



## 7 PM COMPILATION

**December, 2025**

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### **Draft Seed Bill – Important Provisions & Significance – Explained Pointwise**

The Centre has come out with a new Seeds Bill, proposing mandatory registration of seed varieties & stricter punishment for violations. The draft Bill is aligned with current agricultural & regulatory requirements & will replace the Seeds Act, 1966 & the Seeds (Control) Order, 1983. The draft Bill, 2025 seeks to regulate the quality of seeds & planting materials, ensuring farmers' access to high-quality seeds at affordable rates, curbs the sale of spurious seeds & protect the farmers from losses, liberalize the seed imports & safeguard the rights of the farmers.

#### **What is the need for a new seed law?**

1. **Outdated laws:** The 1966 Act was designed for a largely public-sector, low-input agriculture; it did not match today's reality of hybrid seeds, global trade, private multinationals and advanced breeding technologies.
2. **Poor farmer protection:** Farmers frequently suffered crop loss due to substandard or fake seeds, with limited legal recourse and weak enforcement against defaulting seed companies.
3. **Lack of uniform quality control:** There was no comprehensive, compulsory registration and VCU testing framework for all seeds, leading to variable quality and misleading claims in the market.
4. **Weak penalties and enforcement:** Low fines and limited criminal liability under old laws failed to deter sale of spurious or unregistered seeds, allowing repeat violations.
5. **Need for traceability and transparency:** Modern supply chains require QR codes, online traceability and national databases so farmers can verify the source and performance history of seeds, which the earlier regime lacked.
6. **Balancing innovation and farmers' rights:** A new law was needed to both encourage private R&D and clearly protect farmers' rights to save, reuse and exchange unbranded seeds, aligning with contemporary debates on seed sovereignty and IPR.

#### **What are the important provisions of the Seed Bill?**

1. The Bill establishes a comprehensive regulatory mechanism to oversee the import, production and supply of quality seeds in the country.
2. The Bill does not restrict farmers from sowing, re-sowing, exchanging or selling their own seeds, unless the seeds are sold under a brand name.
3. The Bill clearly defines farmers, dealers, distributors and producers as separate regulated entities, each with specific roles and responsibilities.
4. **Institutional Structure:** The Bill proposes the creation of a 27-member Central Seed Committee and a 15-member State Seed Committee to guide seed regulation.
  - The Central Seed Committee can recommend minimum standards for germination, purity, traits, seed health and genetic purity for seeds sold in the market.
  - The State Seed Committees may advise their respective governments on the registration of seed producers, seed dealers, processing units and nurseries.
5. **Mandatory registration of seeds and actors:**
  - All varieties of seeds for sale have to be registered and are required to meet certain prescribed minimum standards. For instance, for transgenic varieties of seeds, registration is to be obtained under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. This can bring greater accountability to seed companies.
  - Dealers, distributors, producers, nurseries, processing units and certification agencies must obtain registration or licenses.

6. **Seed Testing and Regulation:** The Bill mandates the establishment of Central and State seed testing laboratories for analysing the quality and characteristics of seeds.
  - The Bill proposes that a Registrar be appointed to maintain a National Register of all seed varieties available in the country.
  - The Bill makes field trials mandatory to evaluate the Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) of any seed variety before approval.
7. **Penalties and Enforcement:**
  - Offences are classified as trivial, minor and major, with graded penalties.
  - The Bill stipulates that violations can attract monetary penalties ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹30 lakh and can also lead to imprisonment for up to three years.
  - The roles of enforcement agencies, including those under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, are clearly defined for inspecting seed premises and seizing spurious seeds.
  - Minor violations are partly decriminalised, shifting to monetary penalties rather than jail terms in less serious cases.
8. **Farmers' rights and compensation:**
  - Farmers retain the right to grow, save, use, exchange, share and sell farm-saved seeds and planting material, as long as they do not sell them under a brand name.
  - Farmers are eligible for compensation if registered seeds fail to perform as claimed, with liability on the producer as per prescribed procedures.
9. **Market facilitation and corporate access:** A Central Accreditation System allows nationally accredited seed companies to operate across multiple states without separate licenses, aiming to ease business but raising concerns about favouring large firms.

#### **What is the significance of the Seed Bill?**

1. **Quality Assurance & Regulation:**
  - a. **Compulsory Registration:** The Bill makes the registration of all varieties of seeds (whether genetically modified or otherwise) compulsory. This ensures that seeds sold to farmers meet prescribed quality standards for germination, physical purity, and genetic purity before they enter the market.
  - b. **Preventing Adulteration:** By establishing a robust system for inspection, testing, and certification, the Bill aims to curb the sale of spurious or low-quality seeds, which are a major cause of crop failure and financial distress for farmers.
  - c. **Establishment of a Central Seed Committee:** It provides a legal framework for a national committee that will advise the government on seed policy, oversee registration, and standardize testing procedures across the country.
2. **Protecting Farmers' Rights & Compensation:**
  - a. **Compensation Mechanism:** The most significant clause allows farmers to claim compensation from the seed producer or seller if the registered seed variety fails to perform as promised under expected crop conditions. This provides a formal legal recourse that was often complex or non-existent under the older 1966 Act.
  - b. **Protection of Seed Exchange:** It explicitly protects the traditional rights of farmers to save, use, exchange, share, or sell their farm-saved seeds. This is crucial for maintaining traditional farming practices and biodiversity, ensuring that corporate seed registration does not restrict basic farming activities.

- c. **Dispute Resolution:** It proposes a structured mechanism for dispute resolution, usually involving a committee or an authority, to handle farmer complaints quickly without resorting immediately to lengthy court litigation.
- 3. **Modernisation & Accountability of the Seed Industry:**
  - a. **Data Collection and Traceability:** Compulsory registration facilitates better data collection on seed performance, distribution, and usage. This aids in tracking seed varieties and ensuring traceability in case of defects or failure.
  - b. **Attracting Investment:** A clear and consistent regulatory environment encourages both domestic and international seed companies to invest in R&D and bring advanced, high-yielding varieties (including those resistant to pests and diseases) to the Indian market, boosting agricultural productivity.
  - c. **Regulation of GMOs:** While the Bill itself does not govern the safety and testing of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)—that is handled by the Environmental Clearance Committee (GEAC)—it mandates that once cleared, the commercial seed varieties derived from GMOs must also register and comply with quality standards.

**What are some of the concerns & challenges related to the Seed Bill?**

- 1. **Challenges Related to Farmers' Rights & Compensation:**
  - a. **Ambiguity in Compensation:** The Bill allows farmers to claim compensation if the seed fails to perform under expected conditions. However, critics argue the process for determining “expected conditions” and quantifying the extent of failure is vague, making it difficult for farmers to successfully prove their case. The compensation may not cover the total loss, including labor, fertilizer, and potential income.
  - b. **Burdensome Process:** The proposed mechanism involves filing a complaint with a local committee and then potentially appealing to a state-level appellate tribunal. This process is seen as too complex and time-consuming for small and marginal farmers, effectively restricting access to justice.
  - c. **Erosion of Traditional Rights:** While the Bill exempts farmers from registration for selling “farm-saved seeds,” there is a concern that regulatory oversight might still indirectly harass or limit traditional, local seed exchange networks that are vital for maintaining agrobiodiversity.
  - d. **Lack of Price Control:** A major omission is the failure to include a strong mechanism for capping the price of proprietary seeds, particularly expensive hybrid and GM varieties. This leaves farmers vulnerable to price gouging by large corporations for high-performing, patented seeds.
- 2. **Challenges Related to Regulatory and Enforcement Capacity:**
  - a. **Infrastructure Deficit:** Implementing compulsory registration and quality control for *all* seeds requires a massive upgrade in seed testing laboratories and trained personnel across all states. India currently lacks the necessary infrastructure and human resources for this scale of testing.
  - b. **Enforcement Capacity:** The Bill relies heavily on Seed Inspectors to prevent the sale of spurious seeds. Given the high volume of sales and limited staff, effective checking and prosecution are major challenges.
  - c. **Defining “New Variety”:** Clearly defining what constitutes a “new” variety for mandatory registration can be technically complicated, leading to bureaucratic delays and potential disputes with researchers and breeders.



- d. **Impact on Public Sector:** The regulatory burden imposed by the Bill could disproportionately affect public sector seed companies and research institutions, which often operate with thinner budgets and less bureaucratic flexibility than private entities.
3. **Challenges Posed by the Seed Industry:**
- a. **Lax Penalties:** Critics argue that the penalties for seed companies selling substandard or spurious seeds are often too mild compared to the massive profits generated. For large corporations, a fine may simply be considered a minor cost of doing business, rather than a strong deterrent.
  - b. **Lobbying and Influence:** The highly commercial nature of the seed industry means there is constant pressure and lobbying to weaken provisions related to compensation and price regulation, ensuring the Bill remains industry-friendly.
  - c. **Protecting Intellectual Property (IP):** The Bill must navigate a complex relationship with the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001. Ensuring that the registration process under the Seed Bill doesn't conflict with or weaken the IP rights (or the exemptions provided to farmers) under the PPV&FR Act is a delicate legal and regulatory challenge.

#### Conclusion:

The new Seeds Bill tightens quality control and accountability across the seed value chain while formally safeguarding traditional farmers' rights to save and exchange seeds, but it also raises debates about implementation capacity and the balance between farmer protection and corporate facilitation.

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)  
UPSC GS-3: Agriculture

### **Jammu and Kashmir Militancy – Phases, Factors & Way Forward – Explained Pointwise**

The November 2025 Delhi Red Fort car bomb blast has been linked by Indian authorities to militancy networks operating out of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). The bomber, Umar Un Nabi, was a Pulwama-based doctor with alleged ties to militant groups Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind, highlighting active terror module linkages between J&K and urban centers like Delhi.

#### **Introduction:**

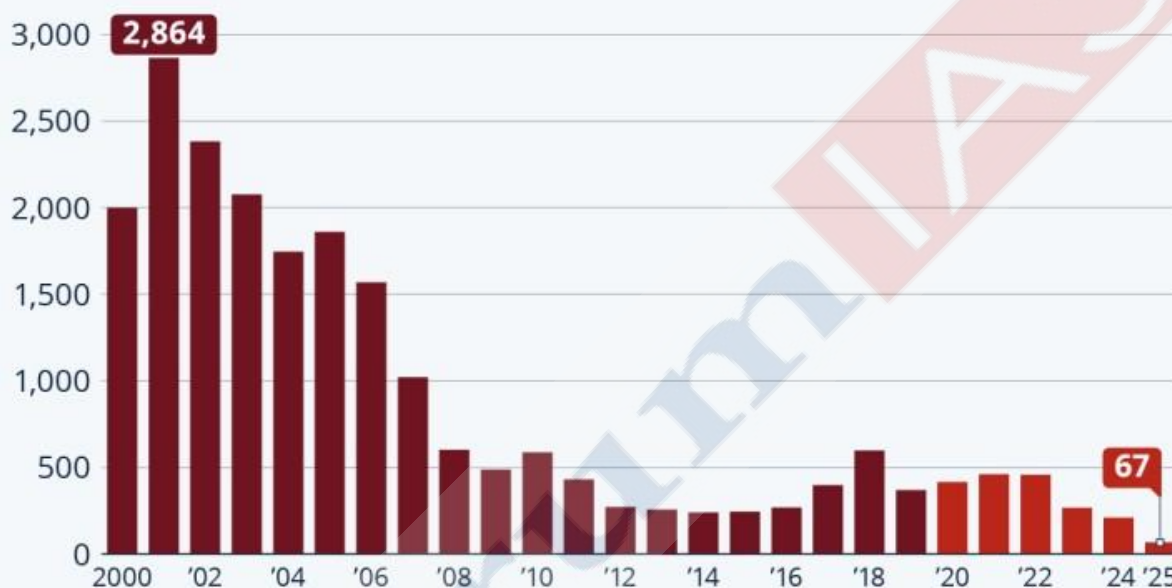
- Jammu & Kashmir militancy refers to the ongoing armed insurgency and terrorist violence in Jammu & Kashmir aimed at challenging Indian sovereignty over the region, either by seeking secession/independence or accession to Pakistan.
- It combines local separatist militancy with Pakistan-supported cross-border jihadist groups and has both political and religious dimensions.

#### **Key phases of J&K Militancy:**

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| <p>Phase 1: The Rise (Late 1980s – Mid-1990s)</p>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Indigenous Start:</b> Initially, the movement was dominated by groups advocating for independence (Azaadi) or merger with Pakistan. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which fought for independence, was prominent.</li> <li>• <b>Escalation:</b> The period saw massive infiltration, targeted killings of government officials and security personnel, and the migration of the Kashmiri Pandit minority community from the Valley.</li> <li>• <b>Shift in Ideology:</b> Over time, the more nationalist JKLF was overshadowed by groups that were religiously conservative and heavily supported by Pakistan, such as the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM).</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Phase 2: The Foreign Jihadi Wave (Late 1990s – Early 2000s)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>De-Indigenization:</b> As the native Kashmiri militant leadership was decimated by counter-insurgency operations, foreign fighters (mainly from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other countries) began dominating the ranks. Groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) became the primary actors.</li> <li>• <b>Major Incidents:</b> This phase was marked by high-profile attacks, including the Kargil War (1999) and the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, which brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war.</li> <li>• <b>Decline in Local Support:</b> The increasing brutality and hardline religious ideology of foreign groups led to a dip in local support for the armed struggle.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Phase 3: Post-2010 Resurgence and the 'New Militancy'</p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shift to Homegrown Militancy:</b> A new wave of militancy emerged, primarily fueled by young, highly educated, and radicalized local Kashmiris, often through social media and online propaganda.</li> <li>• <b>Mass Public Support:</b> The killing of popular militant commander Burhan Wani in 2016 triggered widespread public uprisings and a culture of youth rushing to encounter sites to disrupt operations by security forces.</li> <li>• <b>Hybrid Terrorism:</b> The focus shifted from conventional attacks to "hybrid terrorism," where local, often non-listed militants carry out targeted, small-scale attacks before disappearing back into the civilian population.</li> </ul>                                |

# Jammu & Kashmir: A Region Long Caught Up in Conflict

Total number of terrorism-related incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, by year\*



\* Provisional data from Mar. 6, 2020 - May 10, 2025. Includes incidents where people were killed or injured, arms recovery, suicide attacks, explosions and arrests

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal



statista

## Factors behind the militancy in J&K:

1. **Political and Constitutional Grievances (The Internal Catalyst):** The primary driver of alienation and subsequent militancy stems from a breakdown of trust between the people of the Kashmir Valley and the Central Government of India:
  - a. **The Disputed Accession and Autonomy:** While J&K acceded to India in 1947, the subsequent agreement (Article 370) promised a high degree of internal autonomy. Over the decades, this autonomy was progressively eroded by the central government, leading to a strong feeling that the constitutional relationship was being diluted unilaterally.
  - b. **Political Disenfranchisement and Rigged Elections:** The most crucial trigger was the widespread perception of political manipulation, particularly the widely believed rigging of the 1987 State Assembly Elections. Many young political activists who had faith in the



democratic process (like those in the Muslim United Front) saw this event as definitive proof that legitimate political avenues were closed to them, pushing them toward armed insurgency.

- c. **Lack of Responsive Governance:** Poor governance, corruption, and a lack of accountability in the local political system compounded the sense of betrayal. The absence of credible local leadership exacerbated the disconnect with the mainstream Indian political system.
  - d. **Human Rights Concerns:** The deployment of large numbers of security forces and the implementation of laws like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) led to allegations of human rights abuses, arbitrary detentions, and extrajudicial killings. These incidents became powerful rallying points for militant recruitment.
2. **Socio-Economic Pressures:**
- a. **High Unemployment:** Despite high literacy rates, the region consistently suffered from high rates of educated unemployment, particularly among the youth in the Valley. The lack of viable economic opportunities made extremist narratives appealing.
  - b. **Stagnant Tourism and Industry:** Political instability and recurring violence severely damaged the vital tourism industry and prevented large-scale industrial investment, thus limiting employment prospects.
  - c. **Development Deficit:** Many areas felt neglected in terms of infrastructural development, contrasting sharply with perceived central spending on security and administrative apparatus.
3. **External and Geopolitical Intervention (The Primary Enabler):**
- a. **Pakistan's Active Role:** Pakistan views J&K as "unfinished business" from the 1947 Partition. Its intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), began actively supporting, arming, funding, and training militant groups in the late 1980s. This policy is often termed "proxy warfare."
  - b. **The Afghan Factor (1980s):** The Soviet-Afghan War created a pool of battle-hardened, religiously motivated foreign fighters and an abundance of weapons. Following the Soviet withdrawal, these resources and fighters were diverted toward the Kashmir conflict, escalating the violence dramatically.
  - c. **Ideological Shift (Global Jihad):** The initial, more nationalist and pro-Independence groups (like the JKLF) were systematically marginalized and replaced by Pakistan-backed, religiously focused organizations like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). This shift globalized the ideology, moving the conflict beyond local political grievances to a broader jihadist narrative.
  - d. **Propaganda and Radicalization:** Pakistan uses vast propaganda networks (both media and online) to fuel anti-India sentiment and radicalize Kashmiri youth, often exploiting historical and religious narratives to encourage armed recruitment.

### **Challenges in tackling the J&K militancy:**

1. **Porous Borders and Terrain:** Difficult LoC/IB (740 km LoC, 192 km IB in Jammu) with forests/mountains enables infiltration and arms smuggling despite fencing.
2. **Hybrid Militancy & Support Networks:** Educated "hybrid militants," Over Ground Workers (OGWs), and locals aiding logistics/funding via encrypted apps (Telegram) sustain operations without direct combat.

3. Intelligence & Coordination Gaps: Fragmented intel-sharing between Army, CRPF, J&K Police; militants use locals' phones and online radicalisation, evading detection.
4. Geographical Shift: Militancy moved to Jammu's Pir Panjal forests (Poonch, Rajouri, Kathua); less dense security grid and redeployment to LAC/China border weaken coverage.
5. Radicalisation & Local Sympathy: Online propaganda, unemployment, grievances fuel youth vulnerability; community distrust hampers HUMINT despite de-radicalisation efforts.
6. Pakistan's Proxy Role: Cross-border arms (drones), training, info warfare by LeT/JeM proxies; hard to deter non-state actors.
7. Manpower & Community Issues: Extensive ops require heavy troops; reviving Village Defence Guards (VDGs) faces past abuse allegations and communal tensions.

**Measures taken to tackle the issue of J&K militancy:**

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| <p>Security and Counter-Insurgency Operations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Border Management and Infiltration Control:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Anti-Infiltration Grid:</b> A multi-tiered system consisting of fencing, surveillance systems, and forward-deployed troops along the Line of Control (LoC) to detect and neutralize infiltrators from Pakistan-administered Kashmir (PaK).</li> <li>2. <b>Technological Surveillance:</b> Extensive use of advanced thermal imagers, ground sensors, drones, and electronic surveillance to monitor the porous terrain.</li> <li>3. <b>Strategic Fortification:</b> Building fortified bunkers and posts along key infiltration routes to prevent militants from crossing into the Valley.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Counter-Terror Operations (CT Ops):</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Operation All-Out:</b> A systematic, intelligence-driven approach to targeting and neutralizing top leadership and local militant commanders across various terror outfits (Hizbul Mujahideen, LeT, JeM).</li> <li>2. <b>Intelligence Sharing and Synergy:</b> The Unified Command Structure, involving the Army, CRPF, BSF, and J&amp;K Police, ensures seamless coordination and real-time intelligence sharing to execute surgical operations.</li> <li>3. <b>Addressing Hybrid Terrorism:</b> Recent measures focus on identifying and neutralizing “hybrid terrorists” and over-ground workers (OGWs) who provide logistics, shelter, and intelligence to active militants, thereby breaking the support structure.</li> <li>4. <b>Deradicalization Efforts:</b> Local police have engaged in counseling and surrender policies to bring local youth who joined militancy back into the mainstream.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Legal and Administrative Tools:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA):</b> Provides legal immunity to security forces for actions taken during counter-insurgency operations, although its scope has been debated and reduced in some areas.</li> <li>2. <b>Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA):</b> Used to designate individuals and organizations as terrorist entities, freeze assets, and prosecute individuals involved in terror financing and recruitment.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> |
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|--|---|
| Political and Constitutional Measures        | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Revocation of Article 370:</b> This measure revoked the special constitutional status of J&amp;K and converted the state into two Union Territories (J&amp;K and Ladakh). The stated aims included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully integrating J&amp;K into the Indian Union.</li> <li>Allowing all central laws to apply, including anti-corruption and anti-terror laws.</li> <li>Addressing the separatist ideology which often leveraged the special status for political ends.</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>Delimitation and Electoral Process:</b> The ongoing process of reorganizing assembly constituencies (delimitation) is aimed at preparing for future state elections, attempting to re-establish democratic processes at the grassroots level.</li> <li><b>Empowering Local Governance:</b> Efforts have been made to strengthen the Panchayat Raj institutions (village councils) to decentralize power and fund development at the local level, bypassing traditional political elites.</li> </ol> |
| Socio-Economic and Developmental Initiatives | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Infrastructure Investment:</b> Accelerated development of road networks, power projects, and healthcare facilities under various central schemes (e.g., Prime Minister's Development Package – PMDP).</li> <li><b>Employment Generation:</b> Launching specific skill development programs and initiatives to boost employment for educated youth, including job fairs and incentives for investment in industrial and service sectors.</li> <li><b>Boosting Tourism and Handicrafts:</b> Focused efforts to restore peace and create a safe environment to revitalize the tourism sector, a major employer in the Valley. Financial assistance and marketing support are provided for the traditional handicraft sector.</li> <li><b>Educational Outreach:</b> Initiatives aimed at keeping educational institutions operational and engaging students through competitive exams and scholarships to encourage future-oriented career paths over radicalization.</li> </ol>  |

#### Way forward to resolve the issue of J&K Militancy:

- Enhanced Security Measures with Human Rights Focus:**
  - Continue robust counter-terror operations and intelligence sharing to disrupt militant networks, while strictly adhering to human rights to rebuild trust with locals.
  - Reform laws and ensure accountability to prevent excesses that fuel alienation.
- Political Dialogue and Reconciliation:**
  - Resume meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders, including separatists willing to renounce violence and mainstream political actors, with guarantees for autonomy and participation.
  - Consider calibrated political reforms to address local aspirations without compromising national integrity.

3. Community Engagement and Empowerment:
  - a. Empower grassroots governance, develop local leadership, and implement de-radicalisation programs targeting vulnerable youth and communities.
  - b. Revive Village Defence Guards and community policing with training and safeguards.
4. Socio-Economic Development and Opportunities:
  - a. Accelerate employment generation, skill development, education, infrastructure, and healthcare, especially for youth to address root causes like poverty and alienation.
  - b. Promote cross-community economic integration and cultural dialogue.
5. Diplomatic and Regional Stability Initiatives:
  - a. India should utilize international platforms like UNSC (e.g., highlighting role of Pakistan in cross-border terrorism), FATF and take support of like-minded countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia and UAE) to put pressure on Pakistan to curb non-state actors operating from its soil.
  - b. Strengthen regional cooperation for security and development.

Conclusion:

Achieving peace in J&K and tackling the militancy depends on synergizing the above mentioned dimensions through sustained political will, inclusive governance, and people-centered development.

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC GS-3: Internal Security (Terrorism)

### Regionalism as an Internal Security Challenge in India- Explained Pointwise

Regional movements in India have often transcended into separatist movements like the Bodoland movement. This has often posed grave threats to the Internal security of India. In this article, we will further delve into the issue in detail.

#### What is Regionalism?

Regionalism refers to the collective identity, loyalty, and shared purpose of people in a specific geographical region, often rooted in common language, culture, and historical experiences. In its positive form, regionalism fosters unity, brotherhood, and the protection of regional interests, promoting the welfare and development of the state and its people. However, in its negative form, it may lead to excessive regional loyalty, creating divisive tendencies that threaten the unity and integrity of the nation posing as an internal security challenge in India.

#### History of Regional Movements in India

- Origin in Colonial Era: Regional consciousness emerged from colonial policies, differential treatment of princely states vs. presidencies, and economic neglect, which created regional disparities.
- Movements in Southern India: Regionalism gained momentum with the Dravida Movement (Non-Brahmin movement) in the 1940s demanding an independent Tamil state, later inspiring the call for a separate Andhra.
- Potti Sri Ramulu's Role: The death of Potti Sri Ramulu during the 1954 fast for Andhra statehood triggered mass political regionalism across India.



- States Reorganisation Committee: Widespread revolts led to the States Reorganisation Committee (headed by Fazal Ali), recommending linguistic reorganisation; the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 made linguistic states a reality.
- Insurgencies in Northeast India: Tribal insurgencies in the 1970s–80s resulted in the North-Eastern States Reorganisation Act, 1971, granting statehood to Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya and later elevating Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh to states (1986).
- 21st Century Changes: Strong regional deprivation movements in the 2000s led to the creation of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand; in 2014, Telangana was carved out of Andhra Pradesh.

### Forms of Regionalism in India

- Cultural Regionalism: Arises from the urge to preserve a region's cultural, linguistic, and historical identity. In India's diverse socio-cultural landscape, regions seek recognition of their uniqueness.
  - The demand for Telangana reflected its distinct cultural identity within Andhra Pradesh.
- Economic Regionalism: Driven by perceptions of economic disadvantage, inadequate resource allocation, and lack of development. Regions demand a larger share of resources and greater economic autonomy.
  - Calls for separate states in regions of Bihar or Uttar Pradesh often stem from such economic concerns.
- Political Regionalism: Refers to the assertion of regional political power, with leaders mobilizing regional sentiments for autonomy or influence. Parties like Shiv Sena, Akali Dal, and DMK advance regional agendas and challenge national parties such as the INC and BJP.
- Secessionist Regionalism: The most extreme form, where regions seek complete independence due to historical cultural, religious, or political marginalization. Key examples include the Kashmir conflict and insurgencies in the Northeastern states.

### Factors Behind Regionalism in India

- Linguistic and Cultural Identity: Regionalism often stems from strong linguistic or cultural consciousness. For instance, the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu was driven primarily by linguistic identity.
- Ethnocentrism: Native populations may claim exclusive ownership over regional issues, creating an insider– outsider divide. The idea of Marathi Manoos in Maharashtra exemplifies this exclusionary sentiment toward migrants from other states.
- Tribal Identity: Distinct socio-economic conditions and tribal cultural practices can reinforce regional aspirations. The demand for Jharkhand's creation was rooted partly in its unique tribal heritage.
- Unequal Distribution of Resources: Perceived regional neglect or underdevelopment can intensify regionalist demands. The rise of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) in Darjeeling reflected grievances over disparities with South Bengal.
- Development and Administrative Issues: Feelings of marginalization in policy decisions, whether in resource allocation, employment, or infrastructure, also fuel regional assertions. Such concerns played a major role in the formation of Telangana from Andhra Pradesh.

