

## 7 PM COMPILATION

**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
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## Union Budget 2026-2027

On the sacred occasion of Magha Purnima and the birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Budget for the year 2026-2027. This was her 9th consecutive budget. This is a **Yuva Shakti-driven Budget**.

### Budget Basics:

- **Budget:** Budget is essentially a statement of anticipated receipts and expenditure. The annual budget covers all aspects of government finances, including revenue generation, expenditure allocations, and policy announcements.
- **Government Receipts:** The Government receipts are categorised into revenue and capital receipts.
- **Government Receipts for 2026-27:**
- **Government Expenditure:** The expenditure of the Government is also categorized into revenue and capital expenditure. The components of the expenditure are also shown below.
- **Government expenditure for 2026-27:**

### MACRO-ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BUDGET 2026-27:

1. **Total Receipts for FY 2026-27:** The total receipts for FY 2026-27 is estimated at Rs. 53.4 lakh crore.
2. **Total Expenditure for FY 2026-27:** The total expenditure in Budget Estimates (BE) 2026-27 is estimated at ₹53,47,315 crore of which total capital expenditure is ₹12,21,821 crore and effective capital expenditure is ₹17,14,523 crore.
3. **Fiscal Deficit:** The fiscal deficit is estimated at 4.3 per cent of GDP.
4. The Government has accepted the recommendation of the 16th Finance Commission to retain the vertical share of devolution at 41%. ₹1.4 lakh crore has been provided to the States for the FY 2026-27 as Finance Commission Grants, which include Rural and Urban Local Body and Disaster Management Grants.
5. The debt-to-GDP ratio is estimated to be 55.6 percent of GDP in BE 2026-27, compared to 56.1 percent of GDP in RE 2025-26.

### Budget Highlights 2026-27-Part A:

- India's economic trajectory has been marked by stability, fiscal discipline, sustained growth and moderate inflation.
- India will continue to take confident steps towards Viksit Bharat, balancing ambition with inclusion. India will prefer action over ambivalence, reform over rhetoric and people over populism.
- **Steps taken by the Government to achieve 7% High Growth Rate:**
- **Government's Sankalp:** The budget reiterates Government's 'Sankalp' of its focus on poor, underprivileged and the disadvantaged. The Budget 2026-27 is inspired by **3 kartavya:**
  - **First Kartavya:** Accelerate and sustain economic growth, by enhancing productivity and competitiveness, and building resilience to volatile global dynamics.
  - **Second kartavya:** To fulfil aspirations of our people and build their capacity, making them strong partners in India's path to prosperity.
  - **Third kartavya:** To ensure that every family, community, region and sector has access to resources, amenities and opportunities for meaningful participation.

***Kartavya-1- Area-1 Scaling up manufacturing in 7 strategic and frontier sectors:***

1. **Biopharma SHAKTI** has been proposed with an outlay of ₹ 10,000 crores over the next 5 years, to develop India as a global Biopharma manufacturing hub. This will build the ecosystem for domestic production of biologics and biosimilars, for non-communicable diseases, like diabetes, cancer and autoimmune disorders:
  - a. Setting up **3 new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER)** and upgrading 7 existing ones.
  - b. Creation of a network of over **1000 accredited India Clinical Trials** sites.
2. **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0** to be launched to produce equipment and materials, design full-stack Indian IP, and fortify supply chains, for expansion of India's semiconductor sector capabilities.
3. **The Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme-** Outlay on the scheme to be increased to ₹40,000 crore.
4. **Establishment of dedicated Rare Earth Corridors** in the mineral-rich States of Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to promote mining, processing, research and Manufacturing.
5. **Scheme to support States in establishing 3 dedicated Chemical Parks** to enhance domestic chemical production and reduce import dependency.
6. **Building strong capital goods capability:**
  - a. **Hi-Tech Tool Rooms to be established by CPSEs at 2 locations** as digitally enabled automated service bureaus that locally design, test, and manufacture high-precision components at scale and at lower cost.
  - b. **Scheme for Enhancement of Construction and Infrastructure Equipment (CIE)** to be introduced to strengthen domestic manufacturing of high-value and technologically-advanced CIE.
  - c. **Scheme for Container Manufacturing** to create a globally competitive container manufacturing ecosystem, with a budgetary allocation of ₹10,000 crore over a 5 year period.
7. **Labour- Intensive Textile Sector:**
  - a. The **National Fibre Scheme** for self-reliance in natural fibres such as silk, wool and jute, man-made fibres, and new-age fibres.
  - b. **Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme** to modernise traditional clusters.
  - c. A **National Handloom and Handicraft programme** to integrate and strengthen existing schemes and ensure targeted support for weavers and artisans.
  - d. **Tex-Eco Initiative** to promote globally competitive and sustainable textiles and apparels.
  - e. **Samarth 2.0** to modernize and upgrade the textile skilling ecosystem.
  - f. Launch of **Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj initiative** to strengthen khadi, handloom and handicrafts. This will help in global market linkage and branding.
  - g. **Dedicated initiative for sports goods** that will promote manufacturing, research and innovation in equipment design as well as material sciences.

***Kartavya-1- Area-2 Rejuvenation of Legacy Industrial Clusters:***

**Scheme to revive 200 legacy industrial clusters** to improve their cost competitiveness and efficiency through infrastructure and technology upgradation.

***Kartavya-1- Area-3 Creating "Champion SMEs" and supporting micro enterprises*** Three-pronged approach to help the MSME's grow as "champions".

***Kartavya-1- Area-4 Delivering a powerful push to Infrastructure:***

- Continue to **focus on developing infrastructure in cities with over 5 lakh population** (Tier II and Tier III), which have expanded to become growth centres.
- **Public capex to be increased to ₹12.2 lakh crore**, to continue the infrastructure momentum.
- Setting up **Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund** to provide prudently calibrated partial credit

<b>Second kartavya:</b>  <b>To fulfil aspirations and build capacity</b>	<b>Second Kartavya- Area- Renewed emphasis on the Services Sector:</b> To provide a pathway to fulfilling aspirations of a youthful India. The following measures are envisaged under the following pillars to achieve the second Kartavya.	
	<b>Services Sector</b>	<b>High-Powered 'Education to Employment and Enterprise' Standing Committee</b> to focus on the Services Sector as a core driver of Viksit Bharat. Committee to prioritise areas to optimise the potential for growth, employment and exports.
	<b>Health Sector</b>	Upgradation of existing institutions for <b>Allied Health Professionals (AHPs)</b> and establishment of new AHP Institutions in private and Government sectors, to cover 10 selected disciplines.
	<b>Care Ecosystem</b>	<b>Building a strong Care Ecosystem</b> , covering geriatric and allied care services. Training of <b>1.5 lakh caregivers</b> , covering core care and allied skills, such as, wellness, yoga and operation of medical and assistive devices.
	<b>Medical Value Tourism</b>	Schemes to support States in establishing <b>Five Hubs for Medical Value Tourism</b> in partnership with the private sector.
	<b>Animal Husbandry</b>	Scale up availability of <b>veterinary professionals by more than 20,000</b> . <b>Loan-linked capital subsidy support</b> scheme for establishment of veterinary and paravet colleges, veterinary hospitals, diagnostic laboratories and breeding facilities in the private sector.
	<b>Orange Economy</b>	Support to the <b>Indian Institute of Creative Technologies, Mumbai</b> in setting up <b>AVGC Content Creator Labs</b> in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges.
	<b>Design</b>	Setting up of a <b>new National Institute of Design</b> through the <b>challenge route</b> in the <b>eastern region of India</b> .
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>5 University Townships</b> in the vicinity of major industrial and logistic corridors.</li> <li>● <b>A girls' hostel in Higher Education STEM institutions</b> in every district.</li> <li>● Setting up or upgrading of <b>four Telescope Infrastructure facilities</b>.</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>Tourism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Setting up a <b>National Institute of Hospitality</b> as a bridge between academia, industry and the Government.</li> <li>● Pilot scheme for upskilling <b>10,000 guides in 20 iconic tourist sites</b>.</li> <li>● <b>National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid</b> to digitally document all places of significance. To develop ecologically sustainable Mountain trails, Turtle Trails and Bird watching trails:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Mountain trails</b> in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir; Araku Valley in the Eastern Ghats and Podhigai Malai in the Western Ghats.</li> <li>2. <b>Turtle Trails</b> along key nesting sites in the coastal areas of Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala.</li> <li>3. <b>Bird watching trails</b> along the Pulikat lake in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● India to host the <b>first ever Global Big Cat Summit</b>.</li> <li>● Development of <b>15 archeological sites</b> (Lothal, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi, Adichanallur, Sarnath, Hastinapur, and Leh Palace) into vibrant, experiential cultural destinations.</li> <li>● Development of <b>Buddhist Circuits</b> in the North East Region.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Sports</b></p> <p>Launch of <b>Khelo India Mission</b> for integrated talent development pathway, systematic coaching development, integration of science &amp; technology and development of sports infrastructure.</p>

**Third  
kartavya:  
Sabka  
Sath,  
Sabka  
Vikas  
towards a  
Viksit  
Bharat**

**Third Kartavya- Area 1: Increasing farmer incomes:**

<p><b>Fisheries</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake initiatives for <b>integrated development of 500 reservoirs</b> and Amrit Sarovars.</li> <li>• Strengthen the <b>fisheries value chain in coastal areas</b> and enable market linkages.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Animal Husbandry</b></p>	<p>Entrepreneurship development through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Credit-Linked Subsidy Programme</li> <li>2. Scaling-up and modernisation of livestock enterprises</li> <li>3. Enhanced creation of livestock, dairy and poultry-focused integrated-value chains</li> <li>4. Creation of Livestock Farmer Producers Organisations</li> </ol>
<p><b>High Value Agriculture</b></p>	<p>Support high value crops such as coconut, sandalwood, cocoa and cashew in our coastal areas. Support Agar trees in North East and nuts such as, almonds, walnuts and pine nuts in hilly regions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Coconut Promotion Scheme</b> to increase production and enhance productivity of coconuts.</li> <li>2. <b>Enhance export competitiveness and transform Indian Cashew and Indian Cocoa</b> into premium global brands by 2030.</li> <li>3. Partner with State Governments to promote focused cultivation and post-harvest processing to restore the glory of the <b>Indian Sandalwood ecosystem</b>.</li> <li>4. Rejuvenate old, low-yielding orchards and expand high-density cultivation of walnuts, almonds and pine nuts, through a <b>dedicated programme to enhance farmer incomes</b>.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Bharat-VISTARR</b></p>	<p>A multilingual AI tool that shall integrate the <b>AgriStack portals</b> and the <b>ICAR package</b> on agricultural practices with AI systems.</p>
<p><b>SHE-Marts for Rural Women-led Enterprises</b></p>	<p><b>Community-owned retail outlets</b> within the cluster level federations through enhanced and innovative financing instruments.</p>

**Third Kartavya- Area 2-Empowering Divyangjan:**

<p><b>Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana</b></p>	<p>Ensure dignified livelihood opportunities for divyangjans in IT, AVGC sectors, Hospitality and Food and Beverages sectors.</p>
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- **Ecosystem required for the achievement of the Sankalp:** This threefold approach requires a **supportive ecosystem**– *Sustaining the momentum of structural reforms, robust and resilient financial sector, and cutting-edge technologies, including AI applications.*

### India's Reforms Express:

The Government has undertaken comprehensive economic reforms towards creating employment, boosting productivity and accelerating growth. Over 350 reforms have been rolled out. These include GST simplification, notification of Labour Codes, and rationalisation of mandatory Quality Control Orders.

### Budget Tax Proposals- Part B:

#### Tax Reforms to Boost the Manufacturing Sector:

- Exemption from income tax for five years to non residents providing capital goods, equipment or tooling, to any toll manufacturer in a bonded zone.
- Provision of safe harbour to non-residents for component warehousing in a bonded warehouse.
- Deferred duty payment window to trusted manufacturers.
- Increase the limit for duty-free imports of specified inputs used for processing seafood products for export, from the current 1 per cent to 3 per cent of the FOB value of the previous year's export turnover.
- Duty-free imports of specified inputs extended to export of shoe uppers in addition to leather or synthetic footwear.
- Extension of time for the export of final product from the existing 6 months to 1 year, for exporters of leather or textile garments, leather and synthetic footwear.
- Exemption from basic customs duty on specified parts used in the manufacture of microwave ovens.
- Exemption from basic customs duty on components and parts used in aircraft manufacturing.
- Exemption from basic customs duty on raw materials imported for manufacture of aircraft parts used in maintenance, repair, or overhaul requirements defence units.
- Regular importers with trusted longstanding supply chains to be recognized in the risk system.
- Export cargo using electronic sealing to be provided through clearance from the factory premises to the ship.
- A special one-time measure to facilitate sale in domestic tariff area at concessional rate of duty by eligible manufacturing units of SEZs.

**Tax Proposal for MSMEs-** Removal of the current value cap of ₹10 lakh per consignment on courier exports.

#### Tax Reforms to boost Services Sector:

- Clubbing of services under a single category of information technology services with a common safe harbour margin of 15.5%.
- Safe harbour threshold for IT services increasing from ₹ 300 crore to ₹2,000 crore.
- Approval of safe harbour for IT services by an automated rule-driven process.
- Continuation of safe harbour for a period of five years at the company's choice.
- Fastracking unilateral APA process for IT services with an aim to conclude it within a period of two years. Can be extended by a further period of six months on the taxpayer's request.
- Extension of facility of modified returns for APA-availing entities to its associated entities.

- Provision of tax holidays until 2047 to foreign companies providing cloud services to global customers through India-based data centre services. Related Entities providing data center services from India to get a safe-harbour of 15% on cost.
- Exemption to global income of non-resident expert for a stay period of 5 years under notified schemes.

**Tax Proposals for Financial Sector:**

- Raising the STT on Futures from 0.02% to 0.05%.
- STT on options premium and exercise of options to be raised to 0.15% from rate of 0.1% and 0.125%, respectively.

**Tax Proposals for Agriculture Sector:**

- Fish catch by an Indian fishing vessel in Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) or on the High Seas to be made free of duty. Treating the landing of such fish on foreign port as export of goods.
- Deduction allowed to primary cooperative society engaged to include supply of cattle feed and cotton seed produced by members.
- Allowing inter-cooperative society dividend income as deduction under the new tax regime to the extent distributed to members.
- Exemption from tax dividend income received by a notified national co-operative federation from investments made in companies up to 31.1.2026 from tax for a period of three years. Exemption to be allowed only for dividends distributed to its member co-operatives.

**Tax Proposals for Energy Sector:**

- Exemption of BCD on import of sodium antimonate for use in manufacture of solar glass.
- Exemption of BCD on import of capital goods required for the processing of critical minerals in India.
- Extending exemption of BCD to capital goods used for the manufacture of Lithium-Ion Cells for batteries to be used in battery energy storage systems.
- Extension of the existing basic customs duty (BCD) exemption on imports of goods required for Nuclear Power Projects till the year 2035 and expand it for all nuclear plants irrespective of their capacity.
- Exclusion of entire value of biogas in Central Excise duty payable on biogas blended CNG.

