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7 PM COMPILATION

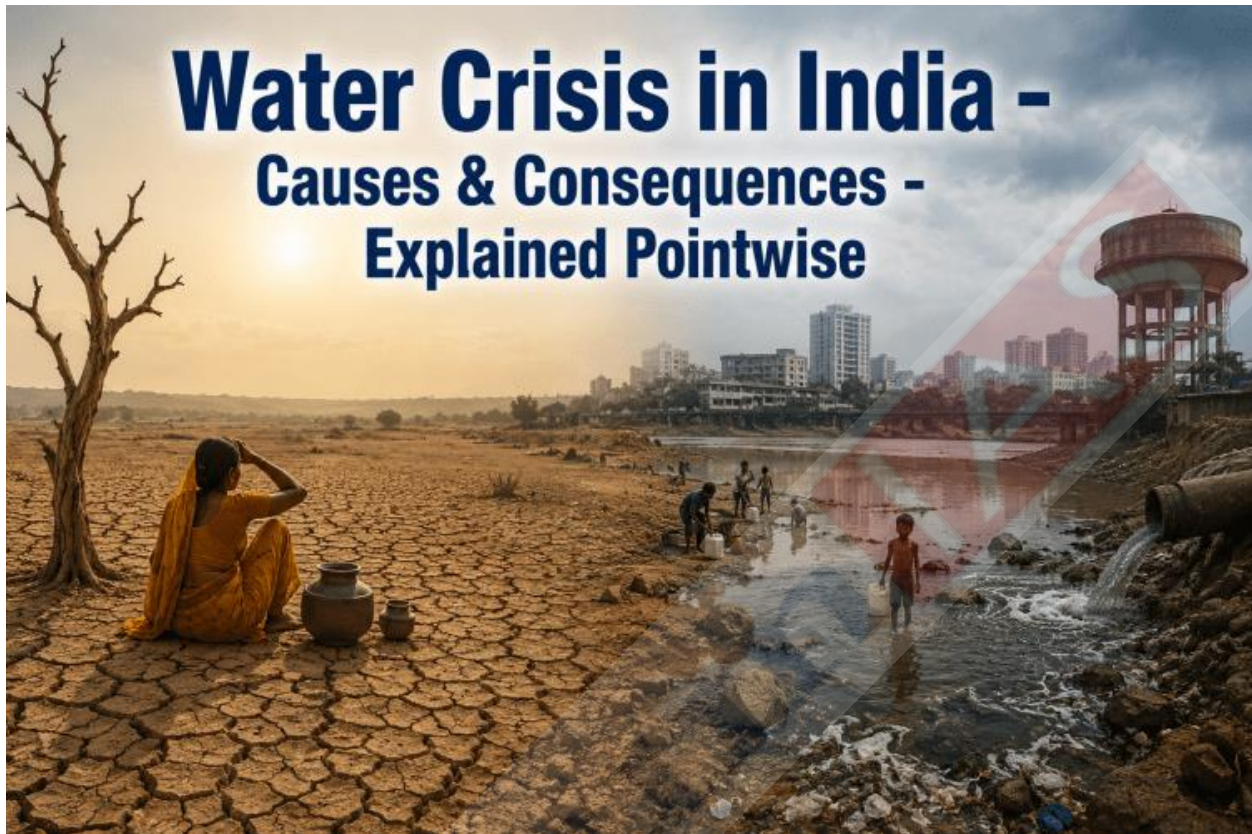
3rd and 4th week June, 2026

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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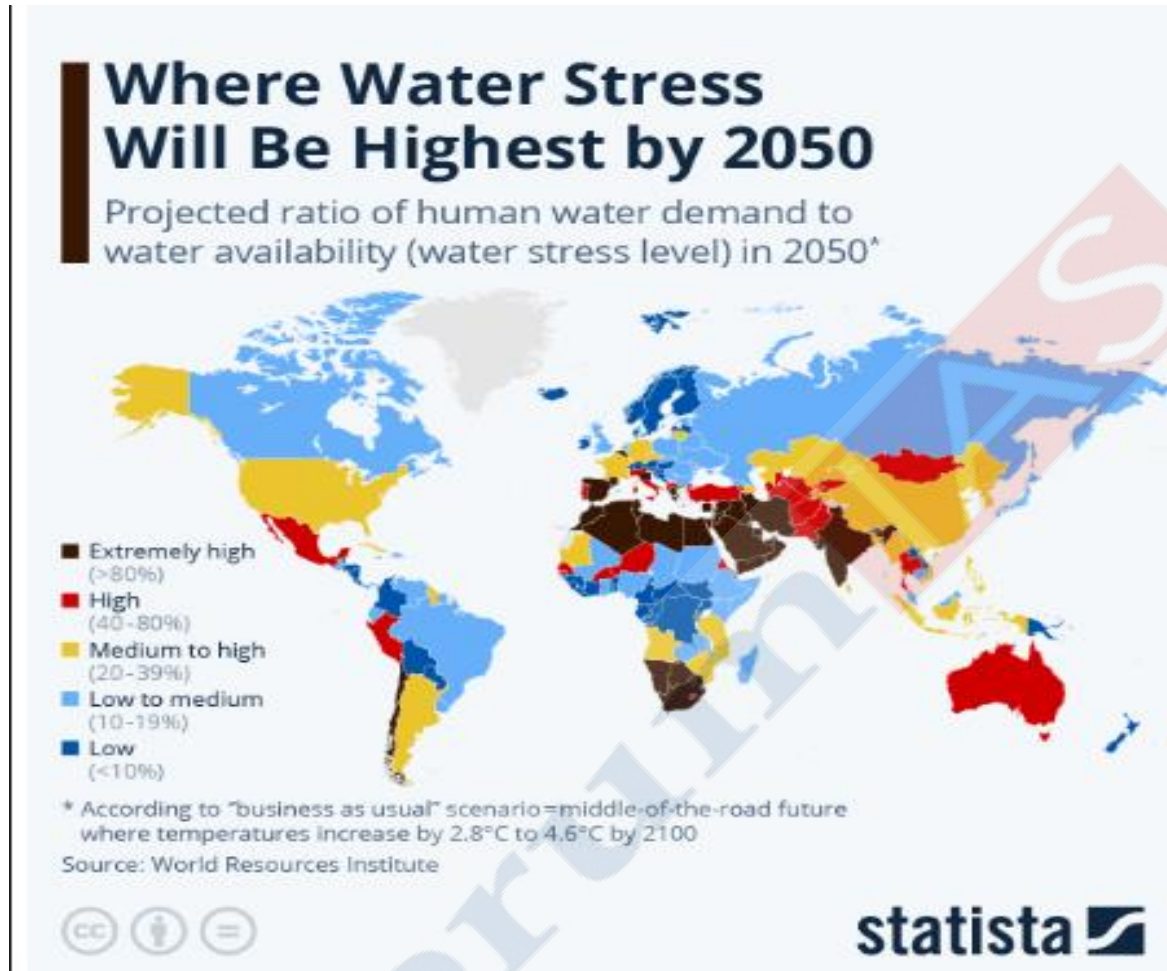
Water Crisis in India – Causes & Consequences – Explained Pointwise

India is experiencing one of the most severe water crises in its history. With only 4% of the world's freshwater resources but home to nearly 18% of the global population, the country faces acute stress in meeting the water demands of its people, agriculture, and industry. By 2030, India's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply, risking severe shortages for millions and potentially impacting the nation's GDP.

What is Water Crisis? What is the situation in India?

- **Water Crisis:** Water crisis refers to the situation where the available potable, safe water in a region is less than its demand. The World Bank refers to **water scarcity** as a condition when the **annual per-capita availability** is less than **1000 cubic metres**.
- Experts generally categorize the crisis into two distinct types:
 1. **Physical Water Scarcity:** There simply is not enough water naturally available in the region. This is common in naturally arid zones like the Middle East and North Africa.

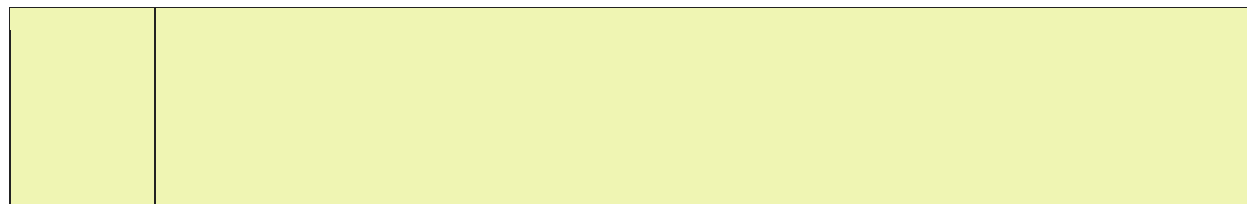
2. **Economic Water Scarcity:** Water exists, but the infrastructure, management, or funding required to clean, store, and safely distribute it to the population is completely lacking.



Water Crisis Situation in India:

Water Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India possesses only 4% of the world's freshwater resources, despite supporting 18% of the world's population According to NITI Aayog's "Composite Water Management Index (CWMI)", report India is undergoing the worst water crisis in its history. Nearly 600 million people were facing high to extreme water stress. India's annual per capita availability of 1,486 cubic meters in 2021 is in the water stress category (less than 1700 cubic meters). As per Govt estimates, this may reduce to 1,341 cubic metres by 2025 and 1,140 cubic metres by 2050. Many cities are already facing existential threats. Chennai's "Day Zero" crisis, where water supplies completely ran dry, is a warning. The concept of "Day Zero" refers to the day when a city's drinking water supply is effectively exhausted and taps run dry.
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<p>Lack of Access to Safe Drinking Water</p>	<p>According to NITI Aayog CWMI Report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2,00,000 people die every year due to inadequate access to safe water. 75% of the households in the country do not have access to drinking water. 40% of India's population will have no access to drinking water by 2030.
<p>Overexploitation and pollution of Ground water</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India is the largest groundwater user in the world, with its total use exceeding 25% of the global usage. The Central Groundwater Board (CGWB) highlights that the national average for groundwater extraction sits at roughly 60%. However, this masks severe regional over-extraction in India's agricultural "breadbasket" states, where water capital is dropping at an unsustainable rate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punjab: 156% extraction rate Rajasthan: 147% extraction rate Haryana: 137% extraction rate Nearly 70% of groundwater is contaminated. India is placed at the rank of 120 among 122 countries in the water quality index. <div data-bbox="354 947 1414 1717" style="text-align: center;"> <p>Figure 1. Source: OpenCity</p> </div>



What are the reasons for the Water Crisis in India?

- Rising water demand:** According to NITI Aayog, India's water demand is increasing at a rapid rate. **India's water demand** will be **twice** the **available supply** by 2030. Also, the **rate of depletion of groundwater** in India during 2041-2080 will be thrice the current rate.
- Flawed Agricultural Policies:** Agriculture consumes nearly **90% of India's available freshwater**, leaving very little for industrial and domestic use. The crisis here is driven by policy rather than necessity:
 - **Subsidized Power and "Free" Pumping:** In many states (like Punjab and Haryana), the government provides free or highly subsidized electricity to farmers. This has led to the unrestricted, 24/7 pumping of groundwater using deep tube wells.
 - **Cultivation of Water-Intensive Crops:** Due to government Minimum Support Prices (MSP) guaranteeing a market for rice and sugarcane, farmers grow these water-intensive crops in naturally semi-arid regions. It takes roughly **3,000 to 5,000 liters of water** to produce just one kilogram of rice in India – a rate that is completely unsustainable for regions with dipping water tables.
- Unregulated Groundwater Exploitation:** Because surface water (rivers and lakes) is unreliable or polluted, India has become the **world's largest extractor of groundwater**, pulling more than the United States and China combined:
 - **Lack of Legal Restraints:** Historically, land ownership in India gave the landowner absolute rights over the water beneath their property. This has led to a "race to the bottom," where neighbors dig deeper and deeper wells to out-pump one another.
 - **Failed Natural Recharge:** As water is extracted at a rate faster than the monsoons can replenish it, aquifers are permanently collapsing.
- Encroachment of Natural Water Bodies & Wetlands:** Historically, Indian cities relied on interconnected systems of lakes, stepwells, and floodplains to store water. Cities like Bengaluru and Chennai have built IT parks, housing societies, and roads directly on top of these ancient water bodies, destroying their natural storage capacity.
- Severe Water Pollution (Quality Crisis):** India does not just have a water *quantity* problem; it has a massive water *quality* crisis. Much of the water that is physically available is too toxic to use:
 - **Untreated Sewage:** Nearly 70% of urban sewage in India is dumped directly into local rivers and lakes without any treatment. Rivers like the Yamuna and Ganga are severely compromised by municipal waste.
 - **Industrial Effluents:** Chemical, textile, and manufacturing plants frequently discharge untreated, toxic heavy metals into surface water and unlined pits, which then leach down into deep groundwater aquifers.
 - **Geogenic Contamination:** As groundwater tables drop to extreme depths, the remaining water reacts with deep rock layers, leading to dangerous, natural spikes in **arsenic, fluoride, and salinity**, making the water unsafe to drink without heavy chemical treatment.
- Climate Change:** Climate change is acting as a massive risk multiplier, destabilizing the predictable weather patterns. Climate change has led to:

- **Erratic Monsoons:** Instead of steady rain spread across 3 to 4 months, India now frequently experiences long dry spells interrupted by sudden, violent downpours. These intense bursts cause immediate flooding and runoff, giving the ground no time to absorb the water.
 - **Glacial Retreat:** The Himalayan glaciers, which act as natural water towers feeding India's major perennial rivers (like the Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra), are melting at an accelerated pace. While this initially causes flooding, it threatens to permanently reduce the dry-season flow of these vital rivers in the coming decades.
7. **Lack of proactive management policies:** Water management policies in India have failed to keep pace with changing demands of time. **For ex- The Easement Act of 1882 granting groundwater ownership rights** to the landowner leading to indiscriminate use of water resources.
8. **Governance issues:**
- **Water governance** in India has been **fragmented**. The Centre and the States have their respective departments for governing various issues related to water.
 - There have been separate departments for surface water and groundwater. **Central Water Commission (for surface water)** and **Central Ground Water Board (for groundwater)**.
 - **Politicization of inter-state disputes** by the political parties have hindered the quick resolution of disputes.
9. **Detached Citizens:** Since water is a free resource, it is not valued by the citizens. Citizens are completely detached from the water issues.

What are the impacts of Water Crisis in India?

Economic Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NITI Aayog's Composite Water Management Index (2018) warned that India's water crisis could cost 6% of GDP by 2050 if unaddressed. ● Water scarcity will result in decline of food production. This will hamper India's food security and have serious impacts on the livelihood of farmers and farm labourers. A study shows that a 100mm drop in rainfall can reduce farmer incomes by 15% during the kharif season. Climate change could further erode agricultural incomes by 15-18% on average, and up to 25% in unirrigated areas. ● Decline in industrial production as Industrial sectors such as textiles, thermal power plants etc. may suffer due to water shortage. ● Over 80% of India's electricity comes from thermal power plants (coal and gas) which require massive amounts of water for cooling. Intense water shortages regularly force these plants to temporarily shut down operations, triggering widespread power outages that disrupt manufacturing. ● In cities like Bengaluru and Chennai, municipal water supply cannot keep up with demand. This has allowed private water tanker operators – often called "tanker mafias" – to thrive. They pump water illegally from surrounding villages and sell it to urban residents and tech parks at highly inflated prices, driving up the cost of living and doing business. ● India's rapidly growing tech sector relies heavily on data centers, which require millions of liters of water daily for cooling systems. Building these facilities in water-stressed zones like Chennai or Hyderabad is becoming highly risky, threatening billions of dollars in tech investments.
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<p>Ecological Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Drying Rivers and Dead Lakes: Perennial rivers are turning into seasonal streams. Major rivers like the Cauvery and Krishna frequently fail to reach the sea for parts of the year. Rivers like the Yamuna, Sabarmati, and Cooum are ecologically dead or severely degraded through stretches, unable to support aquatic life. ● Loss of Biodiversity: As wetlands and marshes dry up, local flora and fauna disappear. Migratory birds are losing their winter nesting grounds, and aquatic life in India's river systems is facing localized extinctions. Heavy metal contamination (Arsenic, cadmium, nickel etc.) and oil spills in rivers and oceans respectively may threaten the marine biodiversity.
<p>Social Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Due to scarcity of clean water, millions of people are forced to rely on contaminated surface water. This drives massive annual outbreaks of preventable waterborne diseases such as cholera, dysentery, hepatitis A, and typhoid. ● Deterioration of health of children due to intake of contaminated water. It leads to a reduction in human capital. ● The increased out-of-pocket expenditure on medical expenses adversely impacts the poorest and the most vulnerable sections. ● As communities dig deeper to find water, they tap into toxic aquifers. Over 300 districts in India have groundwater heavily contaminated with arsenic and fluoride. Prolonged exposure leads to arsenicosis (skin lesions and cancers) and fluorosis, a painful condition that cripples bones and rots teeth. ● Increased hardships for women like school dropout, 'water wives' to fetch water in drought prone regions.
<p>Impact on Federal Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amplification of the existing inter-state water disputes like Kaveri, Krishna, Godavari. There will be emergence of new disputes in the future. ● There will be a rise in parochial mindset and regionalism among states and may hinder growth of national unity.
<p>Impact on International Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Water scarcity can lead to conflict among nations to get control over the water bodies. For ex- Impact on India-China relations due to Chinese building of dams over Brahmaputra river and India-Pakistan relations with India putting the Indus Water Treaty in abeyance.

Case Study: Bengaluru Water Crisis:

- Water starved Bengaluru is facing the **looming threat of Day Zero** (when government will shut down water connections for homes and businesses).
- A **BBC report**, based on UN-projections, had listed **Bengaluru in the second position** after **Brazil's São Paulo** among the 11 global cities that are likely to run out of drinking water.



Bengaluru Water Crisis

WATER CRISIS IN INDIA

The World Bank refers to water scarcity as a condition when the **annual per-capita availability is less than 1000 cubic metres**.

According to **NITI Aayog's Composite Water Management Index report**, India is undergoing the worst water crisis in its history. Nearly **600 million people** are facing **high to extreme water stress**. About 200,000 people die every year due to inadequate access to safe water.

REASONS BEHIND BENGALURU'S WATER CRISIS

- 1. Reduced Rainfall leading to Empty Water Reservoirs-** Water levels in **Cauvery Basin reservoirs** like **Harangi, Hemavathi, and Kabini** are at **39%** of their total capacity as of 2024 due to **deficient North-East Monsoon**.
- 2. Depletion of Groundwater-** **Excessive extraction** of groundwater by the bore wells and lack of proper implementation of rain water harvesting systems.
- 3. Destruction of natural water bodies-** Concretisation and destruction of natural lakes has reduced their storage capacity from **35 tmcft in 1800** to **2 tmcft**
- 4. Mismanagement and Inequitable Distribution-** Inefficient water management practices, including **wastage, leakage, and unequal distribution of water resources**

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What are the government initiatives?

Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) "Catch the Rain" Campaign	Executed annually right before the monsoon season, this campaign pushes for nationwide mandatory rainwater harvesting. It focuses on retrofitting traditional stepwells and tanks, removing encroachments from urban wetlands, and establishing localized Jal Shakti Kendras (Water Knowledge Centers) in every district.
Atal Bhujal Yojana	This scheme focuses directly on seven of India's most groundwater-stressed states (including Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh). Instead of relying entirely on top-down government mandates, it implements participatory water budgeting .
Amrit Sarovars	Launched in 2022 to combat the collapse of local surface water bodies, this project aims to develop and rejuvenate at least 75 massive water bodies (ponds/lakes) in every single district of India. Each "Amrit Sarovar" is built with a substantial holding capacity to boost local irrigation and naturally recharge regional aquifers.
Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) - Har Ghar Jal	Launched in 2019, this initiative aims to provide functional household tap connections to every rural home. Prior to the mission, only about 16.7% of rural homes had tap water. More than 81.5% of rural households have been successfully connected. The mission was extended to achieve 100% coverage, shifting its emphasis heavily toward local operations and auditing infrastructure quality.
Namami Gange Program	It is a comprehensive program with twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution in Ganga (Nirmal Dhara) , conservation and rejuvenation of Ganga (Aviral Dhara) .
Jal Shakti Ministry	Jal Shakti Ministry has been formed by merging the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation . Its aim includes: Providing clean drinking water, implementing the Namami Ganga project, resolving the inter-state water disputes, cleaning Ganga.
Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)	Operating under the motto " Per Drop More Crop ," this initiative targets the fact that farming consumes 90% of India's water. The government heavily subsidizes micro-irrigation systems, pushing farmers to pivot away from traditional flood irrigation toward precise drip and sprinkler systems .
<u>National Water Policy</u>	The policy focuses on the conservation, promotion and protection of water. It promotes measures like rainwater harvesting for meeting the demand of water.

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari (JSJB)	A highly scalable, community-driven initiative that focuses entirely on creating artificial groundwater recharge structures. Millions of localized recharge and storage works have been completed across both rural and urban areas to catch monsoon runoff.
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What should be the Way Forward?

1. **Promotion of Water Conservation:** Encouraging rainwater harvesting to capture monsoon run-off. Also, **traditional water conservation practices** like Kudimaramath practice (Tamil Nadu), Ahar Pynes (Bihar), Bamboo Drip irrigation System(North-East) **must be revived**.
2. **Demand-side Management:** States can adopt a participatory approach with the involvement of local communities. **For ex-** The **Swajal model adopted by Uttarakhand** focusing on community-based management of water resources. **Revival of Johads** in Rajasthan desert by Rajendra Singh (Waterman of India).
3. **Nature-Based Solutions:** **Nature-based solutions** refer to the **solutions that mimic natural processes** to provide **human, ecological and societal benefits**. **For ex-** **Artificial Floodplains** to increase water retention, **Forest management** to reduce sediment loadings.
4. **River Basin Management:** River basin management must be done through **hydrological-basin approach** rather than **administrative boundaries**. Also, steps must be taken to **promote interlinking of rivers**, while addressing its environmental concerns.
5. **Evidence-based Policymaking:** We must create robust water data systems with real-time monitoring capabilities. **For ex-** Andhra Pradesh's online water dashboard for mapping of hydrological resources for better policymaking.
6. **Implementing the Mihir Shah Committee Report:** The Mihir Shah Committee recommendations must be implemented for restructuring the water governance in India:
 - **Establishing National Water Commission** by merging Central Water Commission(CWC) and Central Groundwater Board(CGWB). It would ensure that the surface and the groundwater are taken as a single entity.
 - **Focusing on management and maintenance of dams** rather than construction of dams.
 - Adopting a **participatory approach** to water management.
7. **Decentralized Local "Water Budgeting":** India cannot rely on a single, top-down policy because water availability varies drastically across regions. Following NITI Aayog's new data-driven frameworks, India must roll out localized **water budgeting** across all districts. Using digital platforms like **Varuni**, local village and town councils can calculate exactly how much water they have vs. how much they consume.
8. **Agricultural Resets:**
 - **Crop Diversification:** Governments must realign procurement policies (like the Minimum Support Price) to actively incentivize water-efficient crops like millets, pulses, and oilseeds in semi-arid zones, rather than flooding fields for paddy and sugarcane.
 - **Scale Up Precision Irrigation:** Transition aggressively from wasteful flood irrigation to solar-powered drip and sprinkler irrigation under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY).
 - **Direct Seeded Rice (DSR):** Promote water-saving farming methods like DSR, which bypasses the traditional, heavily flooded nursery stage for rice farming.
9. **Shifting to a Circular Water Economy:** Cities and industries must stop looking at wastewater as sewage and start treating it as an active resource. Enforce strict urban laws requiring residential

complexes, commercial buildings, and factories to treat and reuse 100% of greywater (from sinks, showers, and AC units) for flushing, cooling towers, and landscaping.

10. **Urban Hydrology & "Sponge Cities"**: To keep cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, and Mumbai from running completely dry, urban planning must prioritize natural water absorption:

- **Permeable Infrastructure**: Urban spaces must integrate porous concrete, green roofs, and retention parks that allow heavy monsoon rains to soak directly into the ground rather than causing flash floods.
- **Eviction of Wetland Encroachments**: Strict mapping and legal protection are needed to clear illegal real estate and IT infrastructure built directly over ancient floodplains and natural drainage networks.

11. **Community Participation**: Initiatives like the **Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari** are designed to promote community ownership and responsibility. Success stories, like reviving traditional water harvesting systems in Barmer (Rajasthan), show the power of integrating heritage knowledge with modern techniques.

Conclusion:

India's water crisis is a multifaceted challenge driven by overuse, pollution, mismanagement, and climate change. It threatens health, livelihoods, and the environment. While government schemes like Jal Jeevan Mission and Atal Bhujal Yojana are steps in the right direction, sustained efforts in conservation, efficient use, community participation, and robust governance are essential for a water-secure future.

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

UPSC Syllabus GS 1: Issues related to water resources (Geography), GS 3- Environment

G7 and India – Significance and Challenges – Explained Pointwise



The 52nd G7 Summit, hosted by France in Évian-les-Bains from June 15 to 17, 2026, brought together global leaders to address critical challenges including the Ukraine war, West Asia diplomacy, global economic imbalances, and artificial intelligence governance. India is not a member of the G7 but has become a regular and influential invitee to its outreach sessions. As of 2025, India has participated in thirteen G7 Summit Outreach sessions, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending for the seventh consecutive time this year. India is seen as a major emerging economy, a voice for the Global South, and a critical partner on issues like energy security, technology, climate change, and geopolitical stability. The host country invites India to ensure broader representation and to address global challenges that require cooperation beyond the G7's core membership.

What is G-7? What are the achievements of the Grouping?

- G-7 is a group of the **most developed and advanced economies** of the world.
- The members of the G7 group are **France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States**, and **Canada**.
- Additionally, the **European Union (EU)** participates in all discussions as a non-enumerated member, represented by the presidents of the European Council and European Commission.
- Unlike organizations like the UN or NATO, the G7 has no permanent headquarters or legal status. It is a forum for dialogue rather than a formal international organization with a permanent secretariat or legal status.

- The presidency rotates annually among the member nations. The country holding the presidency hosts the annual summit and sets the agenda for that year.
- The resolutions passed at the end of a summit are not legally binding. Instead, they act as political commitments showing a unified direction from the world's wealthiest democracies.

Origin:

- The G-7 originated from the **Oil crisis of 1973** and **the resulting financial crisis**, which forced the leaders of **6 major industrial nations (G6)** to convene a meeting in 1975.
- The participating countries were the **US, UK, France, West Germany, Japan, and Italy**. **Canada** joined in 1976, leading to the formation of the G-7.
- It was known as the '**G8**' for several years after the original seven were joined by **Russia** in 1997. However, it was renamed as **G-7 after Russia was expelled as a member in 2014** following its annexation of the Crimea region of Ukraine.

What is the significance of G7?

1. **Grouping of Advanced Economies:** G7 members collectively represent a significant portion of global GDP and trade, giving the group substantial influence over international markets and economic policymaking. As of 2026, they comprise over 44% of world nominal GDP and about 30% of world GDP by purchasing power parity (and about 60% of global net wealth).
2. **Forum for Discussing Pressing Global Challenges:** While initially focused on economics, the G7's agenda has significantly expanded over the years to encompass a wide range of global issues. Because they share basic values – **democracy, open-market capitalism, and human rights** – they can align on major global issues much faster than larger organizations. These include:
 - **International peace and security:** Addressing geopolitical tensions, conflicts (e.g. Russia-Ukraine war), and terrorism.
 - **Climate change and energy security:** Coordinating efforts on climate action, clean energy transition, and ensuring affordable and reliable energy access.
 - **Global health:** Discussing responses to pandemics, health crises, and strengthening global health systems.
 - **Technology and Artificial Intelligence:** Addressing the implications of emerging technologies, including their ethical use and governance.
 - **Trade policies and supply chains:** Promoting free and fair trade and addressing disruptions.
 - **Development and humanitarian aid:** Coordinating efforts to support developing countries and address humanitarian crises.
3. **Symbol of Multilateralism & Shared Values:** Geopolitically, the G7 is seen as the core of the Western-led liberal order. The G7 members are united by shared values of liberal democracy, pluralism, and free-market economies. The forum reinforces these principles and promotes a rules-based international order.
4. **Consensus-Building:** While it does not have a permanent secretariat or binding legal authority, the G7 operates by consensus. Its summits are important because they embody the principles of multilateral cooperation and consensus-building among major powers.
5. **Setting Norms & Agendas:** The G7 functions as a global norm-setter. It identifies global norms, elevates their importance, and often sets the agenda for broader discussions in other international bodies like the UN, IMF, World Bank, and WTO such as:

- **Climate Change:** The G7 was the first major forum to commit to phasing out fossil fuels and set concrete deadlines for decarbonization.
 - **Global Taxation:** In 2021, the G7 brokered a historic deal to create a **global minimum corporate tax rate of 15%**, aiming to stop big tech companies from shifting profits to tax havens. It effectively set the stage for over 130 countries to reform their tax laws to prevent multinational companies from dodging taxes in offshore havens.
 - **Technology and AI:** The G7 recently launched the “**Hiroshima AI Process**,” creating the first international framework for governing generative AI.
6. **Crisis Coordination Platform:** Unlike the UN Security Council, which can be paralyzed by vetoes, the G7 is more active. It can convene emergency summits within days to address sudden crises. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the G7 coordinated the rapid funding and global distribution of vaccines (COVAX) before the WHO could get broader international consensus.

What are the Challenges faced by the G-7?

1. **Shrinking Economic Footprint:** In the late 1980s, the G7 controlled nearly 70% of global GDP. Today, that share has shrunk to around 43-44%. The rise of the **BRICS bloc** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and newer members) has dramatically shifted commercial power away from the West.
2. **Exclusion of Major Powers:** The exclusion of the world’s second-largest economy, China, is viewed as an oddity that makes the grouping less representative and effective. Some experts have long argued the G7 should be expanded to include countries like China, India, and Brazil to remain relevant.
3. **Enforcement Gap:** While the G7 issues ambitious pledges and communiqués on various global challenges (climate change, development aid, pandemic preparedness), critics often point to inconsistencies in the implementation of these pledges and a lack of accountability for commitments. For instance, progress on phasing out fossil fuels or delivering on climate finance pledges has been seen as slow.
4. **Historical Polluters:** G-7 accounts for **59% of historical CO2** emissions and pledged phase out fossil fuels. There has been no visible progress of the same and they **currently account for twice the CO2 emission** than African continent.
5. **Deep Transatlantic Rifts:** The relationship between the US and its traditional European allies is strained, with disagreements over trade, tariffs, and the approach to global conflicts . The US’ inclination towards unilateral action and “America First” policies has eroded trust.
6. **Populism and Nationalism:** The rise of populist and nationalist movements **within G7 countries challenge multilateral cooperation** and the G-7 group’s commitment to globalism and liberal democratic values for e.g. 2025 G7 Summit in Canada highlight difficulties in reaching a joint statement on issues like the Russia-Ukraine war due to differing views, and the early departure of a key leader like the US President further hindered substantive discussions.
7. **Divergent National Interests:** While united by shared democratic values, G7 members often have differing national interests, particularly on trade, climate policy, and approaches to geopolitical challenges for e.g. relations with China or Russia.
8. **Rise of the G20 and Other Forums:** The G20, which includes major emerging economies, has largely superseded the G7 as the premier forum for global economic governance. This broader representation makes the G20 better suited to address today’s interconnected global economic challenges. The proliferation of various **multilateral** and “**minilateral**” forums means the G7 is no longer the sole or even primary platform for discussing all global issues.
9. **China Challenge:** Managing the rise of China is perhaps the G7’s most complex strategic challenge:
 - Member states have deep **economic interdependence** with China even as they view it as a strategic rival.

- Coordinating a unified policy on trade, technology, Taiwan, and human rights is extremely difficult.
- China actively promotes alternative institutions (BRICS, SCO, BRI) that contest G7-led global order.

10. Geopolitical Challenges:

- **Russia's War in Ukraine:** While the G7 has shown remarkable unity in its response to Russia's aggression, sustaining this unity amidst economic pressures, energy concerns, and differing views on long-term strategies remains a challenge.
- **West Asia Instability:** The G7 has faced immense criticism from global human rights organizations and developing nations for its handling of the conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon as well as escalating Iran crisis. Even when diplomatic progress is made (such as recent tentative U.S. negotiations over the conflict with Iran and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz), the G7 struggles to control the ground reality.

11. **Failure to Reach Consensus:** The group has repeatedly struggled to issue unified joint communiqués, a sign of fundamental discord. This failure was noted at the 2025 summit, and expectations for 2026 are similarly low.

What is the significance of India's association with G-7 Countries?

1. **India's Economic Significance:** According to the IMF, India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. India's economy is larger than 3 G-7 member countries – France, Italy, and Canada. India's abundant young and skilled workforce, coupled with its market potential, low manufacturing costs, and favourable business climate, makes it an attractive investment destination. This makes India's role vital in discussions on global economic stability and supply chain security.
2. **India's growing strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific:** India has emerged as a major strategic partner for the Western G-7 countries. This has helped in containing China's expanding influence, particularly in the Indian Ocean.
3. **Addressing Global Crises:** Whether it's the Russia-Ukraine conflict, West Asia tensions, or international terrorism, India's nuanced diplomatic approach and its influence among various global actors make it a valuable interlocutor and potential facilitator for conflict resolution and stability.
4. **De-risking Global Supply Chains (The "China+1" Strategy):** A massive priority for the G7 is reducing its heavy economic reliance on China, particularly for semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and critical minerals. The G7 views India as the only democratic nation with the scale, workforce, and tech ecosystem capable of acting as an alternative global manufacturing hub.
5. **Advanced Tech and AI Collaboration:** Global policy is rapidly trying to keep up with Artificial Intelligence, deep tech, and cyber security. India's massive software engineering talent pool and digital infrastructure (like its UPI digital payments system) mean the G7 cannot set global tech standards or AI safety rules without India's alignment.
6. **Representation for Developing Nations (Voice of Global South):** The G7 has been criticized for being an exclusive "rich countries' club." India's consistent presence helps to bridge this gap, bringing the perspectives, challenges, and priorities of the Global South to the table. This is particularly vital for issues like climate finance, development aid, food security, and technology transfer.

What are the major challenges in expanding India's engagement with the G7 bloc?

1. **Non-inclusion of India as a permanent member:** G-7 has an obsolete membership structure which does not include the emerging economies like India. India is always an "invitee" or "outreach partner," not a formal member. This means India doesn't have a permanent seat at the core decision-making

table, nor does it participate in all G7 ministerial meetings or preparatory discussions throughout the year. Its influence is limited to the specific outreach sessions it's invited to.

2. **Navigating Competing Forums:** India is a key player in the G7, the BRICS bloc, the Quad, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This flexibility, while a source of leverage, makes it unlikely to consistently endorse Western priorities. India's participation in BRICS and its deep engagement with Russia are seen as points of friction with the G7's goals.
3. **Climate Change Responsibilities:** While India is committed to climate action, it often pushes for common but differentiated responsibilities, emphasizing the historical emissions of developed nations and their obligation to provide finance and technology. G7 nations, while committed to climate goals, may face domestic political pressures regarding these commitments.
4. **Energy Transition vs. Energy Security:** India's immediate energy needs are massive, and while it's rapidly expanding renewables, it still relies heavily on fossil fuels. G7 nations often push for faster transitions, while India emphasizes the need for a just transition that balances energy security and affordability for its large population.
5. **Relations with Russia:** India maintains a neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine war, advocating for dialogue and diplomacy, and continuing its economic ties with Russia. This position often differs from the unified condemnation and sanctions approach of the G7. While the G7 might appreciate India's role as a bridge, it also puts India in a position where it may face pressure to align more closely with the G7's stance.
6. **West Asia Crisis:** While the G7 leans heavily into specific Western frameworks when responding to security shocks in the West Asia, India has to delicately balance its massive diaspora and trade relations across both Israel and the Arab world.
7. **Market Sticking Points:** Long-standing disagreements over India's high tariffs on American agricultural and industrial goods, alongside Western demands for greater access to Indian digital markets and stricter intellectual property protections, have repeatedly slowed down major trade deals.
8. **Data and Tech Sovereignty:** The G7 is pushing to establish strict global standardizations for Artificial Intelligence and cross-border data flows. India frequently resists these if they infringe on its data sovereignty or hinder its domestic tech growth.
9. **Bilateral Issues with G7 Members:** Last year's G7 summits has highlighted specific bilateral tensions. For example, the **India-Canada relationship** has been strained due to issues like the Hardeep Singh Nijjar killing and concerns about pro-Khalistan elements in Canada. While the G7 summit offers a platform for dialogue, these bilateral issues can overshadow broader cooperation.
10. **Double standards of developed countries on terrorism:** Indian PM highlighted the double standards of developed countries on terrorism as, on one hand, they are quick to impose sanctions on certain countries based on their preferences, while on the other hand, they openly reward countries like Pakistan which promote cross-border terrorism.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. **Deepening Economic Ties:** Encouraging investment in sectors like **renewable energy, technology, infrastructure** and **enhancing trade liberalization efforts** can bolster economic relations between India and G-7 group.
2. **Strategic Collaborations:** Strengthening defense cooperation through **joint exercises, intelligence sharing,** and **technology transfers** can address common security challenges.
3. **Multilateral Engagement:** India's active participation in G7 forums can contribute to shaping inclusive global governance frameworks. **Joint efforts in climate action, focusing on sustainable development and green technologies,** can set benchmarks for global environmental policies.