Read more- [Regionalism in India](#)

### Impact of Regionalism on Internal Security of India

- Rise of Separatist Movements: Extreme forms of regionalism can escalate into secessionist demands, threatening territorial integrity.
  - Examples include movements in Kashmir, Khalistan Movement in Punjab (1980s), and parts of the Northeast (Greater Nagalim), which have led to insurgency and prolonged security operations.
- Intensification of Insurgencies: Regional grievances like economic neglect, cultural alienation, or administrative discrimination often fuel insurgencies.
  - The Northeast insurgencies and tribal uprisings in central India reflect how regional identity can transform into armed resistance.
- Ethnic and Communal Conflicts: Regionalism strengthens ethnic identities, sometimes leading to clashes between communities competing for land, jobs, and political space.
  - Conflicts like Bodo vs. non-Bodo, Meitei vs. Kuki, and Naga territorial claims pose serious internal security challenges.
- Migration-Related Tensions: The “sons of the soil” sentiment results in hostility toward migrants, leading to targeted violence, riots, and mass displacement.
  - Such tensions have surfaced in Maharashtra, Assam, and Manipur, disrupting law and order.
- Challenges to Law and Order: Regional parties or pressure groups may orchestrate bandhs, blockades, and violent protests to assert regional demands, disrupting governance and straining police and administrative machinery.
  - Example: prolonged blockades in Manipur.
- Political Radicalization: Regional political mobilization sometimes adopts radical narratives to gain local support, contributing to polarization and undermining national cohesion. This increases the vulnerability of youth to extremist recruitment.
- Strain on Federal Relations: Contestation over resources like water sharing, boundary disputes, development funds often escalates into inter-state tensions, requiring central intervention and complicating national security management.
  - For example Cauvery River Dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- Economic Disruptions Affecting Security: Persistent regional unrest discourages investment, affects infrastructure projects, and creates zones of economic stagnation, which insurgent groups exploit to expand influence.

| Positive Impact  | Negative Impact   |
|--|---|
| Strengthens federalism by enabling states to assert their rights and autonomy.                               | Threatens national unity by fostering divisive sentiments and secessionist tendencies.            |
| Enhances political representation by bringing local issues and marginalized groups into mainstream politics. | Encourages bias and discrimination through identity-based politics and hostility toward migrants. |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Promotes cultural diversity by preserving regional languages, traditions, and customs.                   | Leads to political fragmentation, making it harder to form stable governments.   |
| Provides democratic mechanisms for addressing regional grievances, reducing chances of violent conflict. | Prioritizes regional interests over national interests, causing resource allocation imbalances and policy distortions. |

## The Dual Nature of Regionalism in India



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### Measures Taken by the Government to Reduce Negative Impact of Regionalism in India

- Constitutional Measures
  - Federal Structure: The Constitution establishes cooperative federalism, accommodating regional aspirations through division of powers between the Union and States.

- Special Provisions (Article 371 Series): Article 371A for Nagaland, 371B for Assam, 371C for Manipur, 371F for Sikkim, 371G for Mizoram, etc., ensuring protection of tribal customs, administrative autonomy, and cultural identity.
- Fifth and Sixth Schedules: Provide self-governance for Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas, particularly in Northeast India, reducing alienation.
- Inter-State Council: Facilitates coordination, dialogue, and conflict resolution between states and the Centre.
- Legal and Institutional Measures
  - Linguistic Reorganisation of States (1956): The States Reorganisation Act reorganized boundaries on linguistic lines, reducing linguistic tensions.
  - Zonal Councils: Established to promote regional cooperation, reduce inter-state conflicts, and strengthen national integration.
  - National Human Rights Commission & Minorities Commission: Address grievances and protect vulnerable groups affected by regional discrimination.
- Policy Measures
  - National Integration Council (1961): Formed to counter communalism, casteism, linguism, and regionalism, and promote national harmony.
  - Industrial Policy Resolutions & Economic Policies: Aimed at reducing regional economic disparities by promoting balanced industrial growth.
  - Finance Commission Grants: State-specific grants, revenue-sharing, and fiscal devolution to support equitable development across states.
- Developmental and Administrative Measures
  - Targeted Development Programs: For example, Aspirational Districts Programme, Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF), North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme, aimed at bridging the development gap and reducing regional inequality.
  - Infrastructure Investments: Expansion of railways, highways, ports, and digital infrastructure to connect underdeveloped regions.
  - Special Packages: Bihar, Bundelkhand, Vidarbha, and Northeast states receive special assistance to address chronic backwardness.
- Security and Governance Measures
  - Peace Accords & Autonomy Arrangements: For example Mizo Accord (1986), Bodo Accords, Naga Peace Framework, providing autonomy and power-sharing to reduce secessionist tendencies.
  - Strengthening Local Governance: Empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions and Autonomous Councils to address local needs effectively.
- Social & Cultural Measures
  - Promotion of National Integration: Cultural exchange programs, national service schemes, and celebration of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat to promote inter-regional understanding.
  - Language Policy: Recognition of 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule to respect India's linguistic diversity and prevent linguistic alienation.

## Way Forward

- Fostering National Unity: Promote an inclusive national identity through education and strengthen cultural exchange programmes to build a shared national outlook.

- Cultural Integration: Encourage frequent intercultural interactions to break regional barriers and deepen nationalist spirit. Initiatives like Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat enhance inter-state understanding and cooperation.
- Strengthening Federalism: Empower states and local bodies and advance Cooperative Federalism to accommodate regional aspirations within the national framework.
- Inclusive Development: Implement targeted development programmes and infrastructure projects to reduce regional inequalities, boost economic growth, and create employment in backward areas.
- **Functional Autonomy: Ensure state autonomy by limiting Union interference to situations of genuine national interest, thereby respecting the spirit of federalism.**

### Conclusion

Regionalism in India functions as a double-edged phenomenon. When channelled constructively, it strengthens inclusive governance, deepens democratic participation, and safeguards cultural identities. But when allowed to escalate or be politicized, it can undermine national cohesion and fuel divisive tendencies.

India must adopt a balanced strategy by addressing legitimate regional aspirations through constitutional provisions, economic development, and autonomy frameworks, while firmly resisting extremist or secessionist impulses. This balanced approach can turn regionalism from a challenge into a driver of national unity and progress.

Source- [PIB](#)

### Role of Social Media in Internal Security – Importance, Risks & Threats – Explained Pointwise

Algorithms on social media now fuel radicalization and disinformation—posing a growing national security threat that regulators are racing to contain. In this regard, let us understand the role of social media in



internal security in a more comprehensive manner.



### What is Social Media?

- Social media refers to internet-based platforms and applications that allow people and organizations to create, share, and interact with content and with each other in virtual communities and networks.
- Social media essentially empowers individuals to be both consumers and creators of content, leading to dynamic, interconnected online communities.
- Examples include social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn), media-sharing platforms (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok), microblogging (X/Twitter), forums (Reddit), and review sites (TripAdvisor, Yelp).
- Social media platforms have fundamentally altered the landscape of internal security, transforming how threats materialize, spread, and are countered. Their impact is characterized by unprecedented speed, reach, and virality, posing complex challenges for law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

### Features of Social Media:

1. **User-Generated Content:** Users produce and upload text, photos, videos, stories, live streams, and other media, forming the core of platforms.
2. **Profiles and Networking:** Customizable personal/organizational profiles with unique web addresses; connect via friends, followers, groups, or lists to build social networks.
3. **Interactivity and Engagement:** Two-way communication through likes, comments, shares, reactions, direct messaging, group chats, and forums for conversations and feedback.
4. **Real-Time Sharing and Notifications:** Instant posting with timestamps; push notifications and activity feeds keep users updated on interactions and new content.
5. **Virality and Sharing:** Content spreads rapidly via shares, reposts, and algorithms promoting popular material for exponential reach.

6. Privacy and Security Controls: Customizable settings for visibility (public/private), secure login (e.g., MFA), and data protection options.
7. Analytics and Insights: Built-in tools for tracking performance, audience demographics, engagement metrics, and trends.
8. Multimedia and Versatility: Support for diverse formats (text, images, audio, video); responsive design across devices (mobile/desktop).

#### **Importance of Social Media as a Tool for Internal Security Agencies:**

1. Real-Time Intelligence Gathering and Surveillance:
  - a. Open Source Intelligence (OSINT): Agencies constantly monitor public posts, trends, hashtags, and geographic check-ins to gain real-time insights into potential threats, public sentiment, and developing unrest.
  - b. Predictive Policing and Threat Mapping: Analyzing patterns of communication, association, and location data helps security forces map out criminal networks and predict potential hotspots for violence or protest.
  - c. Digital Footprint Analysis: Profiles provide crucial forensic evidence and intelligence on suspects, their location, contacts, movements, and future plans.
2. Crisis Management and Communication:
  - a. Rapid Dissemination of Facts: During natural disasters, security breaches, or law-and-order situations, government and police departments use social media to swiftly broadcast verified information, counter rumors, and issue public safety warnings.
  - b. De-escalation: Security forces can use dedicated social media channels to interact with concerned citizens, address grievances publicly, and proactively work to de-escalate tensions before they turn violent.
  - c. Emergency Response Coordination: Platforms serve as vital communication links for coordinating disaster relief and emergency services when traditional networks might be overloaded or compromised.
3. Public Engagement and Image Building:
  - a. Citizen Feedback: Agencies use social media for direct interaction with citizens, allowing for anonymous tips, faster complaint resolution, and gathering feedback on policing efforts.
  - b. Transparency and Trust: Regular updates on police action, successful arrests, and community outreach programs help build public trust and enhance the overall image of law enforcement agencies.
4. Counter-Narrative Strategy:
  - a. Fighting Extremism: Security agencies and governments develop sophisticated counter-narrative campaigns designed to expose the hypocrisy of extremist groups, highlight the positive value of democratic institutions, and discourage youth radicalization.
  - b. Truth Verification: Establishing official handles for fact-checking and debunking misinformation immediately limits the viral spread of malicious content.

#### **Risks & Threats to Internal Security:**

1. Radicalization and Extremism:
  - a. Rapid Indoctrination: Terrorist and extremist organizations (e.g., state-sponsored actors, insurgents) use platforms to rapidly expose susceptible individuals to extremist ideologies, bypassing traditional gatekeepers.

- b. Lone Wolf Recruitment: Social media facilitates direct, private communication between recruiters and isolated individuals, leading to the self-radicalization and planning of “lone wolf” attacks, which are difficult to detect.
  - c. Propaganda Dissemination: High-quality, emotive propaganda (videos, manifestos) is shared instantly, generating sympathy, and glorifying violence among potential recruits.
- 2. Coordination of Unlawful Activities:
  - a. Logistical Planning: Platforms are used for encrypted communication (Direct Messages, private groups) to coordinate the logistics of illegal activities, including protests, riots, arms/drug trafficking, and human smuggling.
  - b. Mobilization and Velocity: They enable the immediate mobilization of large crowds, giving little reaction time for law enforcement to deploy counter-measures during flash mobs, violent protests, or communal riots.
- 3. Misinformation, Disinformation, and Psychological Warfare (IW):
  - a. Fomenting Communal Tensions: Malicious actors deliberately spread fabricated stories or manipulated videos (deepfakes) to incite hatred, distrust, and violence between different communities.
  - b. Erosion of Public Trust: Disinformation campaigns targeting government institutions (police, military, judiciary) are launched to undermine public faith, legitimacy, and stability.
  - c. Hybrid Warfare: State and non-state actors use coordinated campaigns to interfere in domestic political processes, influence elections, and create internal chaos.
- 4. Cyber and Infrastructure Vulnerabilities:
  - a. Phishing and Espionage: Social engineering tactics are widely employed via social media to target critical government personnel, extracting credentials or sensitive information that compromises national networks.
  - b. Data Leakage: Inadvertent sharing of sensitive location data or routine work details by government employees can be exploited by foreign intelligence agencies for physical or cyber espionage.

#### **Various government initiatives to regulate social media:**

- 1. Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021: The IT Rules, 2021 are the most comprehensive and controversial set of regulations targeting social media platforms (defined as “Intermediaries”) and digital news publishers. They create a layered framework of obligations based on the size and nature of the platform:
  - a. Mandatory Due Diligence for all Intermediaries: All social media companies must observe certain due diligence requirements, including:
    - i. Clear User Agreements: Informing users not to host, display, or share prohibited content (e.g., content that is obscene, defamatory, harmful to minors, or threatens national unity).
    - ii. Grievance Redressal: Publishing the name and contact details of a Grievance Officer, who must acknowledge a complaint within 24 hours and resolve it within 15 days.
  - b. Enhanced Obligations for Significant Social Media Intermediaries (SSMIs): SSMIs (platforms with over 50 lakh, or 5 million, registered users) face stricter compliance requirements:
    - i. Appointment of Key Personnel: SSMIs must appoint the following India-based officers:

- Chief Compliance Officer (CCO): Responsible for ensuring compliance with the IT Act and Rules.
    - Nodal Contact Person: For 24×7 coordination with law enforcement agencies.
    - Resident Grievance Officer (RGO): For handling user complaints.
  - ii. Proactive Monitoring of Content: Platforms must deploy technology-based tools to proactively identify and remove content related to child sexual abuse material and content depicting rape.
  - iii. Voluntary User Verification: Platforms must offer users a mechanism to voluntarily verify their accounts.
  - iv. Tracing the Originator (First-Message Identification): For messaging platforms (like WhatsApp or Telegram), the rules mandate tracing the originator of a message deemed unlawful by a court or competent government authority. This requirement is subject to ongoing legal challenges due to privacy concerns.
- C. Regulation of Digital News and OTT Platforms (Digital Media Ethics Code): This section extends regulation to over-the-top (OTT) streaming services (like Netflix and Amazon Prime) and digital news media, mandating a three-tier regulatory structure:
- i. Self-Regulation by Publishers: Adherence to a specified “Code of Ethics.”
  - ii. Self-Regulatory Bodies: Formation of industry bodies to oversee the first tier.
  - iii. Oversight Mechanism: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) acts as the final oversight body.
2. Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act, 2023): Although the DPDP Act applies broadly across all sectors, it fundamentally redefines how social media platforms (as “Data Fiduciaries”) handle the data of Indian citizens (“Data Principals”):
- a. Consent Mandate: Requires platforms to obtain clear, explicit, and informed consent from users before processing their personal data.
  - b. Data Minimisation: Platforms can only collect data that is necessary for a specific, lawful purpose.
  - c. Right to Erasure: Grants users the right to request the deletion or correction of their personal data.
  - d. Data Breach Notification: Mandates timely reporting of data breaches to the Data Protection Board of India and affected users.
  - e. Global Transfer Restriction: While allowing cross-border data transfer, it retains the power for the government to restrict transfers to specific countries deemed unsafe.
3. The Proposed Digital India Act (DIA): The DIA is the proposed successor to the decades-old IT Act, 2000, and is intended to create a future-ready regulatory framework specifically tailored for the Web 3.0 era:
- a. New Regulatory Categories: It proposes to classify online intermediaries into new categories (e.g., social media intermediaries, e-commerce, and search engines) with tailored obligations.
  - b. Harmful Content Focus: Expected to explicitly define and mandate quick action against deepfakes, algorithmic bias, and cyber-security threats.
  - c. Open Internet Principles: Aims to promote innovation while ensuring user rights and safety, potentially addressing issues like net neutrality and competition.



4. **Blocking Orders:** Under Section 69A of the IT Act, the government retains the power to issue content-blocking orders to platforms for reasons of national security, sovereignty, or public order. This power has been frequently used to block specific accounts or content during periods of unrest or border tension.
5. **Financial Scrutiny:** The Ministry of Finance often issues advisories to social media platforms to crack down on financial scams, crypto-related fraud, and illegal lending apps that proliferate on their sites.

#### **What should be the way forward?**

1. **Regulatory and Legal Enhancements:**
  - a. Institutionalize a National Social Media Policy with clear guidelines on content moderation, traceability, and accountability for platforms (e.g., expand IT Rules 2021 to mandate AI-driven proactive detection of extremist content).
  - b. Update cybersecurity policies (e.g., National Cyber Security Policy) for real-time monitoring of radicalization, fake news, and disinformation; make group admins liable for viral harmful content.
2. **Technological and Intelligence Measures:**
  - a. Deploy advanced OSINT tools, AI analytics, and surveillance (e.g., CERT-In enhancements) for 24/7 monitoring of terror propaganda, honey-traps, and foreign influence operations.
  - b. Collaborate with platforms for algorithm transparency and swift takedowns under Section 69A IT Act.
3. **Public Awareness and Capacity Building:**
  - a. Launch nationwide digital literacy campaigns in schools/colleges on fact-checking, cyber ethics, and recognizing misinformation/radicalization.
  - b. Train security agencies and build specialized cyber units; promote responsible user behavior via incentives.
4. **International and Ecosystem Cooperation:**
  - a. Negotiate global standards for cross-border regulation; work with tech firms on “open and agile” anti-terror strategies.
  - b. Balance privacy with security through judicial oversight to avoid overreach.

**Conclusion:** Thus, social media can strengthen internal security & turn into a security asset while mitigating risks like propaganda & terror recruitment when regulated effectively through surveillance, fact-checking, and collaboration with platforms.

UPSC GS-3: Internal Security  
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### **Linkage Of Organized Crime With Terrorism**

India is confronting a deepening security threat as the boundaries between organised crime and terrorism increasingly blur. In the latest major crackdown, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has carried out extensive raids across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana to bust a large inter-state ammunition-trafficking syndicate. These developments suggest that the threat landscape is evolving: organised-crime networks are not operating in isolation, but increasingly intersecting with terrorist and extremist elements

#### **What is Organized Crime?**

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According to the UNODC, an organised criminal group is defined as a structured association of at least three individuals that operates over a period of time and works together to carry out serious offences for financial or material benefit.

### Types of Organised Crime



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### Similarities between Organized Crime and Terrorism

- **Recruitment & Psychology:** Members often emerge from marginalised groups, attracted to risk, thrill, and defiance of social norms, creating similar recruitment pools.
- **Legality & Punishment:** Both operate outside the law, engage in serious criminal offences, and face strict national and international penalties.
- **Technology & Methods:** Each relies increasingly on modern technology, digital tools, high-tech communication, financing, and concealment systems.
- **Organisation & Discipline:** Both maintain hierarchical structures, enforce strict codes of conduct with internal punishment, and carry out well-planned operations.

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- **Secrecy & Violence:** Activities are shrouded in secrecy, and violence or intimidation is used to achieve objectives or influence the surroundings.
- **Operational Nexus:** Terror groups often finance operations through organised crime, while criminal syndicates may pursue political goals using terror tactics, creating a blurred and overlapping boundary.

[Read more about Linkage Of Organized Crime With Terrorism](#)

### Differences between Organized Crime and Terrorism

- **Motives & Objectives:** Terrorism is driven by ideological or political goals aimed at transforming society, whereas organized crime seeks financial gain and profit.
- **Nature of Goals:** Terrorist acts pursue specific political or social change using violence, while organized crime focuses on economic benefits and legalizing illicit wealth, with minimal political intent.
- **Visibility & Messaging:** Organized crime maintains secrecy and avoids publicity, whereas terrorist groups openly declare their objectives to gain support and demonstrate determination.
- **Responsibility for Acts:** Terrorist organizations often claim responsibility for attacks to maximize impact, while organized crime groups avoid any admission of involvement.
- **Relationship with the State:** Terrorism confronts and challenges the state to alter political order, while organized crime infiltrates state institutions through corruption and selective cooperation.

### Linkage Of Organized Crime With Terrorism

Understanding how organized crime and terrorism connect is crucial for strong security policies. Even though they often use similar methods and structures, they pursue different goals. Their relationship can involve cooperation or convergence, and most commonly, criminal activities are used to fund terrorist operations.

- **Financing Terrorism**
  - The UNODC has highlighted that profits from criminal activities increasingly finance terrorism, especially through arms trafficking and money laundering.
  - Examples include Taliban funding from opium production in Afghanistan, and FARC financing through cocaine trafficking, kidnapping, and extortion.
  - Technology, communication, transport, and finance networks now enable easier international cooperation between terrorists and criminal groups.
- **Narco Terrorism**
  - The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) defines narco-terrorism as a form of terrorism involving direct or indirect participation in the cultivation, production, transport, or distribution of drugs, and using the profits to support terrorism.
  - The concept has a dual nature, depending on whether the focus is on drug trafficking or terrorism.
- **Financing Terrorism through Money Laundering**
  - Money laundering is used to generate and move funds for terrorism, by collecting money or property and using it fully or partially to support terrorist acts.
  - Terrorist financing involves multiple channels, including banking systems, cross-border cash smuggling, alternative transfer networks, and front organizations such as humanitarian or non-profit groups.

- The major consequences include destabilizing financial systems, economic instability, declined investment, loss of state credibility, and threats to national security.
- Human Trafficking and Terrorism
  - Human trafficking is increasingly used by terrorist groups, not only for raising funds but also to increase manpower, enable sexual exploitation, and intimidate or harass populations.
  - It supports the formation of military units, with child soldiers and girls recruited and later exploited for sex, logistics, or intelligence, as highlighted in UN reports.
- Intellectual Property Crime and Terrorism
  - Intellectual Property Crime (IPC) involves the production, transport, storage, and sale of counterfeit or pirated goods without the rights holder's consent, often through trademark, patent, trade dress, or copyright infringement.
  - In 2016, terrorist organizations in North Africa were linked to a \$1 billion contraband tobacco trade.

### Linkages in the Indian Context

Crime and terrorism are closely connected in many regions of India, even though the relationship may not be universal. Case studies from India show clear patterns where terrorist activities depend on organized crime.

- North-East India
  - Extortion is the primary source of funding for terrorism in the region.
  - Kidnapping is widely used to spread fear and raise money.
  - Other criminal activities include Human trafficking, Drug trafficking, Gun running, etc.
  - Government officials in conflict areas are often threatened or bribed to give contracts to groups supported by militants.
  - Essential commodities like rice and fuel are diverted to militant groups, who resell them at higher prices, demonstrating a direct link between organized crime and terrorism.
- Jammu & Kashmir
  - Unlike the Northeast, extortion and kidnapping are less common.
  - External funding plays a major role, especially from Pakistan and Gulf countries.
  - These funds are transferred through Money Laundering and Hawala networks, eventually reaching militant groups.
  - Counterfeit currency is a major source of financing- terrorists act as couriers of fake Indian currency in Kashmir. This currency later spreads across India.
- Maoist-Affected Regions
  - Extortion is common among Maoist groups.
  - They have also been involved in bank robberies, forcing cuts on drug-producing crops to generate income.

### Steps Taken by Government to Counter Organized Crime

- Anti-Trafficking Nodal Cell (MHA) acts as the central coordination point for decisions and follow-up with states.
- MWCD funds rehabilitation through Ujjawala (sex-trafficking victims) and Swadhar (women in distress), along with bilateral agreements with countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bahrain to curb trafficking.

- NDPS Act, 1985 and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking Act, 1988 provide the legal backbone to combat drug production, transport and abuse.
- Operation Dhvast (2023) by NIA with state police targeted a terrorist–gangster–drug–arms nexus.
- India is a signatory to major UN conventions on narcotics, supporting global action through UNODC.
- Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection & Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021 proposes investigation units, rehabilitation committees, protection homes, and special courts to ensure faster trials.
- Special courts in each district aim to complete trafficking trials within a year.
- MCOCA, 1999 (used in Maharashtra and Delhi) has helped reduce gang and syndicate operations, despite the absence of a national organized crime law.

### Global Initiatives to Tackle Organised Crime

- The UNTOC, adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution 55/25, is the primary international legal instrument to combat transnational organized crime. It marks a major global commitment to address the growing threat of criminal networks and promotes strong international cooperation. By ratifying the Convention, States agree to:
  - Create domestic criminal laws targeting organized criminal groups, money laundering, corruption, and obstruction of justice.
  - Establish mechanisms for extradition, mutual legal assistance, intelligence sharing, and joint investigations.
  - Strengthen law enforcement capacities through training and technical support.
    - Countries must become parties to the Convention before they can adopt its three supplementary Protocols, which focus on specific forms of organized crime:
      - Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
      - Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air
      - Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking of Firearms, Parts, Components, and Ammunition
  - These Protocols promote victim protection, border controls, arms tracing, and criminalization of trafficking and smuggling networks.
  - The Convention plays a key role in disrupting illicit financial flows, asset laundering, and transnational criminal networks, and supports the seizure and confiscation of criminal proceeds. It also helps safeguard the global economy from criminal infiltration and corruption.

### Challenges in Tackling Organized Crime in India

- Weak Legal Framework: Laws focus on individual offenders, not the criminal networks, making it hard to dismantle entire syndicates.
- Evidence Barriers: Hierarchical and insulated structures protect masterminds, making it difficult to gather direct proof against top leaders.
- Slow Trials & Low Convictions: Delays in investigation, court procedures and poor conviction rates reduce deterrence and discourage public cooperation.
- Resource Constraints: Limited funds, manpower, training and technology weaken policing capacity, especially in states with poor fiscal health.
- Power Nexus: Collusion between criminals, politicians and officials enables syndicates to operate with impunity, influencing decisions and evading action.

### Way Forward

- Institutional & Legal Reforms
  - Create specialised units at all levels for intelligence, documentation and investigation, along with a national body for data collection, analysis and information exchange on domestic and international gangs.
  - Strengthen legal mechanisms through speedy extradition, Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) treaties, and strict implementation of laws such as MCOCA and the Gangster Act, with regular reviews and updates.
- Operational & Intelligence Strengthening
  - Build military, policing and intelligence capabilities to disrupt criminal and terror networks.
  - Share intelligence, exchange personnel, conduct joint operations with other states and countries.
  - Enhance Interpol cooperation to break cross-border crime-terror links and track fugitives.
- International Cooperation
  - Promote global coordination, similar to anti-human trafficking, anti-drug efforts and the Kimberley Process.
  - Joint actions with UN bodies, regional blocs and neighbouring countries to counter funding, trafficking and smuggling networks.
- Community & Media Engagement
  - Public awareness campaigns, media outreach, workshops, and community initiatives to build societal resistance.
  - Encourage citizen participation in reporting, prevention and social boycott of crime syndicate figures.
- Technology & Capacity Building
  - Invest in modern surveillance, analytics, cyber tools, forensics and training of police forces.
  - Improve documentation, databases and early-warning systems on gang activities and terror financing.
- Unified Global Strategy
  - Adopt a common framework, with data sharing and unified approach to break the crime-terror nexus.
  - Follow UN guidance, ensuring countries criminalize participation in organized crime and enforce the convention effectively.

## Conclusion

Organized crime and terrorism are increasingly interconnected, sharing resources, networks, and funding channels. Criminal activities such as drug trafficking, extortion, smuggling, and human trafficking provide vital financial support to terror groups. Weak law enforcement, porous borders, and corruption allow these networks to thrive. Breaking this nexus requires robust intelligence, strong legal frameworks, and global cooperation. A coordinated and multi-dimensional approach is essential to safeguard national and international security.

## UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)

2025 marked the 25-year anniversary of UNTOC's adoption, and the international community- including national governments and civil society reaffirmed the continuing importance of multilateral cooperation against organised crime.

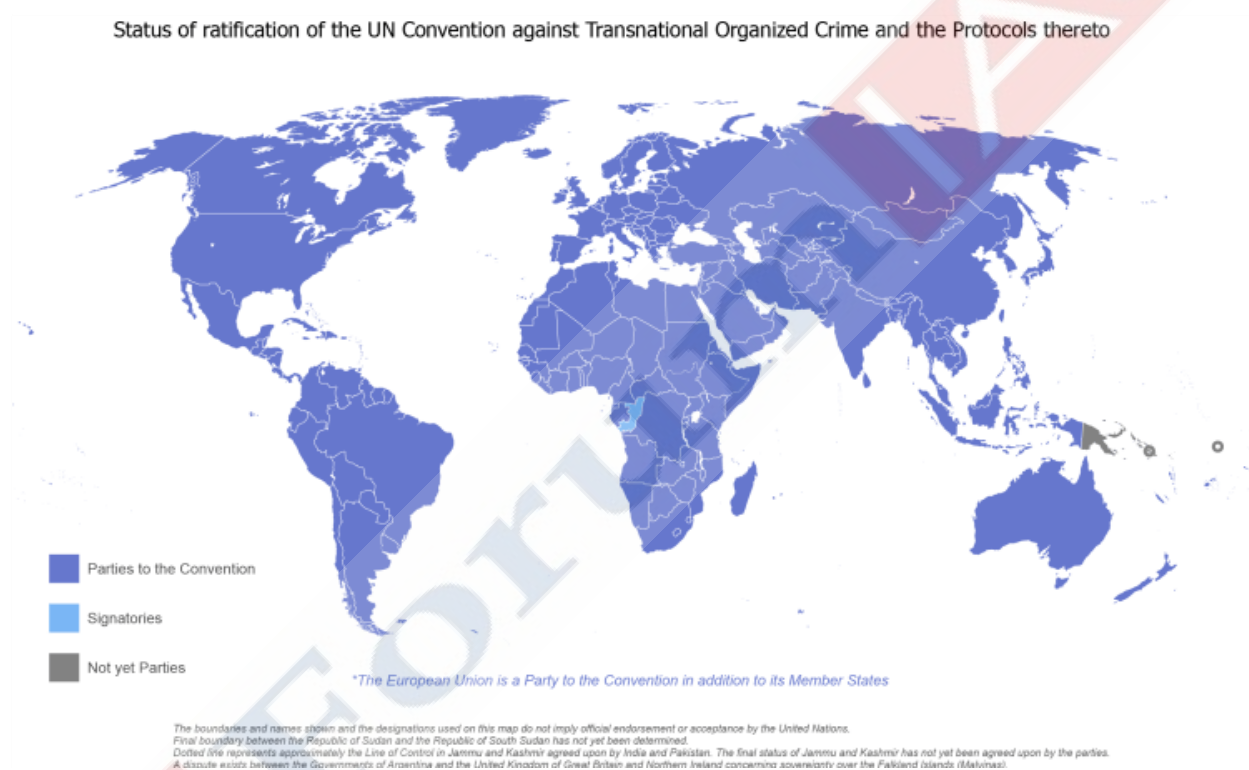
## UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)



- The UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), popularly known as the Palermo Convention, is the most comprehensive international agreement to counter global criminal networks. It was adopted in 2000 with the aim of strengthening international cooperation and legal frameworks against organized crime.
- In March 2024, the UN General Assembly declared 15 November as the International Day for Prevention of and Fight against All Forms of Transnational Organized Crime (TOC).