**Proposals for Trust Based Governance:**

- Enhancement of duty-deferral period for Tier 2 and Tier 3 Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) from 15 to 30 days. Eligible manufacturer importers to get the same duty deferral facility. Government agencies will be encouraged to leverage AEO accreditation.
- Extension of validity period of advance ruling, binding on Customs, from 3 years to 5 years.
- Transformation of Customs warehousing framework into a warehouse operator centric system with self-declarations etc.
- The filing of Bill of entry by a trusted importer, and arrival of goods to automatically notify Customs.
- Regular importers with trusted longstanding supply chains will be recognized in the risk system, so that the need for verification of their cargo every time can be minimized.

**Proposals for Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living:**

- Individual Persons Resident Outside India (PROIs) will be permitted to invest in equity instruments of listed Indian companies through the Portfolio Investment Scheme (PIS).
- Interest awarded by the motor accident claim tribunal to a natural person will be exempt from Income Tax, and any TDS on this account will be done away with.
- Reduce TCS rate on sale of overseas tour program package from 5% and 20% to 2% without any stipulation of amount.
- Reduce TCS for pursuing education and for medical purposes under the Liberalized Remittance Scheme (LRS) from 5% to 2%.
- TDS on Supply of manpower services to be at the rate of either 1% or 2%.
- Obtaining a lower or nil deduction certificate through rule-based automated process for small taxpayers.
- Enable depositories to accept Form 15G or Form 15H from taxpayers holding securities in multiple companies. Time available for revising returns extended from 31st December to up to 31st March with the payment of a nominal fee.
- Individuals with ITR 1 and ITR 2 returns will continue to file till 31st July and non-audit business cases or trusts are proposed to be allowed time till 31st August.
- TDS on the sale of immovable property by a non-resident to be deducted and deposited through resident buyer's PAN instead of TAN.
- Introducing a one-time 6-month foreign asset disclosure scheme below a certain size for small taxpayers.
- Allow taxpayers to update their returns even after reassessment proceedings have been initiated at an additional 10 percent tax rate over and above the rate applicable for the relevant year.
- Framework for immunity from penalty and prosecution in the cases of underreporting extended to misreporting.
- Non-production of books of account and documents and requirement of TDS payment is decriminalised.
- Immunity from prosecution with retrospective effect from 1.10.2024 for non-disclosure of non immovable foreign assets with aggregate value less than ₹ 20 lakh.
- Exemption from Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) to all non-residents who pay tax on presumptive basis.
- Constitute a Joint Committee of Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Central Board of Direct Taxes for incorporating the requirements of Income Computation and Disclosure Standards (ICDS) in the Indian Accounting Standards (IndAS).
- Tax buyback for all types of shareholders as Capital Gains. However, promoters will pay an additional buyback tax.
- Set-off using available MAT credit to be allowed to an extent of 1/4th of the tax liability in the new regime.
- MAT is proposed to be made final tax.
- Exempt BCD on 17 drugs or medicines for cancer patients.
- Single and interconnected digital window for cargo clearance approvals.
- Customs Integrated System (CIS) to be rolled out in 2 years.
- Honest taxpayers willing to settle disputes will now be able close cases by paying an additional amount in lieu of penalty.

## Wetland Conservation in India- Explained Pointwise

February 2 is celebrated annually as World Wetlands Day. The theme for 2026 is “Wetlands & traditional knowledge”. Wetlands, often referred to as the earth’s kidneys, are among the most productive ecosystems, providing critical ecosystem services such as water purification, flood control, and carbon sequestration. Globally, **wetlands cover 6% of the Earth’s land surface** and **support 40% of the world’s species**, as per the Ramsar Convention. However, since 1970, 35% of global wetland areas have been lost due to human activities like urbanization, agriculture, and pollution.

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

### What is the present status of wetlands?

<b>Global Scenario</b>	Wetlands are declining at a rate of (-)0.78% annually, with 81% of inland wetland species and 36% of coastal species experiencing population declines since 1970, as per the Wetland Extent Trends (WET) index. Since 1900, 50% of global wetland area has been lost, with a decline of 35% between 1970 and 2015.
<b>Indian Context</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>India has 98 Ramsar sites</b> (wetlands of international importance), covering 1.36 million hectares. However, this represents only a fraction of the total wetland area.</li> <li>2. Wetlands <b>cover 18.4% of India’s land area</b> (excluding rivers); 70% of these are used for paddy cultivation.</li> <li>3. The coastal wetlands span 6,750 sq. km, with “mangrove ecosystems” concentrated in Sundarbans, Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands, Odisha, and Gujarat.</li> <li>4. Southern peninsular wetlands are largely man-made reservoirs, locally known as <b>Yeris (tanks)</b>, essential for water storage and biodiversity conservation.</li> <li>5. 50% of India’s wetlands have been lost due to encroachment, land-use change, and pollution. E.g. Pallikaranai Marsh and East Kolkata Wetlands have shrunk drastically due to urbanization.</li> <li>6. The Wildlife Institute of India reports that 70-80% of freshwater marshes in the Gangetic floodplains have been lost in the last five decades.</li> <li>7. Urban areas like Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata have lost 71%, 85%, and 36% of their wetlands, respectively, due to urbanization and pollution.</li> <li>8. Indian mangrove areas have shrunk from 700,000 hectares in 1987 to 453,000 hectares in 1995, with only 4,000 sq. km remaining today, as per remote sensing data.</li> </ol>

### What is the significance of Wetlands?

- 1. Ecological Importance:** Wetlands are biological supermarkets, supporting a wide range of species, nutrient cycling, hydrological regulation and habitat heterogeneity. Also, it acts as carbon sinks, mitigating climate change by sequestering carbon. They also support biodiversity, **hosting 40% of the world's species**, as per the Ramsar Convention. **E.g.** the Sundarbans, a Ramsar site, is home to the endangered Bengal tiger and acts as a natural barrier against cyclones.
- 2. Economic Value:** Wetlands contribute significantly to livelihoods. The East Kolkata Wetlands treat wastewater and support fisheries, generating an estimated \$100 million annually.
- 3. Climate Resilience:** Wetlands act as carbon sinks, sequestering carbon and mitigating climate change. They also regulate floods and droughts, providing “**nature-based solutions**” for climate adaptation.
- 4. Cultural & Recreational Value:** Wetlands like **Chilika Lake, Loktak Lake, and Wular Lake** have spiritual, tourism, and aesthetic value.
- 5. Wetlands as Natural Disaster Buffers:** Economic Survey (2020-21) recognizes wetland conservation as a Nature-Based Solution (NbS). Mangrove forests reduce storm surge heights by up to 50% (World Bank, 2021).

#### What progress has been made so far in wetland conservation?

- 1. Policy Framework:** India is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention (1971) and has designated 85 Ramsar sites. The **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017**, provide a legal framework for wetland conservation. The National Committee on Wetlands, Mangroves, and Coral Reefs has identified 93 wetlands for priority conservation.
- 2. Government Initiative:** National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA), ₹900 crore allocated. **AMRUT 2.0 (2021)**, focus on “urban blue-green infrastructure” for wetlands. **Namami Gange Programme**, wetland rejuvenation along the Ganga River Basin.
- 3. Judicial Interventions:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Meghalaya High Court have emphasized the need for wetland conservation through suo motu PILs and directives.
- 4. Global Initiatives:** Ramsar **COP14 (2022) in Wuhan & Geneva** highlighted the need to link wetland conservation with global sustainability goals, including the SDGs, IPCC targets, and UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, Global Biodiversity Framework.

#### What are the Challenges in wetland conservation?

Wetlands are among the most threatened ecosystems because they sit at the intersection of land, water, & development.

- 1. Urbanization and Land Use Change:** Urban expansion has led to the loss of wetlands in cities like Mumbai and Chennai. The **National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas** shows a decline in natural wetlands due to infrastructure development.
- 2. Pollution:** Industrial effluents and untreated sewage have degraded wetlands like the Bellandur Lake in Bengaluru, which famously caught fire due to pollution. Growing pollution results in eutrophication of water bodies when untreated sewage, industrial effluents, agricultural runoff, and solid waste are pushed into wetlands. When a wetland becomes the dumping ground, its biodiversity collapses, along with its ability to buffer floods & purify water.
- 3. Climate Change:** Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns threaten wetland ecosystems. For example, the Sundarbans face salinity intrusion due to sea-level rise.
- 4. Lack of Awareness and Governance:** Weak enforcement of conservation laws and limited public awareness hinder effective wetland management. State wetland authorities are often underfunded & understaffed.

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

#### What is the Way Forward?

1. **Integrated Management:** Adopt an ecosystem-based approach to wetland management, as advocated during the Ramsar COP14. Integrate wetland conservation into urban planning and development policies.
2. **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Amend the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, to include stricter penalties for violations. Ratify and implement global agreements like the ILO's Recommendation 204 on transitioning to sustainable ecosystems.
3. **Community Participation:** Engage local communities in wetland conservation through programs like Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM). Promote eco-tourism to generate livelihoods while conserving wetlands.
4. **Technological Interventions:** Use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing for real-time monitoring of wetlands. Develop blue-green infrastructure in urban areas to restore wetland ecosystems.
5. **International Best Practices:** Learn from the Netherlands' Room for the River Program, which integrates wetlands into flood management. Adopt China's Sponge Cities Initiative, which uses wetlands for urban water management.
6. **Financial Mechanisms:** Allocate funds for wetland conservation in the Union Budget and State Budgets. Leverage international funding mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Wetland Conservation Bonds to raise funds for restoration.
7. **Wastewater Treatment:** Treat the wastewater before it meets the wetlands. For urban & peri-urban wetlands, a key action is to ensure treated inflows. Wetlands cannot be substitute for sewage treatment plants.
8. **Coastal & Riparian Wetlands:** Make coastal & riparian wetlands central to disaster risk reduction. Planning authorities should treat them as risk buffers – worthy of investment as compared to 'grey infrastructure'.
9. **Build Skills & Institutions:** A national capacity mission for wetland managers with accredited training in hydrology, restoration ecology, GIS/remote sensing, environmental law & community-led governance.

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

India must adopt a holistic approach, combining legal, technological, and community-driven strategies, to conserve its wetlands. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed.” Let us strive to protect our wetlands, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

Read more– [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 3– Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

## Death Penalty in India – Explained Pointwise

According to an annual statistics report on death penalties in India (Published by Square Circle Clinic – a criminal justice initiative at the NALSAR University) the SC has not confirmed a single death penalty in the past 3 years.

### What are the findings of the Report?

- **Death Row Convicts:** India had 574 prisoners – 550 men & 24 women – on death row as of Dec 2025. The average time spent on death row before acquittal was over 5 years, with some prisoners languishing for nearly a decade before being exonerated.
- **Supreme Court Restraint:** The Supreme Court has not confirmed a **single death sentence** in the last three years (2023–2025). In 2025, it acquitted 10 death-row prisoners – the highest number of such acquittals in a single year in a decade – citing “wrongful convictions” and “procedural failures.”
- **Trial Court Enthusiasm:** Conversely, Sessions Courts awarded **128 death sentences** in 2025 alone. Nationwide, there are now **574 prisoners on death row** (the highest since 2016), with Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra holding the largest populations. The Session Courts have handed down 1310 death sentences nationwide between 2016-2025.
- **The Confirmation Gap:** High Courts confirm only about **8%** of the death sentences handed down by lower courts, with the rest being commuted to life imprisonment or resulting in acquittals. The Supreme Court’s stance has been even more restrictive, with no death sentence confirmed in the past 3 years.
- **Procedural Violation at Sentencing Stage:** Despite clear guidelines laid down by SC in *Manoj vs. State of Punjab Case*, which mandated psychological evaluations, prison conduct reports, and mitigation hearings – nearly 95% of death sentences in 2025 were imposed without compliance. Source: The Hindu

### What is the Judicial view on Death Penalty?

- ***Jagmohan Singh v. State of UP (1973)*:** First upheld the constitutionality of the death penalty.
- ***Ediga Anamma v. the State of Andhra Pradesh, (1974)*:** The Supreme Court (SC) laid down the principle that life imprisonment for the offence of murder is the rule and **capital punishment is the exception in certain cases**. The Court also stated that a special reason should be given if a court decides to impose a death sentence.
- ***Bachan Singh v. the State Of Punjab, (1980)*:** The SC stated that the death penalty should be awarded only in ‘**rarest of rare**’ cases. A case becomes rarest of rare when there is **extreme culpability of the offender** in committing the offence of murder; and an extreme cause of the offender in committing the offence of murder. The Supreme Court stated that it should be issued only when the alternative of a life sentence is ‘unquestionably foreclosed’. The death penalty should be awarded after seeing the **aggravating and mitigating factors** and balance of the same.
- ***Manoj vs. State of Madhya Pradesh (2022)*,** the Court mandated that trial courts must conduct a thorough study of the convict’s background – including psychological evaluations and prison conduct reports – before deciding on a death sentence.

### What are arguments in favour of Death Penalty?

1. **Maintaining Deterrence:** The foremost argument given in support is the level of deterrence maintained in society by awarding death penalty. Many people believe that a person may restrain himself from committing a heinous crime like murder if death penalty is awarded for it.
2. **National Security:** Some acts like waging war against the State, terrorism etc erodes the sanctity of our National Security framework. Such acts threaten the very existence of the country and its people. For instance, Ajmal Kasab was awarded the death sentence for carrying out 26/11 Mumbai attacks.
3. **Acts that shake the collective conscience:** Supporters of Death Penalty says that there are some acts which shakes the collective conscience of society and deserves nothing except death penalty. For instance, The *Vinay Sharma v. the Union of India* (2020) case, also famously known as the Nirbhaya gang-rape case, had shocked the conscience of the whole country. One of the accused committed suicide in jail and one of the accused was a juvenile so he was not sentenced to death. But the other four accused were sentenced to death and were also hanged in the year 2020.
4. **Safety of Citizens:** Proponents of capital punishment argue that some criminals commit most terrible of crimes and are beyond redemption (e.g., some accused of multiple rape cases). They show no remorse or repentance. There is no change of reform and should be awarded death sentence for safety of citizens.
5. **Closure and Justice for Victims' Families:** For some families of victims, the execution of the perpetrator provides a definitive sense of closure and finality that life imprisonment may not. It can represent the conclusion of a long and painful legal process and a final affirmation that the justice system has taken the ultimate action on their behalf.
6. **Preventing Vigilantism:** If the law does not provide a punishment that the public deems "sufficient" for a horrific crime, there is a risk that citizens might take the law into their own hands.

#### What are the arguments in favour of abolition of Death Penalty?

1. **High Degree of Subjectivity:** There is a high degree of subjectivity in awarding death sentences as the judges find it difficult to balance the mitigating and aggravating factors.
2. **Socio-Economic Bias:** The death sentence is frequently used disproportionately on the poor, minorities, and members of racial, ethnic, political, and religious communities. According to the Death Penalty India Report 2016 (DPIR), approximately **75% of all convicts sentenced to death in India are from socio-economically underprivileged categories**, such as Dalits, OBCs, and religious minorities.
3. **Risk of Irreversible Error:** Courts often give compensation to individuals who are wrongly convicted and have spent considerable time in jail due to an error by the State. However, if a person is wrongly hanged, then no amount of compensation can bring back the person and mitigate the error. Various studies (such as the *Death Penalty India Report*) have shown that trial courts frequently award death sentences based on flawed investigations or coerced confessions, only for these sentences to be overturned years later by the Supreme Court.
4. **Inhumane:** Human rights and dignity are incompatible with the death penalty. The death sentence is a violation of the right to life, which is the most fundamental of all human rights.
5. **Capacity for Change:** People in support of abolition of death penalty argue that every human has the potential for reform. Executing a prisoner eliminates the possibility of them ever making amends or contributing positively to society. Modern penology has shifted from **Retribution** (revenge) to **Reformation** (rehabilitation).
6. **Mental Stress:** In many cases the convicts have to undergo a huge term of imprisonment before being finally executed. The findings of Project 39A's report 'Deathworthy' shows that the segregated, alienated and stigmatized experiences of being on a death row for a longer time result in mental illness.

