

Forum IAS

7 PM COMPILATION

3rd and 4th week February, 2026

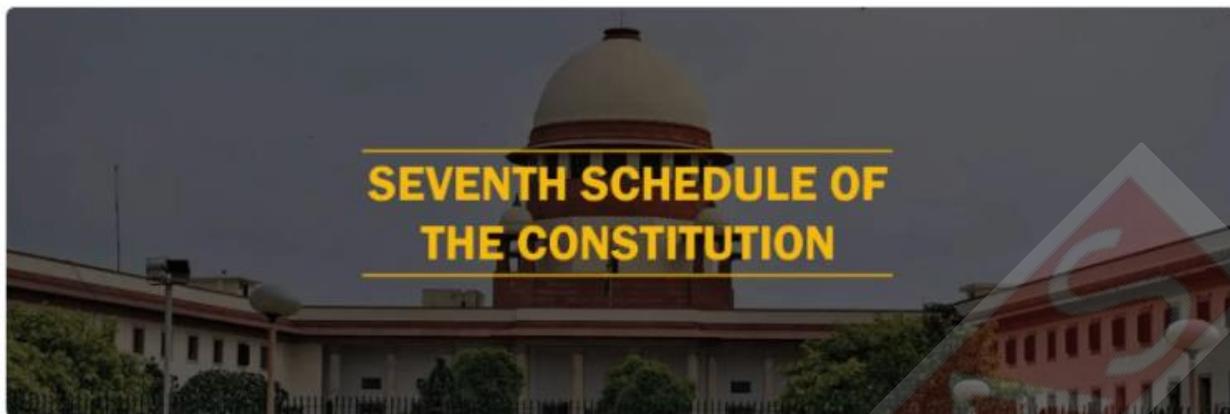
Features of 7 PM compilation

- ❖ Comprehensive coverage of a given current topic
- ❖ Provide you all the information you need to frame a good answer
- ❖ Critical analysis, comparative analysis, legal/constitutional provisions, current issues and challenges and best practices around the world
- ❖ Written in lucid language and point format
- ❖ Wide use of charts, diagrams and info graphics
- ❖ Best-in class coverage, critically acclaimed by aspirants
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7th Schedule of Indian Constitution – Explained Pointwise

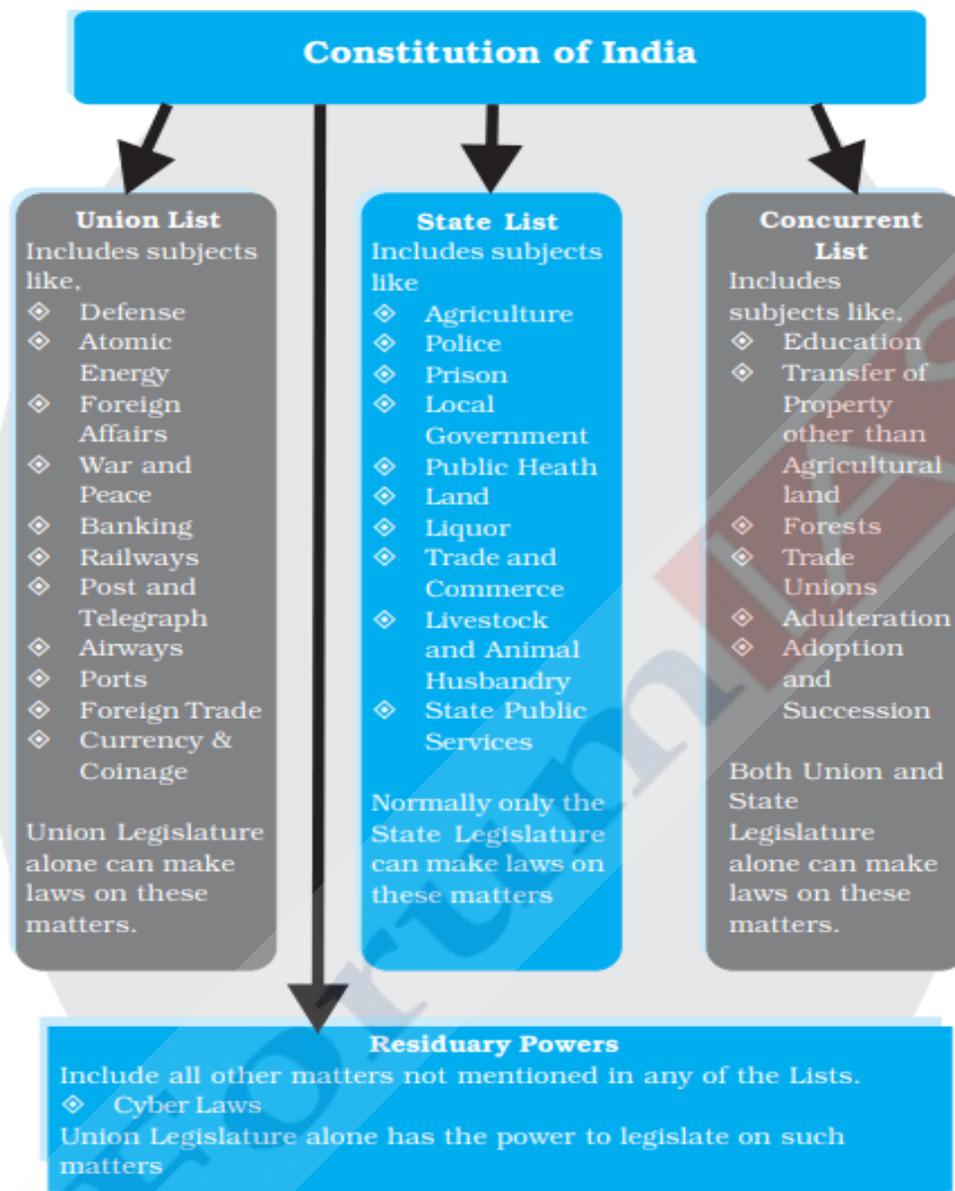


What is 7th Schedule of Indian Constitution?

- The 7th Schedule of the Indian Constitution delineates the distribution of powers and responsibilities between the Union (Central) and State governments in India.
- This schedule is integral in ensuring a balanced federal structure, specifying which level of government has jurisdiction over various domains.
- **Article 246** of the Constitution mentions three lists in the Seventh Schedule — Union, State and Concurrent lists.
- **Three functional lists:**

<p>List I: The Union List</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This list contains matters of national importance. ● Only the Parliament of India has the exclusive power to legislate on these items. ● Purpose: To ensure uniformity across the country in critical sectors. ● Key Subjects: Defense, Foreign Affairs, Banking, Railways, Atomic Energy, and Citizenship. ● Number of items: Originally 97, currently 100
<p>List II: The State List</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This list covers matters of regional or local importance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generally, State Legislatures have the exclusive power to make laws here. ● Purpose: To allow states to tailor laws to their specific socio-economic needs. ● Key Subjects: Public Order, Police, Public Health and Sanitation, Agriculture, and Local Government. ● Number of items: Originally 66, currently 61
List III: The Concurrent List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Both the Parliament and State Legislatures can make laws on these subjects. ● If there is a conflict between a Central law and a State law on a concurrent subject, the Central law prevails (unless the State law received Presidential assent). ● Key Subjects: Education, Forests, Trade Unions, Marriage and Divorce, and Adoption. ● Number of items: Originally 47, currently 52



What is the significance of the 7th schedule of the Indian constitution?

- 1. Clear Division of Powers:** The 7th Schedule defines the jurisdiction of the **Union** and **State governments**, ensuring a clear delineation of responsibilities. This helps maintain the federal balance & prevents prevent "Jurisdictional Overlap". If a law overlaps slightly into another list, the courts use the 7th Schedule to determine the "true nature" of the law and decide its validity (**The Doctrine of Pith and Substance**).
- 2. Balancing National Unity with Regional Autonomy:** The 7th Schedule acts as a bridge between the need for a strong central government and the cultural/geographic diversity of India. Subjects like

Defense and **Foreign Affairs** are kept with the Union to ensure India speaks with one voice (**UNITY**). Subjects like **Agriculture** and **Public Health** are with the States, as a “one-size-fits-all” approach wouldn’t work for a country as diverse as India (**DIVERSITY**).

- 3. Decentralization of Authority:** By distributing powers, it encourages effective governance closer to the citizens, allowing states to address local issues more efficiently.
- 4. Avoiding Conflicts:** It reduces potential conflicts between the Union and State legislatures by clearly specifying which level of government has the authority to legislate on specific subjects.
- 5. Promoting Cooperative Federalism:** The Concurrent List encourages the Union and States to work together on issues that require a national standard but local implementation, such as **Education** and **Forests**. It allows for a “National Minimum” standard while giving States the flexibility to add their own layers of governance.
- 6. Empowerment of States:** States can create legislation that resonates with their demographic, economic, and cultural conditions, promoting local governance.
- 7. Adaptability through Residuary Powers:** By granting **Residuary Powers** (Article 248) to the Union, the Constitution ensures that as the world changes—bringing new challenges like AI, Space Exploration, or Cyber Security—there is never a “power vacuum.”

What are the issues with the 7th Schedule?

- 1. Centralization of Authority (The “Unitary Tilt”):** Critics argue that the Union List is extensive, often leading to central overreach into areas that might be better handled by states, undermining the federal structure. Moreover, by giving **Residuary Powers** exclusively to the Centre, the Constitution naturally increases the Union’s power over time. Also, the Rajya Sabha can pass a resolution (**Article 249**) allowing Parliament to make laws on a subject in the **State List** in the “national interest,” which some states view as an infringement on their autonomy.
- 2. Redundancy and Obsolescence:** The lists were drafted in 1950 and were largely based on the Government of India Act, 1935. Many entries are now considered “colonial relics” or simply outdated. Terms like “Public Order” or “Ancient Monuments” can lead to legal disputes when both governments try to claim jurisdiction.
- 3. Modern Challenges:** There is no clear slot for modern complexities like **Climate Change, Data Privacy, or Global Pandemics**. During COVID-19, the government had to rely on the *Disaster Management Act* because “Pandemics” isn’t a dedicated entry in the 7th Schedule.

4. **Overlapping Jurisdictions:** Some subjects can lead to confusion about whether they fall under the Union List, State List, or Concurrent List, causing conflicts in legislation.
5. **Disempowerment of States:** States may find their legislative power diminished due to central laws taking precedence, especially in areas listed in the Concurrent List.
6. **Slow Amendment Process:** Amending the Constitution to modify the lists can be a lengthy and complex process, making it difficult to respond quickly to emerging needs or issues. The amendment process often requires broad political consensus, which can hinder timely updates.
7. **Duplication of Efforts:** Overlapping responsibilities can lead to duplication in governance efforts, resulting in inefficiencies and misuse of resources.
8. **Coordination Challenges:** Differences in law across states can complicate administration, especially in areas like transport and education where cross-border cooperation is necessary.

What should be the way forward?

To address the issues associated with the **7th Schedule** and improve the federal structure in India, both the **Sarkaria Commission** and the **Punchi Commission** have provided valuable recommendations:

1. Sarkaria Commission (1983):

- Strengthen the specific definitions of subjects in the Union and State Lists to minimize overlaps and ambiguities.
- Increase the autonomy of states by reviewing and potentially reducing the Union List, allowing states greater control over local matters.
- Before the Parliament passes a law on any subject in the **Concurrent List**, the Union must consult the State governments. This prevents “legislative surprise.”
- **Residuary Powers:** It recommended that while taxing power should remain with the Union, other residuary powers (new, emerging subjects) should ideally be moved to the **Concurrent List** so both levels can act.
- Establish an **Inter-State Council** to facilitate dialogue among states and the Union, ensuring better coordination and cooperation on shared subjects.

2. Punchi Commission (2007):

- **Refinement of the 7th Schedule:** Suggested a thorough review of the subjects in the Constitution to reflect the contemporary political and social realities, including potential new subjects in the lists.
 - It suggested a formal mechanism where the Union and States reach a **broad agreement** before the Union introduces legislation on Concurrent subjects.
 - Emphasize the need for a more empowered role for states, particularly in fields such as education, health, and development.
3. **Transition to “Outcome-Based” Lists:** Currently, the lists are based on **subjects** (e.g., “Forests”). Modern governance often requires **outcomes** (e.g., “Climate Change Mitigation”). Thus, create “Framework Legislations” where the Union sets the **National Goal** (e.g., Net Zero emissions), but the 7th Schedule explicitly protects the States’ right to choose the **Method** of achieving it.
 4. **Creating a “Grey Zone” Clearinghouse:** To assign new topic like **Cryptocurrency** or **AI Ethics**, establish a **Technical Standing Committee** under the Inter-State Council. Before a new subject is assigned to a list, this committee of experts and state representatives should perform a “Federal Impact Assessment” to decide if it should be Union, State, or Concurrent.
 5. **Periodic Review of Entries:** To address the issue of legacy items in the 7th Schedule that no longer serve a purpose or create unnecessary bureaucracy, introduce a **Periodic Review Clause** (every 20 years). Just as the Finance Commission reviews revenue sharing every 5 years, a “Constitutional Powers Commission” could recommend moving items between lists based on current economic realities.
 6. **Flexibility in Concurrent List:** If the Union makes a law on a Concurrent subject (like Health or Education), a State should be allowed to follow its own model provided it meets the **minimum national standards** set by the Union. This encourages “Competitive Federalism.”