### Members of UNTOC

As of August 2025, the Convention has 194 Parties, including 187 UN Member. There are four UN Member States that are not party to the Convention- Republic of the Congo, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.



From UNTOC

### Objectives of UNTOC

UNTOC aims to:

- Strengthen global cooperation against organized criminal groups
- Combat trafficking, smuggling, corruption, and money laundering
- Enable extradition, information-sharing, and mutual legal assistance
- Harmonize national laws to criminalize participation in organized crime

### Supplementary Protocols of UNTOC

UNTOC is supported by three legally binding Protocols:

- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children

- Focuses on victim protection, especially vulnerable groups
  - Encourages prevention, rehabilitation and prosecution
- Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air
  - Addresses the organized movement of migrants for profit
  - Emphasizes criminalization of networks, not victims
- Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition
  - Establishes standards for marking, tracing and record-keeping
  - Supports law enforcement cooperation against arms trafficking

[Read more about UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime \(UNTOC\)](#)

### Commitments by States under UNTOC

- States are required to establish criminal offences in their national laws, covering activities such as participation in organized criminal groups, money laundering, corruption, and acts that hinder justice.
- They must develop comprehensive systems for extradition, mutual legal assistance, and cross-border law enforcement cooperation to ensure effective action against transnational crime.
- The Convention also obligates countries to strengthen institutional capacities by providing training, technical support and other resources to improve the effectiveness of national authorities.

### India's Role and Commitment under UNTOC

- India signed UNTOC and all three Protocols on 12 December 2002.
- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) acts as the nodal agency for coordination, data-sharing and implementation.
- India's participation aligns with national priorities such as:
  - Internal security
  - Counter-terrorism
  - Border management
  - Anti-money laundering efforts

### Relevance of UNTOC in Contemporary Context

- Human Trafficking
  - South Asian trafficking routes, particularly involving women and children, demonstrate the scale of the problem.
  - Example: Nepal-India trafficking corridor for forced labour and prostitution has been highlighted by NGOs and law enforcement agencies.
  - UNTOC provides frameworks for cross-border cooperation and victim rehabilitation.
- Migrant Smuggling
  - High-profile cases across Mediterranean Sea crossings to Europe expose coordinated smuggling networks.
  - Example: The 2015 Libya-Italy migrant boats tragedy revealed the role of organized groups operating with sophisticated logistics and profit motives.
- Drug Trafficking & Arms Networks

- Organized networks use global trade routes, leveraging technology and corruption.
- Example: The Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent regions continue to be hotspots for narcotics smuggling affecting India's Northeast and Western borders.
- Cybercrime & Transnational Fraud
  - Organized cybercrime, including cryptocurrency laundering and online scams, increasingly crosses borders.
  - Example: The Southeast Asian "scam factories" revealed international recruitment, forced labour, and money laundering rings.
  - UNTOC enables international legal cooperation and sharing of digital evidence.

### Significance of UNTOC

UNTOC is crucial because:

- Globalization has enhanced mobility, communication and finance flows.
- Criminal groups are agile, networked and often overlap with terrorism, insurgency and corruption.
- It supports a rules-based international system where States act collectively.
- UNTOC protocols help States to track- Firearms, Ammunition, Illicit financing channels
- For India, the Convention strengthens:
  - Border security
  - Regional cooperation (SAARC, ASEAN, BIMSTEC)
  - Anti-trafficking & cybercrime enforcement

### Challenges Related to UNTOC Implementation

- Inadequate Domestic Legislation: Many countries still lack comprehensive laws criminalising organised crime, especially in areas like cyber-enabled offences and financial fraud.
- Weak Institutional Capacity: Limited training, skilled manpower and technological infrastructure hinder effective enforcement and investigation.
- Poor Cross-Border Coordination: Information-sharing and joint operations between States remain slow due to legal, political and bureaucratic barriers.
- Corruption and Political Influence: Criminal networks often exploit corruption within law enforcement and border agencies, weakening enforcement.
- Evolving Nature of Crime: New forms such as darknet markets, crypto laundering and online scams move faster than legal reforms.
- Resource Constraints: Many developing countries struggle with funding, equipment, and forensic capabilities.
- Human Rights Concerns: Ensuring victim protection, non-criminalisation of migrants and due process during extradition remains a challenge.
- Lack of Data and Research: Limited evidence-based assessments restrict policy planning and monitoring.

### Way Forward

- Strengthen National Legislation to align domestic laws with UNTOC offences, including cybercrime, trafficking and financial crimes.

- Enhance Institutional Capacity through specialised training, technology upgradation, forensic tools and dedicated anti-trafficking/anti-smuggling units.
- Promote International Cooperation with real-time intelligence sharing, joint task forces, coordinated investigations and common databases.
- Prioritise Anti-Corruption Measures to build integrity in law enforcement, border management and judicial systems.
- Leverage Technology such as digital surveillance, biometrics, blockchain tracing and AI-driven analytics to track networks and illicit flows.
- Victim-Centric Approach by providing protection, rehabilitation and legal support for trafficked persons and smuggled migrants.
- Strengthen Financial and Cyber Regulations for crypto transactions, cross-border payments and online marketplaces.
- Capacity Building through Multilateral Platforms such as UNODC, Interpol, ASEAN, SAARC and regional mechanisms.
- Periodic Monitoring and Evaluation to assess implementation, identify gaps and improve compliance with UNTOC obligations.

## Conclusion

The Palermo Convention marks a milestone in the global fight against organized crime. Its near-universal participation and robust protocol architecture provide States with the tools to address trafficking, smuggling, arms control and emerging threats like cybercrime. For India, UNTOC strengthens national security, promotes cooperation with partner countries, and enhances the ability to tackle sophisticated criminal networks that transcend borders.

## Permanent Commission for Women in the Armed Forces – Explained Pointwise

There has been a long history of struggle for ensuring the Permanent Commission for Women in the Armed Forces. There has been much progress in recent times, with women progressively getting more responsibilities in the armed forces. Yet, women officers continue to face multiple challenges and equality in true sense has still not been achieved. Further reforms in the implementation are necessary for overcoming these challenges.





### What is the meaning of Permanent Commission?

- A Permanent Commission (PC) means continuing a career in the armed forces until retirement.
- Personnel selected in the Armed Forces through Permanent Commission have the option of serving in the Force till the age of retirement.
- For a long time, the option of Permanent Commission was offered only to the male officers. The Permanent Commission for Women was not allowed. Female Officers were offered only the Short Service Commission (SSC) having a tenure of 10 + 4 years.
- Under the SSC system, the officers are enrolled for 10 years then they can continue their service for 4 years. After this completion of 10+4 years, the women officers were compulsorily made to opt out, while male officers could continue and take up permanent commission or they can also opt-out. Permanent Commission is granted to SSC officers subject to service requirement and availability of vacancies.
- This pattern has now changed and has become liberal towards female officers. Now, Women officers also have the option of permanent commission, on par with the male officers. The Supreme Court has played a major role in this colossal change that leads society one step closer to equality.

### How has the Permanent Commission for Women in the Armed Forces evolved over time?

- The Indian Military Nursing Services originated in 1888 and women were given an opportunity to serve in the Armed Forces. The nurses of the Indian Army first served with distinction in World War I. Formation of Women's Auxiliary Corps allowed them to serve in primarily non-combatant roles like communications, accounting, administration etc. The opportunities for women officers were little.
- After Independence, the participation of women in the Armed Forces remained limited. The Acts governing the Armed Forces restricted the role of women e.g., Section 12 of the Army Act, 1950; Section 12 of the Air Force Act, 1950; and Section 9(2) of the Navy Act, 1957 explicitly make women ineligible



to participate in the respective services except in such bodies/departments/corps as notified by the Union Government.

- In 1991-92, the Government issued notifications regarding the role of women in the Armed Forces. The roles were limited e.g., women were allowed to serve only in Logistics, Law and Education roles within the Indian Navy. Similarly the roles notified in the Indian Army were support roles (rather than core) like the Army Postal Service, Army Education Corps, Army Ordnance Corps and Army Service Corps (Food Scientists and Catering Officers) etc.
- Even in these limited roles, Women were limited only to the Short Service Commission (initially for 5 years only, later extended to 10+4 system). After completion of 14 years, women were asked to leave while eligible male officers were granted Permanent Commission.
- The discriminatory provision led to numerous litigations.
- In 2008, while litigations were sub judice, the Union Government granted a chance of obtaining a PC in the Armed Forces on a restricted basis. There were two major restrictions:
  - a. The policy was prospective (not retrospective) i.e., women will be offered Permanent Commission only after September 2008.
  - b. Permanent Commission will be offered only to specific cadres and branches (and not universal PC).
- The Judiciary played a proactive role in ensuring permanent commission. The Indian Air Force was first among the three services to grant PC to SSC women officers post the Delhi High Court Judgment in *Jasmine Kaur vs. Union of India WP (C) 8492/2009* in favour of granting PC to women officers.
- Similarly in the *Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs Babita Puniya (2020)* case, the Supreme Court granted equal rights to women with respect to the Permanent Commission. The SC held that all the women officers presently on SSC service are eligible to PCs. All the choices of specialization shall be available to the women officers at the time of opting for the grant in PCs, on the same terms as their male counterparts. All the women officers who are eligible and granted PCs through SSC should be entitled to all consequential perks including pension, promotion, and financial incentives.
- The SC also noted that although Article 33 of the Indian Constitution did allow for restrictions on Fundamental Rights in the Armed Forces, it is also clearly mentioned that it could be restricted only to the extent that it was necessary to ensure the proper discharge of duty and maintenance of discipline. Hence, denial of PC to women is violative of their fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 14.

### What are the benefits of the Permanent Commission for Women?

1. The Permanent Commission is central to removing structural gender discrimination in the armed forces.
2. It will provide increased job security and extended tenure for women officers. It will help improve the economic opportunities and improve social conditions and dignity of women. It will also ensure that women officers are not left unemployed after serving many years in the armed forces.
3. The Supreme Court Judgment ensures that women officers also get equal entitlements as men and boost their morale to serve in the services. Traditionally, women officers received no pension as they were contractually mandated to retire within 14 years of service, while defence personnel are entitled to benefits after 20 years in service.
4. Equality in opportunity and entitlements will ensure that more women are attracted to serve in the Armed Forces. It will enlarge the talent pool of officers available for the Armed Forces. As of 2020, women officers in the Indian army (excluding the medical corps) numbered just about 3% compared to 16% in the US, 15% in France and 10% in both Russia and the UK.

5. In response to a question in Rajya Sabha in December 2021, the Minister of State for Defence said the Army has a shortage of 7,476 officers. Permanent Commission to women can help bridge the gap.

**What are the challenges faced by Women in the Armed Forces?**

1. **Skewed Gender Ratio:** Low number of women in the Armed Forces (3%) acts as a deterrent for many aspiring women to join the forces.
2. **Work-Life Balance:** A career in the armed forces is very challenging and demanding with odd work-locations and work hours. Women have dual responsibility of professional duties as well as domestic care work. The responsibility of childcare disproportionately falls on women. It is difficult to balance professional obligations with domestic responsibilities.
3. **Limited Roles:** The roles offered to women officers are still limited. Women are still not allowed for combat roles in the Infantry/Mechanised Infantry/Armoured Corps/Artillery or in the Ships/Submarines. (*The Indian Navy has, in-principle, accepted the proposal, subject to gender-specific facilities being created*).
4. **Gender Stereotypes:** The Supreme Court in its Judgement in the *Babita Puniya* case had criticized the observation made by the Government in the affidavit submitted before the Court. The SC order castigated the Government for portraying women as physiologically unfit for answering the “call beyond duty” of the Army. The note had observed that “*isolation and hardships would eat into their resolve and that they would have to heed to the call of pregnancy, childbirth and family*“. The SC had criticized this patriarchal notion that domestic obligations rested only with women.
5. **Discrimination:** After the 2020 SC Judgment, the Army established additional conditions for female officers to be eligible for permanent commission. Most of them related to physical fitness, which many officers contended that the new criteria would inevitably keep women from gaining permanent tenures.
6. **Biological limitations:** According to studies carried out by the Centre for Military Readiness in the United States, female soldiers, on an average, are shorter and smaller than men, with 45-50% less upper body strength and 25-30% less aerobic capacity, which is essential for endurance. There is an argument that the physical standards for women must be equivalent to the minimum/satisfactory standards for men in supporting arms/services. For fighting arms and Special Forces, these should be at par with males to withstand the rigours of combat. Thus, on physical standards alone, the employment of women in armed forces gets restricted to specific roles.

**What should be the way forward?**

1. **Equality:** Equal rights and opportunities imply equal physical fitness standards, which must be based on the role and not gender. There are no separate battlefields for women.
2. **Accept Gender-specific Rights:** The Forces will have to accept physiological and gender-specific rights like maternity and child care leave.
3. **No Preference/Discrimination:** The armed forces are merit-driven organisations and the women should compete on equal grounds to rise in ranks in a pyramidal set-up. There is no scope for reservations for promotion.
4. **Frame a Pragmatic Policy:** The forces need to shed their patriarchal attitude and frame a pragmatic policy for gradual induction of women in all ranks and disciplines. Necessary infrastructure must be created for women soldiers.
5. **Codify Rules and Regulations:** The terms and conditions of service for women must be codified, keeping in view the organisational interests. Military law, rules and regulations to address gender crimes and related problems must be laid down. Only volunteer women officers/soldiers should be

allowed to join fighting arms, subject to meeting the psychological and physical fitness standards. This is necessary as in the US military, gender-related offences are by far the most common type of discipline problem.

Conclusion: Permanent Commission is not just a matter of welfare or right to equal entitlements like pension. It is the idea to “give women an equal chance at nation-building”. The Supreme Court’s Judgment in 2020 was only the first step in a long journey towards ensuring equal opportunity to women in the armed forces. The debate and legal battles, so far, have been based on gender parity and not on ethical evaluation of the performance of women. The Supreme Court judgments were more driven by Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution than by merit per se. Women aspirants and serving officers should also step up their resolve to meet the exacting physical, psychological and performance standards, and the conditions of service. The Armed Forces should also reform their policies to select the best talent for the role irrespective of gender.

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### Police Reforms in India – Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Telangana Police has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Police Foundation (IPF) to launch a year-long internal reforms project aimed at modernizing policing & making it more people-centric.

#### Introduction:

- Police reforms refer to systemic changes intended to professionalize the police force, enhance its accountability, ensure political neutrality, and improve its overall efficiency in maintaining law and order while protecting human rights.
- They aim to transform the values, culture, policies and practices of police organizations. It envisages police to perform their duties with respect for democratic values, human rights and the rule of law.
- The necessity for reform stems from the outdated framework of the Police Act of 1861 (a colonial-era law) and deeply entrenched structural weaknesses.

#### Constitutional & Legal Basis of Police System in India:

- Police is an exclusive subject under the State List (List II, Schedule 7 of the Constitution). However, the centre is also allowed to maintain its own police forces to assist the states with ensuring law and order. For ex- CRPF, CISF.
- The present Indian police system is largely based on the Police Act of 1861. State legislation on policing is based on this Act. For Ex- Bombay Police Act, 1951, Kerala police Act 1960, Delhi Police Act 1978.

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#### Need for Police Reforms:

1. Overburdened Police Force: Police-public ratio in India stands at 152.80 per lakh person, against the sanctioned public-police ratio of 196.23 per lakh person (as on 1st January 2022). This is way too low when compared with the UN’s recommended standard of 222 police per lakh persons. This has led to a state of an overburdened police force and a huge backlog of cases.

2. **Constabulary Issues:** The constabulary constitutes ~86% of the state police forces. However, the constabulary suffers from issues such as limited promotion opportunities (only once in his lifetime) and harsh working conditions (Lack of housing facilities). This has weakened their incentive to perform well.
3. **Issues with IPS System:** The 'New Delhi- conceived and managed' IPS has emerged as 'a permanent irritant' between the centre and states. States look upon the IPS as unreliable intruders and prefer to have their own recruits. For ex- Tussle over the promotions of Police officers at important positions.
4. **Centre-State Tussle:** Even though police is a state subject, the public prefers CBI investigations over state police interventions as they lack faith in their own police forces, leading to centre-state tussles. For ex- Tussle between WB Police and CBI, Withdrawal of general consent to CBI by WB, TN.
5. **Lack of Diversity in Police forces:** As per Status of Policing in India Report, 2022, the Indian police lacks diversity on the basis of caste, class, religion and gender. Representation of women in the police force is just 11.7% (Jan 2022).
6. **Accountability to the Political Executives vs Operational Freedom:** The Second ARC (2007) has noted that political interference has interfered with professional decision-making by the police and resulted in a biased performance of duties. For Ex- Politicisation of DGP appointment.
7. **Police Infrastructure Issues:** The Police suffers from issues like:
  - a. **Weaponry shortage:** Rajasthan-75% shortage and West Bengal- 71% shortage, according to CAG audit report 2015-16.
  - b. **Surveillance vehicle shortage:** 30.5% deficiency according to BPRD.
  - c. **Under-utilisation of Funds for modernisation of state police forces:** Just 6 % of the Rs 620 cr fund for modernisation of state police forces was used in FY23.
  - d. **Non-functioning of POLNET (Police Communication Network):** A satellite-based network to facilitate faster communication between police and paramilitary forces (CAG report highlights the failure of states like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh in setting up POLNET).
8. **Colonial Legacy:** The Indian Police is still governed by the Police Act of 1861, which is a colonial law aimed at creating a 'suppressor police force' rather than an 'enabler police force'.
9. **Police misconduct and Corruption:** In 2016, the vigilance department had conducted 55% more inquiries against its own men. India lacks institutional mechanism to complain against the erring police officials.
10. **Deteriorating Police-Public Relations:** The Second ARC (2007) has noted that police-public relations is rapidly deteriorating as people view the police as corrupt, inefficient, politically partisan and unresponsive. According to a 2018 survey by CSDS, less than 25% of Indians expressed trust in the police.
11. **Changing nature of Crimes:** The nature of crimes is becoming more complex like the emergence of various kinds of organized crimes, economic fraud, deepfakes. Police lack modern technological capabilities necessary to perform quality investigations.
12. **Botched up Crime Investigation:** The 22nd Law Commission has pointed out that conviction rate for crimes recorded under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 is less than 50%. It has pointed out that the police lack training in essential skills like forensic laws, cybercrimes and legal knowledge of admissibility of evidence.
13. **Custodial Deaths:** As per Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) report, 144 custodial deaths took place from 2017 to 2018. The large number of custodial deaths point towards wide use of torture in police investigations.

#### **Benefits of Police Reforms:**



1. **Shedding the Colonial Legacy:** The reform of Indian Police Act will help in shedding the colonial legacy like it was done in the case of IPC, CrPC and Evidence Act being replaced by Bhartiya Nyaya, Surkasha and Sakshya Samhitas.
2. **Help in tackling Modern day crimes:** The reform will help in tackling the modern day crimes like cyberespionage, deepfakes and online financial frauds.
3. **Increase in social sensitivity:** Diversified workforce like greater representation of women in police force will increase gender sensitivity towards women in the society. For ex- Help in decreasing cases of crimes against women.
4. **Reduction in custodial Deaths and Violence:** It will help in reducing inhumane tortures in police custody especially of the downtrodden and the disadvantaged. For ex- Reduction in cases like Thoothukudi district custodial death.
5. **Bolster Internal security:** Modernised Police force will help in bolstering national security and containing crimes like naxalism and separatism.

#### Recommendations of Various Committees Regarding Police Reforms in India:

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Gore Committee<br>1971-1973        | Enlarge the content of police training from law and order and crime prevention to a greater sensitivity and understanding of human behaviour.   |
| National Police<br>Commission 1977 | Insulate the police from illegitimate political and bureaucratic interference.  |
| Padmanabhaiah<br>Committee 2000    | Standardisation of recruitment procedures for the police force & training. Bring changes in police officers' behaviour, police investigations and prosecution.<br><br>Change the criterion for constabulary recruitment and improve pay & perk.   |
| Soli Sorabjee<br>Committee 2005    | A new model police bill to replace the colonial 1861 Police Act.  |
| Second ARC 2007                    | Separation of crime investigation from other police functions like maintenance of law and order. Establishment of State police boards for welfare and grievances redressal mechanisms for police personnel.   |
| Malimath<br>Committee 2003         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A complete revamp of the entire criminal procedure system.</li> <li>• Creation of fund to compensate victims turning hostile under pressure of culprits.</li> <li>• Separate national level authority to deal with crimes threatening the country's security.</li> </ul> |

#### Seven Directives of The Supreme Court in Prakash Singh vs Union of India:



In the Landmark *Prakash Singh vs Union of India*, for police reforms in India, SC has given the following observations:

1. State Security Commission (SSC): Constitute a State Security Commission (SSC) so that the state government does not exercise unwarranted influence or pressure on the police.
2. Merit based appointment of DGP: Ensure that the DGP is appointed through the merit-based transparent process and secure a minimum tenure of two years of service.
3. Security of tenure: Police officers on operational duties (including SP and SHO) are also provided a minimum tenure of two years.
4. Criminal Investigation and law and order separation: Separate the investigation and law and order functions of the police.
5. Police Establishment Board (PEB): Set up a Police Establishment Board (PEB) to decide transfers, postings, promotions and other service related matters of police.
6. Police Complaints Authority (PCA): Set up a Police Complaints Authority (PCA) at state level to inquire into public complaints against police officers of above the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.
7. National Security Commission (NSC): Set up a National Security Commission (NSC) at the union level to prepare a panel for selection and placement of Chiefs of the Central Police Organizations (CPO) with a minimum tenure of two years.

**NITI Aayog Suggestions on Police Modernisation:**

1. State level legislative reforms: States should be encouraged, with fiscal incentives, to introduce 'The Model Police Act of 2015' as it modernises the mandate of the police.
2. Taskforce under MHA: To identify non-core functions that can be outsourced to save on manpower and help in reducing the workload of the police. For Ex- Address verification for passport applications can be outsourced to private agents or government departments.
3. Greater representation of women: The states should be encouraged to ensure that the representation of women in the police force is increased. For ex- Bihar's 33% women in police force rule.
4. Place police and public order in concurrent List- Police as well as public order must be moved to the Concurrent List to tackle increasing inter-state crime and terrorism under a unified framework.

**Way Forward:**

1. Reform the 'Thana': The thana system is the most basic unit of police functioning. Through the thana, the police force remains in contact with the common man. Thus, improving the working conditions of thana-level constables should be a priority.
2. Enhance Police Budget and upgrade Police Infrastructure- More than 90% of the police budget in the states are used for salary and establishment costs. Allocation for training, procurement and technology deployment should increase. States must fully use the funds for police modernisation.
3. Reform the criminal justice system: Focus must be on the effective implementation of the Malimath Committee recommendations to reform the criminal justice system.
4. Training and Capacity Building of Policemen: Training the police forces should be a continuous process along with the evolving nature of the crime space. For ex- The cyber cell of the Delhi Police to deal with cyber criminals.
5. Upgrade technology and Research in Policing: Reform the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) by making it a more inclusive institution. For ex- Expertise of social science experts for better research on criminology, NCRB's Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS) to identify criminals.

6. Improving public perception through community policing: Community policing initiatives like 'Janamaithri Suraksha Project-Kerala', 'Meira Paibi-Assam' must be undertaken to improve ground level policing.
7. Learning from international best practices: Japan's separate police commission for recruitment, New York Police's specialisation of police model, must be used to reform our police and make it a global Police.
8. Increase women representation: 33% women reservation in police should be implemented in all the states. States like Bihar have taken a step in this direction.

Conclusion:

Police reforms are not merely administrative changes; they are essential for strengthening the rule of law and safeguarding democracy. While the 2006 Supreme Court judgment provided a clear legal framework, true transformation requires sustained political commitment from state governments. However, all reforms must be enunciated in the direction of development of SMART Police– Sensitive, Mobile, Alert, Reliable and Techno-savvy.

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## G2 – Need, Challenges & Implications – Explained Pointwise

Recently, the U.S. President Donald Trump's reference to a "G-2" with China has revived debates about a potential U.S.-China duopoly, raising concerns among allies. At a time when geopolitical fault lines are already deep, this framing challenges the balance built through multilateral institutions and strategic groupings like the Quad.



### What is G2?

- G2 (Group of Two) is a geopolitical term used for the United States and China together, suggesting they are the two leading powers whose cooperation or rivalry shapes the global order.
- It is a conceptual label, not a formal organisation like the G7 or G20, though leaders and analysts sometimes use it when discussing US–China relations.
- The term imagines Washington and Beijing as a kind of informal “directorate” for world affairs, analogous to how the G7 or G20 group major economies, but here limited to just these two states.
- Proponents argue that because of their economic weight, emissions, and military power, coordinated US–China leadership is essential on issues like global finance, climate change, and security; critics worry it would sideline other powers and multilateral institutions.

### Origin & Evolution of the Concept of G2:

- The label “G2” was first clearly articulated around 2005 by economist C. Fred Bergsten, who argued that the US and China, as the two largest economies, should form a core steering group for macroeconomic coordination, exchange-rate issues and global financial governance.
- The idea gained further intellectual grounding in studies of global governance that saw existing groupings like the G7 as too Western-centric and the broader G20 as too large and unwieldy, making a US–China “directorate” appealing to some as a pragmatic alternative.
- The 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis gave the G2 idea momentum because the US and China together contributed a very large share of world growth and coordinated stimulus, leading some analysts to speak of a “G2 within the G20” architecture.

- Around 2009, on the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations, US and Chinese leaders (Obama-Hu) highlighted the importance of structured strategic and economic dialogue, which many commentators interpreted as an informal step toward a G2-style partnership, even though neither side officially embraced the label.
- Recently, in November 2025, President Donald Trump revived the term after a meeting with Xi Jinping, publicly describing their interaction as “G2” and symbolically acknowledging China as a near-peer, which Chinese and international media saw as conferring long-sought status even though Beijing’s response remained cautious.

### What is the significance or need for G2?

1. Core Significance: Global Economic Stability:
  - a. Trade and Supply Chains: As the world’s primary consumer market (U.S.) and manufacturing hub (China), any disruption in their trade relationship (e.g., tariff wars, supply chain decoupling) sends shockwaves through global markets, leading to inflation and recessionary pressures worldwide.
  - b. Financial Crisis Management: During the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, U.S. and Chinese coordination (especially China’s stimulus spending) was instrumental in stabilizing global demand. A lack of coordination today would destabilize international monetary and trade systems.
  - c. Debt and Currency: The U.S. remains the issuer of the world’s primary reserve currency, while China is a major holder of U.S. debt. The stability of this financial interdependency is foundational to global capital markets.
2. Global Needs Driving the G2 Concept: The need for U.S.-China cooperation stems from pressing transnational challenges that neither country, nor any single international body, can solve alone such as:
  - a. Climate Change: As the world’s two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, no meaningful global climate agreement (like the Paris Agreement) can succeed without strong commitments and implementation from both nations.
  - b. Global Health: Coordinating responses to future pandemics (like joint research, vaccine distribution, and supply chain transparency) requires active, transparent collaboration between U.S. and Chinese scientific and regulatory bodies.
  - c. Nuclear Security: Cooperation is vital in addressing proliferation challenges (e.g., North Korea, Iran). Both countries hold permanent seats on the UN Security Council and must align on sanctions and diplomatic pressure.
  - d. Artificial Intelligence (AI): Setting ethical standards and preventing the weaponization or misuse of advanced AI requires dialogue between the world leaders in AI development (U.S. tech firms and Chinese tech firms).