4. **Technological Innovation:** Collaborative efforts in **digital infrastructure development**, **cybersecurity**, and **artificial intelligence** can drive the next wave of technological advancements. Joint research initiatives in fields like **biotechnology**, **space exploration**, and **renewable energy** can foster innovation.
5. **Push for Equitable Frameworks:** India has already signaled it will push back on frameworks that disadvantage developing nations. For instance, it is critical of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which acts as a trade barrier, and will advocate for climate finance to be delivered as grants, not loans.
6. **Balance Multiple Engagements:** India's participation in both the G7 and the BRICS bloc is not a conflict but a feature. Its ability to engage with multiple power centers allows it to influence debates in the G7 before they harden into practices that affect the wider world.
7. **G7 Expansion (Long-Term):** While unlikely in the short term, India should continue to subtly advocate for a more representative G7 (or a G7+ model) that formally includes major emerging economies.

Some Key Outcomes of G-7 Group Summit (2026):

1. **Endorsing the Iran-US Deal:** The most prominent outcome of the summit was the G7's **collective endorsement of the preliminary U.S.-Iran agreement** to end their conflict. The G7 leaders' declaration confirmed their refusal to accept a nuclear-armed Iran and their support for the deal's implementation. They backed a French and British-led maritime initiative to secure shipping and remove mines from the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Leaders emphasized the right of free and toll-free passage through the strait and committed to diversifying global energy supply routes to reduce dependence on this critical chokepoint.
2. **Support to Ukraine:** Despite internal friction, the G7 reaffirmed its **"unwavering support for Ukraine"**. Leaders agreed to increase military support, including the delivery of additional air defense interceptors and long-range capabilities.
3. **Global AI Frameworks:** Leaders agreed on establishing technical and ethical frameworks to facilitate the safe and rapid implementation of Artificial Intelligence, prioritizing secure and accessible digital tools globally.
4. **Economic Stability:** Member states established joint commitments to reduce macroeconomic imbalances, curb predatory competition, and address industrial overcapacity to strengthen and secure vulnerable international supply chains.
5. **Environmental & Biodiversity Action:** The summit featured the five-year progress review of the G7 2030 Nature Compact, the expansion of the Nature and People Finance Alliance, and the formal classification of land degradation, drought, and desertification as systemic security threats.
6. **Development Finance Overhaul:** The G7 adopted strategies to catalyze private capital mobilization, ease debt vulnerabilities, and make development finance more catalytic and responsive to partner countries' priorities.
7. **Strengthened Global Partnerships:** The summit placed an emphasis on reinvigorating international solidarity and dialogue among major powers to address the ongoing geopolitical crises and conflicts.
8. **Global Health – Ebola & Cancer:** Leaders adopted a coordinated call for response to the Bundibugyo Ebola outbreak, as well as a declaration on the fight against cancer, reflecting a broader commitment to global health sovereignty and pandemic preparedness.

Conclusion:

India's evolving relationship with the G7 signifies its growing importance in global economic and strategic

affairs. The synergies between India and G7 nations, driven by shared values and mutual interests, present vast opportunities for collaborative growth. As India continues to rise on the global stage, its partnership with the G7 will play a pivotal role in shaping a balanced and inclusive world order.

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UPSC Syllabus- GS Paper 2- Important International Organisations

Unpaid Domestic Work – Explained Pointwise



Unpaid domestic work, such as childcare, eldercare, cooking, and household management, forms the invisible foundation of economies and societies, yet remains largely excluded from conventional economic measurements. The recent judgement of the Supreme Court of India has renewed attention to recognizing the economic and social value of such work. Understanding the concept and developing methods to estimate its monetary contribution are essential for ensuring gender justice, informed policymaking, and a more accurate assessment of national economic output.

What is Unpaid Domestic Work?

- **Unpaid domestic work** refer to essential household and caregiving tasks performed by family members without monetary compensation. Often referred to as housework or unpaid care work, this labor is vital for a household's daily functioning and well-being, though it is usually excluded from official economic measurements like the GDP.
- Globally, there is a massive imbalance in how this work is split. According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO):
 - Women perform roughly **76.2%** of all unpaid care work globally.

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- On average, women spend **4 hours and 25 minutes** per day on unpaid domestic work, compared to **1 hour and 23 minutes** for men.

What are the impacts of Unpaid Domestic Work on individuals and society?

<p>Impact on Individuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lost Wages: Every hour spent on unpaid domestic work is an hour not spent in paid employment. Over a lifetime, this translates to millions of dollars in foregone income. ● Pension Gap: Because they earn less or take career breaks, primary caregivers contribute less to social security or retirement funds. In old age, they are significantly more likely to live in poverty than their male counterparts. ● Physical Toll: Unpaid domestic work is physically demanding. Constant bending, lifting (children, laundry, groceries), and standing for hours leads to higher rates of back pain, joint issues, and repetitive stress injuries. ● “Burnout” and Mental Load: The mental load due to domestic work creates chronic cognitive overload. This is linked to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and sleep deprivation. Unlike paid work, domestic work has no breaks, no weekends, and no vacations, leading to a state of perpetual exhaustion. ● Reduced Personal Agency and Identity: Individuals often lose the time and energy needed for self-care, hobbies, education, or civic engagement. Their identity becomes tethered to their “role” (mother, wife, caretaker), rather than their personal aspirations. This can lead to a profound loss of autonomy and self-worth.
<p>Impact on Society</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perpetuation of the Gender Pay Gap: Because women perform the vast majority of unpaid domestic work, they are more likely to seek flexible, part-time, or lower-paying jobs closer to home. This occupational segregation is one of the primary drivers of the structural gender wage gap. ● Demographic Shifts and Declining Birth Rates: In many developed nations, the realization that having children results in an overwhelming, unequal burden of unpaid labor has led many couples to delay or completely forego having children. This accelerates population aging and creates future labor shortages. ● Intergenerational Cycles: Children who grow up in households with a highly traditional, unequal split of domestic labor often internalize these roles, passing the same expectations and limitations onto the next generation.
<p>Impact on Economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suppressed Economic Growth (GDP): When highly skilled individuals (disproportionately women) are forced out of the formal labor market to care for children or elderly relatives, society loses out on their productivity, innovation, and tax contributions. Economists view this as a massive underutilization of human capital.

- **Gender Wealth Gap:** Because women do more unpaid work, they accumulate less wealth. This directly contributes to the **global gender wealth gap** (women own roughly only 32% of global wealth).

Why is it important to estimate the value of Unpaid Domestic Work?

Estimating the economic value of unpaid domestic work matters because, in the world of policy and economics, **what doesn't get measured doesn't get managed**. Hence, assigning a monetary value to this work is crucial because of the following reasons:

1. **Exposing Time Poverty:** Women perform roughly 75% to 76% of all unpaid care work globally. Quantifying this burden exposes how "time poverty" directly restricts women's capacity to pursue paid careers or education.
2. **Dismantling Patriarchal Biases:** Assigning monetary value challenges deep-rooted cultural beliefs that label domestic labor as purely feminine or economically valueless.
3. **Enhancing Household Bargaining Power:** Identifying the exact financial value of a homemaker's work increases their recognition, self-confidence, and decision-making leverage within the family structure.
4. **Tracking Total Labor Productivity:** Measuring household tasks alongside paid work highlights how societies balance their time and resources to sustain a productive workforce.
5. **Smarter Resource Allocation:** Knowing the value of unpaid work changes how governments prioritize infrastructure investments. For example, building accessible water systems or modern energy grids directly liberates millions of hours previously spent on manual domestic chores.
6. **Equitable Divorce Settlements:** Measuring domestic contributions ensures that matrimonial property and assets are split fairly during asset division, recognizing that a career-focused spouse cannot succeed without the domestic support of the other.
7. **Accurate Insurance and Wrongful Death Claims:** If a primary caregiver is injured or dies in an accident, insurance companies and courts use these economic estimations to calculate the actual financial cost of replacing those services (cooking, childcare, household management) for the surviving family.

What are the key challenges in estimating the value of Unpaid Domestic Work?

1. **Conceptual and Definitional Hurdles:** One of the most fundamental challenges is simply defining what counts as "work." While cooking or cleaning are relatively straightforward, other tasks blur the lines between work, leisure, and personal care.
2. **Cost and Burden of Time-Use Surveys:** The methods used to collect data on time use are themselves a major obstacle to creating reliable estimates. The most reliable way to collect this data is through specialized Time-Use Surveys (TUS), where respondents meticulously record their activities in a diary. However, these surveys are expensive to conduct, complex to administer, and place a significant burden on respondents.
3. **Challenge of Valuation:** Assuming time-use data is available, the most debated challenge is how to put a price on that time. There is no single, accepted method, and each has its own flaws:
 - a. **The Opportunity Cost Approach:** This method estimates the value of unpaid domestic work based on the market wage a homemaker forgoes by choosing household responsibilities over paid employment. However, it can lead to distortions, as the same domestic task – such as

cooking a meal – would be valued much higher if performed by a lawyer than by a high-school graduate, despite producing an identical outcome.

- b. **The Replacement Cost Approach:** This method estimates the value of unpaid domestic work by calculating the cost of hiring paid workers to perform the same tasks. However, there is no consensus on whether to use the wage of a general domestic worker or that of specialized professionals such as cooks, childcare providers, or nurses. The choice of wage rate can significantly influence the estimated value of unpaid work and, consequently, its contribution to the economy.
4. **Infrastructure Deficits:** In developing nations or rural regions, a vast amount of time is spent on fundamental survival tasks like fetching water or gathering firewood. Standard economic toolkits designed for developed nations fail to cleanly categorize these combined agricultural and domestic survivals.
5. **Simultaneous Activities (Multitasking):** A person frequently cooks dinner while supervising a child's homework and waiting for the washing machine to finish. Surveys that ask for a person's "main activity" fail to capture the full scope of this simultaneous labor, making it hard to assign time and value to each individual task.

What are the key Supreme Court judgments on the value of Unpaid Domestic Work?

<p>Lata Wadhwa v. State of Bihar (2001)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was one of the earliest instances where the Supreme Court explicitly assigned a monetary value to a homemaker's labor. • The Court fixed a notional income of ₹3,000 per month for homemakers aged 34 to 59.
<p>Kirti v. Oriental Insurance Co. Ltd. (2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This landmark judgment challenged the patriarchal mindset of calculating a homemaker's worth based merely on minimum wage for unskilled labor. • The Court recognized that just as a salaried employee's income rises with experience and inflation, the value of a homemaker's work also increases over time. • It mandated an addition of up to 40% to the notional income for homemakers under the age of 40 to account for inflation and growing domestic responsibilities.
<p>Shishu Pal @ Shishu Ram & Ors v. Surjeet (2026)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Court described homemakers as "Nation Builders" whose unpaid caregiving contributes an estimated 15% to 17% of India's GDP. • To ensure dignity and fairness, it created a brand-new compensatory head titled "Loss of Domestic Care". • The Court fixed a baseline minimum notional income of ₹30,000 per month for homemakers to calculate accident death compensation. • The ruling also mandated that this base amount be increased by 10% every three years to account for changing economic realities.

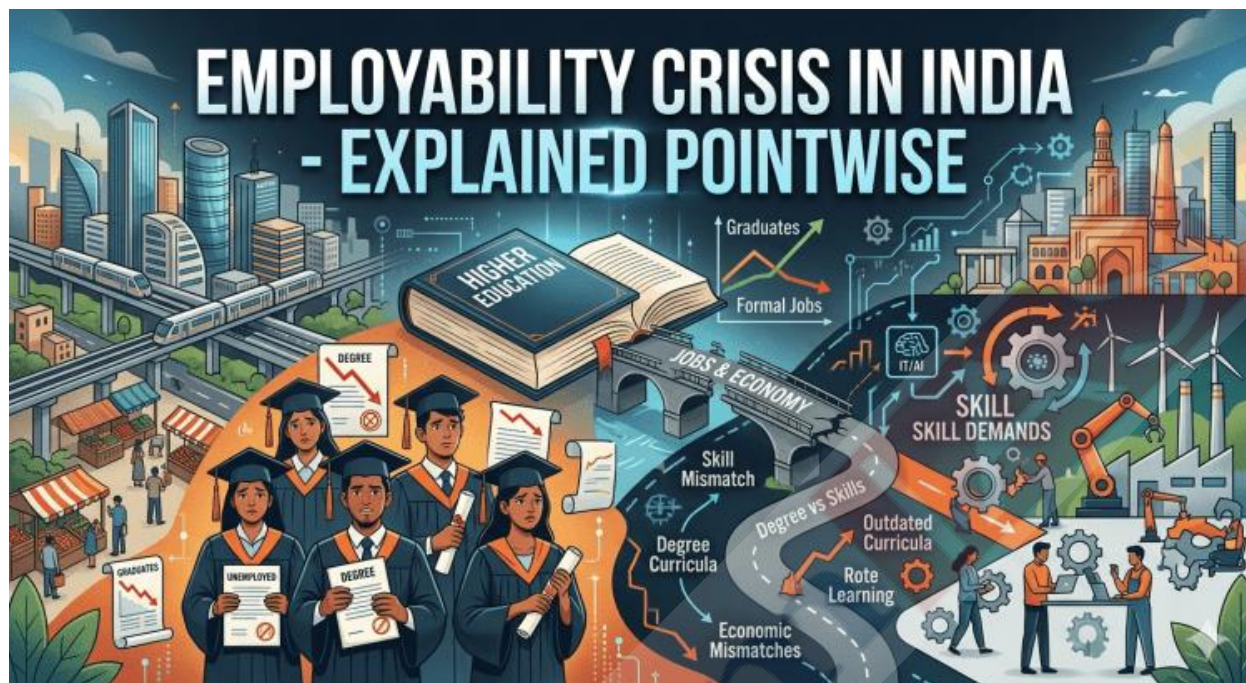
What should be the Way Forward?

1. **“4Rs” Framework: Recognize, Reduce, Redistribute, and Reward:** To address the issue of unpaid domestic work sustainably, organizations like the United Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) point to a foundational roadmap known as the **“4Rs” Framework:**
 - **Recognize (Make the Invisible Visible):** Measuring domestic labor via time-use surveys and factoring its value into legal contexts.
 - **Reduce (Lower the Burden of Physical Work):** Investing in public physical infrastructure, such as clean piped water, local childcare facilities, and household automation tech.
 - **Redistribute (Shift the Burden Equitably):** Changing social norms to shift responsibilities equally between partners and implementing mandatory paid paternity leaves.
 - **Reward:** Ensuring decent, formal wage conditions and standard social security protections for professional care and domestic workers.
2. **Investing in Care Infrastructure:** Valuing domestic work is not just about money; it’s about providing alternatives. The most direct way to reduce the burden of unpaid care is to build systems that take on part of that work. This include:
 - **Expand Affordable, Quality Childcare:** A primary barrier to women’s workforce participation is childcare. The UNDP is piloting innovative models in India, such as community-based and workplace crèches in MSME clusters, and promoting **“carepreneurship”**. These models need to be scaled.
 - **Invest in Elderly and Differently-Abled Care:** With an ageing population and more nuclear families, the demand for formal elder care is set to rise. Developing this infrastructure now is essential for future sustainability.
 - **Improve Basic Enabling Infrastructure:** Access to clean water, reliable electricity, and cooking fuel can save women hours of manual labor every day, directly freeing up their time.
3. **Activate Labour Codes:** The new Labour Codes contain provisions for mandatory crèches, work-from-home options, and social security for informal workers. The central and state governments must finalize the rules to implement these effectively. Without this, the potential benefits remain theoretical.
4. **Formalize the Care Workforce:** India’s potential demand for care workers could exceed 30 million by 2050. This is a huge employment opportunity if the sector is professionalized. This requires a **national skilling and certification system** for care workers, creating pathways to better wages and formal employment.
5. **Promote Equal Sharing at Home:** This is the most fundamental change. Redistributing unpaid work within the household can transform women’s “second shift” into a shared responsibility, breaking the cycle that limits their potential.

UPSC GS-1: Society, Social Justice

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Employability Crisis in India – Explained Pointwise



Despite an unprecedented expansion of higher education, India faces a severe employability crisis, with nearly one in three graduates remaining unemployed. This stark mismatch between academic credentials and industry readiness highlights an urgent need to reform curricula, integrate vocational training, and align education with evolving market demands.

What is the employability crisis in India?

- India's employability crisis is a central **paradox** of its economy: despite being one of the world's fastest-growing nations with a young population, millions of graduates lack the skills needed to find jobs. This crisis is not about a shortage of jobs or degrees, but a profound mismatch between the skills graduates possess and what the industry demands.
- According to the **India Skills Report 2026**, India's graduate employability stands at **56.35%**. This means nearly half of all graduates enter the market without the readiness to perform an entry-level job.

What are the major factors contributing to the employability crisis in India?

1. **Rote Learning Over Applied Application:** The Indian higher education framework historically measures success via written exams that prioritize memory and theoretical recall over hands-on application. For example, simulations testing real-world engineering problem-solving often find that a massive chunk of technical graduates cannot perform practical tasks in their own specialization.
2. **Social Prestige vs. Aptitude:** In India, the choice of academic streams at the secondary level is often shaped more by societal expectations and parental influence than by a student's aptitude or interests. High-performing students are frequently steered towards science and engineering streams irrespective of their aspirations or strengths. As a result, many graduates enter the workforce with

qualifications in fields that do not align with their abilities, leading to reduced motivation, lower productivity, and diminished employability.

3. **Severely Outdated Curricula:** Except for premier institutes (like the IITs or IIMs), the vast majority of India's colleges use course designs engineered decades ago, leaving core technological competencies like Artificial Intelligence, data analytics, cloud computing, and advanced digital marketing out of standard classrooms.
4. **Exponential Technological Shifts:** The explosion of generative AI, automation, and advanced data analytics has shifted the hiring landscape overnight. While tech heavy-weights like Computer Science (80% employability) and IT (78%) hold strong because they adapt quickly to digital-first shifts, generalist degrees – including traditional MBAs – have seen their employability slide.
5. **Weak Industry-Academia Linkages:** There is minimal continuous collaboration between corporate employers and the academic institutions. Fewer than **8%** of institutions regularly involve industry experts in their programs, leaving students disconnected from real-world expectations.
6. **The Soft Skills Deficit:** Students are rarely trained in analytical problem-solving, structured reasoning, or data interpretation. Only about **50%** of graduates are considered employable for communication-based roles, while creative thinking skills are even lower. Traits like teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability are often missing from the curriculum.

What are the socio-economic consequences of low employability among India's youth?