- 7. Misuse:** The death penalty can be used as a tool for political repression, to silence dissent, or target vulnerable groups (e.g., in authoritarian regimes).
- 8. Global Precedent – No correlation with low crime rates:** Scandinavian countries like Norway, Sweden and Finland have one of the lowest crime rates in the world without death penalty. They focus on reforming the criminal rather than deterring him with stricter and harsh punishments. As of 2026, over 140 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, making retentionist countries like India part of a shrinking minority.

Source: *The Guardian*

### What should be the way forward?

- 1. Institutionalizing “Life without Remission”:** The judiciary is increasingly viewing “**Life Imprisonment for the remainder of natural life**” as the standard alternative to execution. This satisfies the need for **Retribution** (the prisoner never leaves jail) while avoiding the moral and legal risks of **Execution** (irreversibility).
- 2. Self-Executing Commutation:** Legal experts suggest a “time-bound” rule: if a mercy petition is not decided by the President/Governor within a specific timeframe (e.g., 2–3 years), the sentence should automatically be commuted to life imprisonment.
- 3. Balancing Aggravating & Mitigating Factors:** The SC should release updated guidelines on how to balance the aggravating and mitigating factors in cases. This will help in reducing subjectivity in awarding death penalty and reduce the instances of unnecessary award of death sentence.
- 4. Certainty of Punishment:** The focus should be on ensuring certainty of punishment rather than quantum of punishment that will act as a better deterrent for criminals. Experts argue that the **certainty** of being caught and punished is a much stronger deterrent than the **severity** of the punishment itself.
- 5. The Ultimate Step:** The long-term solution is for Parliament to follow the 262nd Law Commission Report and abolish the death penalty for all crimes except terrorism (**262nd Law Commission Report (2015)** recommended the abolition of the death penalty for all crimes except terrorism-related offenses and waging war against the state).

### Conclusion:

The Law Commission in its 262nd report proposed that the death penalty should be abolished for all crimes excluding terrorism-related offences and war. The experience of the Scandinavian countries also supports this view.

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

## 16th Finance Commission Recommendations – Explained Pointwise

The Finance Commission (FC) is a Constitutional body constituted by the President every five years to make recommendations on centre-state fiscal relations. The Report of the 16th Finance Commission (Chairman: Dr. Arvind Panagariya) was tabled in Parliament on February 1, 2026 for the five-year period between 2026-27 and 2030-31.

### What are some of the key recommendations of the Finance Commission?

1. **Vertical Devolution:** The share of states in the divisible pool of central taxes has been recommended at 41%. This is same as the share recommended by the 15th Finance Commission.
2. **Horizontal Devolution:** To provide for the distribution of central taxes among states, Finance Commissions define a formula with weightage for certain parameters – which include:
  - **Income distance**
  - **Population (2011)**
  - **Demographic performance**
  - **Area**
  - **Forest**
  - **Contribution to GDP** = The 16th FC has introduced this parameter to account for the contribution to national GDP. This replaces the **Tax and Fiscal Efforts** parameter used by the 15th FC which rewarded states with a higher tax collection efficiency.
3. **Grants-in-Aid:**
  - The 16th FC has recommended grants worth Rs 9.47 lakh crore over the five-year period. These comprise grants for:
    - a. Urban & Rural Local Bodies
    - b. Disaster Management
  - The 16th FC has discontinued the following grants recommended by the 15th FC:
    - a. Revenue Deficit Grants
    - b. Sector-specific Grants
    - c. State-specific Grants
4. **Grants for Local Bodies:**
  - The 16th FC has recommended grants worth Rs 4.4 lakh crore and Rs 3.6 lakh crore for rural and urban local bodies, respectively.
  - These grants are divided into **basic (80%)** and **performance-based (20%)** components:
    - a. **Basic grants:** 50% of the basic grant will be untied and the rest 50% will be tied to: (i) sanitation and solid waste management, and/or (ii) water management.
    - b. **Performance grants:** These grants for local bodies are further divided into state performance grants and local body performance grants. **State performance grants** will be made available upon meeting a minimum benchmark for transfers to local bodies from their own resources. **Local body performance grants** are linked to achievement of minimum targets specified by the Commission for own source revenue growth.
  - Special Infrastructure Grants and Urbanisation Premium Grants have also been recommended for urban local bodies.
  - All local body grants will be made available upon fulfilment of three entry-level criteria:
    - a. Constitution of the local bodies as per the Constitution.
    - b. Publication of provisional and audited accounts of the local bodies in the public domain.
    - c. Timely constitution of the State Finance Commission.
5. **Disaster Management Grants:**
  - The Commission has recommended disaster management corpus of Rs 2,04,401 crore for State Disaster Relief and Management Funds (SDRF and SDMF).
  - The cost-sharing pattern between the centre and states is recommended to be: (i) 90:10 for north-eastern and Himalayan states, and (ii) 75:25 for all other states.

**6. Fiscal roadmap:**

- The Commission has recommended that the Centre should bring down fiscal deficit to **3.5% of GDP** by 2030-31. It recommended the annual fiscal deficit limit for states to be 3% of GSDP.
- It also recommended strictly discontinuing the practice of **off-budget borrowings** for states and bringing all such borrowings onto their budgets. The definition of fiscal deficit and debt should be expanded to uniformly include all off-budget borrowings.

**7. Power-sector Reforms:**

- The Commission recommended that states should actively pursue privatisation of electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs). To shield the private investor from debt burden after discom takeover, a special purpose vehicle may be created to warehouse the debt.
- Pre-payment or eventual repayment of this debt may be allowed using the funds from the Special Assistance Scheme for Capital Investment. It also recommended that states should be allowed to utilise this assistance only after the privatisation process is complete.

**8. Subsidy Expenditure:**

- The Commission recommended states to review and rationalise their subsidy expenditure. It noted that schemes providing unconditional cash transfers tend to have large and untargeted beneficiaries.
- It recommended setting clear exclusion criteria and a rigorous review process to ensure effective targeting. In addition, it recommended discontinuing financing of subsidies through off budget borrowings.

**9. Public Sector Enterprise (PSE) Reforms:**

- The Commission recommended a review and closure of 308 inactive State Public Sector Enterprises (SPSEs). It recommended formulation of a state-level PSEs disinvestment policy to target inactive and underperforming SPSEs.
- State or union PSEs, which incur losses for three out of four consecutive years, should be placed for the respective Cabinet's consideration. The Cabinet may decide closure, privatisation, or continuation depending on the strategic importance of the enterprise.

**What are the positive aspects of the 16th Finance Commission's recommendations?**

- 1. Rewarding Economic Performance (The GDP Parameter):** By replacing the narrow "Tax and Fiscal Effort" metric with "Contribution to GDP", the 16th FC rewards states that drive national economic growth. This addresses long-standing grievances from industrialized states (like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra) that felt penalized for their economic success under previous formulas.
- 2. Strategic Urbanisation Focus:** The 16th FC acknowledged that India's future growth lies in its cities, introducing two innovative grants:
  - a. Urbanization Premium:** A one-time incentive for states to merge "peri-urban" (semi-urban) villages into larger Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). This encourages planned urban expansion rather than chaotic sprawl.
  - b. Special Infrastructure Component:** Dedicated funding for wastewater management in mid-sized cities (population 10–40 lakh) which often lack the financial muscle of mega-metros.
- 3. Enforcing Fiscal Discipline:**
  - a. End of Off-Budget Borrowings:** 16th FC called for a strict discontinuation of off-budget borrowings, requiring all such liabilities to be disclosed in the main budget. This provides a truer picture of public debt.

- b. Rationalizing Subsidies:** It advised states to move away from “unconditional cash transfers” and implement clear exclusion criteria, ensuring welfare spending reaches the most vulnerable rather than becoming a general populist tool.
- 4. Empowerment of Local Bodies:** While the 15th FC started the trend, the 16th FC has solidified the push for grassroots accountability by recommending Performance-linked grants. In fact, to even access basic grants, states must ensure timely constitution of State Finance Commissions and the public disclosure of audited accounts for all panchayats and municipalities.
- 5. Transparency in “Net Proceeds”:** The commission recommended that the Centre annually disclose tax data as certified by the CAG to ensure states have full visibility into the “divisible pool.”

#### What are the criticisms against the recommendations of 16th finance commission?

- 1. Vertical Devolution Stagnation:** A major point of contention is the decision to retain the states’ share at 41%. 18 out of 28 states had formally requested an increase to 50%. 41% is insufficient given that states now bear the majority of “ground-level” expenditure responsibilities in health, education, and social welfare, while their power to raise independent revenue has been curtailed post-GST.
- 2. The “Cess & Surcharge” Loophole:** The commission has been criticized for not addressing the growing “leakage” of the divisible pool through cesses and surcharges. Cess & surcharge are collected by the Centre but are not shared with states. Between 2013-2019, for every Rs100 collected by the Centre, about Rs 93-95 was collected as taxes & duties that form the divisible pool & the remaining Rs 5-7 was collected as cess & surcharge. For 2025-26, the Centre is expected to collect Rs 89 as taxes & duties & Rs 11 as cesses & surcharges.
- 3. Impact on Poorer States:** States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have seen a marginal decline in their share because to accommodate the GDP parameter, the weight of “Income Distance” was reduced from 45% to 42.5%. Critics argue that this parameter benefits already industrialized states (the “richer” states), potentially widening the developmental gap and violating the principle of “Economic Convergence.”
- 4. Discontinuation of Revenue Deficit Grants:** Complete scrapping of RDGs will impact the Hill & Special Category States like NE States, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand etc. Revenue deficit of these states is due to lack of favourable geography & industrialization. Removing these grants without a transition plan could cripple their public services.
- 5. “Freebie” Criticism:** The commission’s warning against “unconditional cash transfers” (like *Majhi Ladki Bahin* or *Gruha Lakshmi*) is viewed as an ideological intervention into state welfare politics.
- 6. Power Sector Privatization:** Linking capital assistance to the privatization of DISCOMs is criticized as a “one-size-fits-all” approach that ignores the specific political and social realities of different states.

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

UPSC GS-2: Polity

### DISCOM sector in India – Challenges & solutions – Explained Pointwise

Power distribution companies (DISCOMs) in India have recently shown an improvement in their performance – recording a positive turnaround marked by reduced AT&C losses, a narrowed ACS-ARR gap & improved financial discipline. However, still many utilities continue to rely on tariff subsidies & loss takeover by the state governments – underscoring the scope for further improvement.

#### Introduction:

- Power generation, transmission, and distribution are the three main processes involved in the power sector.
- Distribution is done by the Distribution Companies (DISCOMs) which connect power producers to the households. They are the interface between utilities and the consumers. There are total 72 DISCOMs in India (44 State-owned, 16 Private sector entities & 12 Power department).
- Under the Indian Constitution, power is a concurrent subject and the responsibility for distribution and supply of power to rural and urban consumers rests with the states. Hence, DISCOMs are predominantly owned by the state governments.
- Private DISCOMs are also operational in India but are limited to a few cities like Delhi and Mumbai.
- Government of India provides assistance to states through various Central Sector / centrally sponsored schemes for improving the distribution sector. Since many years, most power distribution companies in India are incurring losses every year. Due to these accumulated losses and various other reasons the condition of DISCOMs in India is quite fragile.

### What are the challenges being faced by the DISCOMs in India?

#### 1. High AT&C losses:

- The precarious financial position of DISCOMs is due to the **high level of aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses**, the levy of **inadequate or lesser tariffs** when compared to the cost of power supply, and **insufficient subsidy support from state governments**.
- Their annual losses are estimated to be around 45,000 to 50,000 crore and the overall debt is around 6 lakh crore.
- The figure for AT&C loss in India, as per Min. of Power, was **18-19%** in 2019. In countries such as UK and US, it is about **6-7%**. However, in recent times, there has been an improvement as AT&C losses have been reduced to 15%.

**Note:** AT&C loss reflects the loss due to energy loss during transmission and distribution (technical reasons), theft, and inefficiency in billing and commercial loss such as inefficiency in collection, and default in payment.

**2. Determination of tariffs:** One major factor impacting the health of DISCOMs is the determination of the tariffs. There are frequent delays in the tariff determination process.

#### 3. Poor financial health (**High ACS-ACR Gap**):

- Power distribution companies collect payments from consumers against their energy supplies (purchased from generators) to provide necessary cash flows to the generation and transmission sectors to operate.
- Due to the perennial cash collection shortfall, often due to payment delays from consumers, Discoms are unable to make timely payments for their energy purchases from the generators. This overhang limits their ability to pay on time, forcing them to run up operational debt to electricity suppliers and transmission firms.
- Further, this gap/shortfall is met by borrowings (debt), government subsidies, and possibly, through reduced expenditure. This increases the Discoms' cost of borrowing (interest), which is inevitably borne by the consumer.

**Average Cost of Supply (ACS)** = The expense incurred by a DISCOM to deliver a unit of electricity to consumers.

**Annual Revenue Requirement (ARR)** = The revenue collected by the DISCOM as consumer tariffs and subsidy payments from the government.

4. **Lack of metering:** Minimizing the AT&C losses is critical to improve the operational efficiency of Discoms. However, even 10 years after UDAY was launched, various levels in the distribution chain (the feeder, the distribution transformer (DT) and the consumer) have not been fully metered. As a result, it is difficult to isolate and identify loss-making areas and take corrective action.
5. **Decrease in revenue generation owing to the Pandemic:** Revenue from industrial and commercial users is used to cross-subsidize other consumers. However, owing to the Pandemic the demands from industrial and commercial users is falling. This has led to stress on discom finances.
6. **Absence of political consensus at the state level to raise tariffs:** Many states report losses as they could not eliminate the gap between power costs and revenue.
7. **Emergence of alternative sources of energy and resultant decline in cross-subsidy tariff:** DISCOMs were able to charge higher tariffs from commercial and industrial consumers to cross-subsidize agricultural and low-income households. However, high-tariff paying consumers are migrating to alternative sources of energy like solar. This is happening due to two reasons: an increase in funding at national and global level towards cleaner options and secondly, the average cost per unit for commercial and industrial consumers has dropped considerably. This reduced reliance of high tariff paying consumers on DISCOMs will only worsen their already weak financial position.