### What are the limitations of the G2 Concept?

1. Ideological Conflict: The U.S. operates on democratic principles, while China operates under a one-party system. This fundamental ideological difference prevents deep, trusting cooperation and fuels strategic distrust.
2. Geopolitical Competition: The intense rivalry over technology (especially semiconductors and 5G), maritime dominance (South China Sea), and regional influence (Taiwan) means that strategic competition often overrides the impulse for global cooperation.



3. “G0” Fear: The failure of the U.S. and China to cooperate can lead to a state known as “G0,” where there is no effective global leadership structure, resulting in international fragmentation and the breakdown of multilateral institutions like the WTO.
4. Chinese and American reservations:
  - a. Chinese commentary frequently rejects the G2 framing as a US-driven, hegemonic idea that could either trap China as a junior partner or make it shoulder disproportionate responsibility, conflicting with Beijing’s stated preference for broader multilateral formats like BRICS or the UN.
  - b. US critics argue that any G2 would either legitimise authoritarian practices or force the US to compromise on allies’ interests and liberal norms, while still not resolving core disputes such as economic imbalances and security dilemmas.
5. Multilateral & Legitimacy Deficit: A US–China condominium would marginalise other major powers and groupings (EU, India, Japan, ASEAN, G20, Global South), clashing with today’s multipolar reality and norms of inclusive multilateralism.

#### **What could be the implication of G2 on India?**

1. Strategic & Geopolitical Implications:
  - a. A functioning G2 could weaken the logic of the Indo-Pacific “balancing” architecture (Quad, minilaterals, strategic partnerships), making India less central to US China-strategy and shrinking New Delhi’s leverage in dealing with Beijing on the LAC and regional issues.
  - b. Bilateral US-China bargains over trade, technology or security could be struck without India at the table, creating fait accompli on issues like supply chains, digital norms or regional crises that India would then have to adapt to rather than shape.
2. Economical & Technological Consequences:
  - a. India’s heavy dependence on Chinese imports in sectors such as electronics, APIs and critical minerals means a G2-shaped geo-economic order could entrench Chinese dominance in value chains and make it harder for India to emerge as an alternative manufacturing hub.
  - b. If Washington softens pressure on Beijing in favour of big transactional deals, India may lose some “China-plus-one” relocation opportunities and face less favourable terms on tariffs, market access and technology transfer compared with China.
3. Impact on India’s Strategic Autonomy & Multipolar Vision:
  - a. India’s preferred model of “multi-alignment” and a genuinely multipolar world, where Delhi balances relations with the US, China, Russia, EU, Japan and the Global South rather than being forced into a subordinate role under a two-power condominium.
  - b. The G2 moment is a warning that India cannot assume enduring US support as a counterweight to China and must instead build intrinsic economic and technological strength (Atmanirbharta) to preserve real strategic autonomy.
4. Opportunity for India: If US-China cooperation falters, India can position itself as a pivotal swing player and resilient hub in alternative supply chains, digital governance, and Indo-Pacific security networks.

#### **What can be the way forward?**

1. From reliance to multi-alignment: India must move faster towards a multi-aligned posture. It should deepen ties with Europe, the UK, Gulf states, Africa, ASEAN, Russia and Central Asia. No single relationship should be able to limit or define India’s choices in foreign or economic policy.



2. Reassessing the Quad and other coalitions: Uncertainty over Trump's participation in the next Quad summit in India shows how fluid coalitions are. India should treat the Quad as useful but not central, and weigh it alongside other regional and bilateral forums, including engagement with China when it serves Indian interests.
3. Managed competition with China: The current US-China thaw creates some space for engagement between India and China. India needs a model of managed competition: firm military preparedness on the border, but open diplomatic and trade channels. This can prevent escalation and keep room for negotiation on difficult issues.
4. Cutting dependence and building capability: India's reliance on Chinese imports, especially in pharmaceuticals and electronics, is a core weakness. India must diversify supply chains, attract firms that want to reduce exposure to China, and build domestic capacity in AI, quantum technologies, semiconductors and advanced manufacturing.
5. Balancing openness and state-led instruments: Economic policy must be coherent and rooted in political and social realities. India should keep trade and investment open and business-friendly, but also use targeted industrial policy, public investment and digital tools where markets alone cannot protect workers, key sectors or critical technologies.

Conclusion: For India, the "G2" moment is a clear warning. The US will not automatically treat India as a counterweight to China. In a transactional multipolar world, only a proactive, multi-aligned strategy built on economic and technological resilience can reliably safeguard India's interests.

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### Status of Inequality In India- Explained Pointwise

Recently, the World Inequality Lab has released the World Inequality Report 2026, according to which the income & wealth inequality in India is one of the highest in the world. The report combines data from **national income accounts, wealth aggregates, tax tabulations, rich lists, and surveys on income, consumption, and wealth** to arrive at the results.

#### What are the main takeaways of the report?

1. Extreme concentration of income and wealth:
  - a. The top 10% of adults worldwide receive about half of all income (around 53%) while the bottom 50% receive only about 8%, showing a very skewed income distribution.
  - b. Wealth is even more concentrated: the top 10% own roughly three-quarters of global wealth, the bottom half hold only about 2%, and the top 0.001% (fewer than 60,000 ultra-rich) now own three times more wealth than the entire bottom 50% of adults.
2. Gender inequality and unpaid work:
  - a. Globally, women capture just over one-quarter of total labour income, a share that has barely improved since 1990, reflecting persistent structural and cultural barriers.
  - b. Excluding unpaid work, women earn about 61% of men's hourly income; when unpaid domestic and care work is counted, they effectively earn only about 32% per working hour, despite working more hours on average than men.
3. Global financial asymmetries and climate inequality:

- a. The report argues the global financial system systematically favours rich countries: roughly 1% of world GDP flows net from poorer to richer countries each year via excess returns and interest-rate differentials, an amount several times larger than total aid flows.
  - b. Climate responsibility is also highly unequal: the poorest half of the global population accounts for only 3% of carbon emission associated with private capital ownership, while the top 10% account for 77% of emissions. The wealthiest 1% account 41% of private capital ownership emissions, almost double the amount of the entire bottom 90% combined.
4. India-specific highlights:
- a. India is flagged as one of the countries with the highest levels of income and wealth inequality, with the top 10% capturing about 58% of national income, while the bottom 50% receive only 15%. Wealth inequality is even greater in India, with the richest 10% holding 65% of total wealth & the top 1% holding about 40%.
  - b. The female labour force participation remains very low at 15.7%, showing no improvement over the past decade.
  - c. The report notes India's relative decline in the global income distribution, low female labour-force participation, and rising ultra-wealth concentration as key structural concerns needing corrective policy action.

Source: The Indian Express

#### What are the implications of rising inequality in India?

1. Economic: Reduced social mobility, slower economic growth, and an increase in poverty are all effects of inequality. When a small number of individuals control a sizable percentage of the money and resources, it may be challenging for others to access the tools and opportunities necessary to raise their economic standing.
2. Social: Transgender, SC/ST, OBC, Specially-Abled, Tribals and Religious minority groups frequently experience a sense of marginalisation as a result of social inequality.
3. Public Health: Public healthcare suffers when there is significant economic disparity. Living in poverty or having limited access to healthcare increases the likelihood of having poor health outcomes.
4. Higher Vulnerabilities to Extreme Events: Poor people have little to no savings or wealth which makes it very difficult for them to survive in extreme situations like Pandemic, Disasters etc.
5. Hampers progress of Future Generations: Lack of access to income and wealth hampers the ability of the poor to access the levers, like education, that enable upward mobility. Children born in poor families remain perpetually trapped in poverty.
6. Undermines Dignity: People with less resources have to work day and night without any day off, unlike the affluent section. They starve for food, clothing and other basic things, which undermines their right to a dignified life under Article 21.
7. High Crime Rates- Inequitable distribution of wealth leads to lower social trust and higher crime rates.

#### What are the challenges in addressing inequality?

1. High level of informalization of economy: A significant portion of India's workforce is engaged in the informal sector, which typically lacks job security, social protections, and access to formal financial services. Workers in the informal sector often face exploitative working conditions and lower wages compared to their counterparts in the formal sector.
2. Low Female Labour Force Participation Rate: Lack of Education, Early Marriage, household responsibilities etc. force women to opt out of jobs which reduces their income and increases income inequalities.

3. **Poor Coverage of Schemes:** There is poor coverage of health and education schemes, which increases the out-of-Pocket expenditure of poor people and exacerbates income and wealth inequalities.
4. **Global Uncertainties:** COVID-19, Russia-Ukraine conflict, Tariffs imposed by USA etc have pushed the inflation levels in the country, thereby increasing income and wealth inequality in India.
5. **Skewed Economic Growth Patterns:** High growth rates have primarily benefited certain sectors and regions, leading to a concentration of wealth and opportunities among a relatively small portion of the population.

#### What steps have been taken by the government to reduce inequality in India?

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| JAM Trinity             | It focuses on mobile numbers, Aadhaar Card and post office accounts as <b>alternative financial delivery mechanisms</b> to ensure that benefits reach the poor households seamlessly.  |
| Ayushman Bharat         | It focuses on providing care through <b>Health Wellness Centres (AB-HWC)</b> covering child and maternal health services, non-communicable diseases, and free drugs and diagnostic services.   |
| Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan | It is an Integrated Scheme for School Education. This programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of <b>Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)</b> , <b>Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)</b> and <b>Teacher Education (TE)</b> . |
| MGNREGA                 | It <b>guarantees 100 days of work a year</b> to every rural household with an aim to enhance the livelihood security of people.  |

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

1. **Employment generation:** Promote employment generation in labor-intensive sectors (like manufacturing, construction, and services) and support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to absorb a large workforce, especially from rural and marginalized backgrounds.
2. **Social security:** Ensure fair minimum wages and robust social security so all workers – formal and informal – enjoy basic living standards and protection from economic shocks.
3. **Super Tax or Wealth Tax:** Implementing a super tax on Indian billionaires and multimillionaires, restructuring the tax schedule to include both income and wealth, and finance major investments in education, health and other public infrastructure, could be effective measures to reduce inequality in India.
4. **Raising minimum wage rate:** The government should raise the minimum wage rate especially in the unorganized sector wherein people get very less social security benefits like gig workers and gig economy.
5. **Higher investment in Education and Health:** The government of India must invest 6% of GDP in Education and 2.5% of GDP in Health to ensure equitable development and reduce inequalities in the country.

6. Access to public services & infrastructure: Ensure quality universal access to public services and infrastructure—clean water, sanitation, affordable housing (e.g., PMAY)—to reduce urban-rural, regional, and social divides.
7. Reduce exclusion error in schemes: There should be greater focus on digitization and JAM usage in order to reduce inclusion and exclusion errors in schemes.
8. Need for Institutional & Structural Reforms:
  - a. Enforce constitutional provisions for equality and anti-discrimination, and support independent bodies protecting the rights of minorities, women, and other vulnerable groups.
  - b. Strengthen local democracy and decentralization to empower communities and tailor development policies to local needs.
  - c. Land reforms and asset-building (like easier access to home ownership) help in wealth creation for working families, particularly the poor and marginalized.

Conclusion: Tackling inequality requires rural revitalization, better education and skills, gender parity in labour, and more formal jobs. Equity in income and opportunity is vital for resilient, inclusive growth.

Read More- [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Inclusive Growth In India

### Aviation Sector in India

The Indian aviation sector has grown rapidly, emerging as one of the world's busiest domestic markets. But the IndiGo crisis of December 2025, with over 2,000 flight cancellations, exposed major gaps in operational planning and regulatory readiness. Triggered by an acute crew shortage following the rollout of new Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms.

#### Aviation Sector in India

Aviation in India encompasses both military and civil segments, with the civilian aviation sector emerging as one of the world's most dynamic markets. India has already become the third-largest domestic aviation market globally. According to International Air Transport Association (IATA), the country is poised for even greater growth, set to surpass the US and China to become the world's third-largest air passenger market by 2030. This rising demand is driving rapid fleet expansion, with India's aircraft count expected to reach around 1,100 by 2027.

#### Status of India's Aviation Sector

- India recorded 376.43 million air passengers in FY24, growing at 15% YoY, with daily passengers crossing 5 lakh in 2024.
- The sector contributes 5% to GDP, supports 4 million jobs, and adds \$72 billion in gross value to the economy.
- Fleet strength stands at 941 aircraft (2025), while 162 airports (up from 74 in 2014) are operational, with metro capacity targeted to reach 468 MPPA.
- India handled 3,365.65 MMT air cargo in FY24, strengthening logistics and e-commerce supply chains.
- India leads globally in gender diversity with 15% women pilots (3× global average).
- Sustainability advances include 73 airports using 100% green energy.

[Read more about Aviation Sector in India](#)

### Potential of India's Aviation Sector

- High-growth market: Aviation market set to expand from \$14.78 bn (2025) to \$26.08 bn (2030) at 12% CAGR (IATA).
- Balanced regional development: Enhanced connectivity in the North-East and aspirational districts.
- Tourism multiplier: Aviation drives hospitality, transport, and local economies.
- Aerospace & MRO expansion: Rising fleet enables growth of indigenous MRO and aerospace manufacturing.
- FDI & infrastructure expansion: Nearly \$3 bn FDI, large Greenfield projects (Navi Mumbai, Jewar).
- High skill demand: Need for 10,900 pilots by FY30 along with engineers and crew.
- Created by ForumIAS

### Challenges in India's Aviation Sector

- Grounded Fleet: Over 160 aircraft (~25%) grounded due to financial stress, OEM delays, and safety issues.
- Market Duopoly & Financial Stress: IndiGo (60%) and Tata Group (20%) dominate; airlines may face \$1.6–1.8 bn losses (FY24).
- High ATF Taxes: 40–50% tax burden among the highest globally raises operating costs.
- Regulatory Bottlenecks: Outdated frameworks (now replaced) like the Aircraft Act 1934; airport monopolies limit competition.
- Low Per-Capita Air Travel: 0.13 seats per capita, far below China (0.49) and Brazil (0.57).
- Crew & Technical Shortages: Pilot, engineer, and cabin crew deficits cause flight delays and operational disruptions.
- Connectivity Gaps: Tier-2/3 cities remain underserved despite UDAN.
- Environmental Pressure: Compliance with CORSIA, need for greener fuels and technologies.
- Operational Risks: Accidents (e.g., Air India crash in Ahmedabad) highlight safety concerns.
- Unrealistic Airline Expansions: Failures of Jet Airways, Kingfisher, Go First due to inflated growth plans.

[Read more about Growth & Innovation in Aviation Sector in India](#)

### Government Initiatives for Aviation Sector in India

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) | Expands international operations; boosts MRO; promotes market liberalisation and regional connectivity.     |
| UDAN Scheme                           | Enhances regional air connectivity; 619 routes, 88 airports operational; expanding to 120 new destinations. |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| DigiYatra                                       | Paperless, biometric-enabled seamless passenger processing.                                      |
| Open Sky Policy                                 | Liberalises airport sector; major airports under PPP mode; boosts private participation.         |
| Open Sky Air Service Agreements                 | Allows unlimited flights between partner countries; enhances bilateral air traffic.              |
| FDI Policy                                      | 100% FDI for greenfield airports; 74% automatic route for brownfield; boosts private investment. |
| Tax & Duty Exemptions                           | 10-year tax exemption for airport projects; full customs exemption for MRO services.             |
| GAGAN Navigation System                         | Satellite-based augmentation enhancing precision navigation and flight safety.                   |
| Bhartiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam (2024)               | Modernised aviation regulation; replaced Aircraft Act 1934; aligned with global standards.       |
| Protection of Interest in Aircraft Objects Bill | Aligns leasing laws with global norms; reduces aircraft leasing costs.                           |
| NABH Nirman                                     | Expands airport capacity; modernises infrastructure across major airports.                       |
| Krishi Udan                                     | Enhances air transport of perishable agricultural goods for farmers.                             |

### Budget 2025–26: Provisions for the Aviation Sector

- **Strengthening Regional Connectivity:** The Budget expands the UDAN scheme, targeting 120 new destinations and aiming to attract 4 crore additional passengers over the next decade.
- **Airport Infrastructure Development:** Major upgrades include the expansion of Patna Airport and development of a brownfield airport at Bihta (Bihar), alongside continued support for Greenfield airport projects nationwide.
- **Support for Smaller Airports:** Increased focus on helipads and small airports in hilly, Northeastern, and aspirational districts to improve last-mile air connectivity.
- **Budgetary Allocations:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation receives ₹2,400.31 crore, slightly reduced from the previous year's allocation of ₹2,658.68 crore.
  - UDAN funding lowered to ₹540 crore (from ₹800 crore), indicating a shift towards efficiency-driven implementation.
- **Policy Continuity:** Infrastructure push aligns with broader reforms such as leasing at GIFT City, DigiYatra expansion, and airport modernization efforts under NABH Nirman.

### Way Forward

- **Infrastructure Expansion:** Build new airports, expand metro hubs, modernize regional airports.
- **Strengthen Regional Connectivity:** Deepen UDAN, boost last-mile air links in hilly and NE regions.
- **ATF Tax Reform:** Bring ATF under GST to reduce operational costs.
- **Fleet & Manufacturing Push:** Boost leasing at GIFT City; scale up MRO and aerospace manufacturing.
- **Improve Global Competitiveness:** Strengthen bilateral agreements; develop India as a global transit hub.
- **Sustainable Aviation:** Promote SAF, carbon-neutral airports, and energy-efficient technologies.
- **Skill Development & Safety:** Expand aviation training institutes; strengthen DGCA oversight.
- **Digital Air Travel Ecosystem:** Enhance DigiYatra, AI-based traffic management, and paperless systems.

### Conclusion

India's aviation sector is at a pivotal moment shifting from a capacity-constrained market to a potential global aviation hub. Ensuring affordability, expanding connectivity, modernising infrastructure, rationalising fuel taxes, and promoting sustainability will be central to harnessing India's enormous demand. With continued reforms and resilient operational planning, India can transform its aviation ecosystem from merely "moving vehicles" to "moving people", driving inclusive economic growth and global competitiveness.

### Blue Economy- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

'Blue Economy' has been identified as one of the **major pillars of economic growth** for **making a Viksit Bharat by 2047**. Despite its significant potential for the growth of the nation, it also faces **several constraints and challenges**. Overcoming these challenges will be crucial for the realization of true potential of this sector.

### What is 'Blue Economy'? What is the extent of 'Blue economy' in India?

Blue Economy: World Bank defines blue economy as the **sustainable development of ocean resources** for **economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem**. The

concept was first given by **Gunter Pauli** in **2010** in his book '*The blue economy, 10 years, 100 innovations, 100 million jobs*'.

### Components of Blue Economy:

Source: World Bank

The blue economy encompasses a diverse range of activities that are critical for sustainable development, such as:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Renewable Energy   | Renewable and Sustainable marine energy resources like <b>offshore wind</b> and <b>tidal energy</b> constitutes an important component of Blue Economy.  |
| Fisheries          | Sustainable management of fisheries ensures a <b>continuous supply of fish for greater revenue</b> while <b>simultaneously contributing to the restoration of fish stocks</b> . This supports both economic and environmental goals. |
| Maritime Transport | Sustainable, safe and secured maritime transport is an <b>important component of the global economy</b> , as it connects nations and facilitates trade.  |
| Tourism            | <b>Ocean and coastal tourism</b> offer recreational opportunities, contribute to job creation and economic growth, making it a key component of the blue economy.  |
| Climate Change     | Oceans act as crucial carbon sinks for the absorption and storage of carbon dioxide.   |

Potential for the World Economy: Oceans contribute to around **3-5% of Global GDP** and over **80% of international goods transportation**. The UN has declared the period 2021-2030 as the '**UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development**'.

Extent of Blue Economy in India: India has a coastline of more than ~11,000 km spread across 9 states. India also has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of more than 2.2 million sq km. India's blue economy accounts for ~4% of the GDP and is estimated to increase over the period of time.

### **What is the significance of Blue Economy for India?**

Blue economy can contribute to India's economic growth in the following ways:

#### **1. Oceanic Resources:**

- a. Fisheries: Indian marine fisheries constitute a major portion of India's agri-allied exports. India produced **~3.7 MMT of marine fisheries** in **2019-20**.
- b. Rare Earth Minerals: The continental margins of India have an extensive variety of heavy and rare earth minerals like **ilmenite, magnetite, monazite, zircon, and rutile**.
- c. Hydrocarbons: The oceanic sea beds are a major source of hydrocarbons. India has 26 sedimentary basins, spread across a total area of 3.4 million square km.

- d. Renewable Energy: Renewable energy in offshore regions has tremendous potential in the form of offshore wind, waves, ocean currents, tidal currents, and thermal energy.
2. Ports, Shipping, and Marine Tourism:
  - a. Port-led Development: India is focusing on port-led development with the vast network of port connectivity. India comprises 200 ports, of which 12 are major ports that handled 541.76 million tonnes in FY21.
  - b. Shipping and Maritime Transport: India has the largest merchant shipping fleets among the developing countries. Around **95% of the country's trade by volume and 68% by value is moved through maritime transport**. Hence, shipping sector has the potential to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities.
  - c. Coastal tourism: Coastal Tourism has contributed largely to the development of India's tourism sector and livelihood creation.
3. Ocean Science and Services:
  - a. Observations, data, and information services: The data set and information services help in providing information regarding **Marine Fishery Advisories, Ocean State Forecasts, Tsunami and Storm Surge Early Warnings, Sea Level Rise, Oil Spill Trajectories**. These are key to enhancing the safety of lives and livelihoods of coastal communities.
  - b. Conservation of Marine Biodiversity: Sustainable use of ocean helps in the conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity.
4. Employment Opportunities: Blue economy provides an avenue for employment generation to the burgeoning youth population. For ex- Enhanced employment opportunities in **Fishing and Aquaculture, Marine Tourism, Shipbuilding** etc.

#### What are the challenges associated with Blue Economy in India?

1. Overfishing: Overfishing has **emerged as a major challenge in India's coastal waters**. It has led to the **depletion of fish stocks** and **harming of the marine ecosystem**. For ex- **Depletion of fishery resources in the Palk Bay Area** due to bottom trawling.
2. Marine Pollution: Pollution from sources such as oil spills, plastic waste, and industrial effluent harm the marine ecosystems and have negative impacts on the blue economy. For ex- **Oil spill in Chennai** originating from the **Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd (CPCL's) refinery**.
3. Lack of Infrastructure: The lack of ports, airports, and road connectivity has hampered the development and expansion of economic activities in these regions.
4. Piracy and International Conflicts: The piracy in the Indian Ocean region near the Red Sea and **unsecured sea lanes of transport** are a major threat to the development of Indian Shipping Industry. Further, the strings of pearls of China and conflicts over maritime boundaries are also a major challenge. For ex- **India-Sri Lanka Fishing Conflict**.
5. Climate Change: Rising sea levels, negative Indian Ocean dipole and amplification of cyclones also **pose risks to coastal communities** and also have negative impacts on the blue economy.

#### What are the Government initiatives for the Development of Blue Economy?

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Sagarmala Project | It aims for <b>holistic port infrastructure development</b> along the <b>7,516-km long coastline</b> through modernisation, mechanisation and computerisation. The projects under this project aim for <b>Coastal Infrastructure Development, Coastal Industrial Development, Coastal Community Development</b> and <b>Development of Coastal Tourism</b> . |
|-------------------|---|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan | ICZM is a process for the <b>management of the coast using an integrated approach</b> , to achieve the goal of sustainable management of coastal regions.  |
| Deep Ocean Mission                      | It is India's ambitious program to <b>explore and harness the depths of the ocean</b> . The mission <b>aims to address scientific and economic challenges</b> associated with <b>ocean exploration</b> and <b>resource utilization</b> . |
| O-SMART                                 | The scheme encompasses a total of 16 sub-projects addressing ocean development activities such as Services, Technology, Resources, Observations and Science.   |

### What Should be the Way Forward?

1. Blue Ocean Strategy: India's Blue Ocean Strategy should rest on 3 pillars – Stewardship of the commons, Resilience, and Inclusive growth:
  - a. Stewardship: India must continue to assert that the Indian Ocean is a shared space, not a contested one. By prioritizing ecosystem restoration, biodiversity protection, and sustainable fisheries, India can set the tone for cooperative management, rather than competitive exploitation.
  - b. Resilience: As the climate crisis intensifies, ocean nations must focus on adaptation & preparedness. India can lead by establishing a Regional Resilience & Ocean Innovation Hub – one that strengthens ocean observation networks, improves early warning systems, and transfer technology to Small Island Developing States and African coastline nations.
  - c. Inclusive Growth: The Indian Ocean must become a driver of prosperity for all littoral states. Green shipping, offshore renewable energy, sustainable aquaculture, and marine biotechnology offer pathways to development that are compatible with climate goals.
2. Skill Development Initiatives: Skill development initiatives along with **preservation of traditional knowledge** are integral to harnessing the full potential of the blue economy and ensuring prosperity for all.
3. Blue Diplomacy Cadre: We must aim to develop a 'blue diplomacy cadre' through the use of policies and platforms such as **SAGAR, IORA, BIMSTEC, SAARC** in the Indo-Pacific region. This will be helpful in peaceful resolution of all international disputes and securing global maritime transport routes.
4. Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning: This scientific approach should be used to **analyse and allocate coastal and marine resources** over space and time. It will help in sustainable fisheries development and optimum use of oceanic mineral resources.
5. Proper Waste Disposal Policies: Proper waste disposal policies like **robust Plastic Elimination** and **National Marine Litter policy**, that prevent pollution, accumulation of marine debris, must be enacted and implemented.
6. Research and Funding: Funds must be provided for R&D in the emerging fields of blue economy such as marine biology, marine technology, marine chemistry, geology, shipping, oceanography.

Conclusion: As the climate change is rapidly heating & acidifying the oceans, the sea levels are rising, and the illegal & unregulated fishing is stripping marine life from the water column, India now has both the opportunity



& the responsibility to play a historical leadership role – ensuring that the Indian ocean becomes not a theatre of rivalry, but a laboratory of sustainability, innovation, and resilience.

Read More- [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3- Indian Economy

### **VB-G RAM G Bill – Provisions & Significance – Explained Pointwise**

The Union government has moved a “new MGNREGA Bill” in Parliament to repeal and replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, refers to as the Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 (VB-G RAM G).

#### **What are the important provisions of the new Bill?**

1. The Bill repeals the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 and replaces it with a new law carrying the VB-G RAM G title, effectively retiring “MGNREGA” as the statutory name.
2. This includes formally removing “Mahatma Gandhi” from the scheme’s name, which is one of the main political flashpoints around the legislation.
3. The Bill raises the guaranteed wage employment from 100 to 125 days per rural household per year, expanding the basic entitlement beyond what MGNREGA provided.
4. It embeds this guarantee within a broader “Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)” (VB-G RAM G) framework, linking wage employment with livelihood and asset-creation objectives.
5. Draft provisions provide for suspending or limiting works during peak agricultural seasons, so that wage employment under the scheme does not clash with local farm labour demand.
6. The Bill envisages greater flexibility for states in selecting works and synchronising them with local development plans, while still operating under a central guidelines framework.
7. Explanatory notes indicate changes in Centre-State funding norms, with the Union government continuing to bear a substantial share of wage costs but with revised cost-sharing for materials and administration; exact ratios will depend on rules and notifications under the Act.
8. The Bill also updates institutional and monitoring provisions (for example, use of digital tools, social audits, and grievance mechanisms), though detailed operational rules are to follow through subordinate legislation once Parliament enacts the law.