1. **Jobless Growth:** India's high GDP growth is not creating enough quality jobs. Even graduates with credentials face unemployment; data shows only **under 7%** secure permanent salaried jobs within a year of graduating, and less than **4%** land white-collar positions. The unemployment rate for graduates is roughly **29.1%**, nine times higher than for illiterate individuals.
2. **Wasting the Demographic Dividend:** India has a limited window (until about 2030) to capitalize on its young population. If this generation is not productively employed, the country will miss its chance to become a global economic powerhouse and may instead face the burden of a large, unproductive population.
3. **The "Missing Middle" in the Labor Market:** The formal economy is not generating enough mid-skill, white-collar roles. Many young people are forced into a "**gig trap**" – a rapidly expanding gig workforce projected to reach 23.5 million by 2030. This work often provides little to no social security or career progression, trapping workers in a "low-skill trap". This also contributes to **underemployment**, where highly educated individuals are forced into low-productivity jobs in agriculture or informal sectors just to survive.
4. **Erosion of the "Return on Investment" in Education:** As a degree increasingly fails to guarantee a stable job, families, especially poorer ones, are questioning the value of higher education. The proportion of young men in school is declining as they are forced to take informal jobs to meet immediate household needs, creating a cycle of low skill and low pay.
5. **Deepening Inequality:** The crisis is not uniform. Women face a "qualitative divide" - a small, educated elite finds opportunities, while a far larger number are pushed into self-employment, unpaid family work, or agricultural labor. For example, **64% of working women are in agriculture**, many with degrees that were meant to lift them out of such work.
6. **Corporate Training Tax:** Companies have to waste massive capital running internal finishing schools. They must spend months teaching basic writing, coding, and office etiquette to new hires.
7. **Brain Drain Acceleration:** Top-tier talent with the means to relocate exit the country rapidly. This leaves the domestic market starved of high-caliber innovators and entrepreneurs.

What measures has the government undertaken to improve employability in India?

1. **Structural Education Reforms:**
 - a. **Mandatory Internships:** Under the **National Education Policy (NEP 2020)**, the University Grants Commission (UGC) enforces mandatory internship credits (2 to 4 credits) for all undergraduate students after their fourth semester to bridge classroom theory with corporate reality..
 - b. **National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF):** This framework standardizes the learning outcomes across higher education, prioritizing practical skill application, critical thinking, and technical readiness over traditional rote learning.
2. **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS):** The government provides financial incentives to private organizations to absorb technical graduates and ITI trainees, expanding formal on-the-job training tracks across various domains. It has successfully engaged over **51 lakh apprentices** in recent years.
3. **Introducing Future-Focused Curricula:** The government has introduced courses in modern technologies. For instance, new-age job roles under PMKVY and the Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) now include fields like **AI/ML, Cybersecurity, Drone Technology, and 5G Network Technician**.
4. **Strengthening Industry Linkages:** 36 Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), led by industry experts, have been established to identify skill needs and set competency standards. The government has also signed MoUs with major tech companies like IBM, Cisco, and Microsoft to ensure training is aligned with current industry practices.
5. **National Scheme for Upgradation of ITIs:** Under this initiative, the government is transforming 1,000 public ITIs into modern digital hubs (establishing 200 hub centers and 800 spoke networks). These upgraded schools feature smart classrooms, specialized simulation labs, and updated short-term certification modules tailored explicitly to **Future Skills** like Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), 3D printing, and green energy maintenance.
6. **Early Exposure (AVGC Labs):** To cultivate creative and tech-focused careers early on, the latest structural rollouts include establishing **AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics) Content Creator Labs** across 15,000 secondary schools and 500 regional colleges.
7. **FutureSkills PRIME:** Orchestrated by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), this specialized initiative focuses on upskilling and re-skilling the country's workforce in 10 crucial emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity, blockchain, and cloud computing.
8. **AI-Powered Learning:** The collaboration between the Ministry of Skill Development, Google, and Chaudhary Charan Singh University to create India's first AI-enabled university is a major pilot. It aims to use AI for personalized learning, skill-gap analysis, and to break down barriers of language and geography.

What should be the way forward?

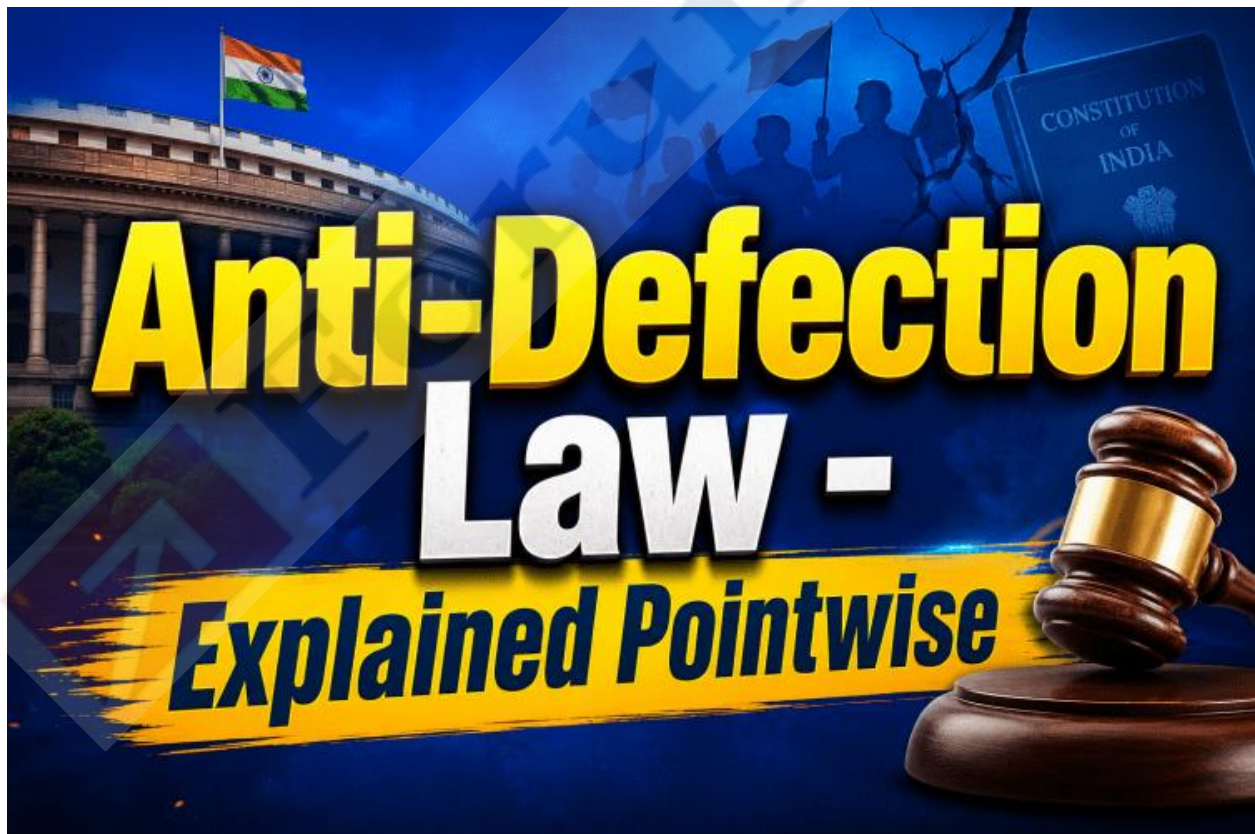
1. **Employer-Designed Curricula:** Having businesses help design course content, equipment standards, and apprenticeship programs to ensure training matches real-world needs. The new **PM-SETU** program is an example of this model, aiming to forge genuine partnerships between ITIs and industry.
2. **Strengthening Sector Skill Councils (SSCs):** These councils, led by industry leaders, need to be reorganized and given clear performance goals to ensure they effectively set skill standards.
3. **Elevating ITIs:** A key recommendation from the **Economic Survey 2026** is to upgrade ITI diplomas to bachelor-level degrees. This would make vocational pathways more attractive and valuable, and allow for lateral entry into higher education, which was previously closed to vocational graduates.

4. **A Unified Apprenticeship Mission:** Apprenticeships are a proven path from school to work. The government is being urged to bring all existing apprenticeship schemes under one unified framework to simplify the system and expand opportunities into new-age and gig economy sectors like green manufacturing and digital services.
5. **Sector-Specific Demand Creation:** Employability improvements mean little without job creation; complementary push needed in labour-intensive manufacturing (apparel, leather, electronics assembly), construction, and care economy sectors, alongside PLI (Production Linked Incentive) schemes calibrated for employment intensity, not just output.
6. **Formalize the Informal Sector:** Extend social security, skill certification (via RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning), and productivity incentives to informal workers, improving both employability signaling and job quality.

Conclusion: Thus, to significantly improve youth employability, India needs a multi-pronged approach that redefines skill development and integrates it tightly with industry needs.

UPSC GS-3: Indian Economy
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Anti-Defection Law – Explained Pointwise



India's Anti-Defection Law, enshrined in the Tenth Schedule, aims to deter political opportunism and ensure government stability. However, its effectiveness faces constant scrutiny during leadership crises. Recent intra-party splits in Maharashtra-based factions and large-scale desertions within West Bengal's Trinamool Congress highlight how rebels frequently exploit structural loopholes to bypass disqualification. In this context, it becomes important to understand the Anti-Defection Law in a comprehensive manner.

What is Anti-Defection Law?

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

Evolution of the Anti-Defection Law:

Pre-1985	<p><u>The Era of “Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram”:</u></p> <p>In the 1960s and 70s, Indian politics was plagued by frequent floor-crossing. The most famous instance occurred in 1967, when Haryana MLA Gaya Lal changed parties three times in a single day. This instability led to the fall of multiple state governments and created a culture of opportunism where legislators would jump ship for cabinet positions or other incentives.</p>
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1985	<p><u>52nd Amendment Act:</u></p> <p>The Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, also known as the Anti-Defection Law, was inserted by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985, to curb the growing menace of political defections & to provide a legal framework for disqualifying defectors.</p>
1992	<p><u>Kihoto Hollohan Case:</u></p> <p>This landmark judgment upheld the constitutional validity of the Tenth Schedule. Crucially, it declared that while the Speaker has the power to decide disqualification cases, their decision is not immune from judicial review. Courts can intervene in cases of <i>mala fide</i> intent or jurisdictional error.</p>
2003	<p><u>The 91st Amendment (2003):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Removed the “Split” provision: Previously, a “split” by one-third of a party’s members was protected. This was removed to prevent mass defections. ● Ministerial Limit: It capped the total number of ministers (including the PM/CM) at 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha or State Assembly. ● Holding Office: A member disqualified under the 10th Schedule cannot hold any remunerative political post or ministerial position until they are re-elected.
2020-2025	<p>Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. Speaker, Manipur (2020) and the recent Padi Kaushik Reddy v. Telangana (2025) case, the Supreme Court directed Speakers to decide disqualification petitions within a “reasonable period,” explicitly stating a three-month timeline.</p>

What was need for introducing the Anti-Defection Law?

1. **Ensuring Political Stability:** Between the general elections of 1967 and 1971, nearly **50% of the 4,000 odd legislators** in Central and State assemblies defected. State governments were collapsing like houses of cards. When a government is constantly worried about losing its majority to a rival party’s “offer,” it focuses on survival rather than policy-making. By making it difficult for individuals to defect without losing their seats, the law ensures that the government can focus on long-term administration rather than constant survival tactics.
2. **To Curb the Influence of Money and Power:** Defections were rarely driven by ideology; they were driven by **“Horse Trading”** (Political Corruption). Legislators would defect in exchange for a Cabinet berth in the new government. Large sums of money being paid to “buy” the loyalty of independent and small-party candidates to tip the scales during a floor test.
3. **To Prevent the Breach of Electorate’s Trust:** When a citizen votes for a candidate, they are often voting for the **party’s manifesto and ideology**. Defection of a candidate effectively nullifies the mandate of the voters. The law was intended to ensure that a representative remains accountable to the platform they were elected on.

4. **Party Discipline and Cohesion:** The law gives legal teeth to the **Political Party** as an institution. Through the system of “Whips,” parties can ensure that their members vote as a unified block on crucial Bills. This prevents internal sabotage and ensures that the legislative agenda of the party in power can actually be implemented.
5. **Constitutional Legitimacy to Political Parties:** Until the Tenth Schedule was added, political parties had no formal mention in the Indian Constitution. The Anti-Defection Law provided **constitutional recognition** to political parties, acknowledging them as the fundamental units of Indian democracy.
6. **Saving of Taxpayer’s Money:** Frequent defections and floor-crossings often led to mid-term elections. By preventing governments from collapsing every few months, the law helped save the enormous expenditure of conducting frequent elections and the cost of President’s Rule (which often followed unstable assemblies).

What have been the concerns/issues raised against the Anti-Defection Law?

1. **Suppression of Legislative Dissent:**
 - Since every member *must* vote according to the party whip (under threat of disqualification), the outcome of most debates is a foregone conclusion. This reduces the significance of individual arguments and logical persuasion on the floor of the House.
 - It also creates a conflict of interest. A legislator may feel that a specific Bill (e.g. a controversial land acquisition law) is bad for their specific constituency, but they are legally forced to vote for it if their party commands it.
2. **Partisanship of the Speaker:**
 - **Lack of Neutrality:** Speakers usually belong to the ruling party and do not resign from their party upon taking office. This often leads to biased decisions where disqualification petitions against opposition members are fast-tracked, while those against members supporting the ruling party are delayed.
 - **Indefinite Delays:** The law originally set no timeline for the Speaker to decide. This has allowed Speakers to “sit on” petitions for years, effectively allowing defecting members to complete their terms without consequences.
3. **Wholesale Defection:** The law only punishes “retail” (individual) defection but incentivizes “wholesale” (mass) defection. Under the 91st Amendment, if **two-thirds** of a party’s legislators defect together, it is labeled a “merger” and they face no penalty. Thus, despite the law, defections continue due to inducements and intimidation, with legislators often kept in “*resorts*” during political crises.
4. **Resignation over Defection:** Instead of voting against the whip, legislators simply **resign** from the House. This brings down the government’s majority. Once the government falls, these members often contest by-elections on the ticket of the opposing party and return to the House as ministers. This bypasses the spirit of the law while following its letter.
5. **Lack of Intra-Party Democracy:** The law gives supreme power to the party leadership via the “Whip,” it discourages internal democracy. Rank-and-file members are afraid to criticize the leadership or policy decisions within the party because an expulsion could end their career.

What are the reforms that should be introduced into the Anti-Defection Law?

1. **Neutral Decision-Making Authority:** The law gives power to disqualify a member to the Speaker of the Legislature. This should be replaced with:
 - a. **Election Commission:** Both the **Election Commission of India** and the **2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)** suggest that the President (for MP’s) or Governor (for MLA’s) should decide defection cases based on the **binding advice of the Election Commission**.

Women Representation in Judiciary - Significance & Challenges - Explained Pointwise



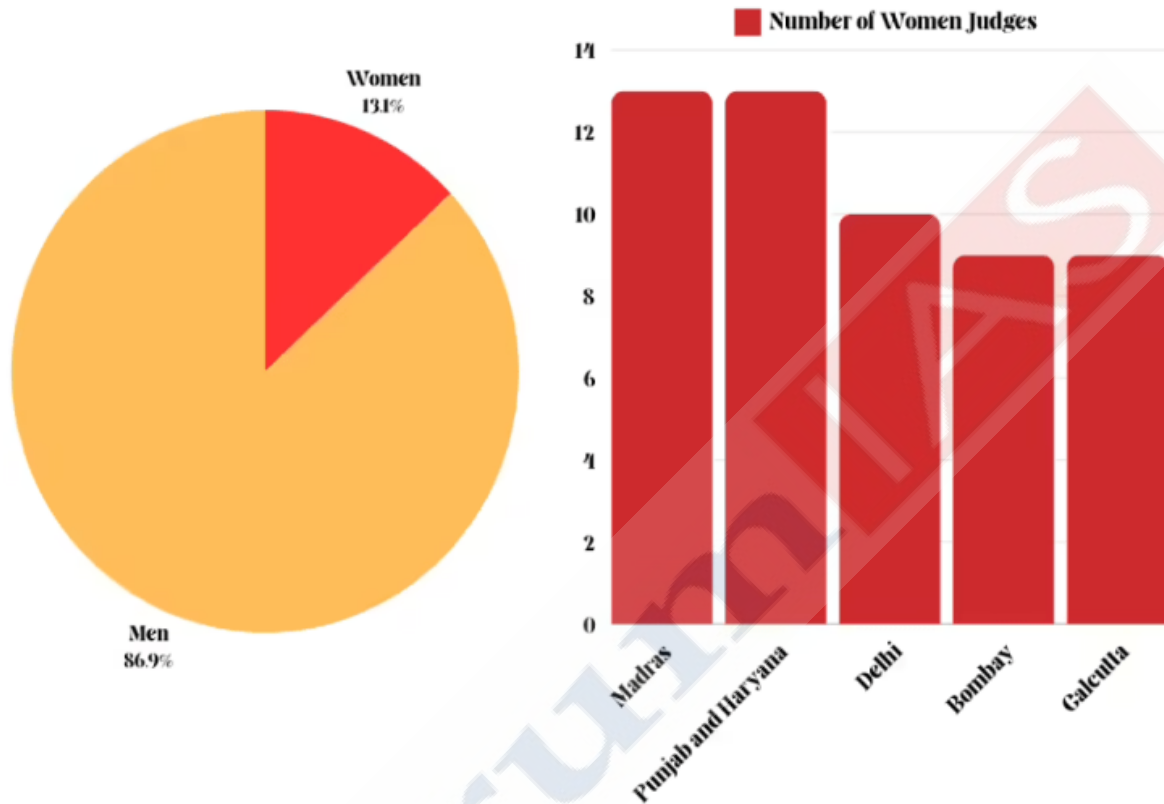
The recent appointment of Justice V. Mohana as a Supreme Court judge has renewed attention on the issue of women's representation in India's higher judiciary. As only the 12th woman judge in the Supreme Court's 76-year history, her elevation marks progress toward gender diversity, yet women remain significantly underrepresented in judicial leadership positions. The "glass ceiling" remains strong for women judges, especially in promotions to higher courts. Minority and marginalized women face even greater barriers to advancement.

What is the Status of Representation of Women in Judiciary?

- **Supreme Court:**
 - As of June 2026, only 2 woman judges (Justice B.V. Nagarathna & Justice V. Mohana) serves out of 37 judges, yielding a representation of just **5.4%**.
 - In its entire history since 1950, only 12 women judges have ever been appointed to the Supreme Court (Of them, 6 have been appointed since 2014 and 5 since 2018) — just **3.8%** out of 287 total appointments.
 - No woman has held the Office of **Chief Justice of India**.
- **High Courts:**

- Collectively for all High Courts, Women Judges constitute only 13.1% of the Judges.