#### What are the implications of a weak DISCOM sector in India?

A fragile state of DISCOMs in India will lead to various other problems:

1. **Difficulty in achieving the new climate targets:** India will struggle to meet its bold target of raising non-fossil-fuel generation capacity—including hydroelectric and nuclear power—to 500 gigawatts by 2030, up from roughly 150 gigawatts now. At COP26 meeting, India had recently committed to use non-fossil-fuel sources for half of its energy needs by 2030.
2. **Payment Delays:** Financially stressed DISCOMs often delay payments to renewable energy (RE) developers. This increases the risk profile of RE projects, making it harder for developers to secure low-cost financing.
3. **PPA Reluctance:** Many DISCOMs are locked into expensive, long-term **Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)** with old coal plants and are hesitant to sign new agreements for greener power, even if it is cheaper.
4. **Bailout Cycles:** Historically, states have had to take over DISCOM debt (like under the UDAY scheme). As of late 2025, outstanding DISCOM debt was approximately **₹7.26 lakh crore**, forcing states to divert funds from healthcare, education, and infrastructure.
5. **Poor Service Quality & Vicious Cycle:** Financial weakness leads directly to operational failure as DISCOMs often resort to load-shedding (power cuts) to avoid buying expensive power during peak hours.

#### What key initiative have been taken by the Govt to address the DISCOM problem?

Various steps have been taken by the govt to resolve the problems being faced by the DISCOMs:

1. **UDAY Scheme:** Launched in November 2015, the Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) was designed to turn around the financial position of state distribution companies (DISCOMs). The state

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governments took over 75 % of the debt of their DISCOMs, issuing lower-interest bonds to service the rest of the debt. In return, DISCOMs were given target dates (2017-19) to meet efficiency parameters like reduction in power lost through transmission, theft and faulty metering. The scheme was not successful in fulfilling its objective.

2. **Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution (RLRBSD):** In budget 2021-22, the Union government had announced the launch of a “reforms-based and results-linked” scheme for improving the financial health and operational efficiency of discoms. Under the scheme, AT&C losses will be brought down to 12-15% by 2025-26, from 21-22%. Operational efficiencies of discoms will be improved through smart metering and upgradation of the distribution infrastructure, including the segregation of agriculture feeders and strengthening the system.
3. **Smart Metering Revolution:** By late 2025, over **5.28 crore smart meters** have been installed across India. These help in real-time billing, reducing theft, and enabling “prepaid” models that ensure DISCOMs get paid upfront.
4. **Electricity (Amendment) Bill:**
  - **Cost-Reflective Tariffs:** It mandates that tariffs must cover the actual cost of supplying power, reducing the “ACS-ARR gap”.
  - **Promoting Competition:** The bill proposes allowing multiple DISCOMs to operate in the same area using a **shared network**, effectively giving consumers the choice to switch providers—much like choosing a mobile network.
  - **Reducing Cross-Subsidies:** A plan to phase out the practice of charging industries more to subsidize domestic users over a five-year period.

#### What is the way forward?

1. **DISCOM Restructuring:** Only 10% of India’s population is served by private distribution licensees. Hence, **good Corporate Governance and higher private participation in distribution** hold out the possibility of greater efficiency.
2. **Regulatory Reforms:** The state governments should promote **autonomy, competence and transparency** of the State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC). Depoliticisation of DISCOMs is a must.
3. **Operational Reforms:** The overall AT&C loss figure in India is high. Many discoms need to improve their billing efficiency through better and smart metering.
4. **Renewable Energy Integration Reforms:** DISCOMs need to prepare to accommodate an increasing amount of renewable energy (RE), from generators as well as prosumers.
5. **Managerial Reforms:** Effective reforms such as easily accessible call centres, convenient bill payment facilities can help reduce customer dissatisfaction and increase revenue. Moreover, Performance incentives can also help align discom employees to the interests of the organisation.
6. **Increase share of solar power in power mix:** While errant billing and collection, the other aspect of high cost can be partially solved by renewable power, especially solar. **A low-cost robust solar panel manufacturing industry** in India will lead to lower cost of power for DISCOMs. As the share of solar power increases, the cost for DISCOMs will come down.
7. **Privatisation of DISCOMs:** It is an experiment that has yielded positive results in many cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Ahmedabad. Before it was privatised in 2002, AT&C losses in the national capital were at a high 53% and the government was subsidising discoms to the extent of Rs 12,000 crore every year. After privatisation losses came down, and today Delhi has one of the lowest AT&C losses among DISCOMs in the country at just 8 per cent.

Read More: [The Hindu](#)  
UPSC GS-3: Economics (Electricity)

## Deep Tech Startups – Significance & Challenges – Explained Pointwise

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has introduced a dedicated “**Deep Tech Startup**” category with significantly relaxed eligibility to account for long development cycles. DPIIT has released a gazette notification in which it has provided an official definition a ‘deep tech’ startup in India. In this article we delve about deep tech startups, its significance, the challenges they are facing in India, the initiatives taken by the government for their growth & what could be the way forward.

### What are Deep tech Startups?

- Deep tech startups, according to DPIIT, is one that primarily concerned with producing a solution based on new knowledge/advancements in a scientific or engineering discipline. It must spend most of its money on R&D activities; owns or is in the process of creating significant novel IP & taking steps to commercialize the same; faces extended development timelines; long gestation periods, high capital & infrastructure requirements, and carries large technical or scientific uncertainty.
- Deep tech startups refer to startups based on high technology fields like Artificial intelligence, Deep learning, Robotics, Semiconductors, Biotechnology, Space, e-vehicles, etc. which aim to solve complex problems & create significant impact across various sectors.
- Deep tech company can consider itself a startup for as long as 20 years & has a turnover of up to Rs 300cr.
- To be counted as a deep tech startup, companies must apply to the DPIIT for a certificate. The DPIIT is the final authority that determines whether a company qualifies as a startup or a deep tech startup.

### What is the significance of Deep Tech Startups?

1. **Drive innovation:** Deep tech innovations form the basis for science & tech breakthroughs. They form the backbone of transformative industries. *For e.g. Discovery of Penicillin by Alexander Fleming in 1928 ushered in the era of antibiotics & dramatically reduced the deaths from infections.*
2. **Economic & industrial impact:** Deep tech innovations like GenAI can add \$1 trillion to India’s GDP by 2030. According to the former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, the cascading effects of deep tech innovations would be critical for India to become a developed economy. Deep tech startups are crucial for ushering in Industrial Revolution 4.0.
3. **Strategic importance:** Deep technologies are not only economic drivers, but are essential for developing self-reliance (**Atmanirbharta**) in critical sectors like defence, energy, healthcare etc. Developing & leveraging such deep tech innovations helps in providing a technological bulwark against geopolitical uncertainties & supply chain vulnerabilities *for e.g. China developed DeepSeek AI to achieve technological independence from the West, particularly in the face of US-led restrictions on advanced semiconductors exports.*
4. **Solving societal challenges:** Development of India-centric deep technologies can help in fueling innovations to provide solutions to India-specific problems like affordable & accessible healthcare or sustainable energy, language-based AI, North-South divide etc.

### What are the challenges hindering the growth of deep tech startups in India?

- 1. Low R&D funding & investment:** Annually, USA, UK, Germany & Japan spend >3% of their GDP on R&D, China spends 2.68%, while India spends less than 1% of its GDP. While China's '**Made in China 2025**' initiative poured in >\$800bn in strategic sectors, India's total technological investment from 2014-2024 estimated at \$160bn is pale in comparison. This funding gap stifles the startups aiming to tackle complex problems. Moreover, the investment from the private sector remains low despite government policies like Make in India.
- 2. Long gestation conundrum:** Building of deep tech innovations takes time – which is usually longer than what the venture capital timelines allow in India. The venture capital landscape in India prioritizes quick return investments over deep tech startups that require patience. This myopic view, coupled with regulatory hurdles like Angel Tax (now scrapped) – stifles deep tech growth in India.
- 3. India's talent paradox:** Though India produces lakhs of engineers annually, but only a fraction of engineers in India specialize in frontier technologies. Also, there is a continuous brain drain happening from India to Western countries where many Indians are driving innovations at firms like Tesla & NVIDIA or founding startups in Silicon Valley for e.g. *Aravind Srinivas (Co-founder of Perplexity)*.
- 4. Commercialization bottlenecks:** Indian startups face difficulties in scaling-up from prototype to product due to long R&D cycle, weak industry-academia collaboration for tech transfer, lack of regulatory sandbox etc.
- 5. Regulatory & bureaucratic hurdles:** Complicated IP protection & patent filing process, regulatory uncertainties in sectors like genomics, drones etc are delaying the development of deep tech startups.
- 6. Dominance of USA & China:** While the USA is the global leader in AI through companies like Nvidia, China is also very rapidly catching up. According to a WIPO report, China has filed over 38,000 generative AI patents between 2014-2023. Also, according to a study by the Australian Strategy Policy Institute, China leads globally in 57 out of 64 critical technologies.
- 7. Stagnation in startup ecosystem:** Though India has the 3rd largest startup ecosystem in the world with >100 unicorn startups, but majority of the startups in India are based on quick commerce & other consumer-tech innovations rather than deep tech breakthrough such as startups like OpenAI, Blue Origin, Deep Mind etc.
- 8. Innovation ecosystem:** India lags behind in innovation. According to the Global Innovation Index 2024, India ranks 39th while China ranks 11th. None of the Indian universities rank among global leaders in original research & innovation.

#### What are the government initiatives?

- 1. Policy reforms in high tech sectors:** Government has taken several initiatives in high tech sectors to promote innovation & private sector participation as well as to boost entrepreneurship & self-reliance for e.g. **Indian Space Policy 2023**, liberalized **Drone Rules 2024**, **Draft National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) 2023**, **Nuclear Energy Expansion Policy 2024** etc.
- 2. India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) & Design-linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme:**
  - ISM is a specialized business division within the Digital India Corporation. Its goal is to build a vibrant, sustainable semiconductor and display ecosystem in India. It doesn't just fund factories (Fabs), it supports the entire value chain – from design and manufacturing to packaging and testing.
  - While manufacturing requires billions in capital, **design** is where the high-value Intellectual Property (IP) lives. The DLI scheme targets Indian startups and MSMEs to ensure India owns the "blueprints" of the chips it uses.

- 3. IndiaAI Mission:** The IndiaAI Mission is a government-approved, national-level strategy to strengthen India's AI ecosystem – from research and talent development to real-world applications and ethical standards. In 2024, the Union Cabinet has approved Rs 10,000cr for IndiaAI Mission.
- 4. National Supercomputing Mission:** Aim is to build a network of 70 high-performance computer facilities with a cumulative capacity of 45 PF (Petaflops).
- 5. National Quantum Mission:** Aims to put India among the top 6 leading nations involved in the R&D in quantum technologies.
- 6. Deep Tech Fund:** Government has recently announced Rs 10,000cr Deep Tech Fund of Funds as well as Rs 1000cr space tech venture capital fund with the aim to bridge the critical funding gaps & catalyzing innovations. These initiatives also send a strong signal to the private investment ecosystem that India is committed to playing the long game in advanced technology.
- 7. Innovation ecosystem:** Govt has introduced policies like Atal Innovation Mission, NIDHI-PRAYAS, T-Hub, iCreate etc to foster innovation & entrepreneurship at early stages for inquisitive minds.
- 8. Slow but definite growth:** Despite various challenges, India has seen pockets of deep tech startups success – supported by various government initiatives such as Space tech (**Skyroot, Agnikul, Digantara**), Robotics (**Addverb, CynLR**), Gene editing (**CrisprBits**), Quantum solutions (**Qnu Labs**), EVs (**Ola, Ather**) etc. As per NASSCOM, India's 4000 deep tech startups attracted \$1.6bn investment in 2024 – which is a 78% increase year-on-year.

#### What is the way forward?

- 1. Increase R&D investments:** USA is facilitating a \$500bn AI initiative called Stargate, France is mobilizing \$112bn in public & private investments towards AI development. China has set up a \$138bn fund for accelerating growth in emerging technologies. Thus, India is also required to follow their steps.
- 2. Increased & patient capital:** Attracting more venture capital with a long-term perspective, as well as government-backed funds specifically for deep tech, is crucial. Loan guarantees and other mechanisms to reduce investor risk can help.
- 3. Industry-Academia linkage:** A close collaboration between India's premier universities & research institutes like IITs, IISc and deep-tech startups is needed. *For e.g. India can take inspiration from USA's Federal institutes like Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency & NASA to encourage bold innovations.*
- 4. Education sector reforms:** Reforms in the education sector are needed to build a framework for cutting-edge research & promoting innovation from the very beginning.
- 5. IPR Ecosystem:** Providing robust IPR protection & speeding up the process of patent approval can also help in promoting deep tech innovations in India.
- 6. Global integration:** Encourage international collaboration for joint R&D and market access. Facilitate Indian deep tech participation in global standards bodies & consortia. Promote collaboration of Indian universities & research institutes with global powerhouses in frontier technologies.
- 7. Developing Specialized Talent:** Focused programs to train and upskill professionals in deep tech domains, along with initiatives to attract and retain global talent, are necessary.

**Conclusion:** Deep tech startups are essential to India's technological sovereignty, economic resilience, and strategic autonomy. By promoting deep tech entrepreneurship, streamlining regulatory processes, enhancing IP protection, India can unlock the immense potential of its deep tech startups & position itself as global leader in this transformative space.

Read More-[Indian Express](#), [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus GS3-Indian economy, Awareness in the field of IT, Space, Computers

### India-Malaysia Relations- Significance and Challenges- Explained Pointwise

Recently, PM Modi visited Malaysia as a part of India-Malaysia Bilateral Summit where leaders deepened their **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** across economic, strategic and people-to-people fronts. It was noted during the visit that **India and Malaysia have close similarities** as both are 'multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries'. 11 key agreements were signed during the visit, providing impetus for the deepening of India-Malaysia relations.

However, there are also serious challenges between India and Malaysia. In this article, we will look at the history of India-Malaysia Relations, significance of the relations and the way forward.

#### Key Takeaways from the recent India-Malaysia Bilateral Summit:

- Semiconductor Cooperation:** Enhancing collaboration in semiconductor research, manufacturing, testing and global supply chain integration.
- Disaster Management Cooperation:** Joint efforts in disaster preparedness, training and exchange of best practices.
- Anti-Corruption Cooperation:** Framework for cooperation on transparency and anti-corruption measures.
- Local Currency Settlement:** Both nations reaffirmed their commitment to settle trade in **Indian Rupee (INR) and Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)**.
- UPI-PayNet Linkage:** India and Malaysia have agreed to work on connecting **India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** with **Malaysia's PayNet** for **digital transactions**.
- Intelligence Sharing:** New agreements were signed between the National Security Councils of both countries to enhance intelligence sharing and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.
- Terrorism:** The leaders of the both the countries unequivocally & strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms & manifestations, including cross-border terrorism. They called for zero-tolerance of terrorism & for concerted international efforts to combat terrorism in a comprehensive & sustained manner. They also recognised the linkages between terrorism & transnational organised crime.
- Social Security Agreement:** A new pact between India's ESIC and Malaysia's PERKESO ensures better social security protections for Indian workers in Malaysia.
- Thiruvalluvar Scholarships:** To deepen cultural ties, new scholarships were announced for Malaysian students to study in India, emphasizing shared Tamil heritage.
- AITIGA Review:** Both sides agreed to fast-track the review of the **ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement** to address India's trade deficit and improve market access.
- UNSC & BRICS:** Malaysia explicitly reaffirmed its support for India's permanent membership in a reformed UN Security Council. In return, India welcomed Malaysia's aspirations to join BRICS, with India serving as the 2026 BRICS Chair.