Conclusion: Thus, we need to move away from “**Water-tight Compartments**” (where lists are strictly separated) to “**Shared Sovereignty.**” In an interconnected digital economy, the Union and States are no longer competitors for power; they are partners in a single economic unit.

Role of AI in Democracy – Explained Pointwise

India is hosting the AI Impact Summit 2026, one of the leading international forums focused on artificial intelligence. It is also one of the largest global gatherings on AI ever hosted in the Global South, bringing

together governments, industry leaders, policymakers, researchers, startups, and civil society to discuss the real-world impact of AI.

As artificial intelligence has rapidly evolved in recent years from a theoretical concept into a tangible reality, significant concerns have emerged regarding its impact on economic, social, and political systems. In this context, it is essential to examine its implications for democratic systems in particular.



How different countries use AI tools in their governance systems?

ESTONIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Estonia is the world leader in integrating AI into the very fabric of the state.• Bürokratt (#KratAl): A national virtual assistant that allows citizens to access all government services via a single voice-activated or text-based interface.• AI Judges: The country has experimented with “robot judges” for small claims disputes to clear court backlogs, though human oversight remains for appeals.
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INDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bhashini (Language Bridge): India uses AI to provide real-time speech-to-speech translation in dozens of Indian languages. This allows a farmer who speaks only Marathi to access central government services or court documents originally written in English. ● AI in Justice: The Indian Supreme Court uses AI (SUVAS) to translate legal papers, making justice more accessible to non-English speakers.
TAIWAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Polis (Consensus Mapping): Taiwan uses AI algorithms to map out public opinion on controversial topics (like Uber regulations or liquor sales). Instead of highlighting extreme views, the AI identifies “consensus statements” that most people agree on, helping lawmakers find middle ground.
GERMANY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The city of Berlin has launched BärGPT, a state-owned AI assistant for its 130,000 employees. Developed as an open-source solution with high data protection standards, it helps with generating, translating, and summarizing texts, as well as analyzing documents.

How can AI contribute to the functioning of a democracy?

1. **Improving Accessibility:** AI-driven real-time translation and transcription can make political debates, and government documents accessible to citizens with disabilities or those who speak different languages, fostering a more inclusive public sphere. Thus, it can make the democratic process accessible to those with lower literacy or for whom English is a second language.
2. **Predictive Service Delivery:** By analyzing data, local governments can predict which neighborhoods might face a public health crisis or where infrastructure is likely to fail, allowing them to allocate taxpayer resources more equitably.
3. **Hyper-Personalized Services:** AI can help citizens find government programs they qualify for (like tax credits or healthcare subsidies) that they might otherwise miss due to complex paperwork.

4. **Data-Driven Policy Making:** By analyzing large datasets on public health, traffic patterns, economic activity, and social needs, AI can help policymakers identify problems more precisely, model the potential impacts of different policy options, and design more effective, evidence-based solutions. This moves governance from being reactive to proactive.
5. **Enhancing Public Services:** AI-powered chatbots can provide 24/7 assistance to citizens navigating government services, answering questions about benefits, taxes, or regulations, thus improving the citizen-state interface.
6. **Monitoring Government Activity:** AI can be used by journalists, watchdogs, and civil society to monitor government spending, track changes in legislation, and analyze public records for signs of corruption, waste, or abuse of power.
7. **Use in electoral process:**
 - **Securing Elections:** AI-powered cybersecurity tools can help protect voter registration databases and election infrastructure from cyberattacks and foreign interference, safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process.
 - **Voter Engagement:** Tools like chatbots can provide voters with information about candidates, policies, and voting procedures, making it easier for them to participate.
 - **Electoral roll management:** AI helps in cleaning and updating voter databases to reduce errors and duplication.
 - **Transparency in Electoral Expenditure:** AI can cross-reference declared expenses against market rates, flagging when candidates have spent more than what they have declared.

What are the major challenges and risks associated with AI in democratic systems?

1. **Deepfakes & Synthetic Persuasion:** Generative AI allows for the mass production of hyper-realistic audio and video. In recent elections (e.g., Slovakia 2023, India 2024), “persona bots” and fake audio clips were used to simulate scandals just days before voting, leaving no time for debunking.
2. **Micro-Targeted Manipulation:** By analyzing vast datasets—voter rolls, consumer habits, and social media activity— AI can identify and target individual voters with hyper-personalized political ads designed to exploit their fears, suppress their likelihood to vote, or sway their choice.
3. **Algorithmic Bias and Discrimination:** AI models learn from historical data, which often contains embedded societal biases related to race, gender, and socioeconomic status. When these models are

used in critical public domains, they can perpetuate and even amplify discrimination e.g. Risk assessment tools used in courts have been shown to be biased against minority groups.

4. **Erosion of Civil Society:** AI operates at a speed that human-led organizations (unions, NGOs, community groups) cannot match. There is a risk of a “technological arms race” where traditional civic infrastructure is overpowered by well-funded AI persuasion machines.
5. **The Digital Divide:** The benefits of AI-driven governance (e.g., efficient online services) may not reach all citizens equally, further marginalizing communities with limited internet access or digital literacy. Conversely, the risks of AI (e.g., surveillance) often disproportionately affect these same communities.
6. **Diffusion of Responsibility:** When a decision is made or influenced by an AI, it becomes difficult to assign responsibility. Is it the fault of the programmer, the agency that deployed it, the politician who approved its use, or the AI itself? This accountability gap can be exploited to avoid blame for harmful outcomes.
7. **Mass Surveillance:** AI enables governments to analyze data from CCTV cameras, social media, financial transactions, and online activity at an unprecedented scale. AI-powered facial recognition can track individuals’ movements in public spaces, chilling free speech and assembly.

What should be the way forward?

1. For Governments: The Role of “Smart” Regulators:

- a. **Enact Comprehensive, Rights-Based AI Legislation:** Laws should be built on a foundation of fundamental rights. They should be based on key components like mandatory transparency, algorithm impact assessment etc.
- b. **Sovereign AI Infrastructure:** To avoid dependence on a few global tech giants, countries need to build “Public Interest AI.” These are open-source, transparent models trained on public data to serve local needs (like translating court judgments into regional languages) without a profit motive.
- c. **Liability Frameworks:** Enact new laws that can establish a clear chain of responsibility, ensuring that the developers and deployers are legally liable for the outputs of their systems.

2. For Tech Companies: The Role of Responsible Innovators:

- a. Embrace “Responsible AI by Design”:** Ethical considerations, safety testing, and bias mitigation should not be an afterthought but integrated from the very beginning of the development process.
 - b. Prioritize Transparency:** Move away from “black box” models in high-stakes domains. Invest in research to make AI systems more interpretable. Publicly release transparency reports detailing the use of their AI, the steps taken to mitigate risks, and the results of internal audits.
 - c. Content Provenance and Authentication:** Develop and widely implement robust technical standards (like digital watermarking or cryptographic provenance) for AI-generated content so that citizens can know if what they are seeing is real or synthetic. This is a direct countermeasure to deepfakes.
- 3. For Civil Society & Academia: The Role of Independent Watchdogs:**
 - a. Conduct Independent Audits and Research:** Universities and non-profit organizations must develop the expertise to audit AI systems for bias, fairness, and compliance with the law, publishing their findings for public scrutiny.
 - b. Educate and Advocate:** Civil society organizations are essential for raising public awareness about AI’s risks and advocating for strong, rights-protective policies. They translate complex technical issues into language the public can understand and act upon.
- 4. For Citizens: The Role of a Resilient Public:**
 - a. Invest in Massive Digital and Civic Literacy:** A citizen who cannot distinguish between a deepfake and a real video is effectively “disenfranchised.” Schools and public service programs must shift towards treating AI literacy as a foundational skill, similar to reading – which should include a basic understanding of what AI is, how it works, its capabilities, and its limitations.
 - b. Demand Accountability:** Citizens must use their voices and their votes to demand that their representatives take AI governance seriously. They should support companies that demonstrate responsible practices.

Conclusion: AI's integration into democratic processes must be approached with caution. Ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusivity is crucial to prevent pitfalls associated with technology misuse and to foster a healthy democratic environment.

UPSC GS-2: Polity

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Sedition Law in India – Explained Pointwise



What is Sedition?

- In India, Sedition used to fall under section 124A of the IPC (Indian Penal Code).
- It was defined as any action that brings or attempts to bring contempt or hatred towards the Government of India. Sedition cases are punishable with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. It categorizes four sources of seditious acts: **(a) Spoken words; (b) Written words; (c) Signs; (d) Visible representations.**
- Sedition cases were punishable with a maximum sentence of **life imprisonment.**
- It was classified as “**cognizable**” (*No need of Court warrant to arrest the person*) and a “**non-bailable**” and “**non-compoundable**” offence (*In a compoundable offence, charges against the accused can withdrawn*).
- A person charged under this provision **can't apply for a government job.**
- She/he had to **live without their passport.** Apart from that, they must present themselves in court as and when required.

- In 2023, the IPC was replaced by the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)**. While the new **BNS** has technically replaced the IPC and omitted the word “sedition,” the substance remains under **Section 152** (acts endangering sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India).

History of Sedition law in India:

- Sedition law was first enacted in **17th century England**. Later it was inserted into IPC in 1870.
- The section was introduced initially to deal with increasing Wahabi activities between 1863 and 1870. These activities posed a challenge to the colonial government.
- Some of the most famous sedition trials of the late 19th and early 20th century involved Indian nationalist leaders:
 - The first among them was the trial of **Jogendra Chandra Bose** in 1891. He was the editor of the newspaper, **Bangobasi**. He wrote an article criticizing the Age of Consent Bill for posing a threat to the religion and for its coercive relationship with Indians.
 - It was also used to prosecute **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** (for his writings in Kesari) in **1897**.
 - The other well-known case was the sedition trial of **Mahatma Gandhi** in 1922. Gandhi had called Sedition “*the prince among the political sections of the IPC designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen*”.

Judicial interventions on Sedition law in India:

1. In 1951, the **Punjab High Court** had ruled Section 124A to be **unconstitutional**. A similar ruling was passed in 1959 by the **Allahabad High Court**, which also concluded that it struck at the very root of free speech.
2. **Kedar Nath Singh v State of Bihar, 1962:**
 - The Supreme Court has **upheld the constitutionality of Section 124-A** (sedition) on the basis that this power was required by the state to protect itself but **narrowed its scope**.
 - However, it said that every citizen has a right to say or write about the government by way of criticism or comment. A citizen can criticize the government to the extent it does not incite people into violence against the government or with the intention of creating public disorder.
3. **P. Alavi vs State of Kerala, 1982:**

- The Supreme Court held that **sloganeering, criticizing of Parliament or Judicial setup** does not amount to sedition unless there is a direct call to violence.
- It reinforced that “anti-government sentiment” isn’t a crime.

4. **Balwant Singh v State of Punjab, 1995:**

- The Supreme Court acquitted persons from charges of sedition for shouting slogans such as “Khalistan Zindabad”.
- The court held that mere raising of slogans by two individuals alone cannot be said as sedition. Further, it is also not considered as an attempt aimed to excite hatred or disaffection against the government.

5. **Sanskar Marathe v The State of Maharashtra, 2015:**

- In this case, the Bombay High Court issued certain guidelines Police officials must follow before filing a sedition case against anyone.
- **These guidelines include an objective evaluation of the seditious material.** By evaluation, the police **must form an opinion** on whether the words and actions caused disaffection and disloyalty to the government.

6. **Rajat Sharma v. The Union of India Case, 2021:**

- In this case, the court ruling said that **disagreeing with the views and policies of the government** will not attract the offence of sedition. So the provision of Sedition cannot be invoked to quiet the disquiet ([criminalizing the critics](#)).

7. **S.G. Vombatkere v. Union of India (2022):**

- The court **effectively paused** Section 124A. It ordered that no new FIRs be filed under the law and that all pending trials and proceedings be kept in abeyance while the Government of India re-examined the statute.
- This paved the way for the legislative overhaul and the introduction of the BNS.

Arguments supporting the sedition law in India:

1. **National Security:** One of the strongest arguments is related to **national security**. Supporters contend that sedition laws are essential for safeguarding the country against individuals or groups that seek to undermine the state or promote anti-national sentiments. It provides a mechanism to deal with secessionist movements, armed rebellion, and terrorism in sensitive regions (like Jammu & Kashmir or regions facing Left-Wing Extremism).