Women in High Court (2023)

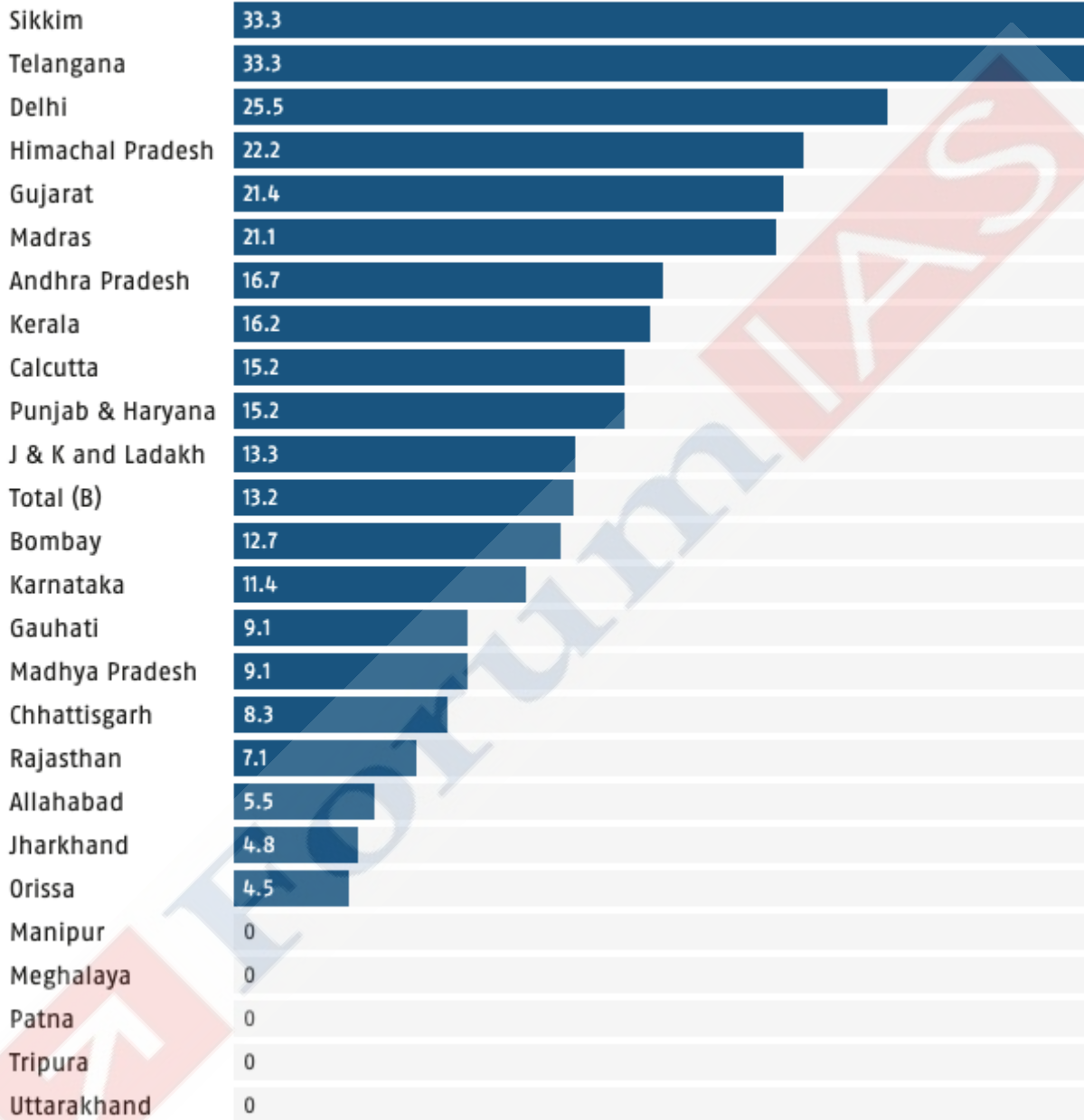


- However, there are considerable variations among High Courts (HCs). 5 HCs have not a single woman Judge. Another 7 HCs have < 10% women judges. Sikkim and Telangana HCs have the highest

representation at 33.3%.

Five HCs did not have a single woman judge

(women, % of total working strength of judges in High Courts)



- **District & Subordinate Judiciary:**

- Women Judges constitute ~35% of the Judges in the lower courts. Here the proportion varies from 19.5% in Gujarat to 70% in Goa.
- As of 2025, 7,852 women judges serve in district and subordinate courts.
- 17 of the 36 States and UTs had a smaller proportion of women in the lower judiciary than the national average.

- Out of 1.7 million advocates in the country only 15% are women. Only 2% elected representatives in the State Bar Councils are women.

What are the reasons for Low Representation of Women in Judiciary?

1. Judicial Rules:

- **Article 233** puts the condition of **7 years** of practice as an advocate to be eligible for appointment as District Judge. The Judiciary has interpreted this as 7 years of continuous practice.
- Most States' Judicial rules dictate a minimum age of **35 years** for entry as a district judge through direct recruitment.
- No one below the age of **55 years** can be appointed as a judge in the Supreme Court. Marriage and family responsibilities in this age group reduces the ability of women to compete for roles in the Judiciary.

2. 'Leaking Pipeline' Syndrome:

- The leaking pipeline syndrome is often used as a metaphor for the way **women disappear as they move from lower to higher levels**.
- The phenomenon of the leaking pipeline is witnessed across a spectrum of careers including the Judiciary (~35% Judges in Lower Courts to ~11% in the SC).
- Family responsibilities, personal choices, long working hours and work-life conflict, working conditions, lack of access to employment opportunities, barriers to advancement, inadequate support from family results in women frequently dropping out mid-career.
- This 'voluntary withdrawal' masks the tacit consent given to patriarchally prescribed gender roles.

3. **Opaque Recruitment Process (Collegium System):** Unlike lower courts, where entry is based on transparent, merit-based competitive exams (Judicial Services Examinations), appointments to the High Courts and the Supreme Court are managed by the **Collegium system**. Because the process lacks institutionalized, objective criteria for selection, it heavily relies on existing professional networks. Historically dominated by men, these networks create an unconscious bias that favors male candidates, often overlooking highly competent women.

4. **Shorter Tenures and the Seniority Trap:** High Court judges retire at 62, and Supreme Court judges at 65. Because of their late entry, women frequently have **shorter judicial tenures**. This prevents them from gaining the seniority required to enter the Supreme Court or to sit on the internal Collegium councils that choose future judges, perpetuating the cycle.

5. **Bar Councils and Bar Associations:** Women are significantly underrepresented in Bar Councils and Bar Associations, which can provide a pathway to visibility and leadership. The Bar Council of India, for instance, has no women members, and only 9 out of 441 State Bar Council representatives are women.

6. **Hostile Courtroom Culture:** Women lawyers frequently report facing patronizing attitudes, casual sexism, and a lack of mentorship from senior male colleagues. This everyday friction makes litigation an exhausting space for women to sustain a multi-decade career.

7. **Lack of Supportive Infrastructure:** The dearth of supportive provisions and infrastructure, from toilets to maternity leave, also contribute to a high attrition rate amongst women lawyers. In 6,000 courts across the country, 22% of them do not have separate toilets for women. As a result, many women law graduates prefer to join the corporate sector.

8. **Lack of Enabling Provisions:** While quotas for women have been implemented in the lower courts of many states, these policies are yet to be implemented in the higher judiciary. States like Assam,

Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha have these enabling provisions and have > 40% women judges.

What are the impacts of Low representation of Women in Judiciary?

1. **Gender Bias in Judgements:** The absence of diverse perspectives on the bench often results in a narrow understanding of social dynamics and gender-based violence. Historically, this has led to problematic judicial reasoning:
 - **Victim-Blaming:** Courts have sometimes granted bail to perpetrators under archaic conditions (e.g., asking the attacker to get a *rakhi* tied by the victim).
 - **Patriarchal Expectations:** Judges have made rulings assessing whether a woman's post-rape behavior fits the standard of an "ideal" rape victim rather than focusing on the criminality of the act itself.
 - The basis of such judgements is limited to the ideal dignity of a woman, and not on the criminal nature of the act itself.
2. **Narrowing the Scope of Law:** Women judges often bring lived experiences that push the boundaries of jurisprudence, introducing new legal concepts related to **equal opportunity, sexual harassment (e.g. Vishaka Guidelines in India)**, and reproductive rights. Low representation means these vital areas of law may progress slowly or remain undeveloped.
3. **Deficiencies in Legal Reasoning:** The ability of the legal system to understand and respond to different social circumstances and experiences is enriched by more judicial diversity. If there is not adequate women's representation, the justice system will not be able to meet the needs of women and other underserved communities.
4. **Impact on Access to Justice:** Women litigants, especially those from economically weaker sections, often feel more comfortable and confident presenting their cases before a female judge. The lack of women on the bench can deter women from seeking legal recourse in sensitive matters, contributing to a **justice gap**.
5. **Undermining of Gender Equality & Causing Trust Deficit:** Lack of women representatives in courts give rise to questions about the courts' legitimacy as representatives of the societies they serve. A judiciary that does not reflect nearly half the population lacks legitimacy and fails the principle of representative justice.
6. **Lack of Role Models:** High-ranking women judges serve as powerful **role models and sources of inspiration** for young girls and women entering the legal profession and other fields. Their visibility breaks stereotypes about women's capacity for leadership and high office.
7. **Reinforcement of Societal Stereotypes:** The lack of visible, high-ranking women in the judicial system reinforces the societal stereotype that women are incapable of holding top leadership or adjudicatory roles. Conversely, a robust presence of women on the bench breaks these biases and promotes egalitarianism.

How are different countries promoting greater representation of women in the judiciary?

Belgium	Belgium amended its laws governing the Constitutional Court to implement a strict gender quota . The law mandates that at least one-third of the judges must belong to each gender. Till the court reached the composition of one-third women judges, it was mandated that after every 2 male appointees, the third appointment would have to be of a woman.
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South Africa	Section 174(2) of the South African Constitution explicitly mandates that the judiciary must broadly reflect the racial and gender composition of the country. Driven by this constitutional obligation, South Africa's Constitutional Court achieved a female majority (6 out of 11 judges), headed by a woman Chief Justice.
The United Kingdom	The UK created an independent Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) . The JAC is legally required to actively seek out and encourage applications from underrepresented groups, including women and ethnic minorities. It publishes transparent selection criteria, uses blind grading for initial assessments, and actively tracks gender metrics across all levels of courts.
Canada	Canada relies on an open, merit-based application process through independent advisory committees. This transparent process has effectively pushed women's representation to approximately 50% across its federal courts .
France	Imposed a 50% gender parity quota at the local and municipal election levels . This has profoundly "feminized" the baseline of the French legal framework, naturally spilling over into a high volume of senior female magistrates and judges in courts of first and second instance.
Rwanda	Rwanda implemented constitutional quotas requiring at least 30% women in all decision-making bodies. Combined with targeted legal education funding, this mechanism was so successful that nearly half of all judges in Rwanda are now women .

What should be the way forward?

- Gender-Based Affirmative Action:** Implement a policy where a certain percentage (e.g. 30% where feasible) of judicial positions, particularly at the **District and High Court level**, are reserved for women. While the Supreme Court appointments are based on seniority and merit, High Court recommendations must proactively seek out qualified women candidates.
- Mandatory Inclusion in Selection Committees:** Ensure that all shortlisting and selection bodies, including the Collegium (at the Supreme Court level) and State-level committees, include **at least one woman member**. This inclusion brings diversity to the decision-making process itself, challenging inherent biases during candidate evaluation.
- Reforms in State Bar Councils and Bar Associations:** State Bar Councils and Bar Associations must implement structural support systems. Recent Supreme Court directives mandating **30% seat reservations for women in Bar Council and Association elections** must be strictly enforced. Empowering women at the litigation stage ensures they are visible, mentored, and naturally positioned for direct bench elevations.
- Broaden the Zone of Consideration:** Collegiums can proactively consider capable women advocates practicing in the Supreme Court who belong to different states, ensuring a wider talent pool when suitable state-level candidates are scarce.

5. **Lateral Entry from Academia:** Encourage and facilitate the lateral entry of women with strong academic backgrounds (law professors, legal scholars) into the mid-level judiciary or as judges in specialized tribunals. This broadens the entry point beyond traditional litigation tracks.
6. **Addressing Family and Work-Life Balance:** The biggest hurdle for women in the legal field is often the lack of institutional support for work-life balance. Judicial academies and the bar associations should advocate for:
 - **Childcare Facilities** within court complexes.
 - **Flexible Timings** for female lawyers and judges, particularly during early motherhood.
 - **Adequate Maternity Leave** policies that do not negatively impact seniority or career progression.
7. **Better Infrastructure:** Provide basic, dignified infrastructure in all courts, especially at the lower judiciary level (e.g. separate, well-maintained washrooms and retiring rooms and fully subsidized institutional childcare facilities), to support the comfort and safety of women lawyers and judges.
8. **Eliminating Gender Bias Training:** Introduce mandatory, regular **gender sensitization and unconscious bias training** for all sitting judges, law clerks, and court staff. This is essential to create a neutral and respectful court environment for female advocates and litigants.
9. **Mentorship and Support Networks:** Establish formal mentorship programs where senior women judges and lawyers mentor junior female colleagues, helping them navigate the systemic challenges and stay in the profession long enough to be considered for elevation.

Conclusion:

Bridging the gender gap in the judiciary will ensure that the judiciary is not only *independent* but also truly *representative* of the society it is tasked with serving.

UPSC GS-2: Indian Judiciary

Read More: [Indian Express](#)

Urban Fire Disasters in India – Reasons & Solutions – Explained Pointwise

Rapid urbanisation, overcrowded buildings, and poor compliance with fire safety norms have led to a worrying rise in fire incidents across Indian cities. The recent devastating fire in Lucknow's Aliganj area, which claimed at least 15 lives, has once again exposed critical gaps in safety enforcement and emergency preparedness. The tragedy underscores the urgent need to strengthen fire safety regulations, conduct regular audits, and build resilient urban infrastructure to prevent the recurrence of such avoidable disasters.

What are fire disasters, and why are they considered a major urban hazard in India?

- A **fire disaster** is an uncontrolled, large-scale outbreak of fire that spreads rapidly, causing extensive property damage, severe economic losses, environmental harm, and most critically, injuries or loss of human life. Unlike slow-onset disasters, fires spread rapidly and can be catastrophic within minutes.
- According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, India records over **1.5-2 lakh fire accidents annually**, resulting in thousands of deaths. Fire-related deaths consistently rank among the leading causes of accidental fatalities.
- They are considered a major urban hazard because the rapid and often unplanned growth of Indian cities has created a “perfect storm” of conditions that make fires both more likely and more deadly.

What are the different types of fire-related disasters in India?

<p>Urban and Structural Fires</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commercial & High-Rise Fires: Occur in shopping malls, office complexes, and high-rise apartments. They are typically caused by electrical short-circuits, overloaded meters, or poorly maintained centralized air conditioning (HVAC) systems. 2. Educational Institutions & Assembly Fires: Fires in schools, private coaching institutes, and movie theaters. These frequently turn into disasters due to overcrowding, highly flammable false ceilings, and a lack of secondary emergency exits. 3. Slum Fires: Highly frequent in mega-cities. Because slums are built using combustible materials (tarpaulin, wood, plastic) and rely heavily on illegal electrical hookups or domestic LPG cylinders, a single spark can wipe out an entire neighborhood in hours. 4. Hospital Fires: Particularly tragic as victims have limited mobility. They are often triggered by the continuous, heavy electrical load required for life-support systems, ventilators, and oxygen-rich environments.
<p>Industrial and Chemical Fires</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chemical & Pharmaceutical Plant Fires: These are incredibly dangerous because they involve toxic chemicals that release poisonous gas clouds when burned, requiring specialized chemical-foam firefighting rather than water. 2. Textile and Paper Mill Fires: These facilities stock massive inventories of highly flammable raw materials. Once a fire catches, the airborne fibers accelerate the spread rapidly across the shop floor. 3. Illegal Firework Factory Explosions: A recurring disaster type, particularly in hubs like Sivakasi (Tamil Nadu). They usually happen in unorganized, small-scale units operating without any safety clearance, where gunpowder is handled manually.
<p><u>Wildfires (Forest Fires)</u></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Himalayan Pine Forest Fires: Highly prevalent in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh during the dry pre-monsoon months (March to June). The dry, fallen needles of <i>Pinus roxburghii</i> (Chir Pine) are highly resinous and catch fire instantly. 2. Central and Southern Deciduous Fires: Occur in states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha. They are often triggered naturally by lightning, or by humans accidentally when burning dry leaves to collect forest produce like Mahua flowers or Tendu leaves.

Transport and Infrastructure Fires	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Railroad Fires: Break out in passenger trains, often due to short-circuits in air-conditioned coaches, pantry car gas leaks, or passengers illegally carrying inflammable materials like firecrackers or kerosene. Electric Vehicle (EV) Battery Fires: Thermal runaway in Lithium-ion batteries – often caused by poor thermal management or low-quality cell sorting – has led to sudden, explosive fires in electric two-wheelers and buses. Oil & Gas Pipeline/Refinery Fires: Rare but catastrophic incidents involving crude oil pipelines or storage depots. They cause intense, high-temperature blazes that can burn for days.
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Why Fires Are a Severe Major Hazard in Indian Cities?

- Extreme Population & Spatial Density:** Urban spaces in India, especially commercial hubs like Delhi's Chandni Chowk or Burrabazar in Kolkata, feature highly congested buildings packed tightly together. Once a fire starts, it easily leaps from one building to the next.
- Haphazard Overhead Wiring & Electrical Infrastructure:** Electrical short-circuits are the root cause of over **70-80%** of all urban fires in India. Walk down almost any older urban street, and you will see a chaotic web of tangled electrical wires. Overloaded transformers and poorly maintained commercial meters frequently spark explosions.
- Inadequate Emergency Access (The "Narrow Lane" Problem):** Many fire disasters turn tragic simply because massive fire tenders (engines) cannot physically navigate the extremely narrow, winding lanes of older city centers or informal settlements (slums).
- Widespread Violations of the National Building Code (NBC):** Many high-rises, coaching hubs, and commercial complexes skimp on safety. Common violations include missing fire exits, blocked staircases used as storage, absent or non-functional sprinkler systems, and the use of cheap, highly flammable building and interior materials.
- Mixed Land-Use Anomalies:** It is very common in India to find small-scale manufacturing units, chemical storage facilities, or illegal commercial kitchens operating inside purely residential buildings. This brings highly combustible materials right into people's homes.
- The "Flue" Effect in High-Rises:** When high-rise buildings are constructed without proper fire barriers between floors, open stairwells, elevator shafts, and internal utility ducts act like giant chimneys. If a fire starts on the ground floor, the heat and toxic smoke are sucked violently upward, trapping hundreds of people on upper floors.
- The "Chalta Hai" (Casual) Attitude toward Audits:** Fire NOCs (No Objection Certificates) are legally required for commercial buildings, but regular compliance audits are frequently bypassed. Building owners often install fire extinguishers to pass an initial inspection, but fail to maintain them, leaving them depressingly useless when a real crisis strikes.
- Illegal and Unauthorized Construction:** A pattern emerges in many fire tragedies: buildings operating with far more rooms, or for entirely different purposes, than they were approved for. The recent deadly fire at a bed-and-breakfast in Delhi's Malviya Nagar is a prime example, where a building licensed for six rooms was allegedly operating with 25, with a single blocked exit and a basement kitchen where the fire likely started. These "clandestine modifications" often bypass safety rules for wider roads, setbacks, and fire escapes, creating death traps.
- Modern Security as a Trap:** Ironically, features meant to enhance security can become lethal in a fire. Electronic smart locks, biometric systems, and security grills can fail in extreme heat or lock occupants in, while locked terrace access and sealed balconies block potential escape routes.

What are the major initiatives undertaken by the government to improve fire safety and fire disaster management in urban areas?