## What is the History of India-Malaysia Relations?

### Historical Ties:

- 1. Establishment of Relations:** The historical ties between India and Malaysia trace back over a millennium. The relation was **significantly influenced by the Chola Empire** (9th-13th centuries). The Cholas established **extensive maritime trade routes** that connected South India with the Malay Peninsula. It fostered close cultural and economic exchanges.
- 2. Rule over the Malaysian Territory:** Under the reign of emperors like Rajaraja Chola I and Rajendra Chola I, the Cholas established control over parts of Southeast Asia, including present-day Malaysia.

### Post

### Independence

### Ties:

India and Malaysia share close cooperation since the independence of both nations. The major phases of relations are mentioned below:

<b>Establishment of Relations</b>	India established <b>diplomatic relations with the Federation of Malaya</b> (predecessor state of Malaysia) in <b>1957</b> .
<b>Phase of Strong Relations</b>	India-Malaysia enjoyed a <b>strong relationship in the 1960s</b> as a result of the personal friendship between Prime Ministers <b>Nehru</b> and <b>Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra</b> . India and Malaysia have developed close political, economic and socio-cultural relations.
<b>Strategic Partnership</b>	India-Malaysia relations were elevated to <b>Enhanced Strategic Partnership</b> during the visit of PM Narendra Modi in 2015.  The <b>Enhanced Strategic Partnership</b> was upgraded to a <b>Comprehensive Strategic Partnership</b> during the visit of Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim in 2024.

### What are the areas of cooperation between India and Malaysia?

- 1. Geopolitical Cooperation:** India and Malaysia are members of key global forums like the **Commonwealth of Nations**, **NAM**, **G-15**, and **G-77**. This forms a strong foundation for close geo-political mutual cooperation. Further, India and Malaysia closely cooperate through **ASEAN plus** and **East Asia Summits**.
- 2. Geo-strategic Cooperation:**
  - India and Malaysia have steadily expanded their defence ties since signing a **defence cooperation memorandum in 1993**.
  - India and Malaysia engage in regular defence cooperation meetings, and joint military exercises. **For ex-** **Exercise Harimau Shakti (Military)**, **Exercise Samudra Lakshmana (Navy)**, and **Exercise Udara Shakti (Air Force)**.
- 3. Geo-economic Cooperation:**
  - Bilateral trade between India and Malaysia has reached a **record high of ~USD 19 billion**. Malaysia is among India's 10 largest trading partners. India is among the **top partners for Malaysia** too.

- b. As per official figures (DPIIT), **Malaysia ranks as the 26th largest investor in India** with FDI inflow of US\$1.16 billion during the period April 2000 to September 2022.
  - c. **India is a significant investor in Malaysia**, particularly in sectors like technology, manufacturing, and services. More than 150 Indian companies, including 61 Indian joint ventures and 3 Indian Public Sector Undertakings, operate in Malaysia.
  - d. **Exports from India:** It Includes mineral fuels, aluminum, meat, iron and steel, copper, organic chemicals, and machinery.
  - e. **Imports to India:** It Includes palm oil, mineral fuels, electrical machinery, animal or vegetable fats, and wood.
  - f. **ASEAN-India Business Summit 2023** celebrated 30 years of ASEAN-India Engagement, with significant participation from Indian and Malaysian stakeholders.
4. **Diaspora Cooperation:** Malaysia is home to over **2.95 million large Indian diaspora** and **the second-largest Persons of Indian Origin (PIO)** community in the world after the US.
  5. **Cultural Cooperation:** India and Malaysia share close cultural Cooperation, which are explained below:
    - a. **Institutional Cooperation:** The **Indian Cultural Centre Kuala Lumpur**, established in **2010** and **Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Indian Cultural Center (NSCBICC)** offers classes in Carnatic vocal music, Kathak dance, Yoga, and Hindi, with teachers from both India and Malaysia.
    - b. **Literary Cooperation:** **Hikayat Seri Rama** (Malay literary adaptation of the Hindu Ramayana epic) reflects local adaptations, and close literary cooperation. Ramayana's themes are reflected in local stories, arts, and performances of Malaysia.
    - c. **Shared Cultural Architecture & Craft:** The **Sri Veera Hanuman Temple in Malaysia** shows the shared cultural heritage, with its architecture and tales deeply rooted in Indian traditions.

#### What is the significance of India-Malaysia Relations?

1. **Geopolitical Significance:** Close India-Malaysia relations **aligns with India's Act East Policy**. Close cooperation with Malaysia, provides India the **strategic pivot towards the ASEAN region**, and enhance its influence and connectivity in South East Asia. Deepened India-Malaysia relations also forms an important pillar of India's effort of outreach to countries of the Global South.
2. **Geostrategic Significance:**
  - a. Close cooperative mechanism between India and Malaysia on the **Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS)**, is key for the **establishment of rule based order in Indo-Pacific**.
  - b. Close India-Malaysia relations will **enhance interoperability** and **address regional security challenges** like counter-terrorism and extremism in South East Asia.
3. **Geo-economic Significance:**
  - a. **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)** between India and Malaysia will provide a boost to India's effort for achievement of its foreign trade target of \$2 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030.
  - b. The exploration of option of **Local Currency Trade** between the Indian Rupee (INR) and Malaysian Ringgit (MYR), will help in reducing reliance on the US dollar and enhancing economic resilience.
4. **Cultural Significance:** The close people to people connect and the presence of large Indian diaspora in Malaysia can be **leveraged for increasing the cross-border investment and trade**.

#### What are the Challenges in India-Malaysia Relations?

- 1. Extradition of Zakir Naik:** Malaysia's **rejection of repeated India's request for extradition of Zakir Naik**, who is wanted in India on hate-speech and money laundering charges, is one of the prominent challenges in India-Malaysia relations.
- 2. Malaysia's criticism of India's internal Policies:** Malaysia's strong criticism of Indian Government's Policies like the **Citizenship Amendment Act**, and the **re-organisation of Jammu and Kashmir**, has created further wedge between India and Malaysia.
- 3. Economic Challenges:**
  - The economic relationship between India and Malaysia faces challenges such as **higher import tariffs** and **trade restrictions**. This has impeded the growth of bilateral trade between India and Malaysia.
  - India consistently runs a significant trade deficit with Malaysia (driven largely by palm oil and petroleum imports).
  - Both nations are currently pushing for an early conclusion to the review of the **ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA)** to address high tariffs and market access issues.
- 4. Diaspora Challenges:** There are concerns of **illegal immigration, exploitation of workers**, and **human trafficking** surrounding the Indian diaspora. The **detention of hundreds of Malaysians during the COVID-19** pandemic also created tensions between India and Malaysia.
- 5. The China Factor:** Malaysia maintains a delicate balancing act with China, its largest trading partner. Unlike India, Malaysia is more cautious about joining security frameworks that could be perceived as "anti-China".

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

- 1. Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA):** India and Malaysia must **accelerate the review and amendment of the CECA**, to include emerging sectors such as fintech, semiconductors, and defense. This will help achieve the **target of increasing bilateral trade to \$25 billion**.
- 2. Closer Economic Cooperation:** Efforts like **avoiding double taxation, mutual customs assistance, improving air connectivity**, and **collaborations among airlines** can boost trade and tourism between India and Malaysia.
- 3. Defense Technology Collaboration:** Fostering partnerships in defence technology and research, **can enhance both nation's defence capabilities** and will contribute to regional stability in Indo-Pacific.
- 4. Focus on ASEAN Integration:** India must leverage Malaysia's position in ASEAN to enhance its engagement with the region. This will help in **aligning the relations with India's Act East Policy** and supporting the ASEAN centrality.
- 5. AITIGA Review:** Expediting the review of the **ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement** is a priority to ensure Indian exporters (especially in services and pharmaceuticals) get the same market access that Malaysian palm oil and petroleum enjoy in India.

Read More: [The Indian Express](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- India and its Neighbourhood relations

### India-Seychelles Relations – Explained Pointwise

The President of Seychelles, Patrick Herminie, is on a visit to India – which came within the first 100 days of his swearing-in & coincides with the 50th anniversary of Seychelles independence & 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries – indicating the importance of India for the island nation. The leaders of

the both the countries reaffirmed that as a close maritime neighbours they share a special partnership rooted in history, kinship and shared democratic values.

#### Key takeaways from the recent visit:

1. **Adoption of a Joint Vision - "SESEL":** India and Seychelles adopted the **Joint Vision for Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages (SESEL)**, setting a roadmap for deeper cooperation in development, security, and technology.
2. **\$175 Million Special Economic Package:** India announced a **\$175 million economic package** for Seychelles. The funding targets infrastructure, public housing, mobility, capacity building, health, defence, and **maritime security** projects.
3. **Seven MoUs** were signed to expand cooperation in health, digital transformation, meteorological cooperation etc.
4. **Maritime Security and Defence:** The visit solidified Seychelles' role in India's **Vision MAHASAGAR**.

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

##### 1. Geopolitical Importance:

- a. **Strategic Location:** Situated in the Indian Ocean, Seychelles acts as a key maritime neighbor to India. Its location provides India with a critical foothold in the region to counteract influences from other powers, particularly China.
- b. **Security Cooperation:** India and Seychelles have strengthened military and security ties, conducting joint exercises and sharing intelligence to tackle piracy and other maritime security challenges.

##### 2. Economic Importance:

- a. **Trade Relations:** Seychelles is a growing market for Indian goods and services, including pharmaceuticals, food products, and construction materials. The bilateral trade has seen significant growth over the years.
- b. **Investment Opportunities:** Indian companies are investing in sectors like tourism, renewable energy, and fisheries in Seychelles, contributing to the country's economic development.

##### 3. Environmental Cooperation:

- a. **Conservation Efforts:** Seychelles is known for its biodiversity and unique ecosystems. India collaborates with Seychelles in conservation efforts, especially concerning marine ecosystems and threatened species.
- b. **Climate Change:** Both countries share concerns regarding climate change impacts in the Indian Ocean region and work together on sustainability initiatives.

##### 4. Cultural Connections:

- a. **Diaspora Ties:** About **11%** of the Seychellois population is of Indian origin, creating a strong cultural bridge and "soft power" influence that stabilizes the political relationship. This community plays a vital role in strengthening bilateral relations.
- b. **Cultural Exchange Programs:** Various cultural initiatives, including festivals and art exhibitions, enhance mutual understanding and build goodwill.

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

**1. Economic Importance:**

- a. Trade Relations:** India is one of Seychelles' significant trading partners. Indian goods, particularly in pharmaceuticals, food products, and textiles, are vital for the local market.
- b. Foreign Investment:** Indian investments in sectors like tourism, energy, and infrastructure have contributed to Seychelles' economic growth and development, enhancing local business opportunities.

**2. Strategic & Security Cooperation:**

- a. Geopolitical Stability:** India's presence in the Indian Ocean helps Seychelles counterbalance potential risks from other regional powers, enhancing the nation's strategic security framework.
- b. Military Partnerships:** Seychelles and India conduct joint naval exercises and training, reinforcing military ties that aid Seychelles in maintaining maritime security, particularly against piracy.

**3. Environmental Collaboration:**

- a. Sustainable Development:** Both nations work together on initiatives for environmental protection, focusing on the conservation of marine biodiversity and combating climate change, which is particularly impactful for island nations like Seychelles.
- b. Disaster Relief:** India has provided assistance during natural disasters, showcasing its commitment to supporting Seychelles in times of need.

**4. Cultural & Social Connections:**

- a. Diaspora Influence:** A historical Indian diaspora enriches Seychelles' cultural landscape, promoting cultural exchanges and fostering connections between the two nations.
- b. Educational Initiatives:** India offers scholarship programs for Seychellois students in various fields, enhancing educational opportunities and fostering long-term relations.

**What are the challenges in the India-Seychelles relations?****1. Geopolitical Tensions:**

- a. Chinese Influence:** Seychelles has been increasingly engaging with China, which raises concerns for India. Beijing's growing presence in the Indian Ocean can challenge India's strategic interests in the region.
- b. Naval Competition:** The presence of foreign naval forces, particularly from China, could complicate India's military and maritime strategies in the region, potentially leading to tension.

**2. Economic Issues:**

- a. Trade Imbalance:** While trade relations have grown, a significant trade imbalance favoring India persists. This could lead to concerns in Seychelles regarding dependency on Indian goods.
- b. Investment Challenges:** Implementation of Indian investments can face bureaucratic hurdles or local resistance, slowing down developmental projects.

**3. Environmental Concerns:**

- a. Sustainable Development Pressures:** Intensive development driven by foreign investments, including from India, might lead to environmental degradation, affecting Seychelles' rich biodiversity and ecosystems.

- b. **Climate Change Vulnerability:** As a low-lying island nation, Seychelles is particularly vulnerable to climate change, and coordinating effective environmental initiatives can be challenging.
- 4. **Cultural & Social Issues:**
  - a. **Perceptions of Influence:** Some citizens of Seychelles perceive Indian influence as overwhelming, which can lead to social tensions or anti-foreign sentiments, complicating diplomatic relations.
  - b. **Cultural Integration:** Balancing local culture with influences from India may sometimes create friction, as the local identity is an important aspect of Seychelles' society.
- 5. **Political Factors:**
  - a. **Domestic Politics:** Changes in leadership or policy in either country can impact bilateral relations, sometimes leading to a reevaluation of priorities or strategies.
  - b. **Regional Instability:** Political instability in neighboring countries or within Seychelles itself can complicate wider regional cooperation and affect bilateral dynamics.

#### What are the various initiatives to boost the ties?

1. **Trade Agreements:** India and Seychelles have negotiated trade agreements to enhance commercial exchanges and reduce tariffs, aiming to bolster bilateral trade.
2. **Investment in Infrastructure:** India has engaged in various infrastructure projects in Seychelles, including roads, hospitals, and housing, fostering development and strengthening economic ties.
3. **The Assumption Island Project:** India and Seychelles signed an agreement to develop a naval facility there. This would allow India to extend its reach in the Western Indian Ocean.
4. **Joint Military Exercises:** Regular naval exercises are conducted, such as the "Varuna" exercises, focusing on maritime security and anti-piracy operations, which enhance military collaboration.
5. **Coast Guard Cooperation:** India has trained Seychelles' Coast Guard personnel and provided equipment, enhancing Seychelles' capabilities to protect its maritime interests.
6. **Digital India Initiative:** India has extended its expertise in IT and digital technologies to help Seychelles improve its digital infrastructure and services. India is actively exporting its "Digital Public Infrastructure" (DPI) model to Seychelles such as UPI & other digital governance initiatives.
7. **Skill Development:** India provides training programs for Seychellois in diverse sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, and tourism, fostering capacity building.
8. **Participation in Multilateral Forums:** Both nations collaborate on various global platforms, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Colombo Security Conclave, where they can collectively address regional issues. Seychelles has officially joined the Colombo Security Conclave as a full member, solidifying a regional security bloc with India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and the Maldives.
9. **Blue Economy & Climate Action:** As part of India's **MAHASAGAR** vision (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), both countries are focusing on:
  - a. **Ocean Research:** Agreements for joint ocean observation and maritime scientific research to protect coral reefs and manage fisheries.
  - b. **Renewable Energy:** India is providing technical assistance for power grid management and e-mobility solutions (electric buses/cars) to help Seychelles meet its climate goals.