- 2. Preserving Public Order:** The law is also defended on the basis of maintaining **public order**. By restricting speech that may incite violence or promote hatred against the state, it is argued that the overall social fabric is preserved.
- 3. Preventing Terrorism:** In the context of modern geopolitical challenges, the sedition law is cited as a tool in the fight against **terrorism**. By deterring individuals from glorifying or advocating violence against the government, it aims to minimize terrorist ideologies from taking root.
- 4. Limitations on Freedom of Speech:** Supporters assert that freedom of speech is not absolute; it comes with responsibilities. The law is viewed as a reasonable restriction to ensure that such freedoms do not endanger society.
- 5. Protecting the Sovereignty, Unity, and Integrity of India:** The new iteration of the law, **Section 150 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, reframes the offence. It moves away from the colonial term “sedition” and instead criminalises acts that “**endanger the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India**”.

Arguments against the sedition law in India:

- 1. Chilling Effect on Free Speech:** One of the most significant drawbacks of the sedition law is its **chilling effect on free speech**. Critics emphasize that the fear of sedition charges can deter individuals from voicing dissent or engaging in political criticism, which is essential for a vibrant democracy.
- 2. Ambiguity and Misuse:** The law is often criticized for its **ambiguous language**, which can lead to arbitrary interpretations. This ambiguity allows authorities to misuse sedition charges against political rivals, activists, and journalists, leading to unjust detentions and prosecutions.
- 3. Contradiction to Democratic Values:** Opponents argue that the sedition law fundamentally undermines core **democratic values**. A healthy democracy thrives on open discussions, debate, and dissent. Punishing individuals for expressing opposition to the government is seen as antithetical to these principles.
- 4. Ineffective in Preventing Violence:** Critics assert that the sedition law is largely **ineffective** in addressing the complex factors that contribute to political violence. Instead of serving as a preventive measure, it often suppresses legitimate expressions of discontent without tackling the underlying issues.

5. **Low Conviction Rate:** National Crime Records Bureau data shows a surge in sedition cases over the last decade, yet the **conviction rate remains extremely low** (below 3%).
6. **Colonial Legacy & Historical Injustice:** Sedition was introduced by the British in 1870 specifically to suppress Indian nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Many advocate for its repeal, arguing that India should move beyond laws that were used to silence dissent during British rule.
7. **Vague Terminology:** Terms like “disaffection” (in the IPC) or “subversive activities” & “endangering sovereignty” (in the BNS) are very vague. This allows the state to categorize any inconvenient opinion as a threat to national security.
8. **Existing Statutes:** The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)** and the **National Security Act (NSA)** already cover terrorism and secession.
9. **Removal of the “Violence” Requirement:** While the *Kedar Nath* judgment (1962) said sedition requires an incitement to violence, the new BNS language is broad enough to allow prosecution for “subversive activities” that don’t involve any physical harm.
10. **Global Trends:** Most modern democracies, including the **United Kingdom** (which originally introduced the law to India), have abolished sedition, arguing it has no place in a 21st-century republic. Similarly, in Australia also, following the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) the term sedition was removed and replaced with references to ‘urging violence offenses’.
11. **Recommendation of Law commission:** In 2018, the Law Commission of India questioned how far it is justified to retain Section 124A. It even suggested to re-think or repeal the Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code.

What should be the way forward?

1. **Clear Definitions:** Creating **clearer definitions** and parameters for what constitutes sedition can help minimize misuse. Specific criteria should be established to distinguish between legitimate dissent and actions that threaten national security. Thus, Section 152 of the BNS should be amended or judicially clarified to explicitly state that **incitement to violence** is a mandatory prerequisite for an offense. This prevents the law from being used against “peaceful dissent.”
2. **Procedural Safeguards:** To address the issue of “process as punishment”—arrests happen first, and acquittals come years later – implement the **Law Commission’s (279th Report)** recommendation:

- c. Preliminary Inquiry:** A police officer of at least the rank of **Inspector** must conduct a preliminary probe to verify the “incitement to violence” before an FIR is filed.
 - b. Prior Permission:** Mandatory sanction from the Central or State Government should be required before initiating prosecution.
- 3. Increased Judicial Oversight:** Strengthening **judicial oversight** can serve as a check against arbitrary applications of the law. Courts should be empowered to rigorously evaluate sedition cases, ensuring that civil liberties are protected.
- 4. Strengthen Accountability and Deter Misuse:** To deter the state and its agencies from filing motivated cases and to provide recourse for victims of such harassment award compensation to individuals who are maliciously prosecuted under the sedition law.
- 5. Focus on Root Causes:** A proactive approach should involve focusing on the **root causes** of dissent. Addressing social, economic, and political grievances can help mitigate extreme sentiments, reducing the likelihood of sedition-related incidents.

Conclusion: Every irresponsible exercise of the right to free speech and expression cannot be termed seditious. While it is essential to protect national integrity, it should not be misused as a tool to curb free speech. Dissent and criticism are essential ingredients of a robust public debate on policy issues as part of a vibrant democracy. Therefore, every restriction on free speech and expression must be carefully scrutinized to avoid unwarranted restrictions.

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Inter-State Council – Explained Pointwise



Introduction:

The Inter-State Council (ISC) is a **constitutional body** designed to foster coordination and cooperation between the Union and the State governments in India.

ISC is a vital forum in India's political structure, established to facilitate discussions and cooperation between the Central government and the State governments.

It serves as a key mechanism to promote and support the principle of cooperative federalism in the country.

The Council may meet **at least thrice in a year**.

Background:

The provision for an ISC is enshrined in **Article 263** of the Constitution, which empowers the **President** to establish such a council if it is in the public interest.

Despite this provision existing since 1950, the council was not formed for four decades. It was finally established in **1990** by the **Janata Dal government** led by V. P. Singh through a presidential order, following the key recommendations of the **Sarkaria Commission (1988)**.

Composition:

Chairman: The Prime Minister

Members:

- a. **Chief Ministers** of all states and union territories that have a legislative assembly.
- b. **Administrators** of union territories without a legislative assembly
- c. **6 Ministers** of Cabinet rank in the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

Permanent Invitees: 13 Union Ministers are permanent invitees to the council.

Functions & Duties of ISC:

Coordination: The ISC aims to foster coordination between the states and the central government in matters of policy making and implementation.

Investigation & Discussion: Examine and deliberate on subjects in which some or all of the states, or the Union and one or more states, have a common interest.

Inquire and Advise: Investigate and advise upon disputes that may have arisen between states.

Resolve Disputes: The council also assists in resolving disputes between states or between states and the central government.

Make Recommendations: Offer recommendations for the better coordination of policy and action on any such subject, which is its primary role in fostering cooperative federalism.

<p style="text-align: center;">Zonal Councils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zonal Councils are Statutory Bodies. They were established under Part III of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956. ● Zonal Councils are the regional counterparts to the national-level ISC. They were created to address issues specific to different regions of the country. ● There are 5 Zonal Councils, each covering a specific geographical region of India – North, South, East, West & Central Zonal Councils. ● Composition: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Common Chairman: The Union Home Minister chairs all five (non-North-Eastern) Zonal Councils. 2. Vice-Chairman: The Chief Ministers of the states in the zone act as Vice-Chairman by rotation, usually for one year. 3. Members: Chief Minister and two other ministers from each state in the zone, plus administrators of UTs. 4. Advisors: One person nominated by the NITI Aayog and the Chief Secretaries of each state (they participate but cannot vote). ● Main objectives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emotional Integration: To stop the growth of acute “state-consciousness,” regionalism, and linguism. 2. Boundary & Border Disputes: Solving local issues like small border adjustments or forest land disputes between neighbors. 3. Infrastructure Coordination: Planning regional transport, power grids, and water sharing. 4. Security: Coordinating anti-Naxal operations or coastal security (depending on the zone).
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<p>North East Zonal Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The North Eastern Council was created later, under the North Eastern Council Act of 1972, to address the unique challenges and development needs of the northeastern region. ● Composition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chairman: The Union Home Minister serves as the ex-officio Chairman. ○ Vice-Chairman: The Minister of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) is the ex-officio Vice-Chairman. ○ Members: The council comprises the Governors and Chief Ministers of all the eight Northeastern states. ● Unlike the advisory role of the Zonal Councils, the NEC is a statutory body for regional planning and development. ● It focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Formulating unified and coordinated regional plans for the Northeast. ○ Addressing the specific economic and social development needs of the region.
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Standing Committee of ISC:

To ensure continuous dialogue, the council also has a Standing Committee. It was established in 1996.

The Standing Committee has been reconstituted from time to time with the approval of the Chairman of the Council. It was last reconstituted in November 2024.

Composition of Standing Committee:

- a. **Union Home Minister** as the Chairman
- b. **5 Union Cabinet Ministers**
- c. **9 Chief Ministers**

Its role is to facilitate continuous consultation and process issues related to centre-state relations before they are taken up by the full council.

The standing committee also monitors the implementation of the decisions taken on the recommendations of the council and considers any other matter referred to it by the chairman or the council.

The Council is assisted by a secretariat called the **Inter-State Council Secretariat**. This secretariat was set-up in 1991 and is headed by a secretary to the Government of India. Since 2011, it is also functioning as the secretariat of the Zonal Councils.

Other bodies to promote inter-state relations:

Significance of ISC:

Promoting Cooperative Federalism: The ISC is the ultimate platform for Cooperative Federalism. It moves away from a “top-down” approach (where the Center dictates) to a “horizontal” approach (where the Center and States negotiate). It allows Chief Ministers to voice regional concerns directly to the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Structured Dialogue: It provides a permanent, institutionalized platform for the Centre and States to sit together, exchange views, and understand each other’s perspectives on various issues, moving beyond informal or ad-hoc discussions.

Building Consensus: It helps build a national consensus on policies that affect both the Union and the States. By facilitating open dialogue, it aims to resolve differences through discussion rather than confrontation.

Investigating Disputes: Under Article 263, one of its core functions is to investigate and advise on disputes between states. This provides a platform for inter-state dispute resolution before they escalate into legal or political battles.

Political Disputes: While the judiciary handles legal disputes, the ISC addresses the political dimensions of Centre-State and Inter-State conflicts, offering recommendations to resolve them amicably.

Platform for Regional Issues: Chief Ministers can use this forum to raise issues specific to their regions, bringing them to the attention of the entire national leadership.

Implementation of Recommendations: It has been instrumental in examining and implementing the recommendations of key commissions on Centre-State relations, such as the Sarkaria Commission and the Punchhi Commission.

Expert Consultation via the Standing Committee: The Standing Committee of the ISC provides a continuous mechanism for consultation. It processes complex matters (like the

Punchhi Commission reports on Center-State relations) before they reach the full Council. This ensures that when the full Council finally meets, the discussions are backed by rigorous data and prior departmental scrutiny.

Limitations of ISC:

Infrequent and Irregular Meetings: The Sarkaria Commission, which recommended the council's formation, suggested it should meet at least three times a year. However, since its establishment in 1990, the council has met only 11 times, with the last meeting taking place in 2016. This long gap undermines the council's purpose as a continuous forum for dialogue.

Advisory and Non-Binding Nature: The ISC's recommendations are purely advisory and not binding on the central government. This lack of enforceability means that even if the council deliberates and makes suggestions, the Centre is under no constitutional or legal obligation to implement them.

Centre's Dominance in Agenda Setting: The functioning of the ISC is heavily skewed in favor of the central government. The council meets only when the Prime Minister (the Chairperson) decides to convene it, not when the states demand a meeting. The agenda is also set by the Centre, which limits the scope of discussion and prevents states from bringing up issues that the central government might find uncomfortable.

Ineffectiveness in Resolving Core Disputes: Despite being established to inquire into and advise upon disputes, the ISC has largely failed to resolve major inter-state conflicts. Long-standing issues like border disputes (e.g., between Karnataka-Maharashtra, Assam-Meghalaya) and river water disputes remain unresolved, often escalating into violence or ending up in the judiciary.

Impact of Political Dynamics: The effectiveness of the ISC is often paralyzed by the prevailing political atmosphere. When the party in power at the Centre is different from the parties ruling the states, discussions can become adversarial, with chief ministers airing grievances rather than engaging in collaborative problem-solving.

Way forward:

Institutionalize Regular and Mandatory Meetings: The Sarkaria Commission recommended the Council meet at least three times a year. Making this mandatory would transform the ISC from an occasional forum into a permanent platform for continuous dialogue and dispute resolution.

Give the Council a Binding and Quasi-Judicial Role: The Council's recommendations are purely advisory and non-binding, which often renders state participation futile. To address this, expand its role to function as a "collaborative council" with quasi-judicial powers to ensure its advice is heeded .

State-Initiated Agenda: The agenda is currently set by the Prime Minister, limiting the council's ability to address state-initiated concerns . A reformed ISC should allow states to put forth items for discussion, ensuring their most pressing issues are heard.

Link with Zonal Councils: The effectiveness of the ISC could be enhanced by better integrating it with the zonal councils, which have also become largely dormant. These councils could act as filtering mechanisms, resolving issues at the regional level before they reach the ISC.