1. **Modernization of Fire Services:** Backed by the 15th Finance Commission recommendations, the central government is providing Rs 5,000 crore to states to procure modern firefighting equipment (e.g., hydraulic platforms and turntable ladders), expand infrastructure to local levels, and implement legal reforms.
2. **Disaster Management Framework:** The Disaster Management Act, 2005 established the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to provide rapid, specialized responses to both natural and human-induced disasters, including fires.
3. **The National Building Code (NBC):** Issued by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Part 4 of the NBC deals exclusively with 'Fire and Life Safety'. It mandates structural requirements like compulsory fire exits, automated sprinkler systems, fire-resistant construction materials, and clear setback spaces.
4. **Mandatory Fire Risk Assessments and Audits:** Across states, authorities have vastly intensified the frequency of surprise checks. Properties like high-rises, factories, hotels, and schools are legally required to perform regular electrical and fire audits to maintain their **Fire NOC (No Objection Certificate)**.
5. **NDRF and SDRF Specialized Battalions:** The **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** consists of highly trained battalions strategically stationed across India. They are uniquely equipped to handle industrial and **CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear)** fire emergencies that are beyond the capacity of local municipal firefighters.
6. **Dial 112 Emergency Response Support System (ERSS):** This pan-India unified emergency number integrates police, fire, and medical services to reduce emergency response times drastically.
7. **Aapda Mitra Scheme:** A community-oriented program dedicated to training 100,000 local volunteers in highly vulnerable multi-hazard districts to act as first responders during fire and other emergencies.
8. **National Fire Service Week:** Observed annually across the country, this initiative is used by public and private sectors to run massive mock evacuation drills, test internal hydrant networks, and train normal citizens on how to operate basic fire extinguishers.

What measures are needed to improve fire preparedness and emergency response systems in urban areas?

1. **Enacting a Uniform National Fire Safety Code:** Fire services are currently treated as a state or municipal subject, resulting in highly fragmented regulations. India needs a uniform, legally binding National Fire Safety Code implemented stringently across all states.
2. **Third-Party Digital Fire Audits:** Rather than relying on sporadic manual checks by understaffed departments, cities should mandate annual, independent third-party fire safety audits. These audit reports should be linked to an online public database, meaning a building's commercial license or insurance automatically expires if they fail compliance.
3. **Mandatory Building Compartmentalisation:** Large floors must be structurally divided into independent fire zones using fire-rated doors and fire-resistant walls. This traps the flame and smoke in one specific zone for at least 60–120 minutes, giving occupants time to escape.
4. **Anti-Smog and Smoke Management Systems:** Since smoke inhalation causes the vast majority of fatalities, urban high-rises must feature automated mechanical ventilation systems that actively extract toxic gases from corridors during a fire.
5. **Tactical "Mini-Tenders" for Congested Areas:** For dense, historic markets and informal settlements, traditional heavy fire trucks are useless. Municipalities must invest in fleets of agile, customized mini-tenders and motorcycle-mounted water mist systems capable of threading through narrow alleyways.

6. **Mandatory Neighborhood Fire Drills:** Much like earthquake drills in prone areas, schools, high-rises, and major commercial hubs should legally be required to conduct seasonal evacuation drills so occupants intuitively know exit routes.
7. **Curriculum-Level Education:** Fire safety literacy – understanding electrical overloading, how to properly handle LPG cylinders, and how to operate an extinguisher – needs to be embedded directly into school curricula across the country.

UPSC GS-3: Disaster Management

Read More: [The Hindu](#)

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) – Significance & Concerns – Explained Pointwise



The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010 regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign funds by individuals, associations and NGOs to ensure transparency and safeguard national interests. The government's newly notified **FCRA Amendment Rules 2026** significantly tighten compliance. They mandate purpose-specific and geographical registration, hold “key functionaries” personally liable, expand social media disclosures, and require utilizing 75% of existing funds before receiving new installments.

What is the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)?

- The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) is a law that regulates the acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions or hospitality by individuals, associations, and companies to ensure they do not adversely affect national security, public order, or national interest.
- Enforced by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, it prevents foreign entities from influencing India's internal politics, media, and public discourse.

What are some of the important provisions of the FCRA?

1. **Mandatory Registration or Prior Permission:** Organizations with cultural, educational, economic, or social programs must be officially registered with the Central Government to receive foreign contributions. Alternatively, they must obtain 'Prior Permission' for specific grants.
2. **Prohibited Entities:** Certain individuals and professions are entirely banned from accepting foreign contributions. These include election candidates, journalists, newspaper/media owners, judges, government servants, political parties, and members of legislative bodies.
3. **Registration and Renewal:** The Central Government grants registration, which is valid for **five years** and must be renewed within six months of expiry to remain valid. Newer organizations can seek 'prior permission' for a specific project from a specific donor.
4. **Banking and Utilization Rules:**
 - All foreign contributions must be received in a **single, exclusive FCRA bank account** at the State Bank of India's main branch in New Delhi.
 - Organizations can open additional accounts in scheduled banks solely for the **utilization** of these funds, but they must report this within 45 days.
 - The law caps the use of foreign funds for administrative expenses at **20%**.
 - The funds cannot be used for speculative business and must be utilized strictly within India for the approved purpose.
5. **Accounting and Reporting:** Recipients must maintain separate accounting records and file an annual online return in **Form FC-4** by December 31st each year. The return must be certified by a chartered accountant and include a balance sheet and income/expenditure statement. Records must be preserved for six years.
6. **Surrender and Cancellation of Registration:** The Central Government can suspend or cancel an organization's FCRA registration if there are violations of the Act. Organizations can also voluntarily surrender their registration, after which their foreign funds and related assets are transferred to a designated government authority.

What are the key objectives of the FCRA?

1. **Regulating the Acceptance of Foreign Funds:** The FCRA provides a structured mechanism to monitor who is bringing money into the country from abroad. It ensures that any individual, association, or company receiving foreign hospitality or cash is strictly registered, verified, and trackable.
2. **Preventing Activities Detrimental to National Interest:** A major objective is to block foreign entities from funding proxy agendas inside India. The law seeks to prevent foreign contributions from being used for activities that could pose a threat to:
 - a. The sovereignty and integrity of India.
 - b. Public interest or internal security.
 - c. Strategic, scientific, or economic interests of the state.
 - d. Harmony between religious, racial, social, linguistic, or regional groups.


3. **Insulating India's Democratic Institutions:** By placing a blanket ban on political parties, candidates, judges, legislators, and mainstream journalists, the objective is to ensure that domestic policy and public opinion are shaped exclusively by Indian citizens, not foreign donors.
4. **Ensuring Accountability and Correct Utilization:** The Act forces NGOs and social organizations to be entirely transparent about how they use foreign aid.


What are the key changes introduced by the latest amendments to the FCRA Rules?

1. **Activity & Geographic Restrictions:** Registrations are now strictly activity-based and geography-based. Organizations must declare specific approved states/union territories of operation, utilize funds for designated purposes, and declare their social media accounts.

Funding check


Under the fresh changes to Rules of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, all NGOs are required to disclose specific activities and geographical scope of their programmes to receive contributions under 5 permitted categories:






EDUCATIONAL

- Schools, colleges, and libraries
- Scholarships
- Research institutions and think tanks
- Civic-awareness and constitutional-rights programmes




ECONOMIC

- Livelihood generation
- Skill development
- Agricultural sectors
- Entrepreneurship and micro-enterprises
- Financial and digital inclusion




RELIGIOUS

- Places of worship
- Religious education
- Pilgrim services
- Meditation programmes
- Preservation of religious traditions



SOCIAL

- Public health
- Rehabilitation
- Sanitation and nutrition
- Disaster relief



CULTURAL

- Preservation of Indian arts and languages
- Museums, archives, and cultural festivals
- Heritage conservation

Source: The Hindu

2. **No Proselytisation:** While faith-based activities like maintenance of worship places, religious education, and community kitchens are permitted, they strictly exclude proselytisation or religious conversion.
3. **Reasonable Activity Clause:** Organizations must utilize a minimum of ₹10 lakh in foreign funds over two financial years to demonstrate active operations.
4. **Vesting of Assets:** If an organization's FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered, or expires without renewal, its foreign contributions and physical assets provisionally vest in a government-appointed Designated Authority.
5. **Permanent Takeover:** If registration is not restored, the assets permanently vest with the Authority, which may sell them or transfer them to government bodies, with proceeds credited to the Consolidated Fund of India.
6. **Expanded Definitions:** The definition of "key functionaries" now encompasses trustees, partners, governing body members, and anyone controlling the organization.

7. **Foreigner Restrictions:** Organizations with foreign nationals (other than OCI or Persons of Indian origin) as key functionaries are generally ineligible for registration unless specifically cleared by the central government.
8. **Usage Caps & Staged Receipts:** Subsequent installments of foreign funds can only be released after at least 75% of the prior installment has been spent and verified.
9. **Restrictions on “News” Activities:** Organizations must declare if they publish any books or articles, as they are prohibited from producing or broadcasting “news or current affairs” under the Act.

What is the significance of the FCRA?

1. **Sovereignty and National Security:** The primary purpose of FCRA is to protect the sovereignty & national security. It was enacted to ensure that the foreign money cannot be used to:
 - Fund **political destabilisation** or influence electoral outcomes.
 - Support **separatist or secessionist movements** (e.g., concerns about foreign funding to organisations in Kashmir, Northeast India).
 - Advance **religious conversion** activities that may cause communal friction.
 - Undermine **strategic national interests** through NGO-led campaigns against defence, nuclear, or infrastructure projects.
2. **Regulation of Civil Society and NGO Ecosystem:** India has one of the world’s largest NGO sectors. FCRA is the **primary regulatory lever** governing the approximately 16,000–22,000 organisations registered to receive foreign funds.
3. **Ensuring Transparency and Accountability:** The Act creates a strict compliance regime. It requires NGOs to register, report their foreign receipts and expenditures in detail, and use funds only for their stated purposes, thereby making the flow and use of foreign money transparent.
4. **Enforcing Compliance:** In recent years, the government has used the FCRA to significantly increase scrutiny. This is evident in the cancellation of over 20,000 FCRA registrations of organizations for non-compliance.

What are the major criticisms of the FCRA framework in India?

1. **Vagueness of Key Provisions:** The Act prohibits activities “detrimental to national interest” or affecting “public order, security of State, harmony between religious, racial, linguistic or regional groups” — but these terms are **not defined** in the Act.
2. **Weaponisation Against Dissent:** The FCRA has often been criticised for being selectively enforced to silence organisations critical of government policies. Between 2014 and 2022, over **20,000 FCRA registrations** were cancelled — a scale critics argue cannot be explained by genuine security concerns alone.
3. **The Sub-Granting Ban:** India’s civil society ecosystem historically functioned on a **hub-and-spoke model** — larger, registered organisations received foreign funds and channelled them to smaller, specialised grassroots groups. The ban effectively **severs this ecosystem**, leaving smaller organisations — often working with the most marginalised communities — without funding.
4. **The 20% Administrative Cost Cap:** The reduction of the administrative expense ceiling from **50% to 20%** of foreign contributions has drawn sharp criticism. The cap does not reflect **ground realities** of non-profit operations in India, where costs of compliance, rent, travel to remote areas, and staff training are substantial. For many organisations — particularly advocacy, legal aid, and research bodies where **human capital is the primary resource** — staff salaries alone exceed 20% of total expenditure.
5. **SBI New Delhi Main Branch Requirement:** The mandatory requirement that all FCRA-registered organisations maintain their **designated account only at SBI’s New Delhi Main Branch** has been

widely criticised. Organisations based in **Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, or rural areas** must operate a bank account 1,000+ kilometres away from their operations. It creates **severe practical difficulties** — physical banking, cheque clearing, cash management, and local vendor payments all become complicated.

6. **Due Process Deficits:** The procedural framework for **suspension and cancellation** of FCRA registration has been criticised for inadequate safeguards:
 - The MHA can **suspend registration for 180 days** on the basis of pending inquiry — effectively shutting down an organisation for six months without any finding of wrongdoing.
 - The **appellate mechanism** (appeal to the High Court) is expensive and slow — organisations may cease to exist financially before judicial relief is obtained.
 - There is **no independent adjudicatory body** — the MHA is simultaneously the regulator, prosecutor, and decision-maker, violating basic principles of **natural justice and institutional separation**.
7. **Chilling Effect on Legitimate Civil Society Activities:** Organisations avoid taking on **controversial causes** — environmental litigation against state projects, minority rights cases, anti-corruption campaigns — for fear of FCRA action. This progressively **depoliticises Indian civil society**, leaving only service-delivery organisations (which are less threatening to state power) while advocacy and rights organisations are weakened.
8. **Disproportionate Impact on Marginalised Communities:** The cumulative effect of FCRA restrictions falls most heavily on **India's most vulnerable populations**. Organisations working with **Adivasi communities** on land and forest rights — which frequently conflict with state and corporate interests — face disproportionate FCRA scrutiny.
9. **International Law and Human Rights Concerns:** The FCRA framework has been criticised as incompatible with India's **international human rights obligations**:
 - The **UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders** (1998) recognises the right of civil society to seek and receive funding — including from foreign sources — for legitimate rights work.
 - The framework potentially violates **Article 22 of the ICCPR** (freedom of association), to which India is a party.

What reforms are needed to make the FCRA regime more effective and balanced?

1. **Expedite Processing Times:** Introduce strict, legally binding service-level agreements (SLAs) for processing FCRA registration, renewal, and prior permission requests to prevent administrative backlogs and project disruptions.
2. **Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** Establish an independent ombudsman or a dedicated grievance redressal cell within the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to allow non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to appeal licensing delays or arbitrary cancellations transparently.
3. **Rationalize Administrative Caps:** Revisit the restriction that caps administrative expenses at 20% of foreign funds. Many specialized development and advocacy organizations require higher operational and administrative budgets to function efficiently.
4. **Re-permit Sub-Granting:** Reintroduce sub-granting but attach strict **“chain-link responsibility”** to it. The primary recipient NGO would remain legally and financially accountable for verifying the end-use of the funds by the smaller partner. This maintains transparency without cutting off the financial lifeblood of micro-level community organizations.
5. **Standardize & Define Vague Terminology:** Terms like “national interest,” “public order,” and “harmonious relations” must be given **precise, narrow definitions**. Clear legal definitions eliminate

ambiguity, giving NGOs a transparent blueprint of boundaries they cannot cross, rather than leaving them vulnerable to shifting political definitions of what is “acceptable” work.

6. **Rationalising the SBI New Delhi Main Branch Requirement:** The mandatory SBI New Delhi Main Branch account should be **replaced with a designated account at any scheduled commercial bank**, with real-time reporting to a central FCRA monitoring system.
7. **Adoption of the UN Framework on Civil Society Funding:** India should align FCRA with the **UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders** and the recommendations of the **UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Association**, which recognise the right of civil society to **seek, receive, and utilise resources** — including from foreign sources — for legitimate rights work.

Conclusion: A reformed FCRA should rest on three foundational principles – **Proportionality, Institutional independence & Democratic legitimacy**. A framework built on these principles would better serve India’s twin interests: protecting national sovereignty from genuine foreign interference while preserving the civil society ecosystem that is indispensable to a functioning democracy.

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

India’s Bid for Permanent Membership of the UNSC – Explained Pointwise



India's bid for a permanent UNSC seat reflects its status as the world's most populous nation, largest democracy, and a leading economic power. Securing this seat is crucial for global governance to mirror contemporary geopolitical realities. However, structural inertia, China's persistent veto, and procedural hurdles within the UN remain major challenges.

Why has the issue of UNSC reform gained renewed importance in the context of emerging global challenges?

1. **Shifting Power Dynamics & Representation:** The current structure grants permanent membership and veto power exclusively to the **P5** (US, UK, France, Russia, and China), a configuration that excludes modern economic and demographic heavyweights. Emerging nations – such as the **G4** (India, Brazil, Germany, and Japan) – and the **African Union** contend that the council's legitimacy requires a balance of power reflective of today's multipolar world.
2. **The Veto Problem:** The frequent use of the veto by permanent members (P5) has effectively frozen the Council's primary mandate to maintain international peace and security. Recent wars in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip, along with regional escalations in the West Asia, have seen competing P5 vetoes foil humanitarian aid and ceasefire resolutions.
3. **Irrelevant Output:** The Council's output has dropped significantly, with fewer unanimous resolutions being passed as geopolitical polarization deepens. This paralysis has forced countries to look for alternative security frameworks outside the UN, threatening the organization's relevance.
4. **Populational Mismatch:** The P5 represent a shrinking minority of the world's population, making a system where they hold absolute veto power over the remaining 188 member states increasingly indefensible and illegitimate.
5. **Shift from Traditional to Non-Traditional Security Threats:** When the UN Charter was signed, security was defined strictly by state-on-state military conflict. Today's most destabilizing challenges are cross-border, non-traditional, and require fluid, rapid global cooperation, such as:
 - **Emerging Technologies & AI:** The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence, autonomous weapons, and cyberwarfare into state statecraft has created a regulatory vacuum. The UNSC lacks the consensus and specialized framework to govern the international security implications of AI.
 - **Climate Change and Scarcity:** Climate-induced migration, resource scarcity (like water crises), and natural disasters are increasingly driving regional conflicts.
 - **Transnational Threats:** Issues like pandemics, supply chain vulnerabilities, and transnational repression cannot be solved by 1945-era definitions of national sovereignty.

What factors strengthen India's case for permanent membership in the UNSC?

1. **Demographics and Democratic Values:** Representing approximately one-sixth of humanity, India is the world's largest functional democracy. Combined, the current five permanent members (P5) represent less population than India alone. Its inclusion would make the UNSC more representative of the global populace.
2. **Economic Clout:** India is one of the world's largest economies (the 5th largest by nominal GDP and 3rd by Purchasing Power Parity). Its economic growth and role in global trade and development make it an influential player on the world stage.
3. **Global Peacekeeping:** India is historically one of the largest troop and police contributors to UN Peacekeeping Operations. It has deployed over 250,000 personnel across dozens of missions globally since the UN's inception. India has suffered the highest number of casualties among all troop-

contributing nations, demonstrating a profound, tangible commitment to upholding international peace and security under the UN banner.

4. **Voice of the Global South:** As a leader of developing nations and active participants in platforms like the G20, India advocates for an equitable international order and improved representation for underrepresented regions.
5. **Strategic Independence:** India maintains robust diplomatic relationships across major geopolitical divides. It maintains strong ties with the West (via groupings like the Quad), historic strategic partnerships with Russia, and active leadership within the Global South (such as BRICS and G77). Its independent foreign policy and constructive approach to complex international issues make it an essential mediator for world peace.
6. **Founding Member:** India was a founding member of the United Nations, signing the Declaration by United Nations in 1942 before even attaining independence and has faithfully upheld the principles of the UN Charter throughout its history.
7. **Proven Track Record:** India has served multiple terms as an elected, non-permanent member of the UNSC (most recently in 2021–22). During these tenures, it has consistently advocated for counter-terrorism frameworks, maritime security, and democratic majority-building rather than obstructionism.
8. **Nuclear-Armed Status with Responsibility:** As a nuclear-armed state with a declared “No First Use” policy and a commitment to a moratorium on testing, India presents itself as a responsible nuclear power. Its membership in key export control regimes like the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) is also highlighted to demonstrate its commitment to non-proliferation norms.