UPSC GS-2: International Relations  
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## Aviation Sector in India – Opportunities & Challenges – Explained Pointwise

Aviation Sector in India has experienced significant growth in recent years. India has become **the third-largest domestic aviation market** in the world. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), by the year 2030, India is expected to overtake China and the United States as the world's largest air passenger market. However, the aviation sector in India also faces numerous challenges, as operational failures & safety incidents threaten IndiGo & Air India. With profits declining & rising passenger dissatisfaction, the industry must address systemic vulnerabilities ahead of the entry of new regional players.

### Status of Aviation Sector in India:

- India's aviation industry has experienced significant growth in the past 9 years.
- India is the third-largest domestic aviation market globally, operating over 840 aircraft & carrying more than 350mn passengers annually. But this scale has been achieved through an expansion that is increasingly stretched.
- Indian aviation contributes about 5% to the country's GDP, creating a total of 4 million jobs. In addition to it, there is a \$72 billion gross value-added contribution to GDP by this industry.
- The Indian aviation fleet consists of over 860 aircraft, accounting for around 2.4% of the global fleet, and total operational airports increased from 74 in 2014 to 162 in 2025.
- Passenger traffic from January to April 2025 showed significant growth (nearly 10% year-on-year), led by low-cost carriers (64.3% market share).

### What is The Potential of Aviation Sector In India?

1. **Increased Market Size of Indian Aviation Sector:** According to IATA, India is expected to surpass the aviation sector of the United States and China by 2030. This will make India a **lucrative market for airlines** and **related businesses**.
2. **Promotes Balanced Economic Growth:** Passenger airlines and air cargo overcome geographic barriers by connecting remote areas which are alienated from the mainstream. **For ex-** Development of North-East due to enhanced airline connectivity.
3. **Growth of Tourism sector:** Aviation industry function as a **growth pole** by promoting **spill-over & trickling-down** of economic growth. **For Ex-** Aviation sector gives a boost to tourism sector which in turn drives the supporting infrastructure in a region, like roads, railways, hotels, markets. This helps in providing employment opportunities to the locals.
4. **Boost to manufacturing sector:** India's expanding aviation sector offers potential for the **growth of maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facilities**, as well as the development of a domestic aerospace manufacturing industry. **For ex-** Enhanced employment opportunities in aerospace engine maintenance.
5. **FDI in the Expansion of Infrastructure:** Booming aviation sector has attracted **significant FDI to the tune of around ~\$3 bn** in the development of aerospace infrastructure like airports, air bridges, airstrips. **For ex-** Greenfield airport development like Navi Mumbai, Noida (Jewar) airport and expansion of Bengaluru airport.
6. **Increased Employment opportunities:** The growth of aviation sector in India has created a need for skilled professionals, including pilots, cabin crew, and maintenance staff. **For ex-** Indian scheduled operators are likely to require 10,900 additional pilots by FY30 (IATA projection).

### What are The Challenges With India's Aviation Sector?

1. **Increase in number of Grounded Unsafe Aircrafts:** Airlines like Air India, Spice Jet, Go Air, and IndiGo face issues of poor financial performance due to grounded unsafe aircrafts. **For ex– Over 160 aircraft are currently grounded** which represents about a quarter of the total fleet size of Indian carriers.
2. **Supply Chain Disruptions:** **Delays in aircraft deliveries** and supply chain issues with **original equipment manufacturers (OEMs)** has hindered the industry's capacity to meet growing demand.
3. **Duopoly in Indian Aviation Market:** India's domestic aviation market is overwhelmingly dominated by two carriers – **IndiGo (~64% market size)** and the **Tata group airlines (~27% market size)** – **together forming a duopoly controlling nearly 90% of the market.** This concentration has grown due to industry consolidation (e.g., Air India's privatization and Tata Group's merger of its airline units) and the exit or downsizing of several competitors like Jet Airways, GoAir, and others. Source: The Hindu
4. **Heavy Financial Losses:** Most Indian airlines have reported **continuous net losses for years** despite rising traffic. Several carriers have collapsed (Kingfisher, Jet Airways, Go First) showing that growth in passengers is not getting converted into profitability. Profit margins in India are among the lowest globally (1–3%), while costs remain very high due to – high taxes on Aviation Turbine Fuel (forms 35–40% of airline expenses – among the highest in the world due to taxes and state VAT), intense price competition, aggressive expansion without financial discipline, COVID-19 etc. Source: The Hindu
5. **Operational Disruptions due to crew shortage:** Lack of skilled pilots, maintenance engineers, and cabin crew members have led to operational disruptions like **increase in turn-around time of airlines.**
6. **Low per-capita penetration of domestic air travel:** India's per capita penetration of **domestic air travel (0.13 seats deployed per capita)** remains significantly lower than countries like **China (0.49)** and **Brazil (0.57)**. This indicates the failure of aviation industry in India to tap the maximum potential of domestic air market.
7. **Inflated Projections:** Airlines in India often **announce ambitious growth plans without adequately analysing** their financial security, infrastructural and personnel requirements. **For Ex- Failure of Kingfisher, Jet Airways and Go First** on account of inflated projections.
8. **Regulatory issues:**
  - **Tough entry barriers** for new entrants, **high fuel prices** on account of **high taxes on ATF** (Air Turbine Fuel) and **monopoly of inefficient public sector airports** have all acted as barriers in the rapid growth of the airlines sector.
  - Nearly half of the DGCA's sanctioned technical positions remain vacant even as fleet size & passenger volume expand.
  - The recent disruption in December 2025 have been managed through scheduled exemptions rather than strict enforcement, reflecting a shift towards ad hoc crisis management & underscoring deeper fragilities in India's aviation regulatory framework.
9. **Policy Lacunae:** The **Aircraft Act, 1934** and **Aircraft Rules, 1937** have not kept pace with modern technology in aerospace. This has led to increased costs of the industry's operation and ultimately affected passenger growth.
10. **Poor rural connectivity:** With mega airports controlling air and ground space, there has been challenge of enhancing the rural air connectivity. **For ex- Less number of flights to tier 2 and tier 3 towns despite the UDAN scheme.**
11. **Environmental Concerns:** The Indian aviation industry faces increasing pressure to reduce its carbon footprint and adopt sustainable practices (**The Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for**

**International Aviation or CORSIA**). This has also posed a challenge for growth and expansion of the airline sector.

**12. Aviation Safety:** The crash of Air India Airline in Ahmedabad into a residential area in June 2025 that led to the killing of more than 240 people is considered as one of the worst airline disasters. After the Air India tragedy, the Civil Aviation Ministry tabled a report in the Lok Sabha according to which, out of 754 aircraft analyzed, **377 (exactly 50%)** were flagged for “repetitive defects”—issues that occurred three or more times despite maintenance attempts.

**13. India’s Pilot Bottleneck:**

- IndiGo with ~5000 pilots operating a fleet of 360 aircraft, translating into a pilot-to-aircraft ratio of ~14, which is well below the global benchmark of 18-20 considered necessary for fatigue-mitigated operations. This mismatch exposed the limits of an operating model calibrated for sustained high utilization.
- While India’s aviation expansion has intensified demands for pilots, training capacity has failed to keep pace. Parliamentary disclosures estimate a requirement of 7000 pilots between 2024 & 2026, rising to 25,000-30,000 over the next decade. In contrast, the DGCA issued only 5700 Commercial Pilot Licenses between 2020 & 2024.

Source: The Hindu

Read More- [CORSIA](#)

**What are The Government Initiatives For Aviation Sector In India?**

<b>National Civil Aviation Policy, 2016</b>	It aims to <b>improve the international footprint of India-based airline services</b> . Airlines can commence international operations, provided they deploy 20 aircrafts or 20% of their total capacity (whichever is higher) for domestic operations.
<b>UDAN Scheme</b>	It aims to <b>expand access to air travel for Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities</b> and shift the traffic pattern away from Metro routes. Under the scheme, 625 routes & 85 airports had been operationalised by 2025.
<b>DigiYatra</b>	Paperless, biometric-enabled air travel to enhance passenger convenience.
<b>Open Sky Policy</b>	Aims to <b>liberalise the aviation sector in India</b> by opening the airport sector to private participation. Currently, <b>6 PPP airports are being developed</b> and <b>60% of airport traffic</b> is handled under PPP.
<b>Open Sky Air Service Agreement</b>	Open Sky Air Service Agreement allows for airlines from the two countries to have an <b>unlimited number of flights as well as seats</b> to each other’s jurisdictions. India has signed these agreements with multiple nations like the US, Greece, Jamaica, Japan, Finland, Sri Lanka.

<b>FDI Policies, Tax and Duty cuts</b>	<p>100% FDI is being allowed under the automatic route for greenfield projects, whereas 74% FDI is allowed under automatic route for brownfield projects.</p> <p>100% tax exemption has been provided for airport projects for a period of 10 years. Indian aircraft Manufacture, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) service providers have been completely exempted from customs and countervailing duties.</p>
<b>GAGAN (GPS-Aided Geo-Augmented Navigation)</b>	<p>Developed jointly by AAI and ISRO, GAGAN is India's own Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS). Operational since 2015, it enhances the accuracy and integrity of GPS signals, improving navigation, especially for approach and landing, and enabling precision approaches at non-instrumented airports, thereby significantly enhancing safety, particularly in challenging terrains.</p>
<b>Bhartiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024</b>	<p>This is a landmark piece of legislation that came into effect on January 1, 2025, replacing the nearly century-old Aircraft Act of 1934. It modernizes India's aviation system, aligning it with contemporary needs and global standards (like the Chicago Convention and ICAO).</p>

### What Should be the Way Forward?

#### 1. Capacity Expansion:

- Continue development of new airports, modernization of existing ones, and upgrading air traffic management systems.
- Strengthen regional connectivity under the UDAN scheme by incentivizing flights to underserved and remote areas.
- For the emerging players to survive & meaningfully contribute to market de-concentration, active policy support beyond initial NOCs will be essential – which includes the effective implementation of UDAN subsidies, preferential slot allocation at congested airports, coordinated development of Tier-2 & Tier-3 airport infrastructure and potentially hedging mechanisms or tax relief on ATF to offset price volatility.

#### 2. Boost Cargo & Logistics: Develop dedicated air cargo hubs and multimodal logistics parks to support India's export-import trade.

#### 3. Initiate reforms in the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA): DGCA should be modernized, well-staffed and incentivised. DGCA should be headed by aviation professionals rather than bureaucrats.

#### 4. Promote 'Start-up India' initiative in the aviation sector: Entrepreneurship must be promoted in the maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facilities of the aviation industry.

#### 5. Rationalisation of taxes: Tax rationalisation must be initiated in aviation fuel taxes (State and Central, which in India are among the highest in the world), air cargo and airport operations.

6. **Safety Management Systems (SMS) Effectiveness:** Ensure that all aviation service providers (airlines, airports, MROs, ATC) have fully functional and effective SMS that are integrated into their daily operations and decision-making. Regulators should audit the effectiveness of these SMS, not just their presence.

**Conclusion:**

With India accounting for 4.2% of global air traffic, and domestic demand set to rise sharply by reaching 715mn by 2030, failure to address the constraints affecting the aviation sector risks converting India's aviation growth into a recurring crisis borne ultimately by the passengers.

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UPSC Syllabus- GS III, Infrastructure: Airports

### Gender Justice – Explained Pointwise

In order to address gender stereotyping, the judiciary has recently emphasized the use of gender-sensitive language in courtrooms to prevent victim-blaming. Under CJI D.Y. Chandrachud, the SC released a *Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes*. It instructed judges to stop using derogatory terms like “keep,” “fallen woman,” or “concubine,” and instead use neutral terms like “woman” or “partner.” However, the Supreme Court under CJI Surya Kant has moved to “fine-tune” these guidelines. While acknowledging the need for sensitivity, the Court has tasked the **National Judicial Academy (NJA)** to create more “practical” training modules for High Court and District judges to ensure sensitivity isn't just a “sermon” but a practiced skill in every trial.

In this context, it is important to understand the broader concept of gender justice.

#### What is Gender Justice?

- **Gender Justice** refers to the fair and equal treatment of all genders in social, economic, political, and legal spheres. It emphasizes that everyone, regardless of their gender identity or expression, should have equal access to resources, representation, and decision-making in society.
- It goes beyond **formal equality (equal laws)** and aims at **substantive equality (equal outcomes and opportunities)** by addressing historical and structural disadvantages faced particularly by women and marginalized genders.
- Key Principles of Gender Justice:
  1. **Equality:** Ensures that people of all genders have equal rights and opportunities in society, addressing the systemic inequalities that exist based on gender.
  2. **Respect for Diversity:** Acknowledges and values the diverse experiences and identities related to gender, including those of transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals.
  3. **End to Discrimination:** Seeks to eliminate discrimination based on gender, whether in workplaces, educational institutions, or legal systems.
  4. **Empowerment:** Focuses on empowering marginalized genders, ensuring they have a voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
  5. **Access to Resources:** Strives to guarantee equal access to resources such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for all genders.

**What are the constitutional and statutory provisions related to gender justice in India?****Constitutional Provisions:**

1. **Article 14 (Equality Before Law):** Guarantees that everyone is equal before the law and provides for equal protection of the laws.
2. **Article 15 (Prohibition of Discrimination):**
  - a. **Article 15(1):** Prohibits the State from discriminating against any citizen on grounds *only* of religion, race, caste, **sex**, or place of birth.
  - b. **Article 15(3):** A crucial “justice” provision that allows the State to make **special provisions for women and children** (e.g., reservation of seats or special welfare schemes).
3. **Article 16 (Equality of Opportunity):** Ensures **equality of opportunity** in public employment and prohibits discrimination based on sex.
4. **Article 21: The Right to Life and Personal Liberty**, which the Supreme Court has interpreted to include the right to live with dignity, free from sexual harassment and violence.
5. **Article 23:** Prohibits **human trafficking** and forced labor, which disproportionately impact women and girls.
6. **Article 39:**
  - a. **Article 39(a):** The State shall direct its policy toward securing an **adequate means of livelihood** for men and women equally.
  - b. **Article 39(d):** Mandates **Equal pay for equal work** for both men and women.
7. **Article 42 (Just and Humane Conditions):** Provides for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
8. **Article 46 (Promotion of Educational and Economic Interests):** Protects the interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections, promoting their educational and economic interests.
9. **Article 51A(e):** Imposes a duty on every citizen to **renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.**
10. **The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992):** Reserved **one-third (33%) of seats** for women in Panchayats and Municipalities.
11. **The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023):** A historic act that mandates **33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha** and State Legislative Assemblies (to be implemented following the next census and delimitation).

**Statutory Provisions:**

1. **The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** Provides protection to women from domestic violence and establishes measures for their safety and legal remedies.
2. **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (POSH) Act, 2013:** Codified the “Vishaka Guidelines” to protect women at work.
3. **The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961:** Grants maternity benefits, including leave and payment during maternity, to women working in establishments.
4. **The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976:** Provides for equal remuneration to men and women for the same work and prohibits discrimination in matters of pay.
5. **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:** Prohibits child marriages and provides for the punishment of those involved in carrying out such marriages.