#### **What are some of the important features of MGNREGA?**

1. **Legal Guarantee:** MGNREGA is a law that gives a legal guarantee of at least 100 days of wage employment per financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work.
2. **Rights-Based Framework:** It is a demand-driven, rights-based programme: if employment is not provided within 15 days of a written application, the worker is entitled to an unemployment allowance.
3. **Social inclusion:** At least one-third of the jobs are reserved for women, and wages must be paid equally to men and women.
4. **Work is, as a rule, to be provided within 5 km of the worker’s residence, with a statutory minimum wage and basic worksite facilities like drinking water and crèche where needed.**

5. **Type of Works:** The Act prioritises labour-intensive public works that create durable assets, especially in: water conservation and harvesting, drought proofing and afforestation, irrigation, land development, flood control, and rural connectivity (village roads, ponds, canals, etc.).
6. **Wage-Material Ratio:** A mandated wage-material ratio of 60:40 ensures emphasis on labour rather than machines or contractors, reinforcing the employment objective.
7. **Implementing Agency:** The Gram Panchayat is the primary implementing agency, responsible for registration, job cards, and planning/execution of works, with significant community participation.
8. **Funding:** Funding is shared mainly by the Centre and states, with the Union government bearing the bulk of wage costs; the scheme now covers almost all rural districts in India.
9. **Transparency, Accountability & Social Audits:** MGNREGA has strong transparency provisions: public disclosure of records, social audits by Gram Sabhas, financial and performance audits, and grievance-redress mechanisms to curb corruption and delays.

#### **What has been the significance of MGNREGA?**

1. **Rural Livelihood Security & Poverty Reduction:** By guaranteeing up to 100 days of wage employment per rural household, MGNREGA has helped smooth consumption and reduce extreme poverty and seasonal distress, especially during droughts, crop failures, and economic shocks. For ex- Livelihood support post-2008 slowdown and the Covid-19 period.
2. **Empowerment of Women:** With a legal requirement that at least one-third of workers be women, and actual participation often exceeding this share in several states, MGNREGA has increased women's labour-force participation, incomes, and visibility in local public life.
3. **Empowerment of Marginalised Groups:** The programme has also given Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other marginalised groups a formal right to work near home, reducing dependence on landlords and contractors and modestly improving their bargaining power in local labour markets.
4. **Effects on Rural Wages:** Studies indicate that MGNREGA has contributed to raising the floor for rural wages, particularly for unskilled casual labour, by offering an alternative source of employment at notified wage rates.
5. **Effects on Migration:** In many regions, this has reduced distress-driven seasonal migration, especially for the poorest households, even if it has not eliminated migration driven by higher-wage opportunities.
6. **Creation of Rural Assets:** The scheme has financed millions of works related to water harvesting, soil conservation, irrigation, land development and rural connectivity, which can enhance agricultural productivity and resilience when well implemented.
7. **Natural Resource Management:** In drought-prone and ecologically fragile areas, repeated investments in check dams, ponds and afforestation under MGNREGA have supported groundwater recharge and reduced vulnerability to climate variability.
8. **Rights-based Approach:** MGNREGA marked a shift from discretionary "schemes" to a justiciable right to work, with enforceable entitlements like unemployment allowance and time-bound wage payments, influencing the design of later rights-based laws.

#### **What are the challenges/limitations of MGNREGA?**

1. **Delays in fund release:** Chronic delays in fund release from the Centre and states often lead to late wage payments and stalled works, undermining workers' legal entitlement and reducing their trust in the programme.
2. **Wage issue:** In several states, statutory wages under MGNREGA are close to or below prevailing agricultural wages, making the scheme less attractive and weakening its role as a wage floor.

3. Inadequate awareness: Many potential beneficiaries are unaware of their rights (job cards, 100-day guarantee, unemployment allowance), so local officials sometimes treat it as a supply-driven scheme and under-register demand.
4. Demand suppression: Instances of demand suppression – discouraging applications, limiting works, or using online systems that poor households struggle to access – reduce effective coverage, especially for women and the most marginalised.
5. Leakages, Corruption & Weak Accountability:
  - a. Despite provisions for social audits, cases of ghost beneficiaries, fake muster rolls, inflated measurements, and collusion with contractors have been reported in several regions.
  - b. Social audits are uneven: a few states implement them rigorously, while others conduct them irregularly or with limited follow-up, weakening MGNREGA's transparency and grievance-redress architecture.
6. Quality & Durability of Assets: The quality of assets created is highly variable; poor planning, technical support gaps and frequent small works can lead to non-durable or poorly maintained assets, limiting long-term productivity gains.
7. Administrative Constraints: Heavy reliance on local bureaucracy, frequent staff shortages, and burdensome online processes (e-muster, Aadhaar-based payments) can cause implementation bottlenecks, especially in remote areas with weak connectivity.

Read More: [The Hindu](#)  
UPSC GS-3: Indian Economy

### **New Insurance Bill – Important Provisions & Limitations – Explained Pointwise**

The Union Cabinet on Friday approved the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, clearing the way for its introduction in Parliament to revamp India's insurance framework. The Bill proposes sweeping changes to the Insurance Act, 1938, the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956, and the IRDAI Act, 1999 – with the stated aim of modernisation, wider coverage & stronger regulatory oversight. However, the final draft reflects a mix of hits & misses.



#### **What are some of the important provisions of new Insurance Bill?**

1. **100% FDI in Insurance:** The Bill raises the FDI cap in Indian insurance companies from 74% to 100%, allowing foreign promoters to own insurers fully, subject to fit-and-proper and control conditions.
2. **Foreign Reinsurers:** For foreign reinsurers, the Net Owned Funds requirement is cut from ₹5,000 crore to ₹1,000 crore, making it easier for more global reinsurers to set up in India and deepen reinsurance capacity.
3. **Enhanced Powers:** IRDAI gets stronger enforcement powers, including the authority to disgorge wrongful gains made by insurers or intermediaries, similar to SEBI's power to recover illicit profits.
4. **Role of IRDAI:** The Bill introduces a one-time registration system for insurance intermediaries and raises the threshold for IRDAI approval of equity transfers from 1% to 5%, reducing routine regulatory frictions.
5. **SOPs:** IRDAI is required to frame and follow formal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for regulation-making and for imposing penalties, with clearer criteria, to improve transparency and predictability.
6. **Policyholder Focus:** The overall stated objectives are to strengthen policyholder protection, promote innovation and competition, and push towards "insurance for all by 2047" by attracting capital and technology.
7. **Greater Operational Freedom for LIC:** The Bill gives greater operational autonomy to LIC, including more flexibility in investments and governance, while keeping government ownership and policyholder safeguards intact.
8. **Regulatory Improvements:** The Bill aims to strengthen the insurance regulatory framework by streamlining compliance processes, reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, and improving transparency and policyholder protection.

#### **What is the need/significance of the new Insurance Bill?**



1. **Boosting Capital, Growth & Penetration of Insurance Sector:** India's insurance penetration and density remain low compared to global averages, and many insurers face capital constraints; allowing 100% FDI is aimed at bringing in fresh equity, technology and product innovation to expand reach, especially in under-served segments.
2. **'Insurance for All by 2047':** The 100% FDI will help in attracting stable & sustainable investment, facilitate technology transfer, enhance insurance penetration & social protection, and help achieve the goal of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.
3. **Benefits of Foreign Reinsurers:** More foreign reinsurers with lower entry barriers are expected to deepen risk-carrying capacity, support infrastructure and catastrophe cover, and stabilise premiums over time.
4. **Strengthening Regulation:** The Bill's enhanced powers for IRDAI (like disgorgement of wrongful gains and clearer enforcement procedures) seek to deter mis-selling and governance failures, thereby improving trust in insurance products.
5. **Policyholder Protection:** Standard Operating Procedures and rationalized approval thresholds are intended to make regulation more transparent and predictable while keeping policyholder interests central.
6. **Improving Ease of Doing Business:** One-time registration for intermediaries, higher thresholds for share-transfer approvals, and procedural streamlining reduce compliance friction and are meant to make India a more attractive insurance hub.
7. **New Insurance Products:** By signaling a stable, liberalized framework, the Bill is expected to encourage new products (health, micro-insurance, climate and crop risks, cyber cover) aligned with changing economic and climate risks.
8. **Financial Mobilisation:** Higher insurance penetration helps mobilise long-term savings, channel them into infrastructure and capital markets, and provide household-level shock protection, supporting inclusive growth.
9. **Financial Sector Liberalization:** The reform also aligns insurance regulation with broader financial-sector liberalisation, while deliberately stopping short of riskier steps (like immediate composite licences), reflecting a calibrated, phased approach.

#### **What are the limitations/criticisms of the new Insurance Bill?**

1. **Concern over 100% FDI:** Allowing 100% FDI may lead to effective foreign control of major insurers and reinsurers, raising worries about profit repatriation, job localisation and alignment with long-term developmental priorities. Allowing 100% FDI could disadvantage domestic promoters and make India more vulnerable to global financial cycles, especially without equally strong consumer and macro-prudential safeguards.
2. **Limited Focus on Inclusivity & Affordability:** The Bill is criticised for focusing more on capital and ease of doing business than on concrete mechanisms for expanding affordable cover in rural, informal and low-income segments (for example, explicit obligations, cross-subsidy rules, or product mandates). There is concern that insurers, once better capitalised, may still chase high-margin urban products rather than deepen genuinely inclusive micro-insurance and health cover unless stronger obligations are built into the law.
3. **Composite License:** The Bill does not include provisions for composite licences, which would allow a single insurer to operate across both life and non-life insurance segments. The absence of this reform maintains the existing segregation of life and general insurers and limits the ability to offer bundled insurance products.



4. **Reduced Capital Norms and New Entrants:** The Bill does not lower the minimum paid-up capital requirement of ₹100 crore for insurers and ₹200 crore for reinsurers. This omission restricts the entry of smaller, specialised, or regional insurers, thereby limiting financial inclusion and market diversity.
5. **Regulatory Capacity:** Strengthening IRDAI's powers without proportionate investment in capacity, staffing, and oversight checks risks either regulatory overreach or continued weak enforcement in practice.
6. **Accountability Issues:** Critics point out that the Bill does not significantly enhance parliamentary or citizen oversight of IRDAI's expanded discretion, which could affect transparency and consistency of decisions.
7. **Missing Proposals:** The original Insurance Amendment Bill, which was prepared 2 years ago, had provisions for distributing other financial products like mutual funds, loans & credit cards, creating new revenue streams & offering integrated solutions & reduced capital requirements. It also proposed more flexibility in revising investment norms in line with market needs, potentially improving returns for policyholders. The new Bill is also silent on the long-awaited proposals to allow large corporations to establish captive insurance entities.
8. **Missed Opportunity on Deeper Structural Reforms:** The Bill does not fundamentally address issues like complex policy wording, claims disputes and long settlement delays, which are central to policyholder experience but left largely to regulations and market practice.
9. **Dilution of LIC's Role:** While the Bill offers more operational flexibility to LIC, critics worry about a gradual dilution of LIC's public-interest role if market pressures dominate, without a clear statutory articulation of its developmental mandate.
10. **Reducing Public Sector's Role in Insurance Sector:** Trade unions and some political voices fear that aggressive liberalisation plus LIC's greater autonomy could pave the way for future disinvestment or strategic shifts that weaken the public sector's stabilising role in the insurance market.

**Conclusion:** The Sabko Bima Sabko Raksha Bill, 2025 marks a significant step toward modernising India's insurance sector, however, to fully realise the sector's growth and financial inclusion objectives, further measures are needed to encourage innovation, diversify financial offerings, and attract new entrants.

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)  
UPSC GS-3: Indian Economy

### **SHANTI Bill 2025 – Important Provisions & Challenges – Explained Pointwise**

A new Bill has recently been tabled in the Parliament called Sustainable Harnessing & Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025 (SHANTI). It repeals both the Atomic Energy Act & Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act. & aims to overhaul India's civil nuclear framework and open the nuclear power sector to regulated private participation.



#### **What are some of the important provisions of the SHANTI Bill?**

1. The Bill repeals and replaces the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010, creating a single modern statute for civil nuclear power, safety and liability.
2. The Bill lays down a comprehensive framework for development, production, use, control & disposal of nuclear material & facilities.
3. SHANTI allows Indian private companies & joint ventures (including PSUs) to undertake specific nuclear activities like manufacturing, construction & operation of nuclear power plants – subject to licensing by the Central Government.
4. Foreign incorporated entities cannot be direct operators but can participate via Indian-incorporated JVs & supplier roles, under safeguards & approvals.
5. The Bill grants full statutory status to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), making it an independent nuclear safety regulator with powers for licensing, inspection, enforcement & shutdown orders. It empowers AERB to take control of nuclear material, facilities or equipments in emergency or if an operator violates safety norms.
6. SHANTI introduces a new civil nuclear liability regime replacing the 2010 law, with defined operator liability & compulsory insurance. The operator must maintain insurance of about Rs 1500cr per incident through the Indian Nuclear Insurance Pool.
7. The Bill enables promotion of advanced technologies such as Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) & new reactor designs, while keeping sensitive fuel-cycle activities (enrichment, reprocessing, strategic materials) under tighter government control.
8. The Bill provides enabling clauses for public-private partnerships, R&D collaborations, and localization of nuclear manufacturing – which aims to build a domestic supply chain & export potential in the long run.

#### **What is the significance of the SHANTI Bill?**

1. **Energy Security & Strategic Significance:** By replacing the outdated atomic energy & liability laws with a unified framework, SHANTI seeks to enable large-scale expansion of nuclear capacity (target ~100 GW by 2047) as low-carbon baseload power, complementing renewables and reducing import dependence on fossil fuels.
2. **Net Zero by 2070:** It aligns the nuclear policy with India's net-zero-by-2070 pledge and long-term growth needs, positioning nuclear as a domestic, reliable source crucial for grid stability and industrial demand.
3. **Entry of Private Sector:** For the first time, the Bill formally allows regulated private entry (Indian private companies and JVs) into nuclear generation and related activities, with the goal of mobilising capital, speeding project execution, and drawing in advanced technologies such as Small Modular Reactors. It will help in reducing the delays & cost overruns that have historically constrained India's nuclear sector.
4. **Overhauling of Nuclear Safety Governance:** By giving statutory independence and clearer powers to AERB, SHANTI aims to strengthen nuclear safety governance, which is essential when more players and technologies enter the sector.
5. **Revised Civil Nuclear Liability:** The revised civil liability and insurance framework seeks a balance between attracting investors (through more predictable liability rules) and ensuring credible compensation mechanisms via mandated operator insurance and a dedicated Nuclear Damage Claims Commission.
6. **Attracting Foreign Nuclear Vendors:** A clearer, investor-friendly nuclear law can make India a more attractive destination for global nuclear vendors and finance, reinforcing strategic partnerships with supplier countries while maintaining sovereign control over sensitive fuel-cycle elements.
7. **Job creation, Nuclear Industrialization & Technological Upgradation:** Domestically, the Bill aims to drive localization of nuclear manufacturing, jobs, and a specialized industrial ecosystem, enhancing India's technological depth and potential future role as a regional nuclear-technology hub.

#### **What are the limitations of the SHANTI Bill?**

1. **Narrower Liability:** The Bill replaces the earlier flat ₹1,500 crore operator-liability cap with a tiered cap from ₹100 crore to ₹3,000 crore, depending on reactor capacity, which many argue is too low for a catastrophic nuclear accident.
2. **Weakened Supplier Accountability:** It restricts the operator's right of recourse against suppliers to narrowly defined contractual or intentional-fault situations, which effectively gives foreign and domestic suppliers "peace" from meaningful liability, shifting more risk onto the operator, state and public.
3. **Concentration of Powers:** The Bill gives the Central Government sweeping powers over licensing, tariff-setting, exemptions, emergency control and even novation of contracts, with limited independent institutional checks.
4. **Institutional Independence:** Although AERB gets statutory status, but it is to be seen whether it will be sufficiently independent from the executive and operator influence, given the central concentration of appointment and direction powers.
5. **Privatisation of Nuclear Sector:** Opening "ultra-hazardous" nuclear operations to profit-seeking private players without robust, visibly independent regulation and strong whistle-blower protections could increase accident and cover-up risks.
6. **Access to Justice:** The Bill limits the jurisdiction of ordinary civil courts in nuclear matters and channels disputes mainly through specialised commissions and tribunals, which may streamline cases but can also narrow avenues for affected communities to seek redress.

7. Lack of Public Participation: There is little explicit emphasis on public consultation, environmental democracy, or community consent around siting and expansion of nuclear plants, a gap that activists argue undermines the public-trust doctrine over life, health and environment.

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)  
UPSC GS-3: Energy

### Indian Diaspora – Distribution, Contribution, Challenges – Explained Pointwise

In a multipolar, interconnected world, India's diplomatic strength rests not only on its economic and strategic clout but also on its vast global diaspora—a key pillar of soft power.

#### Definition of Diaspora:

- A diaspora is a population that is scattered across regions which are separate from its geographic place of origin. The word is used in reference to people who identify with a specific geographic location, but currently reside elsewhere.
- The term Indian diaspora encompasses people of Indian origin residing outside India's territorial borders, whether temporarily or permanently, who continue to retain cultural, social, or emotional links with their ancestral land.
- It is a diverse community, varying in migration history, citizenship, and connection to India.

#### Categories of Overseas Indians:

1. Non-Resident Indians (NRIs): Indian citizens residing abroad for more than 182 days in a financial year but retaining their Indian citizenship.
2. Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs): Foreign citizens with Indian ancestry or heritage.
3. Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs): Individuals granted a form of lifelong residency and visa-free access to India, though not full citizenship rights. In 2015, the PIO and OCI categories were merged for administrative efficiency and to streamline benefits.

#### Distribution of Indian Diaspora:

- According to the Ministry of External Affairs (May 2024), there are approximately 35.42 million overseas Indians, spread across 200+ countries.
- Of these, about 15.85 million are NRIs and 19.57 million are PIOs/OCIs. The diaspora's geographical spread covers the Gulf region, North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

#### Top 10 countries with the highest Indian population worldwide (as of May 2024):



| Rank | Country      | Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) | Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) | Overseas Indian  |
|------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1    | USA          | 2,077,158                   | 3,331,904                       | 5,409,062 (5.4M) |
| 2    | UAE          | 3,554,274                   | 14,574                          | 3,568,848 (3.6M) |
| 3    | Malaysia     | 163,127                     | 2,751,000                       | 2,914,127 (2.9M) |
| 4    | Canada       | 1,016,274                   | 1,859,680                       | 2,875,954 (2.8M) |
| 5    | Saudi Arabia | 2,460,603                   | 2,906                           | 2,463,509 (2.5M) |
| 6    | Myanmar      | 2,660                       | 2,000,000                       | 2,002,660 (2.0M) |
| 7    | UK           | 369,000                     | 1,495,318                       | 1,864,318 (1.9M) |
| 8    | South Africa | 60,000                      | 1,640,000                       | 1,700,000 (1.7M) |
| 9    | Sri Lanka    | 7,500                       | 1,600,000                       | 1,607,500 (1.6M) |
| 10   | Kuwait       | 993,284                     | 2,244                           | 995,528 (996K)   |

**Source:** Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India: Population of Overseas Indians

#### Historical Evolution:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Ancient Movements     | Indian traders, scholars, and monks were among the earliest cultural ambassadors to Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Africa, disseminating Indian art, religion, and philosophy.                           |
| Colonial Period       | Under British rule, millions were sent as indentured labourers to sugar plantations in Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad, and South Africa, forming early diaspora communities.                                     |
| Post-Independence Era | The post-1960s saw migration of skilled professionals to developed countries (USA, UK, Canada, Australia), while semi-skilled and unskilled workers moved to the Gulf region under contract labour schemes. |

#### Role and Contributions of the Indian Diaspora:

1. **Economic Contributions-** India received a record USD 135.46 billion in remittances in FY 2024-25 – the highest globally for over a decade. These inflows covered nearly 47 % of India's trade deficit and form a major share of state economies like Kerala, Goa, and Punjab.



2. Investment and Entrepreneurship- NRIs and OCIs actively invest in India's equities, real estate, and startups, supported by policies such as NRE/NRO accounts and liberal FDI norms. In early 2024, NRI deposits doubled to USD 7.8 billion, with growing interest in renewable energy, fintech, and health-tech ventures.
3. Knowledge and Innovation Linkages- The diaspora connects India with global innovation networks. Over 20 Fortune 500 CEOs are of Indian origin. Programmes like VAJRA, PRABHASS, and VAIBHAV promote scientific collaboration and skill transfer in IT, pharma, and higher education.
4. Political and Strategic Advocacy- Diaspora lobbying has advanced India's interests abroad—such as the US-India Civil Nuclear Deal (2008) and ICJ re-election of Justice Bhandari (2017).
5. Cultural and Soft-Power Promotion- Indian festivals, yoga, cuisine, and cinema enhance India's cultural image worldwide. The UN's International Yoga Day (2014) reflects this outreach, reinforced by initiatives like Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and the Know India Programme.

#### Challenges Facing the Indian Diaspora:

1. Economic Vulnerabilities of Low-Skilled Migrants- Indian workers in GCC nations remain exposed to oil market fluctuations and restrictive labour systems like *Kafala*, which limit job mobility and rights. The 2024 oil slump caused major layoffs in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, highlighting their economic insecurity.
2. Brain Drain and Talent Outflow- India continues to lose skilled professionals to advanced economies. As of January 2024, over 11.6 lakh students were studying abroad. Migration of doctors and engineers weakens domestic innovation, though return migration is gradually increasing.
3. Racism and Xenophobia- Incidents of hate crimes against Indians in Australia, the US, and Europe persist, particularly targeting students. These challenges test India's consular capacity and impact the diaspora's sense of safety and belonging.
4. Restrictive Immigration Policies- Tighter visa norms in major destinations have reduced mobility. The US raised H-1B fees to USD 100,000 in 2025, affecting Indian IT professionals, while similar restrictions in the UK and Canada slowed student and family migration.
5. Limited Political and Institutional Inclusion- NRIs still need to be physically present in India to vote, despite the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act 2010. The lack of postal or online voting limits democratic participation.
6. Weak Policy Coordination and Data Gaps- India lacks a centralised diaspora database, hampering welfare and crisis response. Though platforms like e-Migrate and Madad exist, fragmented institutional coordination reduces efficiency.

#### Government Initiatives for the Diaspora:

1. Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), 2005: Provides lifelong visa-free travel, property ownership, and investment rights for people of Indian origin, without conferring political rights.
2. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD): Celebrated annually on January 9, commemorating Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa in 1915. The 18th PBD (2025) in Odisha, themed "Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat", emphasised partnership in India's development journey.
3. Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award: The highest recognition for NRIs/PIOs for achievements in fields like business, science, and public service.
4. Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), 2006: Provides insurance coverage up to ₹10 lakh for Indian workers under the Emigration Check Required (ECR) category, guarding against workplace accidents or death abroad.

5. Know India Programme (KIP): Targets diaspora youth (18–30 years), exposing them to India's socio-economic realities through a three-week immersion visit.
6. Visiting Advanced Joint Research (VAJRA) Faculty Scheme: Engages overseas scientists in collaborative research with Indian institutions.
7. Promotion of Cultural Ties with Diaspora (PCTD): Funds Indian missions to organise cultural events celebrating India's heritage abroad.
8. Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF): Established in 2009, the fund provides emergency support—legal aid, repatriation, and shelter—to distressed Indians abroad.
9. Madad Portal: A digital grievance redressal platform linking embassies, MEA, and diaspora citizens for assistance in real time.
10. Recent Evacuation Missions:
  - a. Operation Sindhu (2025): Evacuated 4,400 Indians from Iran and Israel.
  - b. Operation Kaveri (2023, Sudan): Airlifted over 3,000 during the Sudan conflict.
  - c. Operation Ajay (2023, Israel) and Operation Ganga (2022, Ukraine) highlighted India's capability for large-scale crisis response.

#### Way Forward:

1. Build a Unified Diaspora Database- Create a real-time, integrated database linking the MEA, immigration, and taxation systems to improve welfare delivery and crisis response, as recommended by the 2025 Parliamentary Committee.
2. Enact a Diaspora Protection Law- Introduce a comprehensive legal framework defining the rights and responsibilities of NRIs and OCIs. Take inspiration from global models like Israel's Law of Return—to ensure protection, welfare, and accountability.
3. Enable Political Participation- Implement postal and online voting for NRIs to strengthen their engagement with Indian democracy and policy-making.
4. Enhance Skill and Pre-Departure Training- Expand Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana and PDOT to include country-specific training in language, law, and culture, reducing workplace exploitation.
5. Strengthen Consular Support Systems- Upgrade Indian missions with multi-lingual legal aid desks, labour attachés, and digital grievance portals for faster assistance to migrants.
6. Deepen Diaspora Investment Channels- Simplify compliance, launch diaspora green bonds and venture funds, and use Pravasi Bharatiya Divas as a regular platform for investment and entrepreneurship.
7. Institutionalise Policy Review- Conduct annual audits of diaspora welfare schemes and migration MoUs to ensure transparency, efficiency, and policy improvements.
8. Convert Brain Drain into Brain Circulation- Shift from exporting talent to attracting and circulating talent by improving domestic research ecosystems and expanding initiatives like VAJRA and VAIBHAV for global collaboration.

**Conclusion:** The Indian diaspora has significantly enhanced India's global image, yet the real challenge lies in India's weak communication and coordination. To harness its full potential, India must engage the diaspora as strategic partners through professional, narrative-driven diplomacy.

Read More: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC GS-2: International Relations

### India-Bangladesh Relations – Explained Pointwise

Bangladesh is on the edge once again after the 'July Revolution' leader Sharif Osman Hadi dies due to gunshot injuries. It led to protests in Dhaka & attacks on newspaper offices. The protests have also been witnessed near Indian High Commission in Dhaka & Assistant High Commissions in Chittagong, Khulna & Rajshahi over the last few days.



#### Historical and Geographical Foundations:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Shared History and Culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bengal's cultural unity – seen through shared language, literature (Tagore, Nazrul), and festivals – binds the two nations.</li> <li>The 1952 Language Movement and the 1971 Liberation War, supported by India, forged deep emotional and political ties.</li> </ul>  |
| Geography and Connectivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides, sharing a 4,096 km border and 54 transboundary rivers. Its deltaic geography links ecological and economic destinies.</li> <li>For India's Northeast, Bangladesh provides the shortest land and port access, making Dhaka a strategic partner in regional connectivity.</li> </ul> |





### Political Evolution and Recent Developments (2024-25):

- Political Transition: Student-led protests in 2024 led to Sheikh Hasina's exit and the establishment of an interim government led by Muhammad Yunus. While Yunus has underscored "fair and balanced" relations with India, some of his remarks – like describing Northeast India as "landlocked" – sparked sensitivities.
- Attacks on minorities across both the borders: The ethnic attacks on **Bangla-speaking Hindus** in Bangladesh and the **attacks on Bangladeshi's in India** have strained the India-Bangladesh relations.
- Resurfacing of security challenges: There are risks of emergence of security challenges by the anti-India groups as encountered during the earlier BNP-Jamaat years. With the continuing tensions on the border with Pakistan, Indian Army's long standoff with the PLA in eastern Ladakh, has created a security-nightmare for India.
- Threat to India's connectivity with the North-east: A further deterioration in Indo-Bangladesh has **restricted India's access to the Northeast**. This region's connection to mainland India will only remain through the narrow "**Chicken's Neck**". With the Myanmar border remaining extremely volatile, the source of unrest in India's Northeast will increase.
- Jeopardized the Bilateral trade and FTA: Sheikh Hasina's exit has jeopardized the growing bilateral trade ties between India and Bangladesh. There has also been stagnation of talks in the **potential free trade agreement (FTA)** between the two countries.

- Deterioration of people-people ties- There are real risk of blowback from the Bangladeshi people and the new power centres in Dhaka- some of whom will carry past grudges against India.
- Geopolitical challenges: Pakistan and China will see the political change in Bangladesh as an **opportunity to challenge India's presence in the country** and try to tar it with a pro-Hasina brush.
- Recent Policy Shifts and Frictions:
  - Transshipment Facility Withdrawal: India revoked Bangladesh's right to ship exports through Indian ports citing congestion; Dhaka saw it as damaging to trade competitiveness.
  - Extradition Tension: The interim government has sought Hasina's extradition from India – causing diplomatic discomfort.
  - Minority Concerns: Reports of violence against Hindus post-regime change have worried New Delhi.
  - China's Outreach: Beijing has stepped up diplomatic and infrastructure engagement, raising strategic concerns in India.
  - Summoning of Bangladesh High Commissioner: India recently summoned the Bangladesh High Commissioner in India over the deteriorating security environment in the country & the threats posed by the extremists elements to the security of the Indian mission in Dhaka.