Implement Pending Recommendations from Key Commissions:

a. Punchhi Commission (2010):

- **Mandatory Consultation on Concurrent List:** The Union should consult the States through the ISC before introducing any bill in Parliament regarding subjects in the Concurrent List.
- **Internal Security Role:** The Commission suggested that the ISC should be the primary forum for discussing internal security and communal harmony.
- **Treaty-Making Powers:** It recommended that the Union consult the ISC when making international treaties that significantly impact the subjects in the State List.
- **Functional Continuity:** It proposed that the Zonal Councils should meet at least twice a year and their secretariats should be merged with the ISC Secretariat to ensure better coordination between regional and national federal issues.

b. National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC, 2002):

- **Regularity of Meetings:** It recommended a constitutional or statutory mandate that the ISC must meet at least thrice a year.

- **Broadening the Agenda:** The NCRWC suggested that the ISC should not just discuss “disputes” but should proactively discuss socio-economic planning and development, moving beyond the narrow interpretation of Article 263.
- **Permanent Secretariat:** It pushed for an independent and permanent Secretariat for the ISC, staffed by experts, to ensure that research and follow-up are continuous rather than “event-based.”

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Pax Silica – Importance & Challenges for India – Explained Pointwise

India joins the US-led tech alliance Pax Silica that seeks to build a common supply chain for electronics & critical minerals to withstand disruptions by China. In this regard, let us understand what Pax Silica is & its importance as well as challenges – especially from India’s perspective.

What is Pax Silica?

- Pax Silica is a U.S.-led geopolitical and economic initiative launched in December 2025 aimed at securing the global supply chain for semiconductors and Artificial Intelligence (AI). It is a strategic alliance focused on building secure, resilient, and diversified supply chains for advanced technologies — especially semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure, critical minerals, and related manufacturing and logistics systems.
- ‘Pax’ in Latin means Peace & ‘Silica’ is a key compound used in chip manufacturing – thus, together they suggest that the supply chain for new technologies should promote peace & prosperity.
- The term implies a potential shift in power from petrostates to “silica states” because of the growing global dependence on high-purity silica sand (especially quartzite) for the 21st-century economy, and the potential for this dependency to shape international relations, similar to how oil (“Pax Petrolia”/“Pax Americana”) did in the 20th century.
- The Pax Silica Declaration noted that the initiative seeks to reduce coercive dependencies, secure global tech/AI supply chains, and build trusted digital infrastructure.

Who are the major participants in Pax Silica?

- **Formal Signatories:** These countries have formally committed to the Pax Silica Declaration, aligning their export controls, investment screening, and supply chain security protocols:
 - 1. United States:** The lead architect and convener
 - 2. Greece**
 - 3. Japan:** A primary partner in semiconductor materials and advanced manufacturing equipment.
 - 4. South Korea:** A critical hub for memory chip production
 - 5. Singapore:** A global leader in semiconductor fabrication and logistics
 - 6. Israel:** A powerhouse for AI software, defense technology, and specialized R&D
 - 7. United Kingdom:** A major player in AI research and semiconductor design (ARM)
 - 8. Australia:** The “resource anchor,” providing critical minerals like lithium and rare earths
 - 9. Qatar:** Brings significant sovereign wealth and energy resources for data centers
 - 10. United Arab Emirates (UAE):** Strategic partner in energy, capital (via funds like MGX), and regional tech infrastructure.
 - 11. The Netherlands:** It is a crucial partner through ASML (the world’s only producer of EUV lithography machines).
 - 12. India:** India is seen as the vital “alternative manufacturing base” and a source of skilled human capital for the alliance.
- **Observers:** These entities attend the summits and collaborate on specific projects but have not yet signed the full operational declaration:
 - 1. Taiwan:** Despite its dominance in advanced chip manufacturing (TSMC), it remains an observer to manage the complex geopolitical sensitivities with China.
 - 2. European Union (EU):** Participates in discussions but maintains a separate industrial policy, though individual member states (like the Netherlands) engage more directly.
 - 3. Canada:** Contributing through its critical mineral reserves and AI research hubs.
 - 4. OECD:** Acts as an advisory guest on global standards and economic impact.

What are the objectives of Pax Silica?

- 1. Secure supply chains:** Build resilient supply chains from critical minerals and energy inputs through advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, and AI infrastructure.
- 2. Reduce dependencies:** Reduce coercive dependencies and protect materials and capabilities foundational to artificial intelligence.
- 3. Economic cooperation:** Create coordinated investment and policy alignment among partner nations.
- 4. Counter non-market practices:** Address non-market practices that undermine innovation and fair competition, including overcapacity and dumping.
- 5. Maintaining the “18-Month Moving Gap”:** A core strategic objective of Pax Silica is to institutionalize a permanent lead over competitors. The policy allows for the sale of older-generation technology to rivals to fund the R&D for the next generation, ensuring that the members of Pax Silica always remain at least 18 months ahead.

What is the importance of Pax Silica?

- 1. Countering China’s Dominance:** China accounts for approximately 69% of global rare-earth mining and nearly 90% of global refining, including a near monopoly over heavy elements essential for high-performance magnets. Pax Silica represents an effort to counter this dominance by creating alternative, trusted supply chains among aligned nations.
- 2. Reducing Critical Supply Chain Vulnerability:** Covid pandemic demonstrated the limitations of supply chains that are heavily reliant on a single country. Pax Silica aims to reshore or friend-shore these supply chains to prevent economic and national-security risks from over-reliance on geopolitical rivals.
- 3. Securing Semiconductor Sovereignty:** The CHIPS and Science Act is part of this broader “Pax Silica” vision – bringing advanced semiconductor manufacturing (which starts with silicon wafers) back to the U.S. and allied countries.
- 4. Defining the “Silicon Age”:** The term itself reflects a historical transition. While Pax Americana was built on oil, steel, and naval dominance, Pax Silica is built on:
 - a. Compute Power:** High-end processing is now the “currency” of global influence.

- b. The Full Stack:** Unlike previous chip alliances, it covers the entire lifecycle: from critical minerals (mining/refining) to semiconductors (design/fabs) and AI infrastructure (data centers/energy).
- 5. Trusted Ecosystems:** By aligning export controls and investment screening among members, it ensures that sensitive technologies (like EUV lithography machines) do not reach strategic rivals.
- 6. Importance for India:**
 - a. Alternative Manufacturing Hub:** Pax Silica views India as the primary alternative to China for large-scale manufacturing and a massive source of human talent.
 - b. Domestic Boost:** Joining the bloc will accelerate India's Semiconductor Mission, providing access to advanced "know-how" and coordinated global investments.

What are the challenges of joining Pax Silica for India?

- 1. Dilution of Strategic Autonomy:** Pax Silica isn't just a trade forum; it demands alignment on export controls and investment screening. India has historically resisted being part of "blocs" that dictate who it can trade with (e.g., maintaining ties with Russia or recalibrating with China).
- 2. Policy Sovereignty:** As a developing country, India has relatively young semiconductor & AI ecosystems compared with those of other Pax Silica countries. Consequently, India will seek to protect its semiconductor & AI ecosystems by granting domestic firms preferential treatment through subsidies, govt procurement, and calibrated import regulations. But, to be a "trusted partner," India may have to align its domestic electronics and AI regulations with U.S.-led standards, which could limit its ability to create "India-first" industrial policies or preferential subsidies for local firms.
- 3. Supply Chain Retaliation:** Despite its "Semiconductor Mission," India remains heavily dependent on China for legacy chips, electronic components, and processed minerals. Analysts warn that China could weaponize its licensing conditions on rare-earth magnets (crucial for EVs and electronics) as a response to India joining Pax Silica – similar to what it did in 2025 when China suspended the supply of rare-earth magnets to India, negatively impacting the country's automobile & electronics industry.

4. The “Capability-Leverage” Gap: India was initially left out of the inaugural Pax Silica summit because it lacked “indispensable” technology. Unlike Taiwan (fabrication) or the Netherlands (machinery), India is currently seen as a “useful participant” (for talent and market) rather than a “critical player.” India’s AI & semiconductor ecosystems are also well behind those of Pax Silica countries.
5. The Expectation Gap: The member countries of Pax Silica, in addition to their technological strengths, are US allies & high income countries. If India decides to join the Pax Silica, it will be the first developing country & also the first non-US ally to join the initiative. This may create an ‘expectation gap’ between India & the other members of Pax Silica.
6. Digital Sovereignty: The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act mandates that critical citizen data stay in India. However, Pax Silica encourages seamless data flows between “trusted partners.”.

What can be the way forward?

1. Build Domestic Capability:

<p>Upstream Raw Material Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Map and develop domestic quartz/silica sand resources (e.g., in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka) with high purity, while establishing strategic stockpiles. ● Invest in beneficiation and purification technologies to upgrade low-grade silica, reducing import dependency.
<p>Midstream Manufacturing Push</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scale up polysilicon and wafer production (for solar and electronics) through PLI-like incentives, joint ventures with tech leaders, and low-cost financing. ● Establish specialized silicon industrial parks with reliable power, water, and logistics – critical for energy-intensive silicon refining.

Downstream Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Become a global hub in solar module assembly and advance into high-value semiconductor fabrication (leveraging the India Semiconductor Mission). ● Focus not just on chips but on compound semiconductors (GaN, SiC) for EVs, defense, and telecom.
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2. **“China+1” with Indian Advantage: Position India as a reliable alternative in the Friendshoring/China+1 strategies of the US, EU, Japan, and Taiwan. Use free-trade agreements (e.g., with Taiwan, Australia) to secure technology transfer and materials access.**
3. **Strategic Alliances:**
 - Join mini-lateral initiatives like the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP) to access global critical minerals (including high-purity silica resources).
 - Deepen collaboration with Quad on supply chain resilience, R&D in advanced materials, and securing seabed/mining rights.
4. **Invest in R&D and Skilling for Next-Gen Technologies:**
 - Fund research into silicon recycling/recovery from PV panels and e-waste, and alternative substrates (e.g., perovskite-silicon tandem cells).
 - Create specialized training programs in materials science, semiconductor process engineering, and advanced manufacturing via partnerships with IITs, global universities, and industry.
5. **Strategic Autonomy with Alignment: In order to secure its strategic autonomy, India needs to maintain ties with both Western “Pax Silica” blocs and resource-supplying Global South nations, avoiding over-dependence on any one camp.**
6. **Diplomatic Leverage: Use India’s market size and strategic location to negotiate tech transfers (e.g., from Taiwan, Japan) and attract FDI in silicon-based industries.**

Conclusion: India should look forward to transform itself from a silicon & high tech consumer to a producer and innovator. This requires combining – Industrial policy (like the China model), Global partnerships (like Japan’s resource diplomacy) & Tech leapfrogging (like Taiwan’s semiconductor

focus). By doing this, India will establish itself as a key node in the resilient, diversified global silicon economy while boosting energy security, high-tech employment, and geopolitical influence.

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Board of Peace – Significance & Limitations – Explained Pointwise

The Board of Peace held its first meeting on 19th Feb 2026 to discuss the reconstruction of Gaza.

India, which was one of the invitee to join the Board as a member, decided to attend the meeting as an “observer”.



What is Board of Peace?

- The Board of Peace (BoP), also known as the Peace Board, is a newly established international organization created by U.S. President Donald Trump in 2026.
- The board is named in [United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803](#) as a body tasked with overseeing the processes of the Gaza peace plan. It oversees the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) and the International Stabilization Force (ISF).
- Its charter grants it a broader mandate to promote stability, peace, and governance in “*areas affected or threatened by conflict*” worldwide, raising questions about its global role.

- The Board of Peace was proposed in September 2025 and formally established on the sidelines of the 56th World Economic Forum in January 2026.
- Participating countries are required to contribute US\$1 billion to the organization to renew membership after the first three years.
- As of 2026, 25 of the 62 invited countries have signed the board's charter. 22 Countries took part in the first meeting as "Observers" – which include India, U.K. Germany, and Switzerland.
- The Board's members include major West Asia countries such as Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, as well as countries like Argentina, Hungary, Vietnam, Cambodia & Pakistan.

What is the Structure of the Board of Peace?

Chairman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Donald Trump, designated as chairman for life. ● He has indefinite tenure and exclusive authority to invite members, appoint or remove board officials, create or dissolve bodies, and approve or veto decisions. ● He also designates his own successor.
Board Proper (General Assembly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Composed of national leaders or designated senior officials from invited member states. ● This is the highest representative body of the organization.
Board of Peace Executive Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A smaller strategic committee tasked with driving policy decisions and operational strategy. ● Members are appointed by the Chairman. Seven members were appointed by Trump.
Gaza Executive Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focuses on the Board's mission related to the Gaza Strip.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oversees implementation of the transitional governance arrangements under the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG).
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Why is the establishment of the Board of Peace important?