6. **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** Prohibits the giving or receiving of dowry in marriages and penalizes those who engage in such practices.
7. **The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994:** Prohibits sex-selection and prenatal sex determination to combat female feticide.
8. **The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019:** Recognizes the right of transgender persons to self-perceived gender identity and prohibits discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare.

**What were the various cases in which the Supreme Court upheld gender justice?**

<p><b>Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Laid down the <b>Vishaka Guidelines</b> to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace.</li> <li>● Recognized sexual harassment as a violation of <b>Articles 14, 15, and 21</b> of the Constitution.</li> <li>● Eventually led to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shayara Bano v. Union of India</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Declared <b>instant triple talaq (talaq-e-biddat)</b> unconstitutional.</li> <li>● Held that the practice violated fundamental rights and gender equality.</li> <li>● Strengthened protections for Muslim women.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Joseph Shine v. Union of India</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Struck down <b>Section 497 of IPC (Adultery law)</b>.</li> <li>● Held that the law treated women as property of husbands and violated dignity and equality.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sabarimala Case</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Allowed women of menstruating age to enter the Sabarimala temple.</li> <li>● Held that exclusion violated equality and religious freedom rights of women.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lata Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Protected a woman's right to marry a person of her choice.</li> <li>● Condemned honour-based violence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vineeta Sharma v. Rakesh Sharma (2020)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Court clarified that daughters have equal <b>coparcenary (birthright) rights</b> in Hindu Undivided Family property, regardless</li> </ul>

	of whether the father was alive when the 2005 Amendment to the Hindu Succession Act was passed.
<b>Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Decriminalized consensual same-sex relations by partially striking down Section 377 IPC.</li> <li>● Held that criminalization violated equality, dignity, privacy, and freedom of expression.</li> <li>● Strongly affirmed constitutional morality over social morality.</li> </ul>

### What is the need for gender justice?

1. **Systemic Discrimination:** Gender justice addresses the historical and systemic inequalities faced by marginalized genders, including women, transgender, and gender non-conforming individuals. These groups often experience disparities in income, education, and healthcare access.
2. **Maximizing Potential:** Promoting gender justice ensures that all individuals can contribute to the economy, which leads to increased productivity and economic growth. Gender-diverse workplaces enhance innovation and performance.
3. **Peace and Cohesion:** Societies that uphold gender justice are generally more peaceful and stable. Reducing gender-based violence and discrimination fosters social harmony, contributing to overall well-being.
4. **Basic Human Rights:** Gender justice aligns with universal human rights principles, ensuring everyone has the right to live free from discrimination and violence. This strengthens the fabric of democracy and promotes accountability in governance.
5. **Access to Resources:** Ensuring gender justice involves providing equal access to healthcare, education, and social services. This leads to improved health outcomes and empowers individuals to make informed choices about their lives.
6. **Increased Representation:** Gender justice promotes the inclusion of diverse voices in decision-making processes, leading to more equitable policies and community development. Empowered individuals are better positioned to challenge oppressive systems.

### What are the challenges in ensuring gender justice?

1. **Deep-rooted Beliefs:** Traditional gender roles and stereotypes often shape societal expectations, limiting opportunities for individuals based on gender. These norms can perpetuate discrimination and violence against marginalized genders.
2. **Ineffective Laws:** Despite existing laws promoting gender equality, many are poorly enforced or have gaps that allow discrimination to persist. Institutional biases within legal systems can also undermine efforts toward gender justice.
3. **Pay Gaps and Employment Inequality:** Gender-based economic disparities, such as wage gaps and unequal access to certain professions, persist in many societies. This limits financial independence and economic empowerment for marginalized genders.
4. **Gender-based Violence:** High rates of gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual harassment, create significant barriers to achieving gender justice. Fear of violence can deter individuals from seeking justice or asserting their rights.

5. **Educational Inequities:** In many regions, access to education and resources is often unequal, with girls and marginalized genders facing barriers to obtaining quality education and skills training.
6. **Lack of Representation:** Underrepresentation of women and marginalized genders in political and leadership roles hinders the development of policies that address their specific needs and interests.
7. **Multiple Identities:** The intersection of gender with other identities (such as race, class, and sexuality) complicates the challenges faced. Individuals may experience compound discrimination that makes addressing gender justice even more difficult.

UPSC GS-2: Polity

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### Labour Codes- Explained Pointwise

In November 2025, the Government of India implemented all four Labour Codes — the Code on Wages, the Industrial Relations Code, the Code on Social Security and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code — with effect from 21 November 2025, **replacing and consolidating 29 existing labour laws.**

This reform aims to modernise labour governance, improve worker welfare, and align labour practices with emerging workplace trends, paving the way for a future-ready workforce and more resilient industries under the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

- The implementation of India's labour codes marks a decisive shift towards greater financial inclusion of the workforce by embedding social security, income protection, and long-term financial safeguards into the employment relationship. By consolidating multiple fragmented labour laws, the codes aim not only to modernise labour governance but also to ensure that the gains of economic growth are shared more equitably with workers.
- These reforms are fundamentally designed to correct long-standing exclusions and integrate millions of workers into formal systems of financial and social security.

#### Labour and Constitutional Rights in India:

The **Constitution of India** provides several safeguards and rights concerning labour and workers:

1. **Article 19(1)(c):** Grants all citizens the **right to form associations or unions**, enabling collective bargaining and organisation of workers.
2. **Article 23:** Prohibits **forced labour**, making it unconstitutional to compel any person to work against their will.
3. **Article 24:** Prohibits **child labour**, specifically banning the employment of children below **14 years in hazardous occupations or processes.**
4. **Article 38(1) & 38(2):**
  - a. Directs the state to **promote the welfare of the people.**
  - b. Seeks to **reduce economic inequalities**, including income disparities.
5. **Article 43(A):** Provides for **workers' participation in the management of industrial and other undertakings**, fostering cooperative industrial relations.

#### Overview of Labour Codes

Labour Codes	Major Acts Subsumed	Key Provisions
<b>Code on Wages, 2019</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Payment of Wages Act, 1936</li> <li>- Minimum Wages Act, 1948</li> <li>- Payment of Bonus Act, 1965</li> <li>- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establishes a <b>uniform definition of 'wages'</b> for all workers.</li> <li>● Mandates <b>timely payment of wages</b> to every employee.</li> <li>● Introduces a <b>national minimum wage</b>, adjustable by states above the central floor.</li> <li>● Ensures <b>equal remuneration</b> for men and women performing the same or similar work.</li> </ul>
<b>Industrial Relations Code, 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trade Unions Act, 1926</li> <li>- Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946</li> <li>- Industrial Disputes Act, 1947</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Simplifies <b>trade union registration and recognition</b>.</li> <li>● Introduces <b>negotiation unions or councils</b> for dispute resolution.</li> <li>● Sets conditions for strikes, including a 60-day notice period for strikes in public utility services.</li> <li>● Establishes <b>grievance redressal mechanisms</b>.</li> <li>● Raises threshold for prior government permission for closure, lay-off, or retrenchment from <b>100 to 300 workers</b>.</li> <li>● Introduces fixed-term employment, providing flexibility for employers while ensuring protection for workers.</li> </ul>
<b>Code on Social Security, 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952;</li> <li>- Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948;</li> <li>- Maternity Benefit Act, 1961;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expands <b>employee definition</b> to include <b>gig and platform workers</b>.</li> <li>● Introduces <b>social security schemes</b> for gig, platform, and unorganised workers.</li> <li>● Mandates creation of a <b>social security fund</b> for unorganised workers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972;</li> <li>- Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides <b>maternity benefits and gratuity</b> to women workers, including those in the unorganised sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code, 2020</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Factories Act, 1948</li> <li>-Mines Act, 1952</li> <li>-Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970</li> <li>-Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures <b>health, safety, and welfare</b> for all workers.</li> <li>• Mandates <b>annual health check-ups</b> for employees.</li> <li>• Regulates <b>working hours and conditions</b> for different sectors.</li> <li>• Introduces a <b>single licensing mechanism</b> for contractors and employers.</li> <li>• Increases <b>thresholds for contract labour applicability</b> and prohibits contract labour in core activities, with certain exceptions.</li> <li>• Shifts primary responsibility for welfare facilities from <b>contractors to principal employers</b>.</li> </ul>

#### Comparison of the Labour Ecosystem Before and After Labour Codes

Parameter	Pre-Labour Reforms	Post-Labour Reforms
<b>Formalisation of Employment</b>	No mandatory appointment letters.	Written appointment letters mandatory for all workers, ensuring transparency, job security, and formal employment.
<b>Social Security Coverage</b>	Limited coverage; many workers, especially in the informal sector, remained outside the social security net.	Under the <b>Code on Social Security, 2020</b> , all workers—including gig and platform workers—are eligible for PF, ESIC, insurance, and other social security benefits.
<b>Minimum Wages</b>	Minimum wages applied only to scheduled	Under the Code on Wages, 2019, every worker has a statutory right to minimum wages. Timely payment and

	industries/employments, leaving large segments uncovered	wage protection enhance financial security.
<b>Preventive Healthcare</b>	No legal mandate for employers to provide annual health check-ups	Employers are required to provide <b>free annual health check-ups to workers aged 40+</b> , promoting preventive healthcare and timely diagnosis.
<b>Timely Wages</b>	No strict compliance requirement for timely wage payments.	<b>Employers must ensure timely payment of wages</b> , improving financial stability and worker morale while reducing exploitation.
<b>Women Workforce Participation</b>	Women faced restrictions on night shifts and certain occupations	Women are permitted to work in all occupations, including night shifts, with consent and adequate safety measures, enhancing access to high-paying opportunities
<b>ESIC Coverage</b>	Limited to notified areas; establishments with fewer than 10 workers were largely excluded; hazardous units had non-uniform coverage.	<b>ESIC benefits extended PAN-India:</b> voluntary for establishments with fewer than 10 workers, and mandatory for even one worker in hazardous processes, ensuring wider social protection.
<b>Compliance Burden</b>	Multiple registrations, licences, and returns under separate laws	<b>Single registration, PAN-India licence</b> , and unified return reduce compliance burden and simplify processes for businesses.

### Benefits of Labour Reforms Across Key Sectors

#### 1. Fixed-Term Employees (FTE):

- FTEs will receive all benefits equal to permanent workers, such as leave, medical benefits and social security.
- Gratuity eligibility reduced from five years to one year of continuous service.
- Equal wages with permanent employees ensure higher income and better protection.
- Encourages direct hiring, reducing excessive contractual dependence.

#### 2. Gig & Platform Workers:

- For the first time, '**Gig work**', '**Platform work**' and '**Aggregators**' are legally defined.
- Aggregators must contribute **1-2% of annual turnover** (capped at 5% of payments made/payable to workers) for worker welfare.
- **Aadhaar-linked Universal Account Number (UAN)** enables fully portable social security benefits across states and migration.

### 3. Contract Workers:

- Fixed-term employment increases employability, ensuring **legal and social security benefits equal to permanent employees**.
- FTEs become eligible for **gratuity after one year** of continuous service.
- **Principal employers** must provide social security and health benefits to contract workers.
- Workers are entitled to a **free annual health check-up**.

### 4. Women Workers:

- Gender discrimination is legally prohibited; **equal pay for equal work is ensured**.
- Women can work **night shifts and in all types of work**, including underground mining and heavy machinery, **with consent and safety measures**.
- **Mandatory representation of women on grievance redressal committees**.
- Family definition expanded to include **parents-in-law for women employees**, increasing dependent coverage.

### 5. Youth Workers:

- **Minimum wage guaranteed** for all workers.
- Mandatory **appointment letters** ensure formal employment and employment history records.
- Employers must **pay wages even during leave**, preventing exploitation.
- Workers to receive wages as per **Central Government floor wage**, enabling a decent standard of living.

### 6. MSME Workers:

- All MSME workers covered under the **Social Security Code, 2020**, based on employee count.
- Minimum wages ensured for all workers.
- Workers get access to **canteens, drinking water, restrooms**, and other welfare facilities.
- Provides **standard working hours, paid leave and double overtime**.
- **Timely wage payment is mandatory**.

### 7. Beedi & Cigar Workers:

- Minimum wages guaranteed.
- Working hours fixed at **8-12 hours a day; 48 hours per week cap**.
- Overtime is **voluntary** and paid at **double the normal wage rate**.
- Timely wage payment ensured.
- Workers become **eligible for bonus after 30 days of work in a year**.

**8. Plantation Workers:**

- Covered under the **OSHC Code and Social Security Code**.
- Codes apply to plantations with **more than 10 workers or on 5+ hectares of land**.
- **Mandatory safety training** for handling and storing chemicals.
- **Protective gear compulsory** to prevent accidents and chemical exposure.
- Workers and families receive **full ESI medical facilities**, and **education benefits for children**.

**9. Audio-Visual & Digital Media Workers:**

- Workers such as journalists, dubbing artists and stunt persons get **full social security benefits**.
- **Mandatory appointment letters**, defining wages and entitlements.
- Timely wage payment enforced.
- Overtime requires consent and is paid at **double the normal wage rate**.

**10. Mine Workers:**

- The Social Security Code treats **certain commuting accidents as employment-related**, under specific conditions.
- Central Government will notify **uniform occupational safety standards**.
- Workers get **free annual health check-ups**.
- Working hours limited to **8-12 hours per day, 48 hours per week**, ensuring work-life balance.

**11. Hazardous Industry Workers:**

- **Free annual health check-ups** for all workers.
- National safety standards framed by the Central Government.
- Women can work in hazardous sectors, including underground mining and heavy machinery, **with equal opportunities and safety safeguards**.
- **Mandatory safety committee at every hazardous site** for workplace monitoring and chemical handling safety.

**12. Textile Workers:**

- All migrant textile workers (direct, contract-based, self-migrated) get **equal wages, welfare benefits and PDS portability**.
- Workers can claim dues up to **three years back**, easing dispute settlements.
- Overtime wages must be **double the normal rate**.

**13. IT & ITES Workers:**

- Salary must be released **by the 7th of every month**.
- **Equal pay for equal work**, with strengthened participation of women.
- Women allowed night shifts with opportunities to earn higher wages.
- Mechanisms established for **timely resolution of harassment, discrimination and wage disputes**.
- Social security ensured through **fixed-term employment and mandatory appointment letters**.

**14. Dock Workers:**

- All dock workers receive **formal legal recognition and protection**.
- Appointment letters mandatory, guaranteeing social security benefits.

- Provident fund, pension and insurance benefits apply to **contract and temporary workers** as well.
- **Annual employer-funded health check-ups** and medical facilities, sanitation and washing areas made mandatory.

### 15. Export Sector Workers:

- Fixed-term export workers to receive **gratuity, PF and full social security benefits**.
- Annual leave available after **180 days of work in a year**.
- Right to **timely wage payment, no unauthorized deductions and no wage ceiling restrictions**.
- Women allowed **night shifts with consent**, including guaranteed safety protocols—transport, double overtime wages, CCTV, security arrangements.