Examine the challenges faced by India in securing a permanent seat in the UNSC.

1. **The P5 Monopoly:** The existing permanent members (USA, UK, France, Russia, and China) are highly reluctant to dilute their exclusive privileges, including the veto power.
2. **Rigid Amendment Process (Article 108):** Any expansion requires amending the UN Charter, which mandates a two-thirds majority in the UN General Assembly followed by ratification by all P5 members. This sets a virtually insurmountable barrier, as any single P5 nation can block the reform.
3. **China’s Reluctance:** While China publicly advocates for greater representation of the Global South, it remains the only one of the five permanent members (P5) that has not explicitly endorsed India’s permanent membership bid. This stance is widely seen as a strategic move to maintain its status as the sole Asian power with permanent membership and veto power in the Council.
4. **The “Coffee Club” (Uniting for Consensus):** This coalition – led by countries like Italy, Pakistan, Turkey, and Mexico – actively opposes the expansion of permanent seats. They advocate instead for expanding only the non-permanent, elected categories to prevent an exclusive club of new powers.
5. **The Veto Dilemma and “Second-Class” Status:** To bypass gridlock, some international factions have proposed granting India permanent status *without* veto power. India (along with its G4 partners: Brazil, Germany, and Japan) rejects this, arguing it would create a second-tier, unequal permanent membership.
6. **India’s Strategic Autonomy as a Double-Edged Sword:** India’s tradition of **strategic autonomy** paradoxically complicates its UNSC membership campaign. Western nations have occasionally questioned whether a permanently seated India would be a **reliable partner** in upholding the rules-based international order, or whether its autonomy would introduce new unpredictability.
7. **The IGN Process: Institutionalised Stalemate:** The **Intergovernmental Negotiations** framework, established in 2009, was designed to advance reform but has become an instrument of delay. The IGN is plagued by a lack of official records, a lack of a single negotiating text, and endless bureaucratic delays used by opposing countries to stall progress.

How would permanent membership in the UNSC enhance India's role in global governance?

1. **Amplified Voice for the Global South:** As the largest democracy and a major economy, India would ensure that the interests of developing nations – such as climate finance, food insecurity, and global health inequities – are central to international security and decision-making. It would break the Eurocentric and post-WWII dominance of the P5, creating a more multipolar and democratically representative global governance architecture.
2. **Reforming Global Institutions:** With formal leverage, India could fast-track its advocacy for broader reforms across international governance architectures, including the World Trade Organization and International Financial Institutions, pushing for fairer representation.
3. **Direct Influence on Rule-Making:** Holding veto power would allow India to proactively shape the UN Security Council agenda on international peace and security and global counter-terrorism frameworks, cementing its status as an undisputed global power.
4. **Insulation from Adversarial Resolutions:** Currently, India relies on strategic partners (historically Russia) to block unfavorable resolutions regarding its sovereign matters, such as the Kashmir issue. A permanent seat would give India the independent capability to safeguard its core national security interests at the highest level.
5. **Counter-Terrorism:** India has long championed a comprehensive global framework against terrorism. Permanent membership would allow New Delhi to institutionalize stricter sanctions on cross-border terror networks and prevent adversaries from placing technical holds on blacklisting known terrorists.
6. **Maritime and Cyber Security:** India could spearhead global governance frameworks for emerging frontiers – such as securing vital Indo-Pacific sea lanes, regulating AI in warfare, and setting norms for state-sponsored cyberattacks.
7. **Nuclear Governance and Non-Proliferation:** As a responsible nuclear state with a clean proliferation record, India could **strengthen rather than weaken** the non-proliferation regime from within. It could advocate for a **universal, non-discriminatory disarmament framework** – challenging the NPT's inherent asymmetry between nuclear haves and have-nots – with the institutional weight of a permanent member.
8. **Peacekeeping Reform:** As a permanent member, India could **directly shape peacekeeping mandates** — ensuring missions are operationally realistic, properly resourced, and designed with input from nations that actually deploy troops. India could drive the **professionalisation and accountability** of peacekeeping.

What diplomatic strategies should India adopt to strengthen its prospects for permanent membership in a reformed UNSC?

1. **Demanding Text-Based Negotiations:** India is calling for formal, **text-based negotiations with clear milestones and timelines**, arguing that the current format of open-ended discussions is no longer acceptable. This is a strategic move to make the reform process more substantive and result-oriented.
2. **Deepening and Operationalising G4 Cohesion:** India should **institutionalise G4 coordination** through dedicated diplomatic working groups that meet regularly, not merely at the margins of UNGA sessions. India should leverage its **growing strategic partnerships** with Germany (Indo-German partnership), Japan (Quad), and Brazil (BRICS, G20) to embed UNSC reform coordination within broader bilateral frameworks.
3. **Engagement with the African Bloc:** No reform can pass the UN General Assembly without the support of Africa, which commands 54 votes – nearly 30% of the entire UN membership. India must continue

to deepen its footprint in Africa through lines of credit, digital public infrastructure (like UPI and Aadhaar-style tech transfers), and capacity building.

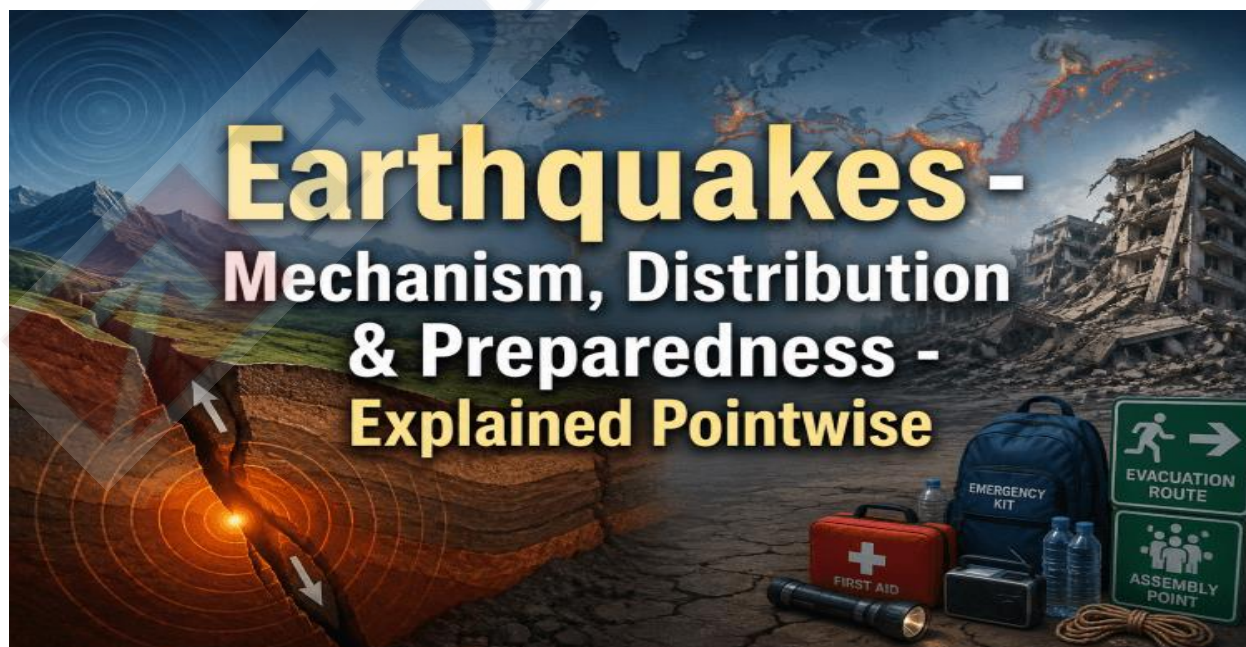
4. **Neutralising or Circumventing Chinese Opposition:** On issues where China seeks Indian cooperation – **climate negotiations, WTO reform, G20 financial architecture** – India should make cooperation contingent on Chinese movement on UNSC reform.
5. **Strategic Engagement with the Islamic World:** India's deepening relationships with **UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt** – built on energy partnerships, diaspora remittances, and investment flows – should be leveraged to extract explicit UNSC reform support.
6. **Support Most Vulnerable Nations:** India should **champion SIDS (Small Island Developing States)** concerns – climate vulnerability, ocean governance, debt sustainability – giving small nations material reasons to support Indian permanent membership despite size asymmetries.
7. **Leveraging Multilateral Forum Leadership:** India should use its **current multilateral leadership positions** to build reform momentum. India's leadership in the **Global Biofuels Alliance, International Solar Alliance, and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** should be framed as evidence of its capacity and willingness to lead global governance institutions.

Conclusion: A permanent seat for India in the UNSC would help align the institution with contemporary geopolitical realities and enhance the legitimacy of its decisions by making it more representative and credible. As an emerging global power aspiring to play the role of **Vishwamitra**, India is well-equipped to contribute meaningfully to addressing the evolving challenges confronting the UNSC and the broader international order.

UPSC GS-2: International Relations

Read More: [Indian Express](#)

Earthquakes – Mechanism, Distribution & Preparedness – Explained Pointwise

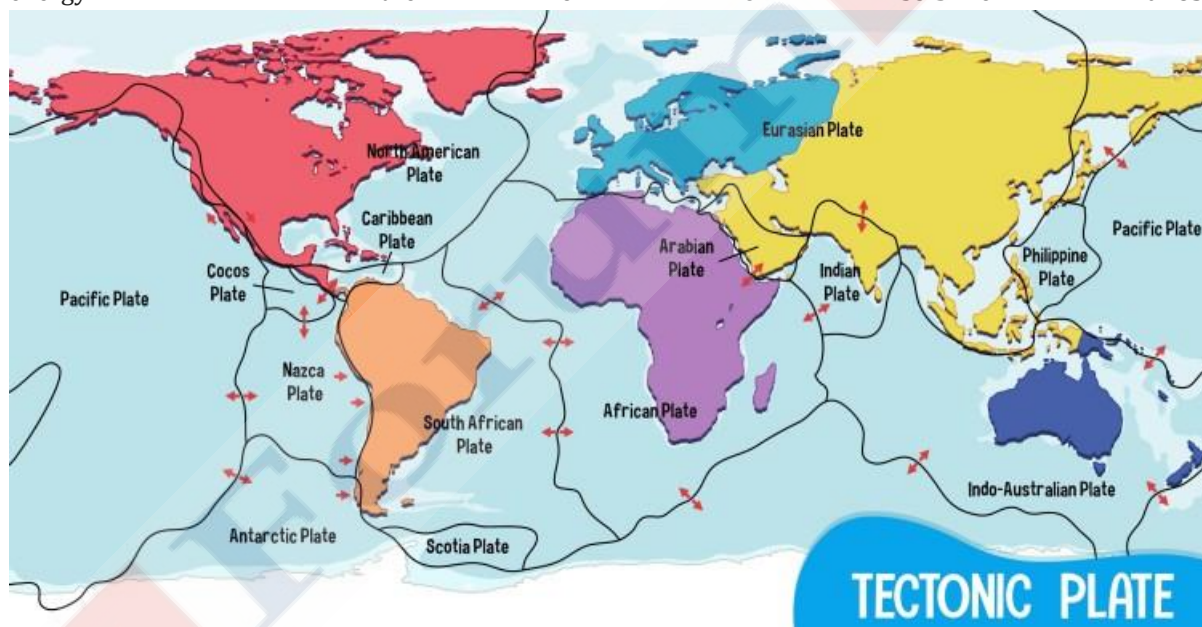


The recent twin earthquakes that struck Venezuela, measuring 7.2 and 7.5 in magnitude within seconds of each other, caused widespread devastation and renewed global attention to seismic hazards. The US geological Survey described the disaster as a “**seismic doublet**”. This disaster underscores the need to understand the mechanism, distribution, and impacts of earthquakes, while strengthening preparedness, resilience, and disaster-management strategies.

What is an EARTHQUAKE?

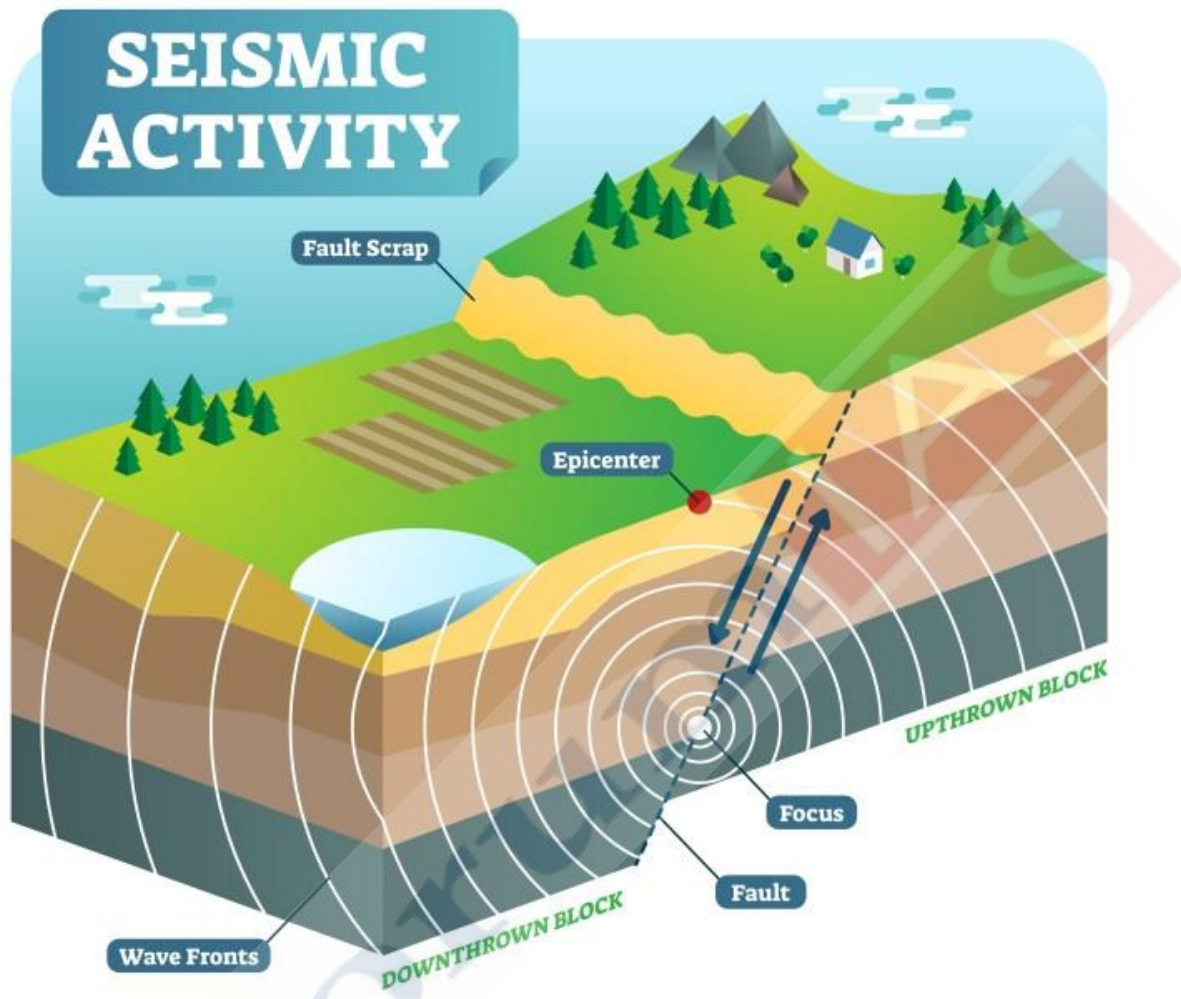
- An earthquake (also known as a quake, tremor or temblor) is a type of diastrophic movement which involves shaking of the Earth surface, resulting from the sudden release of energy in the Earth's lithosphere that creates seismic waves.

The Earth's outer layer (the lithosphere) is not one solid shell; it is broken up into giant puzzle pieces called **tectonic plates**. These plates are constantly, very slowly drifting. As they move, they grind against, pull apart from, or collide into each other. The edges of these plates are rough, so they often get stuck while the rest of the plate continues to move. This builds up immense pressure and stress over decades or even centuries. Eventually, the stress becomes too great, and the stuck rocks suddenly break and **snap** past each other along a crack in the Earth's crust called a **fault line**. This sudden movement releases the stored-up energy in the form of **seismic waves**.



- **Important terms related to earthquake:**
 - **FOCUS** (also known as the **HYPOCENTER**) = The point inside the earth where the energy is released is called the **FOCUS**.
 - **EPICENTRE** = The point on the surface, nearest to the focus, is called **EPICENTRE**.
 - **SEISMIC WAVES** (aka **EARTHQUAKE WAVES**) = The waves of energy that travel through the Earth's layers, causing the ground to shake.

FAULT: The fracture or zone along which the slip occurs.



What are SEISMIC WAVES?

- Earthquake shaking and damage is the result of 2 basic types of seismic waves:
 1. **Body Waves** = Travel through the **interior of the Earth**.:
 - a. **P-waves** = Longitudinal (compressional) waves
 - b. **S-waves** = Transverse (shear) waves
 2. **Surface Waves** = Travel along the **Earth's surface** (cause most destruction):
 - a. **L-waves** = Horizontal shear motion (side-to-side)
 - b. **R-waves** = Rolling motion (like ocean waves) – both vertical and horizontal
- **P-waves** = The faster of these body waves is called the primary or P wave. Its motion is the same as that of a sound wave in that, as it spreads out, it alternately pushes (compresses) and pulls (dilates) the rock. These P waves are able to travel through both solid rock, such as granite mountains, and liquid material, such as volcanic magma or the water of the oceans.
- **S-waves** = The slower wave through the body of rock is called the secondary or S wave. As an S wave propagates, it shears the rock sideways at right angles to the direction of travel. If a liquid is sheared

sideways or twisted, it will not spring back, hence S waves cannot propagate in the liquid parts of the earth, such as oceans and lakes.

- **L-waves** i.e. **Love waves** = Its motion is essentially that of S waves that have no vertical displacement; it moves the ground from side to side in a horizontal plane but at right angles to the direction of propagation. The horizontal shaking of Love waves is particularly damaging to the foundations of structures.
- **R-waves** i.e. **Rayleigh waves** = They are like rolling ocean waves. Rayleigh waves move both vertically and horizontally in a vertical plane pointed in the direction in which the waves are travelling.

What are the TYPES OF FAULTS ASSOCIATED WITH EARTHQUAKES?