- 1. Focus on Peace in Gaza:** The Board specifically targets the delicate situation in Gaza, aiming to address the long-standing conflicts and promote peace initiatives in a region that has experienced prolonged violence.
- 2. International Representation:** By involving multiple countries in its governance, the Board seeks to create a platform for diverse voices. This diversity can lead to more comprehensive and multifaceted peace solutions that address the concerns of multiple parties.
- 3. Bypassing Deadlock:** The BoP is designed to move faster than the UN Security Council. By operating as a “coalition of the willing,” it avoids the veto-driven paralysis often seen in UNSC.
- 4. Structured Dialogue:** The Board provides a formal platform for dialogue among member states, including those directly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This structured approach encourages communication and negotiations, which are vital for resolving misunderstandings and building trust.
- 5. Massive Investment:** The Board has secured over \$17 billion in pledges (including \$10 billion from the U.S.). The economic prosperity that the BoP aims to bring with the help of — jobs, tourism, and modern infrastructure—will make radicalization less attractive.
- 6. Long-Term Peace Plan:** The Board’s establishment signals a commitment to long-term strategies rather than short-term fixes. This approach includes socio-economic development plans to address underlying issues contributing to conflict.

What are some of the criticisms against the Board of Peace?

- 1. The “Pay-to-Play” Membership Model:** The requirement for member states to contribute substantial financial resources (US \$1 billion) to secure a permanent seat on the Board raises concerns about whether decision-making influence is determined by financial contributions. This might lead to a hierarchy where wealthier nations have more sway, potentially sidelining less affluent but equally important voices.

- 2. Concentration of Personal Power:** The Charter names Donald Trump as the permanent Chairman with absolute veto power. The Chairman has the power to unilaterally invite or remove members and appoint his own successor. The concentration of power in the hands of Trump has led to apprehension about the decision-making process. Critics argue that this centralization could stifle diverse opinions and inclusive debate.
- 3. Sidelining the United Nations:** The Board of Peace is widely perceived as a direct challenge to the authority of the United Nations and the established multilateral system. The President Trump has even suggested that the Board could eventually replace the world body. By sidelining the UN, the Board not only diminishes the collective engagement and the legitimacy of peace efforts, it also undermines established norms and frameworks for addressing global conflicts, particularly those involving state sovereignty and human rights.
- 4. Lack of Local (Palestinian) Representation:** While the Board oversees the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), there are no Palestinians on the actual Board of Peace that makes the high-level decisions. Without an authentic voice from the Palestinian community, any peace initiatives lack legitimacy and are less likely to succeed.
- 5. Skepticism from Key Nations:** Many countries, including major Western powers like France, Germany, U.K. and traditional U.S. allies, have expressed skepticism about the Board's intentions and effectiveness. Their reluctance to join or actively participate might hinder its credibility and influence.

Why has India chosen to attend the Board of Peace meeting in an observer capacity rather than as a full member?

- 1. Avoiding the Veto:** Joining the BoP as a full member would mean accepting the Chairman's absolute veto power. As an observer, India can support the Gaza Peace Plan (which is backed by UN Resolution 2803) without endorsing the BoP's more controversial, centralized governance structure.
- 2. Two-State Solution:** India remains firm on its support for a "sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine." Observer status allows India to support Gaza's reconstruction without appearing to abandon its traditional diplomatic stance in favor of a US-centric "deal".

3. **Economic Corridors: Stability in the Middle East is vital for the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). India wants to be part of the conversation on regional stability without being tied to the BoP's specific political or military commitments.**
4. **Managing the Relationship with President Trump: Observer status acts as a middle ground. Refusing the invitation entirely could be seen as a slight to President Trump. It allows India to maintain its "eyes and ears" in a powerful new forum while avoiding the \$1 billion "entry fee" and the binding political obligations of full membership.**
5. **Monitoring the "India-Pakistan" Factor: A primary reason for India's presence is that Pakistan is a full member of the Board. India is wary of any attempt by the BoP to internationalize the Kashmir issue or other bilateral disputes. By being in the room, India can directly monitor and counter any such narratives or mediation attempts that bypass its preference for bilateral resolution.**

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PRAHAAR – India's Counterterrorism Policy – Explained Pointwise

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has unveiled India's 1st counterterrorism policy 'PRAHAAR (National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy)' – a comprehensive framework built on zero tolerance, intelligence-led prevention & coordinated response to extremist violence. The policy seeks to deny terrorists, their financiers & supporters their access, weapons & safe havens – both within the country & abroad.

What is PRAHAAR?

- PRAHAAR is India's first comprehensive national counter-terrorism policy. It marks a shift from a reactive security posture to a proactive, doctrine-driven architecture.
- The Seven Pillars of PRAHAAR:

Prevention	Using intelligence-led, proactive measures to stop attacks before they occur.
Responses	Swift, proportionate, and graded responses coordinated across central and state levels.

Aggregating Capacities	A “whole-of-government” approach to modernize forces with advanced tools and weaponry.
Human Rights	Ensuring operations are grounded in the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights.
Attenuating Conditions	Addressing radicalization and socio-economic vulnerabilities through education and engagement.
Aligning Efforts	Strengthening international cooperation via treaties, extradition, and UN-led norms.
Recovery & Resilience	A “whole-of-society” approach involving NGOs and community leaders for rehabilitation.

What are the key threats outlined by the Policy?

The PRAHAAR policy explicitly outlines the major terrorist threats facing India, which form the basis of its strategy. It notes that India faces threats on land, water, and air. Key threats identified include:

- 1. Cross-Border and State-Sponsored Terrorism:** The policy notes that India has long been affected by “sponsored terrorism from across the border,” with “jihadi terror outfits” continuing to plan and execute attacks. It also observes that “a few countries in the region have sometimes used terrorism as an instrument of State policy”.
- 2. Emerging and Technological Threats:** The policy highlights the challenge of terrorists accessing and using CBRNED (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive, Digital) materials.
- 3. Drones & Robotics:** The misuse of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for smuggling arms, ammunition, and explosives, particularly in border regions like Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.
- 4. Anonymity Tools:** Use of the Dark Web, encrypted messaging apps, and Crypto-wallets to fund, recruit, and coordinate attacks without detection.
- 5. Criminal Nexus and Radicalization:** Terrorist groups are increasingly engaging organized criminal networks for logistics and recruitment. They also misuse the internet, including social media, the dark web, and crypto wallets, for propaganda, communication, and funding.

- 6. Global Terror Groups:** The policy identifies Al-Qaeda and ISIS as persistent threats that continue to attempt to incite violence through local sleeper cells.
- 7. Critical Infrastructure Vulnerabilities:** The policy mandates a protective framework for the “critical sectors of the Indian economy” that are now viewed as high-priority targets:
 - **Energy & Power:** Power grids and atomic energy establishments
 - **Transportation:** Railways, aviation, and major ports
 - **Advanced Sectors:** Space assets and defense installations

What are the key objectives of the Policy?

- 1. Zero-Tolerance Enforcement:** To firmly establish and implement a “zero tolerance” approach towards all forms of terrorism, ensuring that every terrorist act, whether successful or foiled, is met with the full force of the state.
- 2. Criminalize All Acts:** A core goal is to ensure that every act of terrorism, including financing and logistical support, is criminalized under a uniform legal framework.
- 3. Dismantling the Terrorist Ecosystem:** To systematically dismantle the entire ecosystem that enables terrorism. This includes not just active militants, but also:
 - a. Over Ground Worker (OGW) networks and support structures.**
 - b. Illegal arms and drug syndicates that fund and arm groups.**
 - c. Terror financing channels and money laundering operations.**
- 4. Uniform Anti-Terror Structure:** Standardizing the counter-terrorism architecture – across all Indian states so that a police station in Kerala and a unit in J&K, as well as, from a local police station in a small district to the National Security Guard (NSG) – follow the same Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- 5. Intelligence Primacy:** Strengthening the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) to ensure real-time, seamless information flow between central agencies (like the NIA and IB) and state police forces.
- 6. Legal Integration:** It mandates that legal experts be involved from the very first step (the FIR) to ensure that technicalities don’t lead to acquittals, aiming for a near-100% conviction rate to serve as a deterrent.

- 7. Modernization: Aggregating national capacity by equipping law enforcement with state-of-the-art tools for cyber-defense, drone interception, and CBRNED (Chemical/Biological/Nuclear) threat mitigation.**
- 8. Graded Response to Radicalization: Moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach. The policy mandates a “graded” response where legal action is balanced with de-radicalization efforts based on the individual’s level of involvement.**
- 9. Victim-Centricity: Institutionalizing support for victims of terror, ensuring they are at the heart of the national narrative.**
- 10. International Cooperation:**
 - a. Global Collaboration: Engaging with international partners and organizations to combat terrorism on a global level.**
 - b. Extradition & Deportation: Accelerating the pursuit of wanted fugitives through enhanced bilateral treaties.**
 - c. International Norm-Setting: Working with the UN and other global bodies to create a universal definition of terrorism and to hold states that sponsor terror accountable.**
 - d. Sharing Best Practices: Learning from other countries’ experiences and adopting effective counterterrorism strategies.**

Why PRAHAAR is significant?

- 1. Paradigm Shift: Before PRAHAAR, India’s counter-terrorism efforts were often seen as a collection of various laws (like the UAPA) and agency protocols (like the NIA). PRAHAAR replaces this fragmented approach with a unified national doctrine.**
- 2. Dismantling of Terror Ecosystem: PRAHAAR is significant because it not only targets the terrorists but the entire infrastructure of support.**
- 3. Addressing the 21st Century Threats:**
 - **The policy is the first to officially recognize and provide a roadmap for modern, non-traditional threats like drones, robotics, cyberattacks etc.**
 - **It formalizes the response to UAV-based smuggling of arms and drugs in border states like Punjab and J&K.**

- It treats “criminal hackers” and state-sponsored cyber-terrorists with the same urgency as physical terrorists, protecting critical infrastructure like power grids and nuclear plants.
4. **Whole-of-Society Approach:** Instead of treating every radicalized youth as a hardened criminal, it introduces a “Graded Police Response.” This allows for de-radicalization and reintegration for those with low-level involvement, involving NGOs, psychologists, and religious leaders.
 5. **Human Rights as a Pillar:** By making Human Rights one of the seven core pillars (the “H” in PRAHAAR), the state acknowledges that counter-terrorism is most effective when it maintains public trust and adheres to the Rule of Law, preventing the alienation of local populations.

	Pre-PRAHAAR	Post-PRAHAAR
Core Philosophy	Reactive: Responding after an event.	Proactive: Focused on neutralizing threats at the “conception” stage.
Legal Framework	Fragmented: Different states had different laws & SOPs.	Unified: Single national doctrine for all States & agencies.
Focus	Kinetic Focus: Focus only on the “terrorist.”	Ecosystem Focus: Targeting financiers, OGWs, and digital handlers.
Technology	Conventional: Focused on physical border security and CCTV.	Advanced: Specifically targets Drones, Dark Web, and Crypto-terrorism as primary fronts.
Radicalization	Criminalized: Usually treated all involved parties as hardened criminals.	Graded Response: Uses a mix of legal action, de-radicalization, and social reintegration.

Victim Support	Incidental: Compensation and support were handled on a case-by-case basis.	Institutionalized: Places “Victim-Centricity” at the heart of the national counter-terror narrative.
Conviction	Cases often struggled in court due to procedural gaps.	Integrates legal experts from the FIR stage to ensure a near-100% conviction rate.

UPSC GS-3: Internal Security
Read More: [The Hindu](#)

India-Israel Relations – Significance & Challenges – Explained Pointwise

The Prime Minister of India is currently on a visit to Israel. His previous visit took place in 2017, nine years ago, and it marked the first-ever visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Israel. In the years since the Indian Prime Minister’s first visit, the global geopolitical landscape in general—and that of West Asia in particular—has undergone significant changes. In a high volatile environment, Indian PM’s visit to Israel will be among the most watched visits to the region.

India & Israel are not only a key defense & security partners, but also important economic partners in IMEC. India-Israel relations are characterized by a strong, multi-dimensional strategic partnership that prioritizes defense, security, technology, agriculture, and innovation while showing remarkable political alignment on key global and regional issues. The 2026 visit signals a major expansion of strategic collaboration – especially in security, defence, and advanced technologies.



Source: ORF

Historical development:

Distant and Hesitant (1948 - 1992)

- **Initial Recognition (1950):** India formally recognized Israel (created in 1948) in 1950 but, due to Cold War dynamics, the large Muslim population in India, and a commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), it did not establish full diplomatic relations. Israel was only permitted to open a consulate in Mumbai.
- **Pro-Palestinian Stance:** India's foreign policy strongly supported the Palestinian cause and the Arab world, opposing Israel in international forums like the UN.
- **Covert Cooperation:** Despite the diplomatic freeze, contacts existed, especially after India's defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian War. Israel reportedly provided limited, discreet military aid to

	<p>India in the 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan, laying the groundwork for future defense ties.</p>
<p>Full Normalization and the Defense Pivot (1992 - 2014)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Breakthrough (1992): India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992. The geopolitical landscape shifted with the collapse of the Soviet Union, end of the Cold War and India's economic liberalization. • Defense Imperative: The relationship quickly pivoted to defense and security. The Kargil War in 1999 proved to be a critical moment, as Israel provided India with crucial laser-guided missile kits and UAVs, often supplying spare parts and equipment faster than traditional Russian or Western suppliers.
<p>Deepening, De-Hyphenation, and Strategic Alignment (2014 - Present)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-hyphenation Policy: India explicitly adopted a "de-hyphenation" policy, asserting that its relationship with Israel is independent of its historical relationship with the Palestinians. This allows India to maintain ties with both without the former constraining the latter. • 2017 Visit: Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel. The visit was a standalone one, as he did not include a stop in Palestine during the trip. • Multilateral Groupings: The partnership has expanded into the emerging regional structure, I2U2 (India, Israel, US, UAE), focusing on joint investments in water, energy, transport, space, and food security.