#### Reasons Behind Sheikh Hasina's Exit:

1. Peaceful Student demonstration evolving into a nationwide movement: The peaceful student protest against the **freedom fighter reservation of 30% in civil services**, galvanized into a nationwide movement due to Government's heavy-handed approach. The attack on students by Awami League's student wing, **Bangladesh Chhatra League**, imposition of a **strict curfew with a 'shoot-on-sight'** order and labelling the demonstrators as 'Razakars'(a term associated with collaborators during the 1971 war) further inflamed tensions.
2. Slowing down of economic Growth: Bangladesh made rapid economic progress under Sheikh Hasina's regime. The country's per capita income tripled in a decade, with the World Bank estimating that over 25 million people were lifted out of poverty in the last 20 years. However, the pandemic **in 2020** and **a slowing global economy**, thereafter, hit the garment industry badly. This increased unemployment, inflation in the economy and discontent of Bangladeshi Population.
3. Eroding democratic values: The Parliamentary elections in **2014**, **2018**, and **2024** were controversial and non-participative as they were marred by **low turnout**, **violence**, and **boycotts by opposition parties**.
4. Reliance on Hard Power to maintain control: Hasina's government increasingly relied on hard power to maintain control. This created a climate of fear and repression. For ex- **The Digital Security Act 2018**, became a potent weapon for the government and ruling party activists to silence critics and stifle freedom of online expression.
5. Increasing economic inequality: The proliferation of Bank scams and an expanding list of defaulters, coupled with rampant corruption, fueled public discontent despite the overall economic progress. For ex- Companies like **CLC Power**, **Western Marine Shipyard**, and **Remex Footwear** topped the list of defaulters, with bad loans ranging from 965 crore to 1,649 crore Bangladeshi Taka.

#### What is the significance of Bangladesh for India?



1. **Geo-strategic:** Bangladesh holds significant geostrategic importance for India as its eastern neighbour. It provides India with access to the Bay of Bengal and serves as a vital route for trade and connectivity with Southeast Asia.
2. **Geo-political:** A stable and friendly Bangladesh is crucial for India's security. Geopolitical cooperation on issues such as counter-terrorism and border management is essential for maintaining peace in South Asia. Moreover, Bangladesh's support is important for India's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC).
3. **Economic:** Bangladesh is a key economy for India's exports and bilateral trade. Strengthening economic ties with Bangladesh is vital for India to achieve its goals under the new Foreign Trade Policy and its vision of becoming a \$5 trillion economy.
4. **Cultural and Civilisational:** Bangladesh shares deep cultural and civilisational ties with India, including a large Bengali Hindu population and several religious-cultural sites such as Ranir Bunglow Temple and Bhoj Vihara that reflect shared heritage.
5. **International Cooperation:** Strong India-Bangladesh cooperation is essential for the success of regional and global platforms like BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), and international climate forums such as the COPs under the UNFCCC.

#### **What are the areas of Cooperation between India and Bangladesh?**

1. **Trade and Economic Cooperation:** Bilateral trade crossed USD 13 billion in 2023-24, making Bangladesh India's top trading partner in South Asia. India provides duty-free access on most goods under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). Both countries have also started Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations to further ease trade and investment.
2. **Connectivity and Infrastructure:** Cross-border links like the Akhaura-Agartala rail and Khulna-Mongla Port rail line improved regional connectivity. Bus routes connect major cities, and India provides USD 8 billion in Lines of Credit (LOC) for infrastructure development. Ports access facilitates trade with India's Northeast.
3. **Water and River Cooperation:** The 1996 Ganga Water Treaty guides water-sharing, while the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) manages floods, irrigation, and data sharing. Cooperation continues across 54 rivers, though the Teesta River dispute remains unresolved.
4. **Security and Border Management:**
  - a. Anti-India terror groups were dismantled under Sheikh Hasina.
  - b. Border Security Force (BSF)-Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) coordination reduced cross-border crimes, and joint exercises like Exercise Sampriti (Army) and Exercise Bongosagar (Navy) enhanced defence cooperation.
  - c. The 2015 Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) settled enclave disputes.
5. **Energy and Power Cooperation:** India supplies around 2,000 MW of electricity and diesel via the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, strengthening Bangladesh's energy security. Both nations are exploring renewable energy collaboration under One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG).
6. **Multilateral and Regional Cooperation:** Both countries work closely in Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal Initiative (BBIN), and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) for trade, connectivity, and development. They also cooperate on climate change and disaster resilience through global forums like United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Conference of Parties (COP) summits.

7. Cultural and People-to-People Ties: Shared language, literature, and religion create strong cultural bonds. Heritage sites like Ranir Bunglow Temple and Bhoj Vihara highlight common history, reinforced by cultural exchanges and celebrations like Mujib Borsho (Birth Centenary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman).
8. Tourism and Education Cooperation: Bangladeshis form the largest group of tourists in India, with joint promotion of cultural and Buddhist tourism circuits. Student exchanges and scholarships have strengthened educational links.
9. Health and Medical Cooperation: Bangladesh accounts for over 35% of India's medical tourists, contributing more than 50% of medical tourism revenue. Partnerships include medical visa facilitation, hospital collaboration, and telemedicine services.
10. Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence Sharing: Bangladesh's crackdown on anti-India insurgents under Sheikh Hasina boosted security cooperation. Both nations coordinate on intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism operations, and cybersecurity initiatives, ensuring regional stability.

#### **What are the other Challenges in India-Bangladesh Relations?**

1. Sharing of Transboundary River Waters: India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers, but only two transboundary water-sharing treaties have been signed so far: the Ganga Waters Treaty and the Kushiya River Treaty. A major point of contention remains the Teesta River dispute, with Bangladesh seeking equitable distribution of its waters, which has not been agreed upon by India and the state of West Bengal.
2. Deportation of Rohingyas: India and Bangladesh have mutual but sometimes conflicting interests regarding the deportation of Rohingyas to mainland Myanmar. India prioritizes deportation from its own territory first and then later facilitates deportation from Bangladesh to Myanmar.
3. Cross-Border Terrorism and Infiltration: Terrorism and infiltration across the Bangladesh border pose significant internal security threats to India. Activities like armed dacoity in border districts, fake currency transfer, cattle smuggling, and prostitution have also raised security concerns.
4. Drug Smuggling and Trafficking: According to the 2007 International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) report, India remains a prime transit route for heroin trafficking from South Asia to Europe through Bangladesh.
5. Growing Chinese Influence in Bangladesh: Bangladesh is an active partner in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China has invested in 12 highways, 21 bridges, and 27 power and energy projects in Bangladesh. This growing involvement may undermine India's regional standing and impede its strategic aspirations.
6. Rising Radicalization and Minority Persecution: The surge in religious extremism and mistreatment of minorities in Bangladesh poses threats to both internal stability and regional security, potentially destabilizing Bangladesh and affecting India's security environment.

#### **What Should be India's approach to deal with the Bangladesh Crisis?**

1. Diplomatic Engagement: Maintain open channels with the interim government through regular high-level visits and dialogue. Avoid provocative statements and carefully manage perceptions to sustain mutual trust.
2. Raising the Attacks on Minorities: India must raise concerns over attacks on Hindu minorities both bilaterally and multilaterally, including through the United Nations mechanisms.
3. Support to Popular Expression: As a vibrant multi-party democracy, India should support the expression of popular will in a sensitive neighboring country. For example, India supported the people's movement in Nepal in 2006 that ended dictatorial monarchical rule and restored multi-party democracy.

4. Expression of Readiness to Expand Bilateral Ties: India should signal its readiness to enhance economic engagement with a successor government while avoiding branding the ongoing political change as anti-India or anti-Hindu.
5. Cautiousness and Discreteness: India should act cautiously and discreetly, keeping the door open for continued close and mutually beneficial ties, as seen in its engagement with the Maldives under Mohamed Muizzu.
6. Establishment of Joint Task Forces and Smart Border Management: Joint task forces comprising law enforcement agencies from both countries should be established to effectively combat cross-border drug smuggling, human trafficking, and illegal immigration.
7. Establishment of a Digital Connectivity Corridor: A digital connectivity corridor should be developed focusing on high-speed internet, digital services, and e-commerce to create new avenues for trade, collaboration, and technological exchange.
8. Early Conclusion of India-Bangladesh Free Trade Agreement (FTA): Bangladesh is set to lose its Least Developed Country (LDC) status after 2026, which will end its duty-free and quota-free access to India. India should finalise the FTA at the earliest and ensure it is not misused by China to dump goods into India through the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), of which Bangladesh is also a member.

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

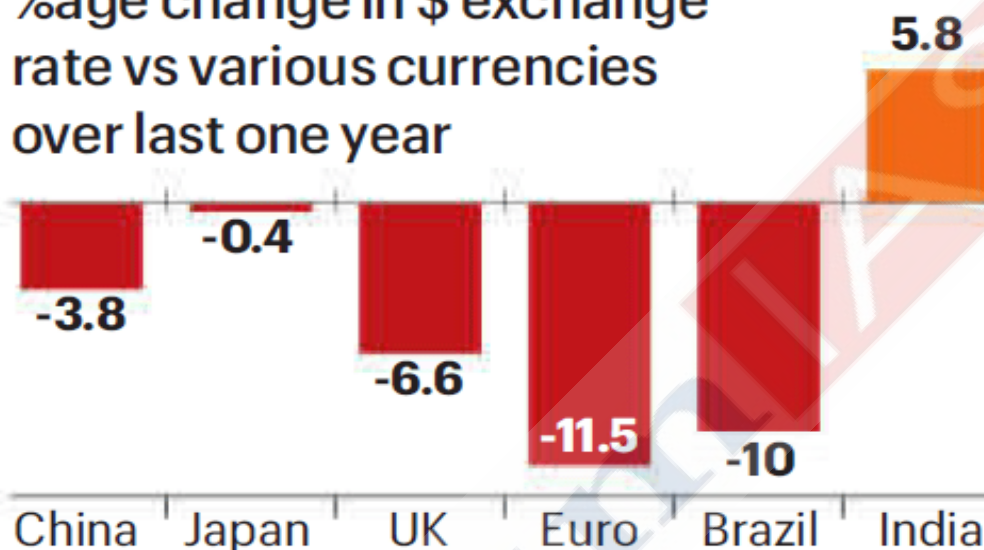
Read More: The Indian Express

### **Weakening of Rupee – Causes & Consequences – Explained Pointwise**

The Indian rupee has continuously been weakening against US dollar in recent past. The rupee has lost almost 6% of its value against dollar over the past year. There are many factors which are responsible for weakening of the Indian rupee even when the currencies of other emerging market economies are strengthening against dollar.

## ● ₹ is weakening against \$; \$ is weakening against rest

%age change in \$ exchange rate vs various currencies over last one year



SOURCE: GOOGLE FINANCE

**What are the factors responsible for weakening of the Rupee against Dollar?**

### 1. Domestic Factors:

- Widening Current Account Deficit (CAD):** The CAD is expected to rise significantly in the Fiscal Year 2025-26, with forecasts indicating a rise to ~1.7% of GDP. This widening of the deficit is mainly driven by a large merchandise trade deficit.
- Sustained FII (Foreign Institutional Investors) Outflows:** 2025 has been characterised by a sustained net selling trend by FIIs in both Indian equity & debt markets. This capital flight reduces the supply of foreign currency & directly pressures the rupee.
- Inflation & Growth Headwinds:** Even though, the long-term growth outlook remains strong, but, the slower near-term GDP growth & very low inflation level have acted as negative economic indicators, dampening investor confidence in Rupee's short term stability.

### 2. External & Global Factors:

- India-USA Trade Tensions & Tariffs:** USA is India's one of the top trading partners. However, the imposition of 50% tariff on Indian goods by the Trump administration has severely impacted the export competitiveness of Indian goods & has increased the market risk perception – making Indian rupee the worst performing currency in Asia for the year.
- Strengthening of USA Dollar:** Despite the US Fed Reserve beginning its rate-cut cycle, the US Dollar has maintained persistent strength, reflecting its status as global reserve currency & a



safe haven asset during a period of geopolitical uncertainty. Strengthening of US dollar against major currencies puts pressure on INR.

- c. High Crude Oil Demand & Import Bill: India imports almost 80-85% of its crude oil. The rise in the crude oil prices & that of the important commodities imported by India like gold – lead to widening of India's trade deficit & weakening of INR.

### 3. Monetary Policy Factors:

- a. Unfavourable Interest Rate Differentials: Even though the US Fed Reserve has begun its rate-cut cycle at a modest rate (e.g. 25 basis point cut in the late 2025), the cumulative interest rate differential remains attractive for the US Dollar relative to Rupee's real yield – driving the capital away from India.
- b. RBI's Stance: The RBI has chosen a Neutral Policy Stance & kept the repo rate unchanged for most part of the year 2025 – prioritizing domestic liquidity management & growth over an aggressive defense of the Rupee.

### What are consequences of weakening of the Rupee?

#### 1. Impact on Consumers:

- a. Inflationary Pressure: As the INR weakens, the Oil Marketing Cos. have to pay more Rupees for the same barrel of oil. This increased cost is eventually passed on to the consumers through higher prices for petrol, diesel, and natural gas. This high fuel cost then triggers a cascading effect – contributing to broader consumer price inflation.
- b. Cost of Goods: The price of other key imports, such as electronics, gold, industrial chemicals, and fertilisers, also rise – intensifying the inflationary pressure & eroding the purchasing power & savings of the average household.
- c. Foreign Travel & Education: Foreign travel & education will become significantly expensive.

#### 2. Impact on Trade (Imports/Exports):

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| The WINNERS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Increased Competitiveness: A weaker rupee makes the Indian goods &amp; services cheaper for foreign buyers who pay in Dollars. This can boost the competitiveness of Indian exports in global market.</li> <li>b. High Profitability for Exporters: Indian exporters, particularly the IT Service Sector, benefit significantly. Weakening of the INR directly boosts their profit margin &amp; revenue growth.</li> <li>c. Boost to Domestic Investment: Rise in export revenue can lead to increased domestic investment as exporters look to expand capacity to meet the higher demand.</li> </ul> |
| The LOSERS  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Higher Import Bill: Weakening of the Rupee against Dollar puts upward pressure on the net import bill.</li> <li>b. Wider Trade Deficit: The cost of essential imports outweighs the revenue gain from exports. A significant rise in import bill can lead to a widening of the Trade deficit.</li> </ul>  |



**3. Impact on Corporates (External Debt):**

- a. **Increase in Debt Servicing Cost:** The Indian Corporates who have taken ECBs denominated in USD & have not fully hedged their exposure, face a major risk. A weaker rupee means that a company has to pay more amount of INR for the USD-denominated debt.
- b. **Divergent Fortunes:** The corporate sector witnesses a divergence – while the export-oriented cos. see higher profits, the import-dependent cos. & highly indebted cos. face significant financial strain.

**4. Macroeconomic Impact:**

- a. **Forex Reserves Drawdown:** The RBI often intervenes (spot intervention) in the forex market to prevent excessive depreciation of the Rupee. The RBI sells USD to absorb the excessive Rupee liquidity. However, it leads to reduction in the national reserve buffer.
- b. **Capital Flight:** Withdrawal of funds by FIIs is one the causes for the weakening of the INR. If the Rupee continues to weaken, it could signal greater macroeconomic instability which may increase the rate of capital flight from India – creating a self-perpetuating cycle of depreciation.

**What should be the way forward?****1. Strengthen Macro-fundamentals:**

- Contain fiscal and current account deficits through better tax mobilisation, rationalised subsidies, and export diversification so external financing needs remain credible.
- Keep inflation durably low and stable via prudent monetary-fiscal coordination, which reduces the long-run tendency of the rupee to lose purchasing power versus the dollar.

**2. Manage External Vulnerability:**

- Reduce import dependence in oil, gas, electronics, fertilisers and defence through domestic capacity, renewables, and energy efficiency, lowering structural dollar demand.
- Maintain adequate forex reserves and flexible exchange rates so the RBI can smooth volatility without defending unsustainable levels, reassuring markets about India's shock-absorbing capacity.

**3. Upgrade Export Competitiveness:** Upgrade export competitiveness with reforms in logistics, trade facilitation, skilling, and industrial policy, focusing on high-value manufacturing and services instead of low-margin commodities.**4. Attract Capital Inflows:** Attract stable FDI and long-term portfolio flows by improving contract enforcement, regulatory predictability, and financial-sector depth, reducing reliance on short-term "hot money".**5. Safeguard Vulnerable Sectors & Households:**

- Encourage firms with foreign-currency liabilities to prudently hedge and improve disclosure, limiting balance-sheet stress from sharp currency moves.
- Use targeted support (e.g., fuel tax calibration, transport and fertilizer support, food security buffers) to protect poorer households from imported-inflation spikes without large, open-ended subsidies.

**6. Long-term Solution:** Continue structural reforms (land, labour, financial inclusion, digital public infrastructure) that raise productivity and long-term growth, making India more attractive to capital and easing pressure on the rupee over time.

UPSC GS-3: Indian Economy

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)

### **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill 2025 – Provisions, Significance & Challenges – Explained Pointwise**

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, which seeks to overhaul the regulation of higher education in India, was referred to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) earlier this week for deliberation after its introduction in the Lok Sabha. The Bill aims to create a single apex body that replaces UGC, AICTE & NCTE, and aligns the system with NEP 2020. The Bill will apply to HEIs, including Institutions of National Importance (INIs), such as IITs, IIMs, NITs, IISERs, Central & State Universities, as well as Deemed-to-be-Universities. However, the Bill will not apply to medical, legal, pharmaceutical, dental & veterinary institutions.



Source: Students Islamic Organisation of India

#### **What are some of the important provisions of the VBSA Bill?**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Establishment of VBSA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill establishes Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) as the overarching commission with three vertical councils: Regulatory Council (licensing/entry/oversight), Accreditation Council (quality grading), and Standards Council (academic benchmarks and frameworks).</li> <li>• It repeals UGC Act, AICTE Act and NCTE Act, transferring their powers/assets/liabilities to VBSA; excludes medicine (NMC), law (Bar Council) and architecture (COA).</li> </ul> |
|-----------------------|---|

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The VBSA's Regulatory Council grants permission to establish/operate Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) based on minimum eligibility (land, funds, faculty, infrastructure) via a single-window process.</li> <li>• VBSA can withhold/release grants and recommend funding cuts for non-compliant HEIs; enables performance-linked financing.</li> </ul>  |
| Graded Autonomy                         | It introduces graded autonomy, where institutions with high performance scores are granted full freedom over curriculum, fees, and international collaborations without prior government approval, whereas the poor performers face intervention or closure.   |
| National Academic Credit Bank           | <p>The Bill mandates a digital inventory for all student credits that will allow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple Entry/Exit: Students can leave a degree program after one year (earning a Certificate), two years (Diploma), or three/four years (Degree), with their credits stored in the NACB for up to seven years.</li> <li>• Cross-Disciplinary Transfer: Allowing students to transfer credits between STEM &amp; liberal arts disciplines seamlessly.</li> </ul> |
| Mandatory 'Industry-Academia' Interface | <p>The Bill introduces legal requirement for industry participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEIs are empowered to hire industry experts as full-time faculty without requiring a PhD, provided they have a 15+ years of professional experience.</li> <li>• Every undergraduate degree must include a mandatory 6 month internship or apprenticeship to qualify for the final degree.</li> </ul>   |
| Internationalization of Education       | <p>To fulfill the "Viksit Bharat" goal, the Bill focuses on global positioning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign Campus Provision: Streamlined legal framework for top 500 global universities to open campuses in India.</li> <li>• Indian Global Outreach: Provisions for Indian IITs and IIMs to set up "Offshore Centres of Excellence" with simplified repatriated funding rules.</li> </ul>  |
| Technology & AI Integration             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Educational Technology Forum (NETF): A dedicated cell</li> </ul>   |

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
|                                 | <p>within the VBSA to provide AI-driven personalized learning tools to government schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swayam Plus Expansion: Recognition of high-quality OER (Open Educational Resources) as equivalent to formal classroom credits for up to 40% of any course.</li> </ul>   |
| Language & Cultural Integration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multilingual Pedagogy: Mandates that all technical and medical textbooks be made available in the 22 scheduled languages of India using AI-translation services.</li> <li>• IKS Inclusion: A requirement for all HEIs to dedicate at least 5% of their curriculum to "Indian Knowledge Systems" (IKS), covering ancient Indian contributions to science, logic, and ethics.</li> </ul> |
| Funding & Shiksha Kosh          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viksit Bharat Education Bond: Provision for the government to issue tax-free bonds to private citizens and NRIs to fund school infrastructure.</li> <li>• Performance-Linked Funding: Moving away from block grants to a model where 30% of government funding is tied to specific outcomes like graduate employability and research citations.</li> </ul>                             |

### What is the significance of the VBSA Bill?

1. **Employability of Graduates:** For years, the Indian Higher Education System has been criticized for producing unemployable graduates. The VBSA Bill is significant because it legally mandates shift towards competency-based education:
  - a. **Skill-Centricity:** By making internships a degree requirement, it forces the academic system to align with the real-time needs of the global labor market.
  - b. **The Professor of Practice:** This breaks the academic "ivory tower" by allowing industry veterans to teach, ensuring that classroom theory is grounded in current industrial reality.
2. **Reversing 'Brain Drain' to 'Brain Gain':** The Bill addresses the massive outflow of Indian students & capital to foreign universities:
  - a. **International Hub:** By allowing top global universities to set up their campus in India, it democratizes access to "world-class" education for students who cannot afford to travel abroad.
  - b. **Global Portability:** The National Academic Credit Bank makes Indian credits globally recognizable, facilitating easier exchange and high-level research collaborations.
3. **Structural Economic Transformation:** The Bill acts as an economic instrument rather than just a social one:



- a. **Demographic Dividend:** With India having the world's largest youth population, the Bill provides the legal framework to convert this population into a skilled workforce before the "aging window" begins in the 2040s.
- b. **Performance-Linked Funding:** By tying government grants to research and employability, it introduces a "competitive federalism" in education, forcing institutions to innovate or face budget cuts.
- 4. **Rural-Urban Divide:** The VBSA Bill is significant in its attempt to bridge:
  - a. **Linguistic Liberation:** By mandating technical education in local languages, it ensures that a student's mastery of English is no longer a barrier to becoming an engineer or a doctor.
  - b. **AI-Democratization:** The use of the NETF (National Educational Technology Forum) aims to provide rural students with the same quality of AI-driven tutoring as their urban counterparts.
- 5. **Single Higher Education Regulator:** It operationalises NEP's "single regulator" idea by replacing fragmented bodies (UGC, AICTE, NCTE) with VBSA, enabling a "light but tight" framework that cuts red tape while enforcing quality and outcomes.

#### **What are some of the criticisms of the VBSA Bill?**

- 1. **Erosion of Federalism:** Education is a Concurrent list subject, however, the VBSA Bill erodes the State autonomy by:
  - a. **Centralization of Power:** The Bill creates a "super-regulator" (VBSA) that overrides state-level education boards. This centralizes decision-making in Centre, potentially ignoring the unique linguistic and cultural needs of diverse states.
  - b. **State Financial Burden:** The Bill mandates expensive technological upgrades and infrastructure changes, but many state governments argue the Centre has not provided a clear roadmap for funding these requirements at the state university level.
- 2. **Commercialization of Higher Education:** By allowing foreign universities to repatriate the profit & by encouraging 'Professors of Practice' role from the Corporate world, the VBSA Bill is criticized for promoting privatization of knowledge:
  - a. **Research vs. Profit:** There is concern that research will shift only toward "profitable" science and technology, neglecting the Humanities and Social Sciences, which are essential for a healthy democracy but often yield lower immediate commercial returns.
  - b. **Job Security for Faculty:** The push for contractual and industry-based hiring (Professors of Practice) is seen by some academic unions as an attempt to undermine the permanent tenure system and traditional academic research.
- 3. **Threats to Academic Freedom:** The Bill introduces rigorous 'National Standards' for curriculum & performance:
  - a. **Ideological Homogenization:** A centralized curriculum could be used to push a specific ideological narrative, limiting the scope for critical thinking and dissent in university spaces.
  - b. **Surveillance through Data:** The mandatory "Academic Bank of Credits" and digital IDs are viewed by privacy advocates as tools for the state to track the intellectual trajectory and political leanings of students throughout their careers.
- 4. **Digital Divide:** The VBSA Bill leans heavily on AI-driven learning & digital credits:
  - a. **Infrastructure Gaps:** In rural India, where internet penetration is inconsistent and electricity is not always reliable, a heavy reliance on digital education could further marginalize underprivileged students.



- b. Cost of Implementation: The move toward “market-linked” education and the entry of foreign universities raise fears of a “two-tier” system: high-quality, expensive private/foreign education for the elite, and underfunded, struggling public institutions for the masses.
- 5. Practicality of “Apprenticeship Mandate”:
  - a. While the Bill mandates internships for all degrees, skeptics question the capacity of Indian industry to absorb millions of students every year.
  - b. Most of India’s businesses are micro-enterprises that do not have the administrative capacity to manage structured internship programs, potentially leading to “fake” certificates and a “paper-only” compliance culture.
- 6. Funding De-linkage: Removing grant-disbursal powers from VBSA and placing them directly under the Ministry of Education risks arbitrary, politically influenced funding, turning public universities into compliance tools rather than autonomous institutions.
- 7. Inequalities due to Graded Autonomy: Graded autonomy sounds progressive but could widen inequalities, favouring elite central institutions while marginalising rural/minority-serving ones through performance-linked funding and accreditation pressures.

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

### Right to Healthy Environment – Explained Pointwise

Every year during the winters, the national capital engulfs in smog & severely low air quality, which cripples the city & poses serious health challenges. The deteriorating environmental quality in several of the Indian cities is forcing the people to link the environmental rights to the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution to enforce environmental protections & to emphasize the state’s responsibility to take corrective measures.



Source: Centre for Earth Ethics

### What is Right to Healthy Environment (RHE)?

- The Right to Healthy Environment (RHE), also known as the Right to a Clean Environment, is a fundamental human right recognised globally and in India as integral to the right to life, ensuring access to pollution-free air, water, soil and ecosystems for human health and dignity.
- UN Resolution 76/300 (2022): The UN General Assembly adopted a historic resolution declaring that “the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right.” While not legally binding, it creates a powerful political and moral standard for international law.
- Elements of RHE:
  - i. Clean Air: The right to breathe air free from hazardous pollutants.
  - ii. Safe Climate: Protection from the devastating impacts of anthropogenic climate change.
  - iii. Safe and Sufficient Water: Access to clean drinking water and sanitation.
  - iv. Healthy Food: Access to sustainably produced and nutritious food.
  - v. Non-toxic Environments: Protection from hazardous substances and waste.
  - vi. Healthy Ecosystems & Biodiversity: Preservation of the natural world that supports human life.
- RHE is often implemented through the “greening” of existing rights for e.g. Right to Life – Interpreted to mean that a state must protect citizens from life-threatening environmental disasters.