### Challenges with the New Labour Codes:

#### 1. Uneven implementation across States:

- Labour is in the Concurrent List, so states frame their own rules.
- By mid-2025, **30+ states/UTs had published draft rules**, but some (e.g., West Bengal, Meghalaya) were still lagging (Ministry of Labour).
- This has created a patchwork of protections → workers in Karnataka may enjoy better safeguards than those in Assam.

#### 2. Excessive delegation of Powers:

- Key provisions like the **definition of “wages”** or **thresholds for retrenchment** are left to government notifications.
- This reduces parliamentary oversight and opens scope for arbitrary decisions.
- The **Standing Committee on Labour (2023)** flagged this as a major concern.

#### 3. Inadequate Protection for Gig & Informal Workers:

- Despite **30+ crore unorganised workers registered on e-Shram**, benefits are still unclear.
- Positive efforts by State govts:
  - **Karnataka’s 2025 law** mandating platform firms to contribute to a welfare fund.
  - **Maharashtra** mapping 10 lakh gig workers.
  - **Telangana study** found gig workers earn ~₹20,000/month but face long hours & high commissions.
- Union Budget 2025–26 extended **PM-JAY health coverage** to gig workers, but a comprehensive national framework is missing.

#### 4. Weakening of collective bargaining:

- The **Industrial Relations Code** requires **75% approval for strikes**, nearly impossible in large firms.
- In 2024, trade unions held **nationwide protests in Delhi, Lucknow, and Kolkata**, calling this provision “anti-labour.”

#### 5. Reduced Job Security:

- Retrenchment/closure threshold raised from **100 to 300 workers**.
- Critics say this tilts towards “Ease of Doing Business” over worker security.
- Example: **Gurugram auto-component firms (2024)** downsized without government approval due to the new threshold.

#### 6. Precarious Fixed-Term Contracts:

- Employers use fixed-term contracts to avoid permanency.
- **The Supreme Court (2024)** criticised exploitative contract renewals.

- **Telangana HC (2025)** ordered regularisation of ad hoc staff, calling repeated contracts “unfair labour practice.”
7. **Broad exemptions diluting protections:**
    - Governments can exempt industries in “public interest,” a vague term prone to misuse.
    - This could let factories bypass rules on wages, safety, and working hours.
  8. **Low awareness & compliance (MSMEs and Informal Sector):**
    - Many MSMEs struggle with digital compliance.
    - **CII’s 2024 survey:** only 46% of small firms were fully aware of labour code requirements.
    - Informal workers remain under-informed about e-Shram benefits.

#### Way Forward:

1. **Uniform Implementation Across States:** Establish a national benchmark framework for minimum wages, occupational safety, and social security. **For Example–** A **GST Council-like institutional mechanism** for labour could promote inter-state harmonisation while preserving federal flexibility.
2. **Strengthening Legislative Oversight:** Ensure **greater legislative clarity** by embedding critical definitions (e.g., “wages,” retrenchment thresholds) within the Codes themselves.
3. **Comprehensive Social Security for Gig & Informal Workers:** Draft a **National Gig and Platform Workers Policy** mandating aggregator contributions to welfare funds. The **e-Shram portal** should be integrated with **DBT-enabled schemes** covering health (PM-JAY), pensions (PM-SYM), and accident insurance for effective last-mile delivery.
4. **Reviving Collective Bargaining Rights:** Rationalise the **strike approval threshold** (from 75% to around 51%) to make it practical while ensuring industrial peace. Promote **tripartite consultations** (Government–Employers–Workers) for dispute resolution.
5. **Balancing Flexibility with Worker Security:** Couple greater flexibility for firms with mandatory unemployment insurance and reskilling programmes for retrenched workers. This would align with global best practices in labour transition support.
6. **Regulating Fixed-Term Contracts:** Introduce a **cap on contract renewals** (e.g., 2–3 cycles). Beyond this, workers should either be granted permanency or strengthened social security entitlements to avoid “permanent temporariness.”
7. **Restricting Exemptions:** Narrow down the scope of “public interest” exemptions. Make them time-bound, criteria-based, and subject to judicial or legislative review to prevent misuse.
8. **Improving Awareness and Compliance:** Launch **multilingual awareness campaigns, labour helplines, and simplified digital compliance portals**. Special digital support cells for MSMEs should be set up to ease compliance without imposing excessive costs.

**Conclusion:** The true success of the labour codes will lie not in resistance or rhetoric, but in ensuring their effective implementation so that every worker becomes an active participant in India’s growth story.

Read more: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2 & GS 3- Social Sector Initiatives & Labour Reforms

## 7th Schedule of Indian Constitution – Explained Pointwise

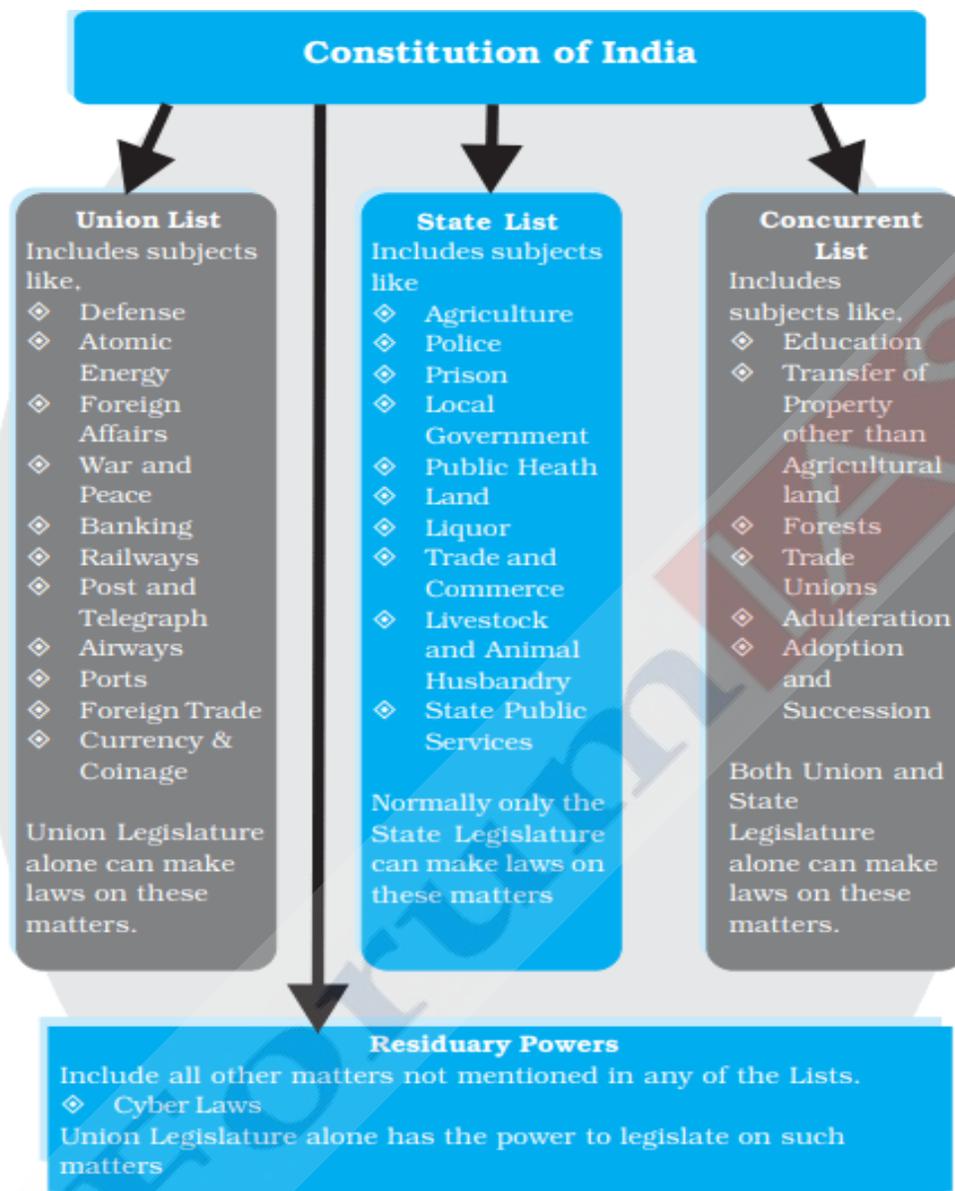


### What is 7th Schedule of Indian Constitution?

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

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



### 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?

<p><b>ESTONIA</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estonia is the world leader in integrating AI into the very fabric of the state.</li> <li>• <b>Bürokratt (#KrattAI):</b> A national virtual assistant that allows citizens to access all government services via a single voice-activated or text-based interface.</li> <li>• <b>AI Judges:</b> The country has experimented with “robot judges” for small claims disputes to clear court backlogs, though human oversight remains for appeals.</li> </ul>
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INDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Bhashini (Language Bridge):</b> 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.</li> <li>● <b>AI in Justice:</b> The Indian Supreme Court uses AI (SUVAS) to translate legal papers, making justice more accessible to non-English speakers.</li> </ul>
TAIWAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Polis (Consensus Mapping):</b> 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.</li> </ul>
GERMANY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The city of Berlin has launched <b>BärGPT</b>, 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.</li> </ul>

### 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.

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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;"><b>Zonal Councils</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Zonal Councils are <b>Statutory Bodies</b>. They were established under Part III of the <b>States Reorganisation Act, 1956</b>.</li> <li>● Zonal Councils are the regional counterparts to the national-level ISC. They were created to address issues specific to different regions of the country.</li> <li>● There are <b>5 Zonal Councils</b>, each covering a specific geographical region of India – North, South, East, West &amp; Central Zonal Councils.</li> <li>● <b>Composition:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Common Chairman:</b> The <b>Union Home Minister</b> chairs all five (non-North-Eastern) Zonal Councils.</li> <li>2. <b>Vice-Chairman:</b> The <b>Chief Ministers</b> of the states in the zone act as Vice-Chairman by rotation, usually for one year.</li> <li>3. <b>Members:</b> Chief Minister and two other ministers from each state in the zone, plus administrators of UTs.</li> <li>4. <b>Advisors:</b> One person nominated by the NITI Aayog and the Chief Secretaries of each state (they participate but cannot vote).</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Main objectives</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Emotional Integration:</b> To stop the growth of acute “state-consciousness,” regionalism, and linguism.</li> <li>2. <b>Boundary &amp; Border Disputes:</b> Solving local issues like small border adjustments or forest land disputes between neighbors.</li> <li>3. <b>Infrastructure Coordination:</b> Planning regional transport, power grids, and water sharing.</li> <li>4. <b>Security:</b> Coordinating anti-Naxal operations or coastal security (depending on the zone).</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
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<p><b>North East Zonal Council</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The North Eastern Council was created later, under the <b>North Eastern Council Act of 1972</b>, to address the unique challenges and development needs of the northeastern region.</li> <li>● <b>Composition:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Chairman:</b> The Union Home Minister serves as the ex-officio Chairman.</li> <li>○ <b>Vice-Chairman:</b> The Minister of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) is the ex-officio Vice-Chairman.</li> <li>○ <b>Members:</b> The council comprises the Governors and Chief Ministers of all the eight Northeastern states.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Unlike the advisory role of the Zonal Councils, the NEC is a statutory body for regional planning and development.</li> <li>● It focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formulating unified and coordinated regional plans for the Northeast.</li> <li>○ Addressing the specific economic and social development needs of the region.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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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><b>Upstream Raw Material Security</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Map and develop domestic quartz/silica sand resources (e.g., in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka) with high purity, while establishing strategic stockpiles.</li> <li>● Invest in beneficiation and purification technologies to upgrade low-grade silica, reducing import dependency.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Midstream Manufacturing Push</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scale up polysilicon and wafer production (for solar and electronics) through PLI-like incentives, joint ventures with tech leaders, and low-cost financing.</li> <li>● Establish specialized silicon industrial parks with reliable power, water, and logistics – critical for energy-intensive silicon refining.</li> </ul>

Downstream Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Become a global hub in solar module assembly and advance into high-value semiconductor fabrication (leveraging the India Semiconductor Mission).</li> <li>● Focus not just on chips but on compound semiconductors (GaN, SiC) for EVs, defense, and telecom.</li> </ul>
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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"> <li>● Donald Trump, designated as chairman for life.</li> <li>● He has indefinite tenure and exclusive authority to invite members, appoint or remove board officials, create or dissolve bodies, and approve or veto decisions.</li> <li>● He also designates his own successor.</li> </ul>
Board Proper (General Assembly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Composed of national leaders or designated senior officials from invited member states.</li> <li>● This is the highest representative body of the organization.</li> </ul>
Board of Peace Executive Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A smaller strategic committee tasked with driving policy decisions and operational strategy.</li> <li>● Members are appointed by the Chairman. Seven members were appointed by Trump.</li> </ul>
Gaza Executive Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focuses on the Board's mission related to the Gaza Strip.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversees implementation of the transitional governance arrangements under the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG).</li></ul>
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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:

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

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

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:

<p><b>Distant and Hesitant (1948 - 1992)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Initial Recognition (1950):</b> 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.</li> <li>● <b>Pro-Palestinian Stance:</b> India's foreign policy strongly supported the Palestinian cause and the Arab world, opposing Israel in international forums like the UN.</li> <li>● <b>Covert Cooperation:</b> 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</li> </ul>
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	<p>India in the 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan, laying the groundwork for future defense ties.</p>
<p><b>Full Normalization and the Defense Pivot (1992 - 2014)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>The Breakthrough (1992):</b> 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.</li> <li>● <b>Defense Imperative:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deepening, De-Hyphenation, and Strategic Alignment (2014 - Present)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>De-hyphenation Policy:</b> 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.</li> <li>● <b>2017 Visit:</b> 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.</li> <li>● <b>Multilateral Groupings:</b> 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.</li> </ul>

**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?**

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

<b>Judicial Members</b>	<b>Must be a Judge of a High Court (or have been one), or qualified to be a Judge of a High Court.</b>	<b>Judicial and Expert members are appointed by a committee formed by the Central Government.</b>
<b>Expert Members</b>	<b>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.</b>	

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

**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 <b>1947</b> . 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"> <li>• <b>The Colombo Plan (1951):</b> Canada provided significant foreign aid, food assistance, and technical expertise.</li> <li>• <b>Nuclear Partnership:</b> 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.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Deterioration in Relationship (1974-2000s)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India-Canada relations witnessed deterioration in the political domain despite economic engagement, regular high-level interactions and long-standing people-to-people ties.</li> <li>● Canada's opposition to India's nuclear tests (1974 &amp; 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.</li> <li>● 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase of Renewal of Bonhomie (2010-2022)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nuclear Reconciliation (2010): A landmark Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement was signed, finally ending the decades-long nuclear freeze.</li> <li>● PM Visit (2015): Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to <b>Canada in 2015 was the first bilateral visit by an Indian PM since 1973</b>. The government hailed the visit with the assumption that decades of mistrust over the Khalistan issue could be brushed aside.</li> <li>● 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.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Nijjar Crisis &amp; Resetting of ties (2023-2025)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>The Diplomatic Row (2023–2024):</b> 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.</li> <li>● <b>The 2025 Recovery:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
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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
<b>Total Bilateral Trade(\$ bn)</b>	<b>8.98</b>	<b>7.16</b>	<b>14.22</b>	<b>9.36</b>

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