Significance of India-Israel Bilateral Relations:

- 1. Political Convergence:** Both countries support each other's positions on critical issues – India has backed Israel's right to self-defense, and Israel supports India's stance against cross-border terrorism. This convergence raises each nation's diplomatic profile and provides reliable allies in volatile regions.
- 2. Defense and Security:**
 - Israel is one of India's top defense suppliers, providing advanced technologies in drones, air defense, missiles, and intelligence – enhancing India's military readiness and anti-terror capabilities e.g. Heron drones, SPICE family precision-guided bombs.
 - Joint R&D and co-production in areas like electronic warfare and missile defense directly strengthen India's self-reliance and modernization e.g. SPYDER air defence system.
- 3. Intelligence and Counterterrorism:** Robust intelligence-sharing and operational cooperation have helped India counter terrorism and address emerging hybrid threats, with both countries facing similar security challenges in their regions e.g. Israel shared satellite imagery and surveillance technologies like sensors and airborne radars with India to improve situational awareness during & after 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.
- 4. Trade and Investment:**
 - India is Israel's second-largest trading partner in Asia.
 - Bilateral trade and economic relations between India & Israel have progressed rapidly – from US\$ 200 million in 1992 (*comprising primarily of diamonds*), merchandise trade has diversified and reached a peak of US\$ 10.77 billion (*excluding defense*) in FY 2022-23.
In FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25 the bilateral trade (*excluding defense*) was US\$ 6.53 billion and US\$3.75 billion respectively, witnessing a decline due to regional security situation and trade route disruption.
 - Though bilateral merchandise trade has been dominated mainly by diamonds, petroleum products and chemicals, recent years have witnessed an increase in trade in areas such as electronic machinery and high-tech products; communications systems; medical equipment, etc.

- The 2025 Bilateral Investment Treaty is expected to boost two-way FDI, fintech, and start-up collaborations, setting the stage for a future free trade pact.
5. **Agriculture and Water Management:** Israeli innovation in drip irrigation, water conservation, and precision agriculture has been scaled across India, improving Indian farmers' efficiency, raising rural incomes, and addressing chronic water scarcity.
 6. **Innovation Ecosystem:** India benefits from Israeli expertise in start-up incubation, cyber security, AI, and "smart city" technologies, and the innovation fund (I4F) fosters joint research and product development for global markets.

Challenges in India-Israel Bilateral Relations:

1. **The Palestine Issue:** While India has successfully employed a policy of "de-hyphenation" (treating ties with Israel and Palestine separately), India remains a traditional supporter of the Palestinian cause in multilateral forums like the UN & was also among the earliest countries to recognise the state of Palestine in 1988. This diplomatic position is sometimes at odds with Israel's actions like dispossession & displacement of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank that has drawn worldwide condemnation.
2. **Energy and Diaspora:** India relies heavily on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for a substantial portion of its crude oil and natural gas supplies. Furthermore, over 9 million Indian expatriates reside in the Gulf, contributing critical remittances to the Indian economy. Any perceived over-alignment with Israel risks jeopardizing these vital economic and energy lifelines.
3. **Iran & China Factors:**
 - To Israel, Iran is an existential "nuclear-armed" threat and a sponsor of the "Axis of Resistance." To India, Iran is a vital gateway to Central Asia and Russia through the Chabahar Port, bypassing Pakistan.
 - Israel's very close relationship with China in high technology (Israel-China trade: \$22 billion+) produce diverging priorities, and India is concerned about technology transfers from Israel to China and Chinese FDI in Israel.
4. **Limited Technology Transfer:** India's priority under its "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative is to acquire technology for domestic manufacturing. While Israel is generally more willing to share defense technology than other nations, it still places restrictions on the full transfer of

proprietary or sensitive systems, especially those containing US components (which are subject to US export control laws).

5. Trade issues:

- **Non-Defense Trade Plateau:** Despite ambitious targets, non-defense trade has generally plateaued between \$6 billion and \$8 billion, highlighting challenges in market access and scaling commercial engagement beyond established sectors.
- **Trade Volume Fluctuations:** Bilateral trade saw a decline in FY 2024-2025 (dropping to approximately \$3.75 billion) due to regional security challenges and maritime trade disruptions in the Red Sea.
- **Stalled Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** Negotiations for a comprehensive FTA have been ongoing for years. Key hurdles include concerns from Indian domestic industries and complexities regarding market access and intellectual property.

6. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): Israel, a high-tech exporter, shares concerns with other Western nations regarding India's relatively lenient IPR regime, particularly concerning the protection of software and digital innovation.

7. Public Opinion in India: Despite the government's strong public embrace, a significant segment of the Indian public and political opposition maintains traditional sympathy for the Palestinian cause, requiring the ruling party to occasionally temper its rhetoric and maintain a semblance of balance on the issue.

8. Hexagon of Alliances: The "Hexagon" is Israeli PM's proposed strategic axis involving six primary nodes: Israel, India, Greece, Cyprus, select Arab nations, and African/Asian partners. The goal is to institutionalize security and intelligence-sharing to counter "radical axes". However, joining such a military or political bloc goes against India's core principle of Strategic Autonomy. This principle of "strategic autonomy" allows India to maintain balanced relationships with a diverse set of powers, including the US, Russia, China, Iran, and all Gulf states simultaneously.

Areas of cooperation between India & Israel:

1. Defence & Security:

- **Arms Trade:** Israel is consistently one of India's top three defense suppliers. India procures critical systems like radar, missile defense shields (e.g., the Barak 8 system developed jointly), drones, and sophisticated surveillance equipment.
- **Joint Research and Development (R&D):** The focus has shifted from a buyer-seller relationship to joint development and co-production, aligning with India's "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative.
- **Counter-Terrorism:** Extensive intelligence sharing and training cooperation, particularly relevant due to shared security threats.
- **Integrated Air Defense:** India is looking to incorporate elements of Israel's Iron Dome and Arrow systems into its own indigenous Sudarshan Chakra air defense shield.

2. Water & Agriculture:

- **India & Israel have signed an Agreement for cooperation in the field of agriculture in 1993.** The Agreement provides for cooperation in the fields of soil and water management, horticultural & agricultural production, post-harvest and processing technology, agriculture mechanization, animal husbandry and research & development.
- **Drip Irrigation and Micro-Irrigation:** Israel has implemented the Indo-Israel Agricultural Project (IIAP), establishing dozens of "Centres of Excellence" across various Indian states. These centres train Indian farmers on high-tech techniques, primarily focused on micro-irrigation, protected cultivation (greenhouses), and maximizing yield with minimal water use.
- **Water Management and Recycling:** Cooperation in water treatment, desalination, and recycling technology to help India address its growing urban water scarcity.

3. Cybersecurity and R&D: Deep cooperation in cybersecurity, and joint research and funding in high-tech areas through the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F). A joint contribution of US\$ 20 million from each side over 5 years (2018-2022), enabled Indian and Israeli enterprises to undertake joint industrial R&D projects in priority technology sectors such as agriculture, water, energy, healthcare and ICT.

4. I2U2 Grouping: India and Israel are core members of the I2U2 initiative, along with the US and UAE. This group focuses on promoting joint investments in key sectors like food security,

water, energy, and transportation infrastructure, demonstrating Israel's role in India's regional economic strategy.

Way Forward:

1. Deepen Strategic and Defense Cooperation:

- Strengthen defense ties by accelerating joint R&D, co-production of advanced military technologies (drones, missile defense, cyber security), and institutionalizing regular high-level dialogues.
- Expand intelligence and counter-terrorism cooperation, leveraging Israel's expertise and India's regional security needs.

2. Expand Economic and Investment Collaboration: Fully implement the 2025 Bilateral Investment Treaty to boost two-way FDI, remove barriers, and scaffold a future Free Trade Agreement to increase trade volumes beyond the current \$7-8 billion.

3. Enhance Innovation and Technology Exchange: Foster shared innovation in AI, biotech, cybersecurity, and smart infrastructure utilizing the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Innovation Fund (I4F).

4. De-Hyphenation through Integration: By channeling joint investments and projects through the I2U2 framework, India demonstrates that its partnership with Israel is not exclusive but is actively beneficial to the Arab world. This provides a diplomatic shield for India's ties to Israel.

5. Knowledge Corridors: Establish structured "Knowledge Corridors" linking major Indian R&D institutions (like the IITs and IISc) with top Israeli universities and research centers to ensure a steady flow of research talent and joint discovery.

Conclusion: A pragmatic, multi-sectoral, and balanced approach respecting geopolitical sensitivities and focusing on enhanced cooperation will cement India-Israel relations as a cornerstone of India's strategic and innovation-driven growth trajectory.

UPSC GS-2: International Relations

Read More: [Embassy of India](#), [Indian Express](#)

National Green Tribunal (NGT) – Explained Pointwise

Supreme Court in a 2021 judgment described the National Green Tribunal (NGT) as not a mere adjudicatory body but a specialised protector tasked with fostering environmental justice & equity. However, a major investigation done by The Indian Express recently has revealed deep-seated structural and functional issues within the NGT. These findings suggest that the tribunal, originally designed as a “specialized protector” of the environment, is undergoing a significant “pro-project” shift.

What is National Green Tribunal (NGT)?

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a specialized judicial body in India established to handle cases related to environmental protection and the conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- It was established in 2010, under the National Green Tribunal Act, India became only the third country in the world (after Australia and New Zealand) to have a dedicated environmental tribunal.
- It is guided by the principles of sustainable development, the precautionary principle, and the polluter pays principle.
- The NGT has a Principal Bench in New Delhi and four zonal benches to ensure accessibility across India:
 - Central Zonal Bench: Bhopal
 - Eastern Zonal Bench: Kolkata
 - Southern Zonal Bench: Chennai
 - Western Zonal Bench: Pune

What is the composition of NGT?

	Qualification	Appointment
Chairperson	Must be a retired Judge of the Supreme Court or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court.	Appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.

Judicial Members	Must be a Judge of a High Court (or have been one), or qualified to be a Judge of a High Court.	Judicial and Expert members are appointed by a committee formed by the Central Government.
Expert Members	Must have professional qualifications and experience (minimum 15 years) in environmental science, forestry, biodiversity, climate change, or related fields, or administrative experience in environmental governance.	

- **Strength of the Tribunal:**
 - **Minimum 10 and maximum 20 Judicial Members**
 - **Minimum 10 and maximum 20 Expert Members**
- **Term of Office:** Members are appointed for a term of 5 years
- **Non-Reappointment:** To ensure unbiased decision-making during their tenure, members are not eligible for re-appointment once their term ends.

What are the objectives & functions of NGT?

- 1. Expeditious Justice:** To ensure environmental cases are settled within 6 months of filing, preventing long-drawn-out legal battles that often allow environmental damage to continue.
- 2. Specialized Adjudication:** To provide a forum where technical environmental issues are handled by people who actually understand the science (Expert Members) alongside legal professionals.
- 3. Enforcement of Rights:** To protect the citizen's right to a healthy environment, which the Supreme Court of India considers a part of the "Right to Life" under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- 4. Reducing Judicial Burden:** To take the weight of thousands of complex environmental cases off the shoulders of the High Courts and the Supreme Court.

What is the jurisdiction of the National Green Tribunal (NGT)?

- 1. Original Jurisdiction:** The NGT only has the power to hear civil cases that involve a “substantial question relating to the environment.” These questions must arise from the implementation of the following seven laws listed in Schedule I of the NGT Act:
 - a.** The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
 - b.** The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977
 - c.** The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
 - d.** The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
 - e.** The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
 - f.** The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
 - g.** The Biological Diversity Act, 2002
- 2. Appellate Jurisdiction:** NGT also acts as an appellate body. It can hear appeals against specific orders or decisions made by various authorities (like CPCB, SPCBs, State governments) under the laws mentioned above. For example, if a government authority grants or refuses an environmental clearance, or if a State Pollution Control Board issues certain directions, an aggrieved party can appeal that decision to the NGT.

What are the powers of NGT?

- 1. Power of a Civil Court:** It has the same powers as a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure (CPC) for summoning witnesses, requiring discovery of documents, and receiving evidence on oath.
- 2. Power to Grant Relief & Compensation:** It can award monetary damages to victims of pollution and order the restitution of damaged property or restoration of the environment.
- 3. Regulatory Independence:** It is not strictly bound by the “Indian Evidence Act” or “CPC.” Instead, it is guided by the Principles of Natural Justice, allowing it to be more flexible and faster than regular courts.
- 4. Penalties for Non-Compliance:** If a person or organization fails to comply with an NGT order, the Tribunal can impose severe punishments like Imprisonment up to 3y, fine (Individual) up to ₹10 crore, fine (Company) up to ₹10 crore.