### What are the various provisions in the Constitution to ensure Right to Healthy Environment?

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Art 21      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 21 states: <i>“No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.”</i></li> <li>● In <i>Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar</i> (1991) and <i>M.C. Mehta v. Union of India</i>, the Supreme Court ruled that the “Right to Life” includes the Right to enjoyment of pollution-free water and air for full enjoyment of life.</li> <li>● In Great Indian Bustard case (2024), where SC explicitly tied climate protection to Article 21.</li> </ul> |
| Art 48A     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 48A state: <i>“The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.”</i></li> </ul>   |
| Art 51A (g) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Article 51A(g) imposes a duty on every citizen “to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures,” making environmental stewardship a collective responsibility.</li> </ul>   |

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Art 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In <i>M.K. Ranjitsinh v. Union of India (2024)</i>, the SC recognised the right against adverse effects of the climate change as being part of the right to life under Article 21 &amp; right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.</li> </ul> |
|--------|---|

### Important Concepts & Principles of Environmental Protection:

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Liability               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Absolute Liability:</b> Absolute liability imposes no-fault, unconditional liability on enterprises handling hazardous activities, with no exceptions – they must compensate all harm caused. Absolute liability was introduced in India for environmental disasters arising out of the storage, leak or use of hazardous substances like Oleum Gas Leak Case.</li> <li><b>Strict Liability:</b> Strict liability holds a person liable for harm caused by escape of something dangerous from their land, even without negligence, but allows exceptions.</li> </ul> |
| Precautionary Principle | <p>Precautionary Principle mandates preventive action in the face of threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, even without full scientific certainty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shifts burden of proof to the project proponent to show no harm; applied in cases like coastal aquaculture, Tehri Dam, and firecracker bans to halt risky activities preemptively.</li> </ul>   |
| Polluter Pays Principle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Polluter Pays Principle requires the polluter to bear the cost of measures to prevent, control or remedy pollution, including compensation to victims and restoration.</li> <li>The cost of repairing environmental damage must be paid by the polluter.</li> <li>Seen in NGT orders for cleanup (e.g., Yamuna, Ganga), fines on industries, and compensation funds for affected communities.</li> </ul>  |
| Public Trust Doctrine   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Trust Doctrine is a common law principle holding that certain natural resources like air, water, forests, wildlife, and seashores are held by the government as a trustee for the public, not as private property to be alienated or exploited for private gain.</li> <li>Clause (b) of the Art 39 of the Constitution provides that material resources shall be owned by the community &amp; Clause (c) says that the state have the responsibility to prevent any concentration of the means of production.</li> </ul>   |

### What are the challenges in implementing the Right to Healthy Environment?

1. **Infrastructure Pressures:** Major projects (highways, dams, mining) often require clearing forests or displacing ecosystems. Balancing the need to lift millions out of poverty with ecological preservation remains a constant struggle.
2. **Ease of Doing Business:** To attract investment, there is often pressure to “relax” Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) norms or provide faster clearances, which can lead to inadequate vetting of ecological risks.
3. **Pollution Control Boards (PCBs):** State and Central PCBs are frequently understaffed, lack technical expertise, and suffer from inadequate funding. This leads to poor monitoring of industrial emissions and waste discharge.
4. **Water Conflicts:** Since water is primarily a State subject, inter-state river disputes (e.g., Kaveri or Yamuna) often stall conservation efforts like the “Clean Ganga” mission due to a lack of federal coordination.
5. **Fragmented Governance:** Waste management, air quality, and forest conservation are often handled by different departments with overlapping or conflicting mandates.
6. **Solid Waste:** Most Indian cities struggle with “legacy waste” mountains (landfills). Current waste processing capacities are insufficient for the daily output of plastic and organic waste.
7. **Marginalized Communities:** Tribal populations and forest dwellers, who are often the best guardians of nature, are frequently the most vulnerable to displacement and least equipped to fight legal battles against large corporations.
8. **The “Tragedy of the Commons”:** In many urban areas, there is a lack of collective responsibility for public spaces, leading to widespread littering and encroachment on wetlands.

#### **What should be the way forward?**

1. **Professionalizing PCBs:** State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) should be staffed by environmental scientists and technical experts rather than generalist bureaucrats. They need independent funding models to ensure they can sustain long-term monitoring.
2. **National Environmental Authority:** Establishing a permanent, independent statutory body (similar to the Election Commission) to oversee environmental clearances and compliance could reduce the “Development vs. Environment” conflict of interest within ministries.
3. **Empowering Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) & Gram Sabhas:** Municipalities must be given the technical and financial capacity to manage waste and water treatment locally, rather than relying on state-level schemes. Similarly, in rural and forested areas, the Forest Rights Act must be implemented in letter and spirit, giving indigenous communities (the primary stakeholders) the legal authority to protect their local ecosystems.
4. **Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (CEMS):** Mandatory installation of IoT-enabled sensors in all red-category industries that stream pollution data directly to public portals in real-time.
5. **Satellite Surveillance:** Utilizing ISRO’s geospatial data to monitor illegal mining, deforestation, and wetland encroachment, allowing for rapid response before permanent damage occurs.
6. **Green GDP:** Transitioning from traditional GDP to “Green GDP” metrics that factor in the depletion of natural resources and the cost of pollution.
7. **Incentivizing Circular Economy:** Providing tax breaks and subsidies for industries that adopt “Zero Liquid Discharge” (ZLD) technologies or use recycled materials in production.
8. **Airshed & Watershed Management:** Creating regional authorities for the Indo-Gangetic plain or major river basins to coordinate pollution control strategies across multiple states, moving beyond the current fragmented approach.



Conclusion: The Right to a Healthy Environment transforms environmental protection from a matter of “policy choice” to a legal obligation. It shifts the focus from managing resources to protecting human dignity and survival in the face of the global climate crisis.

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

### UAPA – Provisions, Significance & Challenges – Explained Pointwise

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) is India’s primary anti-terror law. Originally enacted in 1967, it has been significantly amended over the decades-most notably in 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2019 – to broaden its scope and give the government more power to deal with activities that threaten the sovereignty and integrity of the country.



Source: News Click

#### What are some of the important provisions of the UAPA?

1. Definition & Scope:
  - a. Section 2(o) – Unlawful Activity: Defines it as any action (spoken, written, or physical) that supports the secession of a part of India, questions its sovereignty, or causes “disaffection” against India.
  - b. Section 15 – Terrorist Act: Defines terrorism broadly to include acts intended to threaten the unity, integrity, security, or sovereignty of India, or to strike terror in the people using explosives, firearms, or other lethal substances.
  - c. Section 1(4) – Extra-territorial Jurisdiction: The Act applies to Indian and foreign nationals even if the crime is committed outside India.
2. Investigation & Procedure: The UAPA modifies standard criminal procedures (found in the CrPC/BNSS) to give more time to investigating agencies:



- a. Section 43D(2) – Extended Detention: Under regular law, a charge sheet must be filed within 60 or 90 days. Under UAPA, this can be extended to 180 days, meaning a suspect can remain in jail for six months without being formally charged.
  - b. Section 43D(5) – The “Bail Bar”: This is the most controversial provision. It states that a court cannot grant bail if, after reading the police report, it finds “reasonable grounds” to believe the accusation is *prima facie* (at first sight) true. In practice, this makes bail the exception and jail the rule.
  - c. Section 25 – Seizure of Property: Allows investigating officers to seize property they believe represents “proceeds of terrorism,” subject to approval from senior police or the DG of the NIA.
3. 2019 Amendments (Power to Designate): Prior to 2019, the government could only ban organizations. The amendment introduced a major shift:
  - a. Section 35 & 36: Empower the Central Government to designate an individual as a “terrorist” by adding their name to the Fourth Schedule.
  - b. Section 43: Empowers officers of the rank of Inspector and above in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to investigate cases (previously restricted to ACP/DSP rank).
4. Punishment & Penalties: Terrorist acts resulting in death are punishable with death or life imprisonment and fine, while other terrorist acts generally carry a minimum of five years’ imprisonment extendable to life, plus fine.

#### What is the need/significance of the UAPA?

1. Preventing Secession: The UAPA was originally enacted in 1967 (following the 16th Constitutional Amendment) specifically to address secessionist movements. It gives the state powers to deal with groups or individuals who question India’s territorial integrity or demand secession (e.g. insurgencies in the North-East or the Khalistan movement).
2. Countering “Unlawful” Activities: Unlike the regular penal code, which focuses on crimes already committed, UAPA targets the *ideological and organizational* roots of activities that threaten the nation’s existence.
3. Defining Modern Terror: It provides a comprehensive definition of a “terrorist act” that includes not just physical violence, but also acts that threaten economic security (like high-quality counterfeit currency) and cybersecurity.
4. Uprooting Networks: It allows the government to ban entire organizations (First Schedule) and, since 2019, designate individuals as terrorists. This is crucial for stopping “lone wolf” attacks and dismantling the leadership of terror modules.
5. FATF Compliance: Amendments in 2013 and 2019 were specifically aimed at bringing Indian law in line with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards to combat money laundering and terror financing.
6. UN Resolutions: The Act helps India implement United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions (like Resolution 1373) which require member states to freeze the assets of designated terrorists and prevent their travel.
7. Extended Timelines: Terrorism cases involve complex international links. The provision allowing 180 days for a charge sheet (instead of 60/90) gives agencies the necessary time to track foreign funding and digital footprints.

#### What are some of the criticisms of the UAPA?

1. **Low Conviction Rates:** According to government data shared in Parliament (2025), the conviction rate under UAPA remains very low, often cited around 3%. Between 2019 and 2023, of over 10,000 arrests, only 335 resulted in convictions.
2. **Prolonged Incarceration:** High-profile cases, like the Bhima Koregaon case or the Delhi Riots conspiracy case, have seen activists and students jailed for over 4-5 years without a trial commencing.
3. **Prima Facie Standard:** A judge must deny bail if the police's accusations seem "prima facie true" based *only* on the prosecution's evidence. The defense often cannot present its own evidence or cross-examine witnesses during a bail hearing.
4. **"Unlawful Activity":** Includes any act that causes "disaffection against India." Critics argue this can be used to criminalize political speeches, protests, or social media posts.
5. **No "Sunset Clause":** Unlike previous anti-terror laws (TADA or POTA) which had to be renewed by Parliament every few years, UAPA is a permanent law with no mandatory periodic review.
6. **Weaponisation Against Dissent:** Human rights groups (like Amnesty International and the UN) have raised concerns that the law is frequently used to silence:
  - a. **Journalists:** Who report from conflict zones or write critically of government policy.
  - b. **Human Rights Defenders:** Who document state excesses (e.g. the case of Khurram Parvez).
  - c. **Student Activists:** Participating in democratic protests.
7. **Encroachment on Federalism:** "Police" and "Public Order" are technically State subjects under the Constitution. However, UAPA gives the National Investigation Agency (NIA), a central body, the power to take over cases from state police without their consent, which critics see as an erosion of state autonomy.
8. **2019 Amendment:** The 2019 amendment enabling the executive to designate individuals (not just organisations) as "terrorists" is criticized for lacking prior judicial determination and adequate hearing safeguards.

#### What should be the way forward?

1. **"Speedy Trial" as a Right to Bail:** The Supreme Court (in cases like *KA Najeer*) has established that if a trial is unlikely to conclude soon and the accused has already spent years in jail, the constitutional right to liberty (Article 21) can override the strict bail bar.
2. **Surface Scrutiny of Evidence:** Courts are now being urged not to blindly accept the prosecution's "prima facie" narrative. Judges are encouraged to perform a "surface analysis" to see if the evidence actually supports a terror charge or just a minor offense.
3. **Specialized Courts:** A major recommendation is the creation of dedicated, well-funded Special NIA Courts to ensure that UAPA trials are conducted on a day-to-day basis, preventing decade-long incarcerations without a verdict.
4. **Sunset Clauses or Periodic Review:** Incorporating a mandatory review by Parliament every few years (similar to the old TADA or POTA) would ensure the law is still necessary and hasn't become a tool for political overreach.
5. **Institutional Accountability:** Introducing penalties for officials who willfully file false cases under UAPA would act as a deterrent against "malicious prosecution."
6. **Grounds for Designation:** When an individual is designated as a "terrorist" under the 2019 amendment, the government should be required to provide a clear summary of evidence (without compromising national security) to allow for a meaningful legal challenge.

Read More: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC GS-3: Internal Security

### 100 years of CPI – Role & Limitations – Explained Pointwise

The Communist Party of India (CPI) has turned 100 on December 26, 2025. The CPI has played a very important role during the freedom struggle as well as in the post-independence period. It has traditionally been strong in states like Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.



#### Evolution of the CPI:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>The Formative Years<br/>(1920-1947)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Dual Birth (1920 vs. 1925): There is a long-standing debate over the party's origin. One group was formed in Tashkent (1920) by M.N. Roy and Abani Mukherji. However, the CPI officially celebrates December 26, 1925, when various communist groups met at the Kanpur Conference to form a unified party on Indian soil.</li> <li>• Colonial Repression: The British viewed communism as a major threat, leading to famous "Conspiracy Cases" (Peshawar, Kanpur, and Meerut) where leaders like S.A. Dange and Muzaffar Ahmad were imprisoned.</li> <li>• The "Poorna Swaraj" Demand: The Communists were the first to formally demand "Complete Independence" from British rule at the 1921 Ahmedabad session of the Congress, years before the Congress party adopted the goal.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Post-independence Electoral Success (1947-1964) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● First Opposition: In India's first general election (1951-52), the CPI emerged as the largest opposition party to Jawaharlal Nehru's Congress.</li> <li>● The Kerala Miracle (1957): Under E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the CPI formed the world's first democratically elected communist government in Kerala, initiating radical land and education reforms.</li> </ul>   |
| The Split of 1964                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ideological friction eventually split the party into two: the CPI and the CPI(M). The causes were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sino-Soviet Rift: A global divide between the USSR (advocating peaceful coexistence) and China (advocating revolution).</li> <li>○ Stance on Congress: The "Right" faction (CPI) favored a "National Democratic Front" with the progressive wing of the Congress, while the "Left" faction (CPI-M) viewed the Congress as a class enemy.</li> <li>○ 1962 Border War: Tensions peaked during the India-China war, as one faction supported the Indian government while the other remained more critical.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Role in Recent Years                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support for Emergency: The CPI famously supported Indira Gandhi's Emergency in 1975, a move it later officially regretted as a "tactical mistake."</li> <li>● Left Front Era: Since the late 1970s, the CPI has largely acted as a junior partner to the CPI(M) in the "Left Front," governing West Bengal for 34 years and maintaining a recurring presence in Kerala.</li> <li>● Loss of National Status: In 2023, the Election Commission of India withdrew the CPI's "National Party" status due to declining vote shares, though it remains a powerful "State Party" in several regions.</li> </ul>   |

#### Role of CPI in the freedom struggle:

1. Demanding "Poorna Swaraj" (1921): Long before the Congress party adopted the goal of "Complete Independence" in 1929, the Communists were the first to raise this demand. At the 1921 Ahmedabad Session of the Congress, communist leaders moved a resolution for Poorna Swaraj. They argued that "Swaraj" should not just mean a change of rulers but a complete social and economic transformation.
2. Mobilization of Workers' & Peasants: The CPI's most significant contribution was the mobilization of sectors the Congress initially neglected:
  - a. All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC): Communists were instrumental in building the AITUC (founded in 1920) into a militant force, leading massive strikes like the 1928 Bombay Textile Strike.
  - b. All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS): Founded in 1936, this became the largest peasant organization in India, fighting against both British taxes and Indian landlordism (Zamindari).



- c. They founded the All India Students' Federation (AISF) in 1936 and the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA) to involve youth and intellectuals in the anti-colonial struggle.
- 3. Conspiracy Trials: The British government viewed the CPI as a greater threat than the Congress because of their revolutionary ideology. To crush the movement, the British launched several "Conspiracy Cases" like Peshawar (1922-27), Kanpur (1924), and Meerut (1929): In the Meerut Conspiracy Case, 31 labor leaders were arrested. The trial lasted four years and, ironically, gave the Communists a national platform to propagate their ideas from the courtroom.
- 4. The Post-War Upsurge (1945-1947): Following the war, the CPI led some of the most militant anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggles that accelerated the British departure:
  - a. Royal Indian Navy (RIN) Mutiny (1946): The CPI was the only major party to provide open support and organize food and logistics for the mutineers in Bombay.
  - b. Tebhaga Movement (Bengal): A massive peasant uprising demanding two-thirds of the harvest for sharecroppers.
  - c. Telangana Rebellion (1946-51): An armed peasant struggle against the Nizam of Hyderabad and feudal lords.

#### Role of CPI in post-independence period:

1. Agrarian & Land Reforms: CPI played a crucial role in peasant movements, demanding – abolition of landlordism, tenancy rights, fair wages for agricultural laborers etc. Its pressure contributed to land reform legislation in several states.
2. Kerala State Government (1957): The CPI achieved a global "first" in 1957 by forming the world's first democratically elected Communist government in Kerala, led by E.M.S. Namboodiripad. The CPI government introduced several reforms like:
  - a. Land Reforms: They introduced the *Agrarian Relations Bill*, which sought to abolish tenancy and give land to the tillers.
  - b. Education Bill: Aimed at regulating private schools and improving teacher salaries, this bill triggered the "Vimochana Samaram" (Liberation Struggle) by opposition forces, leading to the central government dismissing the state government in 1959.
3. Language and Federalism: The CPI was a staunch advocate for the Linguistic Reorganization of States, arguing that state boundaries should reflect cultural and linguistic identities to bring administration closer to the people.
4. The United Front (1996-1998): The CPI joined the central government for the first time. Indrajit Gupta served as the Union Home Minister, becoming the first Communist to hold a high-ranking cabinet portfolio in India.
5. UPA-1 Support (2004-2008): The CPI (along with the Left Front) provided crucial external support to the Manmohan Singh government. They were instrumental in the passage of landmark legislations like:
  - a. MGNREGA: The rural employment guarantee scheme
  - b. Right to Information (RTI) Act
  - c. Forest Rights Act
6. Current Role: It remains a key partner in the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala and the INDIA bloc nationally. The party focuses heavily on opposing the privatization of public sector undertakings (PSUs) and championing the rights of unorganized labor.

#### Limitations of CPI:

1. **Geographic Concentration:** Its influence is largely restricted to Kerala and parts of Tamil Nadu and Bihar. It has struggled to make inroads into the Hindi heartland or among the urban middle class.
2. **Aspirational India:** The CPI's traditional focus on industrial labor and peasantry sometimes fails to resonate with a modern "aspirational" India, which includes a massive services sector, gig workers, and a tech-driven economy.
3. **Caste vs. Class:** For decades, the party was criticized for viewing social issues primarily through the lens of class, which led to a late and sometimes inconsistent engagement with the specific realities of caste-based discrimination in India.
4. **Perceived "Extra-Territorial" Loyalties:** Historically, the CPI has struggled with the perception of being more aligned with international communist centers (like the former USSR) than with Indian national interests for e.g. CPI's refusal to support the 1942 Quit India Movement (due to the Soviet alliance with Britain) and its nuanced stance during the 1962 India-China War created a "nationalist" critique that opponents still use against the party today.
5. **Aging Leadership:** Like many veteran parties, the CPI faces the challenge of a "leadership vacuum" and has struggled to recruit and promote younger leaders to top positions.
6. **Resource Constraints:** Unlike larger national parties, the CPI lacks the massive funding and corporate backing required to compete in India's increasingly expensive election cycles.
7. **Loss of National Status:** In 2023, the Election Commission of India (ECI) withdrew the CPI's status as a National Party because it failed to meet the required criteria (vote share and seat count) across multiple states. It is now classified as a State Party.

UPSC GS-1: Post-Independence India

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)

### Child Marriages in India - Explained Pointwise



India has committed to end child marriage by 2030 through UN's SDG, and while it has made comprehensive strides, there are still miles to go to achieve the target. According to 'Girls Not Brides' (a global partnership), at least 9 out of the 17 SDGs will not be achieved without ending child marriage.

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

**Child Marriage:** Child marriage is defined as a marriage of a girl or boy before the age of 18. It includes both formal marriages and informal unions in which children under the age of 18 live with a partner as if married.

Status of Child Marriage:

Global

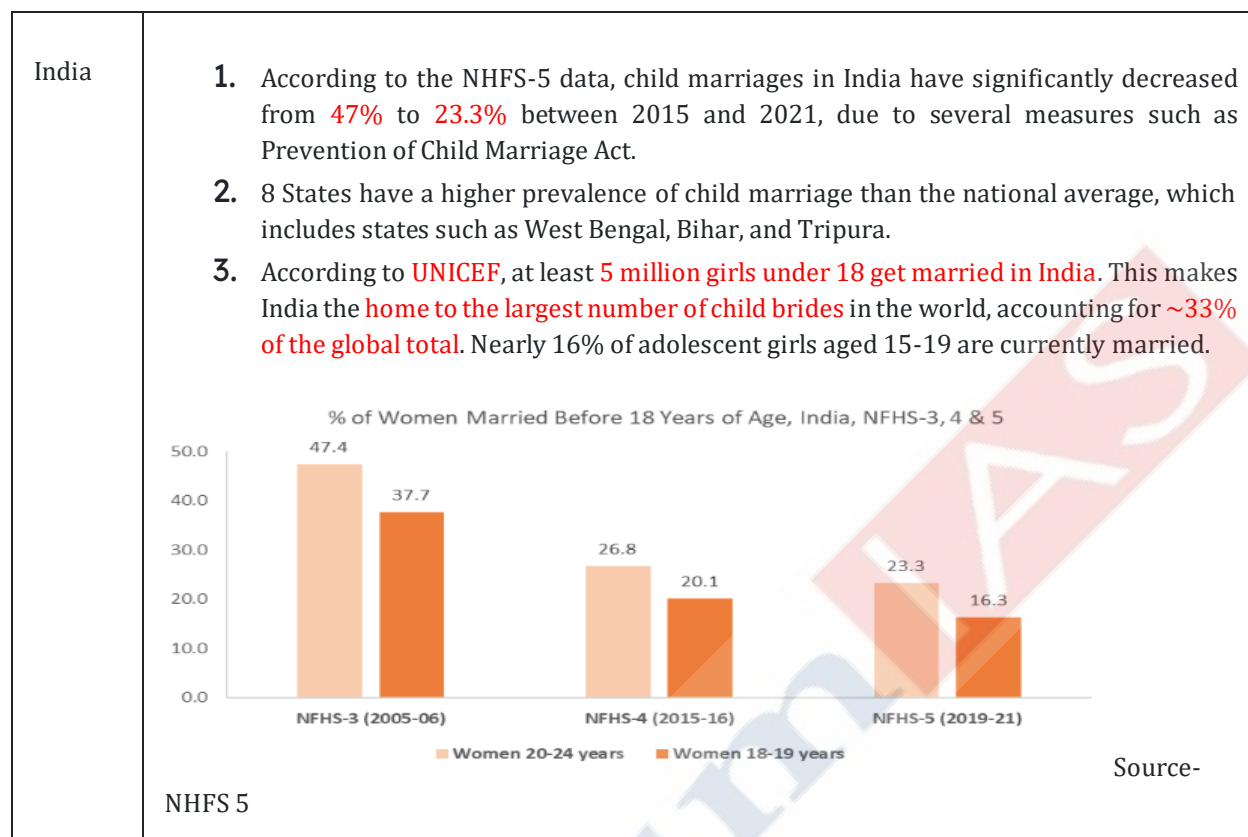
1. About **40 million girls** ages **15-19** are currently married or in a union worldwide.
2. The **Global Girlhood Report** by **Save the Children** estimates that an additional **5 million girls** are at risk of child marriage globally between 2020 and 2025, as a result of reported increases in all types of gender-based violence due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. According to **Save the Children**, about **15 million girls and boys** will never return to school following pandemic lockdowns and school closures. Children who don't come back to school are at greater risk of early marriage, child labour and recruitment into the armed forces.

#### Countries with the highest number of child marriages\*



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

Source- UNICEF



#### What are the harmful impacts of Child Marriage?

1. Violation of Child Rights: Child marriage violates the **right to education**, **right to health** and **right to be safe from physical and mental violence, sexual abuse, rape, and sexual exploitation**. It also robs the children their **right to freedom to choose their partner and life path**.
2. Social marginalisation and isolation: Early marriages deprive girls of their childhood and force them into social isolation. Similarly, boys who marry early are pressured to take on family responsibilities prematurely.
3. Increases Illiteracy: Child brides are often taken out of school and not allowed to get further education. This increases the illiteracy in India.
4. Breeds Intergenerational Cycle of Poverty: Child marriage **negatively affects the economy** and can lead to an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Girls and boys married as children more likely lack the **skills, knowledge, and job prospects** needed to lift their families out of poverty. Early marriage leads girls to have children earlier and more children over their lifetime, **increasing economic burden on the household**.
5. Health Issues:
  - a. Stunted Children: Children born to adolescent mothers have a greater **possibility of seeing stunted growth** (According to NFHS-5, prevalence of child stunting is 35.5%).
  - b. Premature Pregnancy: Child marriage leads to **pregnancy at a younger age**, with women having more than one child before their mind and bodies are ready.
  - c. Maternal Mortality: Girls under 15 are **five times more likely to die** during childbirth or pregnancy. The leading cause of death for girls ages 15 to 19 around the world is pregnancy-related deaths



- d. Infant Mortality: Babies born to mothers younger than 20 have almost **75% higher death rates** than babies born to mothers older than 20 years. The children who do make it are more likely to be born pre-mature and with a low birth weight.
- e. Mental health: Abuse and violence can lead to PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and depression.

### What are the reasons for prevalence of Child Marriage?

Child marriage has strong roots in culture, economics, and religion.

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

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

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Historical Efforts | <p>In 19th Century, the social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Pandita Ramabai worked for uprooting this evil practice.</p> <p>The <b>Sharda Act passed in 1929</b> raised the age of marriage to 14 years for girls and 18 years for boys.</p> |
|--------------------|--|

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Legislative Steps   | <p>The <b>Hindu Marriage Act, 1955</b> prescribes age for marriage as <b>18 for girls</b> and <b>21 for boys</b>.</p> <p>Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006: This law replaced the Child Marriage Restraints Act, 1929. It criminalizes the acts of the person who performs, conducts, directs or abets any child marriage and provides for punishment with an <b>imprisonment up to 2 years</b> and fine up to <b>INR 1 lakh</b>.</p> <p>Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2015): The programme which is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, aims to break gender stereotypes and prevent child marriage.</p> <p>Protection to a child bride is also provided by the <b>Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015</b>; the <b>Domestic Violence Act, 2005</b>; and the <b>Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012</b>.</p> |
| Government Policies | <p>Union Government: Under the National Population Policy 2000 and <b>National Youth Policy 2003</b>, steps have been taken by the central government to address child marriage. The Union Government has launched schemes like the <b>Beti Bachao Beti Padhao</b>, <b>Sukanya Samridhi Yojana</b> for child marriage prevention.</p> <p>State Governments: Rajasthan has started the Action Approach for the Reduction of Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy. West Bengal's <b>Kanyashree Scheme</b> and <b>Rupashree schemes</b> are also aimed at elimination of child marriage.</p>  |

#### What should be the approach going ahead?

1. Empowering the Girl Child: The Governments should take all possible steps to improve access to education for girls, like **providing schools with proper sanitation facilities** and **Incentivising increased enrolment in school**.
2. Proper Implementation of Laws: Village Panchayats must work closely with the **Child Protection Committees** and **Child Marriage Prohibition Officers** to prevent instances of child marriages.
3. Social Change: There is a need to sensitize the parents and society about the ills of child marriage. Rallying the wider community to stand up for girls' rights will help bring the change.
4. Financial Upliftment: Providing families with livelihood opportunities like **microfinance** loans is an effective way to prevent child marriages that occur as a result of financial stress.
5. Community Involvement: Adoption of the **Child Marriage Free Village Initiative** and "Child Marriage Free" certifications for villages and gram panchayats on the lines of "**Open Defecation Free Village**" under the Swachh Bharat Mission can be explored.

#### Conclusion:

Child marriage spells an end to childhood, deprives children of their rights and leads to negative consequences for society. The efforts of the Union and State Governments, NGOs have led to a sharp decline in the instances of child marriages. However, all stakeholders should continue their efforts till this evil practice is eliminated completely.

UPSC GS-2: Social Justice  
Read More: [The Hindu](#)

### India's R&D Funding – Explained Pointwise

India is at a crucial juncture in its research and innovation landscape. The government is actively shifting towards privatizing research funding to boost innovation and strategic autonomy. A significant step in this direction was announced in the **Union Budget 2025-26**, where Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman **allocated ₹20,000 crore** to the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to establish a **private sector-driven research and development (R&D) fund**. This move aims to enhance India's research ecosystem by fostering innovation in emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), deep tech, and space technology.



Source- The Hindu

**What is the current state of R&D funding in India? How does the private sector drive research in other countries?**

| Aspect   | Current Status (Economic Survey 2022)   |
|--|---|
| India's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) as % of GDP | <b>0.64%</b> , significantly lower than the developed and emerging nations such as <b>China (2.4%)</b> , Germany (3.1%), South Korea (4.8%) and the <b>United States (3.5%)</b> . |
| Global Rank in Research Publications                                     | 3rd place globally  |
| Private Sector Contribution  | It contributes <b>36.4%</b> of the country's gross expenditure on R&D (GERD). Thus, in India, the government sector remains the main driver of R&D Funding.                       |
| Global Rank in Patents Granted (2022)                                    | <b>6th place</b> (30,490 patents granted)   |

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| AI Market Growth | Expanding at 25-35% compounded annual growth rate (CAGR), projected to reach US \$17 billion by 2027. |
|------------------|---|

Global examples of private sector-driven research:

1. France: Defense research is funded by the government but conducted in private defense firms.
2. USA: **80% of NASA's budget is contracted out to private firms and universities.** The Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) at Caltech, a private university, has been funded by NASA since 1954.
3. China: The success of **DeepSeek**, a private AI initiative, highlights how private-sector innovation can drive national progress.

**What are the key programs for funding private research in India and the recent budgetary announcements?**

Key Programs supporting private research:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Department of Science and Technology (DST)                      | It provides research grants to private universities through schemes like <b>FIST (Fund for Improvement of S&amp;T Infrastructure)</b> . |
| Ministry of Education's STARS Program                           | It supports private institutions in basic research  |
| DBT-BIRAC (Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council): | It offers <b>funding to private biotech firms.</b>  |
| State University Research Excellence (SERB-SURE):               | It aims to enhance R&D in state universities and colleges.  |
| Fund for Industrial Research Engagement (SERB-FIRE)             | It supports research collaborations between industries and academia.  |

Recent budgetary announcements:

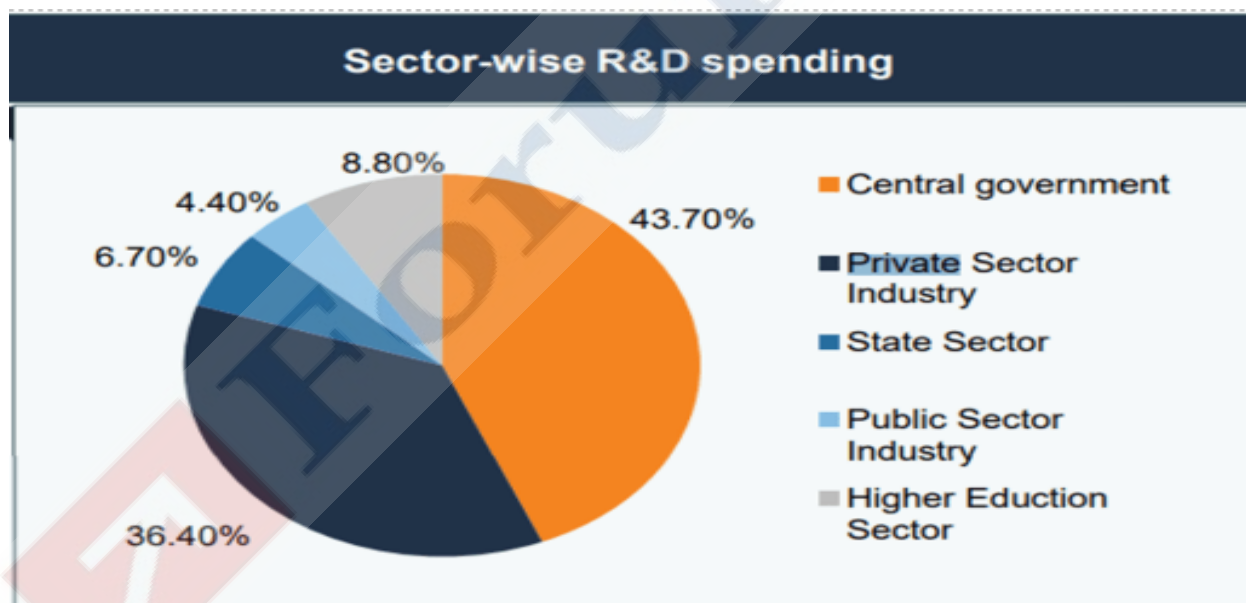
|  |   |
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| Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) | ANRF, a new organization, will allocate Rs. <b>2,800 crore annually to fund early-stage research in private institutions.</b> |
|--|---|



|  |  |
|--|--|
| Budget 2025-26   | <b>Rs 20,000 crore</b> allocated to private sector-driven research and innovation. It encourages private sector-driven R&D initiatives in sectors like AI, space technology, and advanced manufacturing. |
| ISRO's Private Contracts   | ISRO will now <b>purchase launch vehicles from private firms</b> , injecting taxpayer money into private-sector engineering.   |
| Ministry of Electronics and IT (MEITY) AI Investment                       | Procured 18,693 GPUs to support AI research, offering them to private IT firms at <b>\$1 per hour</b> .  |
| ₹1 Lakh Crore Corpus for Sunrise Technologies (interim Budget for 2024-25) | A <b>50-year interest-free loan</b> to promote private sector investment in emerging fields.   |

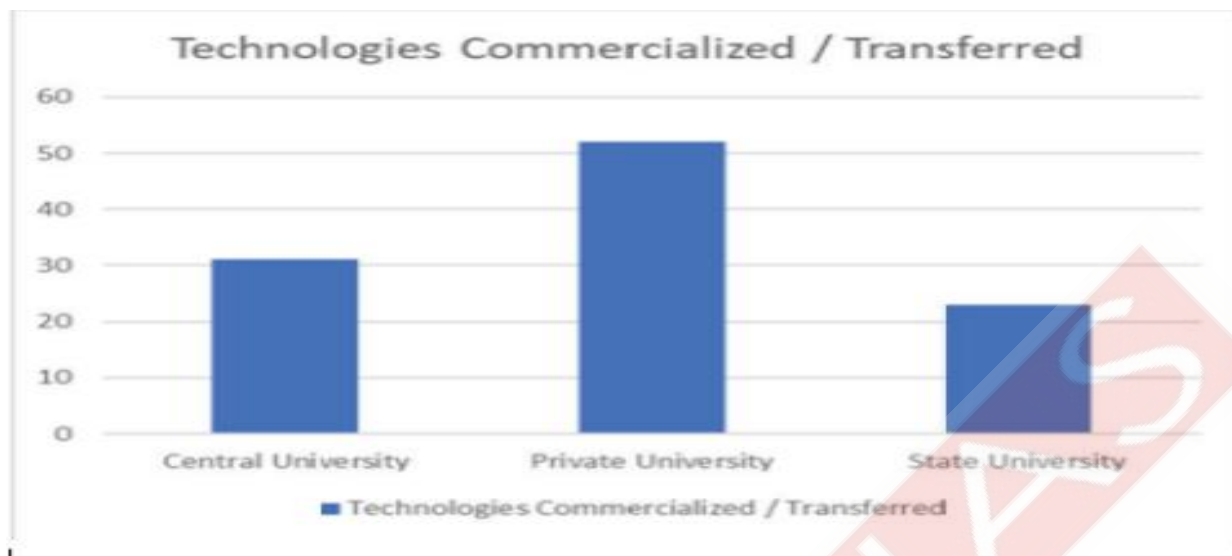
### Why should public funds be used to support private research?

1. The private sector is the **second-largest contributor** to R&D funding in India.



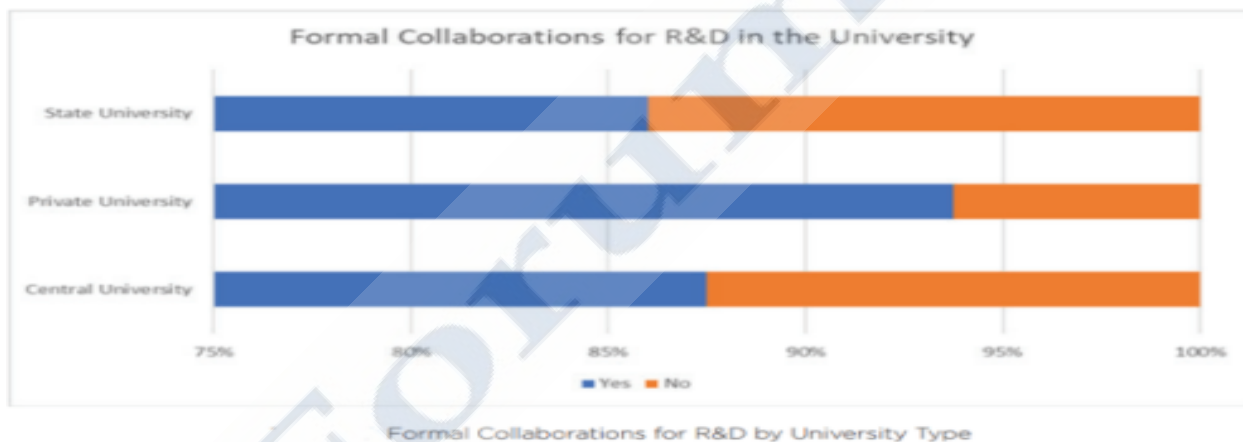
Niti Aayog

2. Private universities **lead in innovation, prototype development, and intellectual property (IP) generation**, often outperforming central universities.



Source- Niti Aayog

3. Collaborative R&D: Private institutions show **stronger industry collaborations**, leading to practical applications of research.



Source- Niti Aayog

4. Global Rankings and Research Output: Stagnant research performance and funding stress upon the need of private players involvement.

- No Indian university ranks in the top 300 of the Times Higher Education Index; only two are in the top 400.
- India has **15 researchers per lakh population**, compared to 111 in China and 825 in Israel.
- India **contributes 4.8% of global scientific publications**, a quarter of the output from China and the USA.

#### What are the benefits of shifting to private sector-led research?

1. Efficiency & Innovation: Private firms operate in a competitive market, which drives them to achieve more efficient and innovative R&D outcomes.
2. Economic Growth: Private sector research aligns better with market needs, leading to enhanced commercialization and job creation in research-intensive sectors.

3. Improved Education & Industry Collaboration: Stronger academia-industry partnerships foster **better training opportunities for students and researchers**, bridging the gap between education and industry.
4. Risk Diversification: Contracting research to multiple private firms **reduces dependency on government-run laboratories**, ensuring a more diverse and resilient research ecosystem.
5. Greater Societal Impact: Knowledge spillovers from private research can contribute to higher GDP growth, benefiting society as a whole.

#### What are the challenges in Implementation?

1. Low R&D Investment: India's GERD remains around 0.7% of GDP, **significantly below the 2% target**.
2. Accountability Issues: Relying on the private sector for 72% of National Research Foundation (NRF) funding raises concerns about alignment with national priorities.
3. Limited knowledge dissemination: Expertise **remains isolated within select institutions like ISRO**, rather than widely distributed across academia and industry.
4. Bureaucratic hurdles: Complex layers of administrative clearance delay financial approvals and project execution.
5. Belief-based Research Focus: Scientists express concerns over the government's emphasis on panch-gavya and Indian Knowledge Systems, potentially diverting resources from evidence-based research.

#### What should be the way forward?

1. Increase Public Funding for R&D: India must increase public funding for R&D by **raising GERD to at least 2% of GDP** to remain competitive. Additionally, greater financial support should be provided to state and private universities to bridge research gaps.
2. Strengthening Legal & Financial Frameworks: Legal reforms should promote **public-private partnerships (PPP) in research**, with transparent mechanisms to ensure efficient fund allocation and utilization.
3. Enhancing Industry-Academia Collaboration: The government can incentivize private sector investments in research by offering tax benefits and grants while also establishing **Centers of Excellence (CoEs) in emerging fields**.
4. Improving Research Accountability & Performance Evaluation: Creating monitoring frameworks to track research outcomes and commercialization while encouraging global collaborations to improve research output.
5. Encouraging Entrepreneurship & Startups in Deep Tech: The government can provide **grants and venture funding for startups** in sectors like AI, biotechnology, and space technology. Additionally, expanding incubators and accelerators in universities and research institutions will further support innovation and entrepreneurship.

#### Conclusion:

India's transition towards funding private universities and firms for R&D is a pivotal step in fostering innovation and intellectual growth. This approach aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "**Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan, and Jai Anusandhan**," emphasizing the importance of scientific research in national development.

India possesses the intellectual capital & the aspiration to become a global innovation leader. However, to tap this potential, we need to strengthen the structural, financial & cultural foundations for innovation.

Read more– [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus-GS 3– Indian science and technological development and Research

### India-New Zealand FTA – Explained Pointwise

The India-NZ FTA has recently been concluded in December 2025, under which the New Zealand will levy zero duty on 100% of India's exports & bring in \$20bn in FDI by 2030. The FTA is designed to double bilateral trade from the current \$2.4 billion to \$5 billion within the next five years.



#### What are some of the key highlights of the India-NZ FTA?

1. **Investment Commitment:** New Zealand has committed to facilitating \$20 billion in investment into India over the next 15 years, mirroring the model used in India's deal with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association).
2. **Trade Growth:** The agreement aims to double bilateral trade from the current \$2.4 billion to \$5 billion within five years.
3. **Gains for India:** New Zealand will provide zero-duty access on 100% of Indian exports immediately upon the deal entering into force. This covers 1,379 tariff lines, providing a massive boost to textiles, leather, gems, jewelry, and engineering goods.
4. **Gains for New Zealand:** India will reduce or eliminate tariffs on 95% of New Zealand's exports – with 57% of these products becoming duty free from day one:
  - a. **Immediate Duty-Free:** Wool, wooden logs, coking coal, and sheep meat.
  - b. **Phased Reduction:** Wine (tariffs cut from 150% to 25-50% over 10 years), kiwifruit, and apples.
5. **Safeguarded Sectors (Exclusions):** India successfully protected its most sensitive sectors. There are no tariff concessions on dairy (milk, cheese, butter), onions, sugar, wheat, rice, or spices.



6. **STEM Professionals:** A new pathway for 5,000 temporary employment visas annually for Indian professionals (valid for up to 3 years) in fields like IT, engineering, and healthcare.
7. **Traditional Occupations:** For the first time, specific quotas are reserved for Yoga instructors, Ayurveda practitioners, Indian chefs, and music teachers.
8. **Geographical Indications (GIs):** New Zealand will amend its laws to recognize Indian GIs (like specialized spirits and textiles) on par with the protection it gives to the European Union.
9. **Agricultural Productivity Partnership:** Instead of just trading produce, the two nations will collaborate to improve Indian farming yields through Centres of Excellence. Focused projects for Apples, Kiwifruit, and Honey to share New Zealand's advanced cold-chain and orchard management technology with Indian farmers.
10. **Women-led FTA:** India-NZ FTA is also one of the first FTAs negotiated & concluded entirely by a women-led & women-driven team – from the chief negotiating officer to the ambassador to New Zealand.

#### **What is the importance of India-NZ FTA?**

1. **Expanding Economic Footprint:** The India-NZ FTA is a framework for deeper cooperation in the future. It is India's conscious move to increase its global economic footprint & diversify its trade partners. Diversification of trade partners means that India does not have to be dependent on traditional markets like EU, the USA & China.
2. **The Dairy Win:** For years, the dairy sector was the primary deal-breaker. New Zealand is a global dairy giant, while India has millions of small-scale dairy farmers. India successfully excluded dairy from the pact, proving that it can sign high-quality deals with developed nations without compromising its sensitive agricultural base.
3. **The "EFTA Model" of Binding Investment:** Following the precedent set with the EFTA (European) deal, this FTA includes a binding commitment for \$20 billion in investment into India over 15 years. If the investment targets are not met, India has the right to suspend certain trade concessions. This shifts the focus from "trade for trade's sake" to "trade for investment and job creation."
4. **Professional Mobility:** The new Temporary Employment Entry (TEE) visa for 5,000 professionals annually creates a dedicated legal pathway for IT, engineering, and healthcare experts.
5. **AYUSH & Traditional Medicine:** This is the first time New Zealand has signed a dedicated annex recognizing traditional medicine. It promotes India's Ayurveda and Yoga on a global stage, facilitating "medical value travel."
6. **Oceania Gateway:** For India, New Zealand acts as a strategic gateway to the wider Pacific Island markets, strengthening India's influence in the Indo-Pacific region.
7. **Supply Chain Resilience:** By securing duty-free inputs like wooden logs, coking coal, and wool, the FTA helps Indian manufacturers lower their production costs. This supports the "Make in India" initiative by integrating Indian MSMEs into high-value global supply chains.
8. **Soft Power:** The Indian diaspora in New Zealand constitute 5% of its population. This creates a promising exchange & opens opportunities for soft power politics between the two nations.

#### **What are the criticisms of India-NZ FTA?**

1. **Apple Farmers (J&K and Himachal):** Apple growers in Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh have protested the reduction of import duties on New Zealand apples (cut from 50% to 25% within a quota). They argue this "violates promises" made by the government and will allow cheaper foreign fruit to crush local livelihoods.

2. **Exclusion of Dairy:** For the first time in its history, New Zealand signed an FTA that completely excludes core dairy products (milk, cheese, butter). The critics, which include the current New Zealand government's coalition partners, argue this is a "bad deal" because dairy accounts for nearly 30% of New Zealand's total exports.
3. **Trade Deficit Worries:** Skeptics point out that India's past FTAs (like those with ASEAN and Japan) have often led to a widening trade deficit. They fear that despite the "investment" promises, the immediate surge in imports (wood, wool, coal) might outweigh export gains in the short term.
4. **Increase in India's Import Bill:** Some critics caution that even without dairy concessions, deep tariff cuts on up to 95% of New Zealand goods could add to India's overall import bill, pressuring domestic producers if safeguards and rules-of-origin are weak.

**Conclusion:** Even though the India-NZ FTA is considered historic, it is important for India to invest in R&D for increasing quality for increasing quality & competitiveness of its product if it has to thrive in the global market.

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### **Gig Workers in India – Benefits & Challenges – Explained Pointwise**

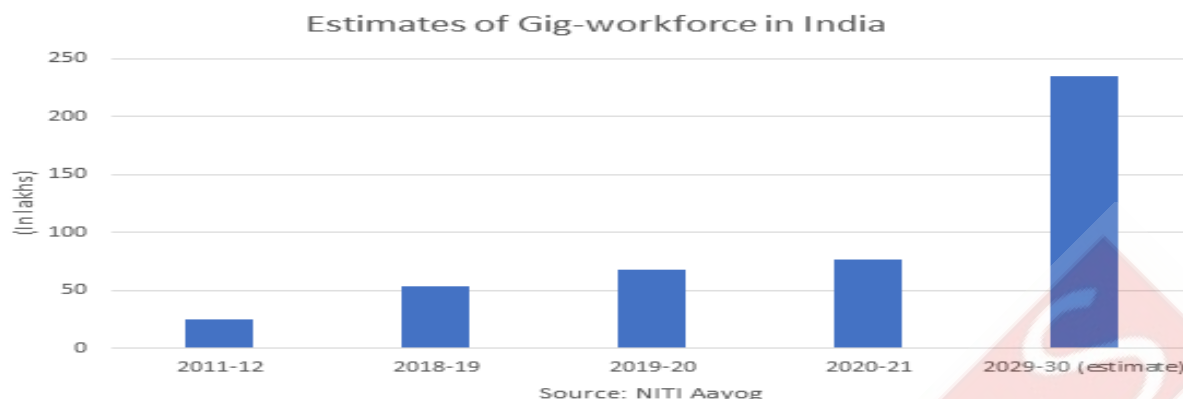
Gig & platform worker unions have announced a strike on New Year's eve against systemic exclusion from core labour entitlements of the workers in the segment. According to the Gig & Platform Services Workers Unions (GIPSWU), the gig workers continue to face pervasive harassment, discrimination, and violence. The gig workers have organized the strike to demand better safety gear, transparent pay structures, and official recognition of their labor rights.

#### **Who are the Gig Workers?**

- According to the Code on Social Security 2019, a gig worker is: "A person who works and earns through activities outside traditional employer-employee relationships."
- Gig work is largely task-based, facilitated through digital platforms. Workers, including freelancers and independent contractors, are paid per task rather than through full-time contracts. Common roles range from food delivery to online freelancing and digital services.

#### **What is the present status of Gig Economy & Gig Workers in India?**

- As of now, India has around 7-8 million gig workers, and this number is rapidly growing. NITI Aayog estimates that the numbers of gig workers could expand to 23.5 million by 2029-30.
- The gig economy is expected to expand at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 12%, reaching 23-25 million workers by 2030. This would mean that gig workers would make up 4.1% of India's total workforce by that time.
- A report by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) suggests that the gig economy could potentially create 90 million non-farm jobs.
- The gig economy could create 90 million non-farm jobs and contribute an additional 1.25% to India's GDP, reflecting its potential as a significant economic driver.



| Indicator          | Value   |
|--------------------|---|
| 2020-21            | 7.7 million gig workers (NITI Aayog)                                      |
| 2029-30 Projection | 23.5 million workers  |
| Skill Distribution | 47% medium-skilled<br>22% high-skilled<br>31% low-skilled                 |
| Major Sectors      | Ride-hailing, delivery, content creation, marketing, e-commerce logistics |

#### What are the factors behind rapid growth of Gig Economy in India?

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Digital Access        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 936 million internet users and 650 million smartphone users (2025 estimate).</li> <li>Affordable devices and 4G/5G connectivity allow even rural workers to participate.</li> </ul> |
| e-commerce & Startups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Platforms like Zomato, Swiggy, Urban Company, Amazon, Flipkart create demand for delivery, marketing, and logistics work.</li> </ul>   |

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Consumer Convenience  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban lifestyles increase demand for on-demand services, boosting opportunities in delivery, customer support, and freelancing.</li> </ul> |
| Labor Market Dynamics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surplus of semi-skilled labor, weak social security, and high unemployment push workers toward gig jobs as a survival strategy.</li> </ul> |
| Work Preferences      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Younger generations value flexibility, remote work, and project-based tasks, making gig work highly attractive.</li> </ul>                 |

### What are benefits of Gig Economy & Gig workers?

- 1. Opportunities for Workers:** Gig work provides flexible hours, helping workers balance personal and professional life. For example, a woman delivering groceries via Swiggy can manage childcare, while a freelance designer on Upwork can pick projects based on availability.
- 2. Business Advantages:** Companies access cost-effective, short-term labor. Amazon and Flipkart hire gig workers during peak seasons, allowing rapid workforce scaling and higher productivity.
- 3. Economic Impact:** By 2030, the gig economy could create 90 million jobs, handle \$250 billion in transactions, contribute 1.25% to GDP, and represent 4.1% of the workforce. Platforms like Zomato and Ola illustrate its role in boosting employment and economic activity.
- 4. Inclusivity & Technology:** Gig work is reaching Tier-II and Tier-III cities, offering jobs to local youth. Ride-sharing and food delivery are expanding in cities like Mysuru, Coimbatore, and Lucknow. AI and predictive analytics help assign tasks efficiently, cut waiting times, and increase earnings.
- 5. Skill Development:** Gig work encourages skill enhancement and digital literacy, as workers learn new tools, platforms, and professional practices to stay competitive.

### What are the challenges faced by the Gig Workers?

- 1. Income Volatility:** Unlike traditional salaries, gig income fluctuates based on demand, season, or even the time of day. This “feast-or-famine” cycle makes long-term financial planning (like getting a mortgage) extremely difficult.
- 2. Lack of Benefits:** Most gig workers are classified as “independent contractors,” meaning they do not receive health insurance, paid sick leave, maternity leave, or retirement contributions.
- 3. Operational Costs:** Workers often bear the full burden of expenses, such as fuel, vehicle maintenance, insurance, and equipment, which can significantly eat into their “take-home” pay.
- 4. The “Black Box”:** Platforms use opaque algorithms to assign tasks, set pay rates, and track performance. Workers often feel they are working for a “boss they can’t talk to.”
- 5. Arbitrary Deactivation:** A sudden drop in customer ratings or a technical glitch can lead to “deactivation” (essentially being fired) without a clear human appeal process or due process.
- 6. Surge and Target Pressure:** Many platforms use “gamified” incentives, pushing workers to work longer hours or take higher risks (like 10-minute delivery guarantees) to meet targets or earn bonuses.



7. Occupational Hazards: Delivery and transport workers face high risks of road accidents, extreme weather exposure, and physical exhaustion.
8. Misclassification: There is a global legal battle over whether gig workers should be considered “employees.” Until this is resolved, many remain in a “legal grey area” without the protection of minimum wage laws or collective bargaining rights.

#### What are the various initiatives taken by the government for Gig Workers?

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Central Legislation     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Code on Wages, 2019: Proposes a universal minimum wage for all sectors, including gig workers.</li> <li>● Code on Social Security, 2020: Recognises gig workers as a separate category, but rules are yet to be framed.</li> <li>● Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines, 2020: Provides term insurance of ₹15 lakh and health insurance of ₹10 lakh for gig drivers. Limits working hours to 12 hours per day with a 10-hour break if logged in full-time.</li> <li>● PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY, 2025-26): Offers ₹5 lakh per family per year health coverage for gig workers.</li> <li>● e-SHRAM Portal (2021): National database for unorganized and gig workers; 30.58 crore workers registered as of early 2025.</li> </ul>                                 |
| State-Level Initiatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rajasthan (2023): First state to enact platform-based gig worker law. Key features include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mandatory registration of gig workers and aggregators.</li> <li>○ Creation of a Welfare Board and Fund, financed by a 1-2% transaction cess.</li> <li>○ Provisions for grievance redressal, payment transparency, and rights awareness.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Karnataka (2024 Bill): Based on Rajasthan’s law but with stronger focus on worker safety and welfare. Includes aggregator contributions to the welfare fund as a percentage of gig worker earnings.</li> <li>● Jharkhand &amp; Bihar: Recently passed similar laws ensuring registration and grievance redressal mechanisms for app-based workers.</li> </ul> |

#### What should be the way forward?

1. Implement existing legal framework better: Notify the detailed rules on eligibility, contribution rates, and benefit packages (health, accident, pension, maternity) under the social security fund for gig workers. Ensuring all gig workers are on e-Shram and linking this to actual scheme delivery, not just data collection, including PM-JAY coverage and existing pension schemes for unorganised workers.
2. Design a robust social security fund: Mandate 1-2% of platform annual turnover or payouts (capped as in the Codes) into a ring-fenced social security fund, with public disclosure and digital tracking of all contributions and disbursements. Provide portable, proportional benefits (health insurance, accident cover, disability support, and old-age income protection) that follow the worker across multiple platforms and cities.

3. Improve Work Conditions & Income Security: Guarantee minimum earnings floors or algorithmic “minimum standard orders” for pay, deductions, and insurance, drawing on models used in Australia and certain US jurisdictions.
4. Strengthen Worker Voice & Data Rights:
  - a. Giving gig worker representatives real voting power in national and state Social Security Boards and Welfare Boards, with transparent criteria for their selection.
  - b. Mandating platform transparency on algorithms that set fares, incentives, and ratings, and granting workers rights to explanation and appeal against automated decisions, as proposed in draft state legislation.
5. Encourage Platform Responsibility & Innovation:
  - a. Offering tax or regulatory incentives for platforms that provide group insurance, skill-upgradation, and savings products over and above statutory minima, while penalising free-riding on the system.
  - b. Promoting digital benefit wallets linked to worker IDs so that every platform contribution (statutory and voluntary) accumulates in one portable account, improving financial inclusion and credit access for gig workers.
6. Implement NITI Aayog’s RAISE Framework:

### RAISE Framework

NITI Aayog has proposed a five-pronged RAISE approach to ensure realisation of full access to social security for all gig and platform workers.

**Recognise** the varied nature of platform work to design equitable schemes.

**Allow** augmentation of social security through innovative financing mechanisms.

**Ensure** benefits are readily accessible to workers.

**Incorporate**, while designing schemes, the specific interests of platforms, factoring the impact on job creation, platform businesses and workers.

**Support** workers to subscribe to government schemes and welfare programmes through widespread awareness campaigns.

Source: NITI Aayog

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