- 5. Suo Motu Powers:** The NGT has the unique authority to take up cases on its own based on media reports or public information, even if no formal complaint has been filed by an affected party.

What is the significance of NGT?

- 1. Faster Justice Delivery:** Before the NGT, environmental cases would languish in civil courts for decades. The NGT is mandated to deliver a final decision within 6 months.
- 2. Scientific Decision Making:** Environmental law is complex and involves data on carbon emissions, effluent levels, and biodiversity. Since the NGT bench includes scientists and environmental experts alongside judges, the rulings are based on technical accuracy rather than just legal technicalities. This reduces the reliance on external committees, which often delayed court proceedings in the past.
- 3. Upholding Global Environmental Principles:** The NGT has been a pioneer in enforcing three major international legal doctrines:
 - a. Polluter Pays:** It has slapped massive fines on major corporations and state governments for dumping waste or polluting rivers.
 - b. Precautionary Principle:** It can stop a project *before* damage occurs if there is a high risk to the ecosystem.
 - c. Intergenerational Equity:** Ensuring that today's development doesn't rob future generations of clean air and water.
- 4. Self-Initiative:** It can take up cases on its own (Suo Motu) based on a news report or even a letter from a concerned citizen, ensuring that even marginalized communities have a voice against powerful industrial lobbies.
- 5. Enhancing Access to Justice:** Relaxed procedures, suo motu powers, and broad "aggrieved person" definition make it easier for citizens and groups to seek environmental justice.
- 6. Institutional Primacy & Trust:** NGT has been recognized by the Supreme Court as the primary body for environmental oversight, entrusted with monitoring complex national issues like river pollution.
- 7. Expanding the Right to Life:** The NGT has played a crucial role in expanding the interpretation of the Indian Constitution. Its proactive interventions have effectively extended the scope of

the right to a clean environment as an integral part of the fundamental Right to Life (Article 21).

What are some of the landmark judgments of NGT?

<p>Shivalik Hills "Vanishing Hills" Case (Punjab)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landmark intervention to protect ecologically fragile Shivalik range (groundwater recharge zone). Case taken up suo motu based on media reports. • Closure of 13 stone crushers in Hoshiarpur and Rupnagar; recovery of over ₹180 crore in environmental compensation.
<p>Morbi Ceramic Units Case (Gujarat)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upheld a ₹122 crore fine against 337 ceramic units for using prohibited coal gasifiers.
<p>Bhopal Adampur Waste Plant Case (Madhya Pradesh)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imposed ₹1.80 crore penalty on Bhopal Municipal Corporation for flouting solid waste management rules.
<p>Ban on Old Vehicles in Delhi (2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NGT banned all diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years from plying on Delhi-NCR roads.
<p>Yamuna Floodplain Case (2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NGT fined the Art of Living Foundation ₹5 crore as "environmental compensation" for damage caused to the Yamuna floodplains during the World Culture Festival.

What are the limitations/criticisms of NGT?

- 1. Persistent Vacancies:** By law, the NGT should have a minimum of 10 Judicial and 10 Expert members. However, it often operates with far fewer, leading to a massive backlog of cases. Lack of appointments has occasionally forced regional benches (like Chennai or Kolkata) to

shut down temporarily, forcing litigants to travel to the Principal Bench in New Delhi or attend hearings via video conferencing.

- 2. Limited Jurisdiction:** Despite being the primary environmental court, the NGT cannot hear cases under two very important laws Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 & Indian Forest Act, 1927. This creates a fragmented system where a person might have to go to the NGT for a pollution issue but to a regular civil court for a wildlife-related grievance in the same area.
- 3. Appeals to Higher Courts:** Almost every major NGT order is immediately challenged in the Supreme Court. This often leads to “litigation fatigue,” where the environmental damage continues while the case is stuck in the superior court’s appeals process.
- 4. Lack of “Teeth” for Execution:** The NGT relies on state pollution control boards and local authorities to enforce its orders. If these bodies are corrupt or inefficient, the NGT’s ruling remains only on paper.
- 5. Arbitrary Fines:** Often, fines ranging from ₹5 crore to ₹100 crore are imposed based on a company’s revenue rather than a scientific assessment of the actual environmental damage caused. This has led to many NGT orders being stayed or overturned by the Supreme Court on the grounds that the penalties were “vague” or “unscientific.”
- 6. The “Pro-Project” Shift (2020–2025):**
 - An investigation done by the Indian Express of over 100,000 NGT orders reveals a startling asymmetry in how the tribunal rules on environmental and forest clearances (EC/FC).
 - For e.g. of the 329 appeals filed by citizens & activists against the grant of clearances by the govt, only in 20% cases did the NGT rule in favour of the appeal.
Conversely, when the project’s proponents appealed against the denial of clearances by the govt, in nearly 80% of the cases, they secured relief.
This is not a historical norm, as data from 2016-2019 shows a more balanced approach where both sides hovered between 18% & 31%.
- 7. Conflict of Interest in “Expertise”:** Out of 13 expert members appointed since 2016, 9 were part of decision making process for granting various green clearances at the highest level of the govt. In contrast, before 2016, only 2 of the 11 experts were associated with govt’s green clearance process. This raises the question of conflict of interests & propriety as the

Tribunal's appellate jurisdiction covers all govt orders, including project clearances issued under Env't Protection Act 1986 & Forest Conservation Act 1980.

- 8. Dismissal on "Technical Grounds":** Public grievances are increasingly being silenced by procedural technicalities rather than being heard on merit. The NGT follows a strict 90 days appeal filing deadline. A significant number of citizen appeals are being dismissed on technical grounds, labelled as 'time barred' for being filed after more than 90 days.

What can be the way forward?

- 1. Mandatory Full Strength:** The government should be legally mandated to maintain the minimum strength of 10 Judicial and 10 Expert members. Delays in appointments should be treated as a violation of the NGT Act.
- 2. Academic & Independent Experts:** Instead of almost exclusively appointing retired Indian Forest Service (IFS) or government officers, the NGT should include active environmental scientists, ecologists, and independent researchers from top universities and NGOs.
- 3. Transparency in Selection:** The selection process for members should be made public, with clear criteria to prevent the appointment of "pro-project" individuals who might have a conflict of interest.
- 4. Monitoring Wing:** Currently, the NGT depends on State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) to enforce its orders. A dedicated monitoring wing within the NGT could conduct independent "surprise audits" to ensure compliance.
- 5. Uniform Compensation Framework:** As suggested by the CPCB in late 2025, there should be a standardized formula for calculating environmental fines. This would move away from "arbitrary" fines and make the orders harder to challenge in the Supreme Court.
- 6. Include Wildlife and Indian Forest Acts:** Bringing the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Indian Forest Act, 1927 under the NGT's umbrella would create a "one-stop shop" for environmental justice, preventing litigants from having to run between different courts for the same project.
- 7. Relaxing the "90-Day" Rule:** The strict timeline for filing appeals often penalizes rural communities who may not find out about a project's "Environmental Clearance" until it's too late. The Tribunal should have more flexibility to condone delays in public interest cases.

- 8. Multilingual Proceedings:** Making judgments and notices available in regional languages (not just English) would empower local communities to participate in the judicial process more effectively.

UPSC GS-2: Polity

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)

India-Canada Relations- Explained Pointwise

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's ongoing visit to India marks an important milestone in India-Canada bilateral relations, which have experienced significant fluctuations over the past two and a half years.

Bilateral relations deteriorated in 2023 after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged the involvement of Indian authorities in the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The unprecedented diplomatic crisis that followed had significant political, economic, and geopolitical repercussions.

However, both countries undertook substantial diplomatic efforts to rebuild ties after Justin Trudeau was succeeded by Mark Carney in 2025. Prime Minister Carney's recent visit to India forms part of a broader initiative to reset and revitalize bilateral relations.

What is the history of India-Canada Relations?

Establishment of Relations	India-Canada established diplomatic relations in 1947 . This relationship was to be built upon built shared traditions of democracy, pluralism and strong interpersonal connections.
Phase of Thaw in Relationship (1947-1974)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Colombo Plan (1951): Canada provided significant foreign aid, food assistance, and technical expertise. • Nuclear Partnership: Canada helped build India's first nuclear research reactor (CIRUS) in 1954. At the time, Canada viewed itself as a "bridge" between India and the Western world.

<p>Deterioration in Relationship (1974-2000s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India-Canada relations witnessed deterioration in the political domain despite economic engagement, regular high-level interactions and long-standing people-to-people ties. ● Canada's opposition to India's nuclear tests (1974 & 1998): After India's 1974 "Smiling Buddha" test, Canada accused India of using the CIRUS reactor (intended for peaceful use) to create plutonium for weapons. Canada severed nuclear ties and imposed sanctions, which were renewed after India's 1998 tests. ● Khalistan Issue: The bombing of a Montreal-to-Delhi Air India flight by Sikh separatists, which killed 329 people, remains the deadliest mass murder in Canadian history. It created long-standing friction over how Canada handled domestic extremism.
<p>Phase of Renewal of Bonhomie (2010-2022)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nuclear Reconciliation (2010): A landmark Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement was signed, finally ending the decades-long nuclear freeze. ● PM Visit (2015): Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Canada in 2015 was the first bilateral visit by an Indian PM since 1973. The government hailed the visit with the assumption that decades of mistrust over the Khalistan issue could be brushed aside. ● Strategic Partnership (2018): Ties were elevated to a "Strategic Partnership." Trade grew steadily, and India became the top source of international students and immigrants to Canada.

<p>Nijjar Crisis & Resetting of ties (2023-2025)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Diplomatic Row (2023–2024): In September 2023, then-PM Justin Trudeau alleged a “potential link” between Indian agents and the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian Khalistani activist. This led to a cycle of expelled diplomats, suspended visas, and heated rhetoric. ● The 2025 Recovery: Following the election of Prime Minister Mark Carney in Canada, a “reset” began. At the 2025 G7 and G20 summits, PM Modi and PM Carney agreed to reinstate High Commissioners and resume trade negotiations.
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The Khalistan Shadow over India-Canada Relations over the years:

During Militancy In Punjab:

- **1982:** Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (Justin Trudeau’s father) declined to extradite **Talwinder Singh Parmar** accused of killing two police officers in Punjab.
- **1984:** In the aftermath of **Operation Bluestar** (launched by the Indian army to root out militants from the Golden Temple in June 1984) bolstered the Khalistan movement among the diaspora.
- **1985:** Babbar Khalsa (Khalistan separatist organisation) orchestrated the **bombing of Air India Kanishka** in June 1985 which resulted in 331 civilian deaths.

Post-2015 Period:

- **2015:** Justin Trudeau’s **proximity to individuals sympathetic to Khalistan’s** cause strained bilateral relations.
- **2017:** The then Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh refused to meet Canadian Defence Minister **Harjit Singh Sajjan**, accusing him of associating with separatists.

- 2018: India got aggravated when Jaspal Atwal convicted of attempting to assassinate an Indian Cabinet minister in 1986 was invited to dine with Trudeau during his Visit to India. Trudeau got a **cool reception** during his visit to India when he was received at the airport by Minister of State for Agriculture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat instead of PM Modi.
- 2019: The annual '**Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada**' released in December 2018, mentioned 'Sikh extremism' and Khalistan for the first time. However, in 2019 Canada revised the report just a day before Vaisakhi, **removing all mentions of Khalistan and Sikh extremism.**
- 2020: India accused **Trudeau of inciting extremists** when he expressed concerns about New Delhi's response to the farmers' protest and pledging support for their rights.
- 2022: In March 2022, Trudeau's Liberal Party formed an alliance with the New Democratic Party (NDP), led by Jagmeet Singh, who openly endorsed the Khalistan Referendum on Canadian soil.
- 2023: In September 2023, PM Trudeau alleged "credible links" between Indian government agents and the killing of Nijjar (a designated terrorist in India) in British Columbia. This led to a complete diplomatic breakdown which caused expulsion of 41 Canadian diplomats from India, withdrawal of High Commissioners in 2024.
- 2025-26: Following the leadership change in Canada (PM Mark Carney), the two countries have attempted a "strategic decoupling" of the Khalistan issue from trade and energy. To firewall the relationship from the Nijjar investigation, both sides have created a separated framework under the NSA to discuss 'transnational crimes'. This mechanism is specifically meant to address the concerns related to pro-Khalistani activities in Canada.

What is the Significance of India-Canada Relations?

1. Cooperation in Indo-Pacific: Canada's **Indo-Pacific Strategy** has listed India an important partner in the Indo-Pacific region. It has marked out China as an "increasingly disruptive global power", while referring to India as a "critical partner" with shared traditions of democracy and pluralism.
2. Trade and Commerce:
 - India is Canada's 7th largest trading partner.

- Bilateral trade between India and Canada stands at **USD 30 billion in 2024**.
- More than 400 Canadian companies have a presence in India and more than 1,000 companies are actively pursuing business in the Indian market.
- Canada and India are working toward a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement** and a **Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA)** – with the aim to double the two-way trade to \$70bn by 2030.

Canada remains India's most reliable supplier of potash (fertilizer) and pulses (lentils), which are critical for India's agricultural stability.

● India-Canada bilateral trade

	Goods trade		Services Trade	
	2024	2025 (Jan-Nov)	2024	2025 (Jan-Sept)
Exports (\$ bn)	4.14	4.1	3.15	1.61
Imports (\$ bn)	4.84	3.06	11.07	7.75
Total Bilateral Trade(\$ bn)	8.98	7.16	14.22	9.36

Source: Indian Express

- 3. Investment:** According to DPIIT, Canada is the 17th largest foreign investor in India. Its cumulative investment of ~\$4bn from 2000 to 2025 represented 0.56% of the total FDI flows into India.
- 4. Security & Defence:**
 - India & Canada have regularly engaged in dialogue & cooperation on global security issues, including counterterrorism, cybersecurity & regional stability.
 - The bedrock of the security relationship remains the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter-Terrorism (established in 1997).
 - Both the sides have also enhanced the security cooperation through another framework on 'Countering Terrorism & Violent Extremism' signed in 2018.
- 5. Energy sector:**

- With Canada's vast natural resources & India's expanding energy demand, the energy cooperation remains a key pillar of the bilateral relationship.
 - The partnership encompasses both – conventional & RE resources – with Canada pitching itself as a reliable supplier of oil, gas, LNG, LPG, Crude oil & Critical minerals.
 - India and Canada signed a **Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA)** in 2010 for which a Joint Committee on Civil Nuclear Cooperation was constituted by both the countries. Uranium supply deal has been signed during PM Modi's visit in 2015.
- 6. S&T and Space: ISRO and CSA (Canadian Space Agency)** have signed MoUs for cooperation in the field of exploration and utilisation of outer space. **ANTRIX**, the Commercial arm of ISRO, has launched many Canadian Satellites.
- 7. Education Sector:** Since 2018, India has been the largest source country for international students in Canada. This has helped Canadian universities and colleges to provide **subsidised education to domestic students.**
- 8. Indian Diaspora (The "Living Bridge"):** Canada hosts one of the largest Indian diaspora in the world numbering **1.8 million (PIOs and NRIs)** which account for more than 3% of its total population. The diaspora has done commendably well in every sector in Canada. In the field of politics, the present House of Common (total strength of 338) has 22 Members of Parliament of Indian-origin.

What are the challenges in the relations between the two countries?

1. Khalistani separatist factor:

- It is the single most important challenge between India and Canada. The **Canadian government's Policy of balancing the Sikh assertions and its relations with India**, has jeopardised the India-Canada Relations.
- The attacks on **Non-Sikh Indian Diaspora, Indian Consulates and Temples** have further strained the India-Canada Relations.

2. Trade Challenges:

- **Structural impediments such as complex labour laws, market protectionism, and bureaucratic regulations have been roadblocks for Indo-Canadian trade relations.**

- Bilateral agreements, such as the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** and **Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements (BIPPA)**, have been in negotiation for long time and no progress has been reached by both the countries.
- 3. Foreign Interference Allegations** Canada's Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference concluded in 2025 that India had become "the second most active country" after China in engaging in electoral foreign interference in Canada, with intelligence suggesting proxy agents may have illicitly supported certain Canadian politicians.
- 4. Human Rights Disagreements** Canada has been vocal about human rights concerns in India, particularly related to the treatment of religious minorities like Sikhs and Muslims, while India has expressed concerns over attacks on Hindu minorities and religious places in Canada.
- 5. Immigration Tensions** Many Indians are returning from Canada due to high living costs and shrinking job opportunities. Indian applications for study permits saw a 40% decline in 2023, driven by diplomatic tensions, Canadian immigration policy changes, and economic concerns. Canada also announced plans to reduce student visas by 35% in 2024, with an additional 10% reduction in 2025.

What Should be the way forward?

- 1. Constructive and Sustained Engagement:** India will have to build a **constructive and sustained engagement** with the Sikh diaspora, **dispel the misinformation** propagated by the Khalistani separatists and showcase the sense of contentment prevailing in Punjab.
- 2. Revive the Stalled Free Trade Agreement (CEPA):** Economic interdependence is one of the best buffers against political friction. Both governments should restart CEPA negotiations with renewed political will, focusing on sectors where there is clear mutual benefit — technology, pharmaceuticals, critical minerals, clean energy, and agriculture. A stronger trade relationship creates stakeholders in both countries who have a vested interest in stable ties.
- 3. Dehypenation:** India and Canada must **dehypenate** their political contestations over the Khalistan issue and their trade and investment relations. Both the countries must look to be back on the trade negotiations table back soon to finalise the **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** between the two countries.

4. **Civil Society and Track II Diplomacy:** India and Canada must encourage civil society organisations and **Track II diplomacy** initiatives to foster people-to-people connections, dialogue, and conflict resolution efforts.
5. **Media and Public Diplomacy:** Promotion of **responsible reporting** to ensure that media coverage and public discourse accurately reflect the complexities of the relationship and the efforts being made to strengthen it.
6. **Cooperate on Global Strategic Priorities** Both nations share interests in a rules-based international order, Indo-Pacific stability, climate change, and democratic governance. They can align in multilateral forums like the G20, Commonwealth, and the UN on issues like climate finance, digital governance, and food security — even when bilateral politics is complicated.
7. **Manage the China Factor Together** Both India and Canada are increasingly wary of Chinese influence — in their economies, institutions, and political systems. This shared concern could be a significant convergence point. Collaborating on supply chain resilience, critical minerals (Canada is rich in them, India needs them), and technology standards could turn a geopolitical challenge into a bilateral opportunity.

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Effects of policies of Developed and Developing countries on India

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) – Explained Pointwise

Recently, a Delhi trial court ordered the discharge of former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his former deputy Manish Sisodia, along with 21 others, in a CBI case linked to the Delhi excise (liquor) policy. The court strongly criticized CBI's investigation, finding no overarching conspiracy, no criminal intent, and insufficient material evidence supporting the allegations.

**Central Bureau of Investigation:**

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is India's premier federal investigative agency. Operating under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions (which falls under the Prime Minister's Office), is the premier investigating police agency in India.
- It is the primary body tasked with probing high-profile corruption, economic fraud, and complex criminal cases.
- CBI is neither a constitutional nor a statutory body. It was set up in 1963 via a resolution by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Legal Power:** It derives its investigative powers from the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946.
- **Nodal Agency:** It serves as the official point of contact for INTERPOL in India.

Composition of CBI:

- The CBI is headed by a Director and he is assisted by a Special Director or an Additional Director.
- Additionally, it has a number of Joint Directors, Deputy Inspector Generals, Superintendents of Police and all other usual ranks of police personnel.
- Appointment: Since the Lokpal Act of 2014, the Director is chosen by a high-powered committee consisting of:
 1. The Prime Minister (Chairperson)
 2. The Leader of the Opposition (or Leader of the single largest opposition party)
 3. The Chief Justice of India (or a Supreme Court judge nominated by them)

Organizational structure of CBI:

The CBI has the following Divisions:

1. Anti-Corruption Division
2. Economic Offences Division
3. Special Crimes Division
4. Directorate of Prosecution
5. Administration Division
6. Policy & Coordination Division
7. Central Forensic Science Laboratory

Key Functions of CBI:

Anti-Corruption	Cases involving Central Government employees, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), and financial institutions.
Economic Crimes	Major financial scams, bank frauds, cybercrime, and smuggling of narcotics or antiques.

Special Crimes	High-profile murders, kidnappings, and crimes with national or international ramifications
Supervision	In corruption cases, the CBI works under the superintendence of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).

Powers and Jurisdiction of CBI:

- Section 3 of the DSPE Act confers upon the CBIs concurrent and co-extensive powers to carry out the investigation of the offences mentioned under the same section.
- According to Section 6 of the DSPE Act, The Central Government has the power to extend the jurisdiction of the CBI to any area, except union territories, that falls within the geographical boundaries of India, subject to the consent of the state so concerned.
- An additional power conferred in the CBI Constitution is that CBI can correspond with and demand information from any Ministry or Department of the central or State Government.
- The officers of the CBI also have the added power of being exempt from the provisions of the Right to Information Act of 2005.
- State Consent:
 - To investigate a crime within a state's borders, the CBI typically needs "General Consent" from that state government.
 - In recent years, several states (such as West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala) have withdrawn this general consent, requiring the CBI to seek case-specific permission unless ordered by a court.
 - The Supreme Court and High Courts can order the CBI to investigate any case across India *without* the state's consent.

What are some of the challenges or criticisms faced by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)?

1. The "Caged Parrot": Since the CBI operates under the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), which is under the Prime Minister's Office, critics argue it lacks the administrative and financial autonomy necessary for complete independence.

2. **Selective and Politically Motivated Investigations** Opposition parties frequently allege that the CBI is selectively deployed — aggressively pursuing cases against political rivals while going slow on cases involving those in power. This perception has significantly eroded public trust.
3. **Withdrawal of Consent:** Under the DSPE Act of 1946, the CBI must obtain consent from a state government to investigate within its territory. As of early 2026, about 10 states (including West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Punjab) have withdrawn their “General Consent.” This forces the CBI to seek case-specific permission for every new investigation in those states, which often leads to delays, legal battles, and the destruction of evidence before a probe can even begin.
4. **Non-Statutory Status:** Unlike the Election Commission or the CAG, the CBI is not a constitutional body. It isn’t even a “statutory” body in the traditional sense, as it was created by an executive resolution rather than a dedicated Act of Parliament. This makes its very existence legally “fragile.”
5. **Dependence on Deputation:** The CBI does not have its own dedicated cadre for high-level officers; it relies on IPS officers coming in on deputation. This can lead to a lack of continuity and potential pressure on officers who must eventually return to their home states or the central pool.
6. **RTI Exemption:** The CBI is largely exempt from the Right to Information (RTI) Act, citing national security and the sensitive nature of its investigations. Critics argue this shields the agency from public accountability regarding its administrative and financial conduct.
7. **Conviction Rates vs. Trial Delays:** While the CBI boasts a high conviction rate (over 65%), many of its high-profile cases take decades to reach a verdict, often leading to “trial by media” followed by an eventual acquittal due to faded evidence.
8. **Overlapping Roles (CBI vs. ED):** Often, both agencies investigate the same scandal (the CBI for the “predicate offense” like corruption, and the ED for “money laundering”). This can lead to bureaucratic friction and multiple arrests for the same crime, which the courts have recently begun to scrutinize under the “Right to Silence” and “Protection against Self-Incrimination.”

What should be the way forward?

1. **Statutory Independence:** Legal experts and parliamentary panels suggest enacting a dedicated “CBI Act” that clearly defines its powers, jurisdiction, and relationship with the Centre.

Granting it status similar to the Election Commission or CAG would protect it from executive whims and provide a solid legal foundation for its operations nationwide.

2. Solving the “Federal Friction”: A new law could empower the CBI to investigate cases affecting national security, integrity, and inter-state organized crime without needing state consent, while leaving local corruption to state agencies. To prevent misuse, the law should include checks where states can challenge a probe if they feel it is politically motivated, perhaps through a fast-tracked judicial review.
3. Creating a Permanent Cadre:
 - Independent Recruitment: Establishing a permanent investigative cadre through a dedicated “CBI Examination” (similar to the UPSC) for ranks like Sub-Inspector and DySP.
 - Lateral Entry for Specialists: Infiltrating the agency with experts in forensic accounting, cyber security, and data analytics from the private sector to handle 21st-century white-collar crimes.
4. Enhancing Accountability and Transparency:
 - Regular reporting to a specialized Parliamentary Committee (without compromising ongoing probe secrets) to ensure financial and administrative accountability.
 - Limiting the broad exemptions the CBI currently enjoys under the RTI Act, specifically for administrative and corruption-related matters within the agency itself.
5. Administrative and Financial Independence:
 - The CBI’s budget should be placed under a separate constitutional or statutory head rather than being dependent on the Ministry of Personnel.
 - Providing the CBI with a dedicated budget sanctioned directly by Parliament, similar to the Judiciary, rather than making it dependent on the DoPT (Ministry of Personnel) for every expense.
6. Modernization and Capacity Building: The CBI needs significant investment in forensic infrastructure, cybercrime capabilities, financial investigation tools, and human resources. Many of its investigative delays stem from genuine capacity constraints. Dedicated training programs, competitive salaries, and lateral induction of specialists in areas like digital forensics and financial crimes would improve output quality.

7. Learning from Global Best Practices: India could draw lessons from agencies like the FBI (statutory independence), Hong Kong's ICAC (singular anti-corruption focus with high public trust), or Singapore's CPIB (lean, well-resourced, and politically insulated) to design a more effective institutional model.

Read More: [Indian Express](#)

UPSC GS-2: Polity