- There are 3 main types of faults:
 1. **Normal Fault**
 2. **Reverse (Thrust) Fault**
 3. **Strike-slip Fault**
- Normal and reverse faulting are examples of dip-slip, where the displacement along the fault is in the direction of dip and movement on them involves a vertical component.
- **Normal faults** occur mainly in areas where the crust is being extended such as a divergent boundary. **Reverse faults** occur in areas where the crust is being shortened such as at a convergent boundary. **Strike-slip faults** are steep structures where the two sides of the fault slip horizontally past each other. Transform boundaries are a particular type of strike-slip fault.
- Reverse faults, particularly those along convergent plate boundaries are associated with the most powerful earthquakes, megathrust earthquakes, including almost all of those of magnitude 8 or more.

What are the different TYPES OF EARTHQUAKES?

Shallow-Focus Earthquakes	<p>Depth: 0 – 70 km</p> <p>Occurrence: Most common type (~80% of all earthquakes).</p> <p>Impact: Most destructive because the energy is released close to the Earth's surface.</p> <p>Examples: Nepal earthquake (2015), Bhuj earthquake (2001).</p>
Intermediate-Focus Earthquakes	<p>Depth: 70 – 300 km</p> <p>Occurrence: About 12% of earthquakes.</p> <p>Impact: Less destructive than shallow-focus but can still cause significant damage over a wide area.</p> <p>Examples: Earthquakes in subduction zones (e.g., Peru-Chile Trench).</p>

Deep-Focus Earthquakes	<p>Depth: 300 – 700 km</p> <p>Occurrence: About 3% of earthquakes.</p> <p>Impact: Rarely cause surface destruction due to great depth, but can be very powerful.</p> <p>Examples: Earthquakes in the Tonga Trench and Mariana Trench regions.</p>
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What are the different ways in which earthquakes are measured?

Earthquakes are measured in two principal ways: **Magnitude & Intensity:**

Magnitude	<p>The magnitude of an earthquake refers to the amount of energy released at the earthquake's focus (hypocentre) during seismic activity.</p> <p>It is a quantitative measure, usually expressed on a logarithmic scale.</p> <p>It is measured by using RICHTER SCALE.</p> <p>The magnitude is expressed in absolute numbers, 0-10.</p>
Intensity	<p>The intensity of an earthquake refers to the measure of the effects and damage caused by the earthquake at specific locations on the Earth's surface. The intensity scale takes into account the visible damage caused by the event.</p> <p>Intensity is a qualitative measure of the shaking at a given location.</p> <p>Two scales most commonly used for intensity are the Modified Mercalli Intensity scale and MSK scale, both of which classify earthquakes from I (least perceptible) to XII (most severe). These readings are based on factors such as how people perceive the shaking. The same earthquake will have different intensity readings at different places; the farther one moves away from the epicentre, the less intense the shaking.</p>

How are Earthquakes distributed across the earth's surface?

Circum-Pacific Belt (Ring of Fire)	<p>Location: Surrounds the Pacific Ocean (Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, Chile, Alaska, California).</p> <p>Share: ~70–80% of the world's earthquakes.</p> <p>Cause: Subduction zones and transform faults.</p>
Alpine-Himalayan Belt	<p>Location: From the Mediterranean → Middle East → Himalayas → Southeast Asia.</p> <p>Share: ~15–20% of earthquakes.</p> <p>Cause: Collision between Eurasian Plate and African/Indian Plates.</p>

Mid-Atlantic Ridge (Oceanic Ridges)	Location: Runs down the Atlantic Ocean; includes Iceland. Cause: Divergent plate boundaries (sea-floor spreading). Earthquake type: Mostly shallow-focus.
Intraplate Earthquakes	Occur within tectonic plates, away from boundaries. Examples: New Madrid Seismic Zone (USA), Kutch Region (India)

What is a SEISMIC DOUBLET?

- A seismic doublet is a rare phenomenon in which **two major earthquakes of similar magnitude** strike close together in both time and geographic location.
- Key Characteristics of Seismic Doublet:
 - **Similar Magnitudes:** Unlike aftershocks (which are typically one or more magnitudes smaller than the main earthquake), the two events in a doublet are nearly equal in magnitude.
 - **Rapid Time Separation:** The twin quakes occur one after another with no time for the initial tectonic stress to settle. This can happen seconds apart.
 - **Distinct Yet Linked Ruptures:** The quakes originate from separate but contiguous or adjacent fault segments. The rupture of the first fault transfers stress to a nearby fault, rapidly triggering the second event.
 - **Shared Waveform Characteristics:** Because both events originate from the same general rupture zone and stress field, seismograms often display nearly identical seismic waveforms.
 - **High Destructiveness:** Doublets are vastly more dangerous than individual earthquakes. The second major shock frequently strikes before structural assessments can be made, causing structurally compromised buildings to collapse during prolonged shaking.

Why Are They So Dangerous?

1. **Compounded Structural Damage:** Buildings, bridges, and dams that managed to survive the first earthquake with minor, invisible structural cracks are frequently brought down entirely by the second, equally powerful shock.
2. **Hazard to Rescue Teams:** First responders and rescue workers are often actively searching through the rubble of the first event when the second major shock hits, creating extreme peril for emergency operations.
3. **Psychological Impact:** Because communities expect aftershocks to get progressively weaker, a second massive shock creates severe panic and disrupts emergency sheltering plans.

What are some notable examples of seismic doublets?

Venezuela (2026)	Two back-to-back quakes, a magnitude 7.2 foreshock followed 39 seconds later by a magnitude 7.5 mainshock, struck along the boundary of the Caribbean and South American plates, causing widespread destruction.
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Turkey & Syria (2023)	A magnitude 7.8 mainshock was followed about nine hours later by a second devastating magnitude 7.7 earthquake on an adjacent segment of the East Anatolian Fault.
California, USA (1987)	Two major strike-slip earthquakes hit the Superstition Hills in the Imperial Valley about 11 to 12 hours apart on intersecting faults.
Peru-Brazil Border (2015)	A deep-focus seismic doublet occurred at a depth of over 650 kilometers, consisting of a magnitude 7.4 event followed five minutes later by a magnitude 7.5 event.

How SEISMICALLY VULNERABLE is INDIA?

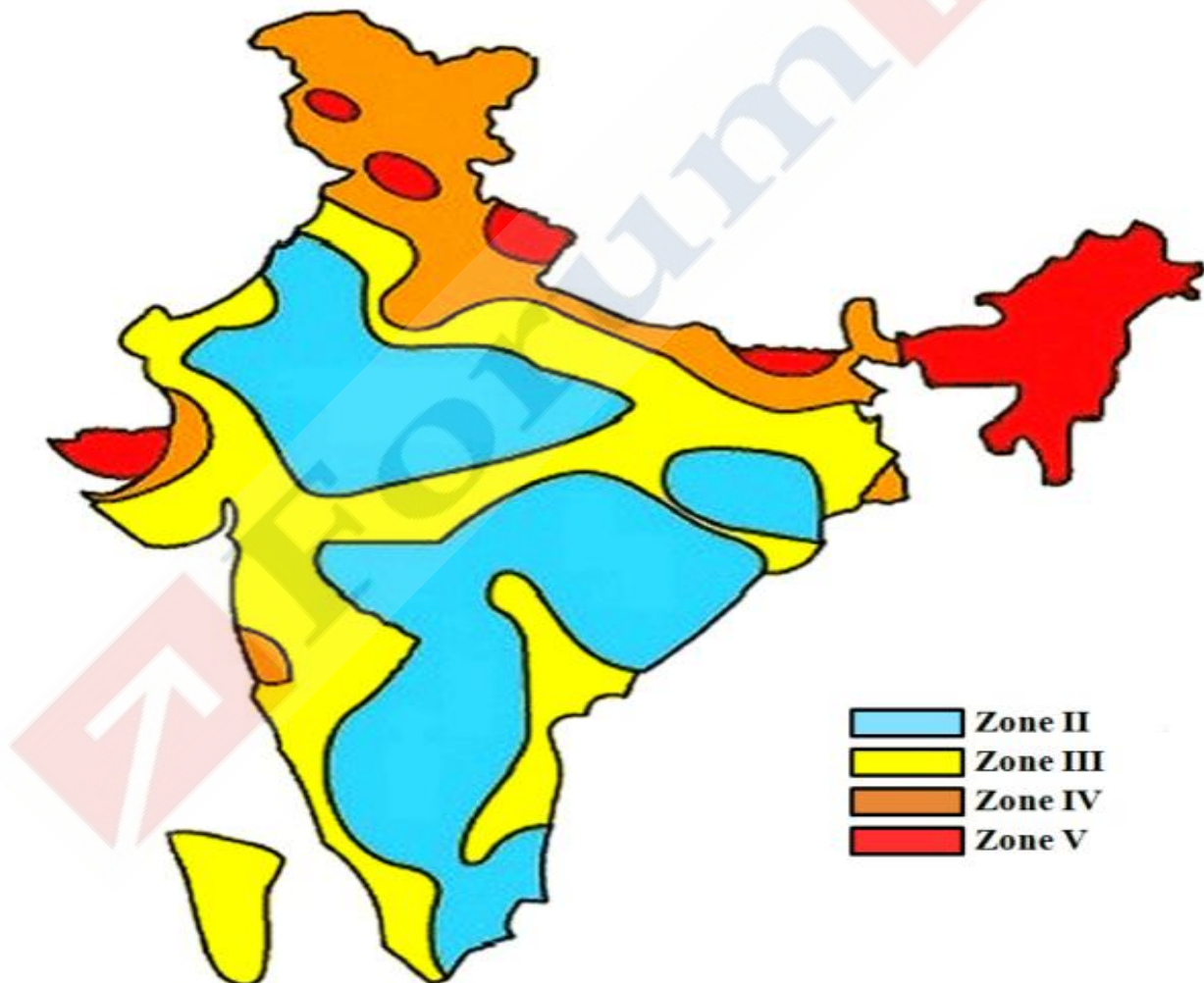
- Around **58% of India's landmass** is vulnerable to moderate or severe seismic hazard.
- India's seismic risk is rooted in the northward drift of the Indian Plate, colliding with the Eurasian Plate at 4-5cm a year.
- **Great Himalayan Earthquake** = Himalayas are one of the most tectonically active regions of the world. An earthquake of magnitude 8 or higher is long overdue in the region according to various seismic studies. The Himalayan '**Seismic Gap**' where strain has built since the Kangra earthquake (1906) & Gorkha earthquake (2015), are a ticking clock.
- Factors increasing the vulnerability:
 - Unplanned urbanization and poor construction practices.
 - High population density in hazard-prone regions.
 - Lack of earthquake-resistant design in many buildings.
 - Low awareness and preparedness.

What are the different EARTHQUAKE ZONES IN INDIA?

Zone 5	<p>Zone 5 covers the areas with the highest risk zone that suffers earthquakes of intensity MSK IX or greater.</p> <p>It is referred to as the Very High Damage Risk Zone.</p> <p>The region of Kashmir, the Western and Central Himalayas, North and Middle Bihar, the North-East Indian region, the Rann of Kutch and the Andaman and Nicobar group of islands fall in this zone.</p>
Zone 4	<p>This zone is called the High Damage Risk Zone and covers areas liable to MSK VIII.</p> <p>Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, parts of Indo-Gangetic plains (North Punjab, Chandigarh, Western Uttar Pradesh, Terai, North Bengal, Sundarbans) and the capital of the country Delhi fall in Zone 4.</p> <p>In Maharashtra, the Patan area (Koyanagar) is also in Zone 4.</p>

	In Bihar the northern part of the state like Raxaul, near the border of India & Nepal, is also in Zone 4.
Zone 3	This zone is classified as Moderate Damage Risk Zone which is liable to MSK VII. Zone 3 = Gujarat, Goa, West Bengal, parts of Andhra, Tamil Nadu
Zone 2	This region is liable to MSK VI or less and is classified as the Low Damage Risk Zone . Zone 2 = Southern Deccan Plateau, Karnataka, Kerala

Since the current division of India into earthquake hazard zones does not use Zone 1, no area of India is classed as Zone 1.



What PREPAREDNESS MEASURES have been undertaken to mitigate the impact of earthquakes?

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1. **Seismic Zoning Map:** The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has classified India into four seismic zones (Zone II, III, IV, and V) based on historical earthquake data and geological features. This map guides earthquake-resistant design. Zone V is the most seismically active, while Zone II is the least.
2. **Earthquake-Resistant Building Codes:** The National Building Code of India includes stringent guidelines for designing earthquake-resistant structures, especially in high-risk zones.
3. **Retrofitting of Buildings:** A major focus has been on retrofitting and strengthening existing older buildings, particularly critical infrastructure (hospitals, schools, government buildings) and those in highly vulnerable areas, to withstand seismic events. Financial grants are sanctioned to support these efforts.
4. **Expansion of Seismic Observatories:** The National Centre for Seismology (NCS) has aggressively expanded its tracking footprint. The number of national seismic observatories has grown from just 80 in 2014 to **168**, vastly improving the accuracy and speed of detecting tremors.
5. **BhooKamp App:** Launched by NCS, this mobile application provides real-time earthquake information to users.
6. **Earthquake Risk Indexing (EDRI):** NDMA's EDRI project assesses earthquake risks in Indian cities, evaluating hazard, vulnerability, and exposure to guide mitigation efforts. Phase I covered 50 cities, and Phase II targets 16 more.
7. **Seismic Microzonation:** Major metro areas (like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru) are progressively undergoing microzonation, which maps soil behavior and seismic hazards down to specific neighborhoods, ensuring safer local zoning laws.
8. **Mass Mock Drills:** Regular large-scale simulation exercises are carried out across regions. Initiatives like the integrated **Exercise Suraksha Chakra** simulate massive earthquakes across multiple locations in the Delhi-NCR zone to test the coordination between local police, hospitals, and disaster teams.

What should be the WAY FORWARD?

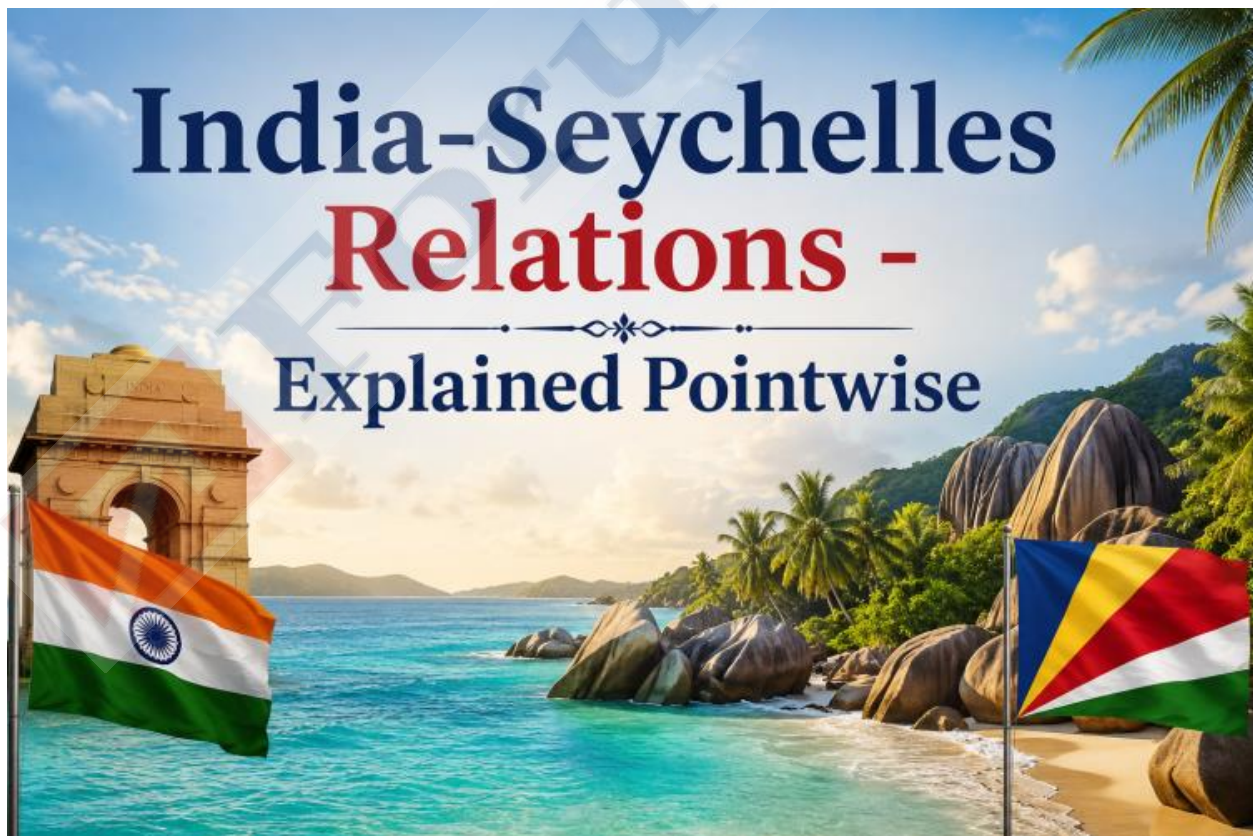
1. **Strict Compliance and Audits:** Implement stricter enforcement mechanisms for existing earthquake-resistant building codes (e.g., IS 1893:2016) for all new constructions. This includes mandatory structural safety certificates and regular, independent structural audits, especially for critical infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and high-rise buildings.
2. **Mandatory Retrofitting of Old Structures:** Accelerate and expand the retrofitting program for the vast inventory of older, non-compliant buildings, particularly in high-risk seismic zones and densely populated urban centers. This will require significant budgetary allocation, government incentives, and public-private partnerships.
3. **Risk-Informed Urban Planning:** Enforce stringent land-use regulations to avoid construction in high-risk liquefaction zones and active fault lines. Promote urban planning that includes adequate open spaces for evacuation and resilient infrastructure development.
4. **Accelerate EEW System Deployment:** Expedite the research, development, and deployment of robust Earthquake Early Warning (EEW) systems, particularly in the Himalayan region and other Zone IV and V areas. Focus on "last-mile connectivity" to ensure timely alerts reach communities effectively.
5. **International Collaboration:** Strengthen collaboration with earthquake-prone countries (e.g., Japan, Chile) to share best practices, research, and technology in earthquake monitoring and early warning systems.
6. **Continuous Awareness Campaigns:** Sustain and intensify public awareness campaigns using diverse media to educate citizens on earthquake risks, safe building practices, and the "Drop, Cover, and Hold On" technique.

7. **Seismic Insurance and Risk Financing:** Explore and promote government-backed earthquake insurance schemes for homes and businesses, potentially with incentives for adopting earthquake-resistant measures, to transfer financial risk and aid faster recovery.
8. **Traditional & Light Architecture in Hill States:** In highly vulnerable eco-sensitive zones like the Himalayas and Northeast India, heavy concrete construction must be discouraged. Traditional, flexible, and lighter architecture (like the *Khasi* houses of Meghalaya or *Dhajji Dewari* of Kashmir) should be modernized and incentivized.
9. **Deepening Microzonation:** Complete the seismic microzonation of all Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities in high-risk zones. This data must be seamlessly integrated into Geographic Information Systems (GIS) used by urban planning authorities to forbid high-rise zoning on unstable or liquefaction-prone soil.

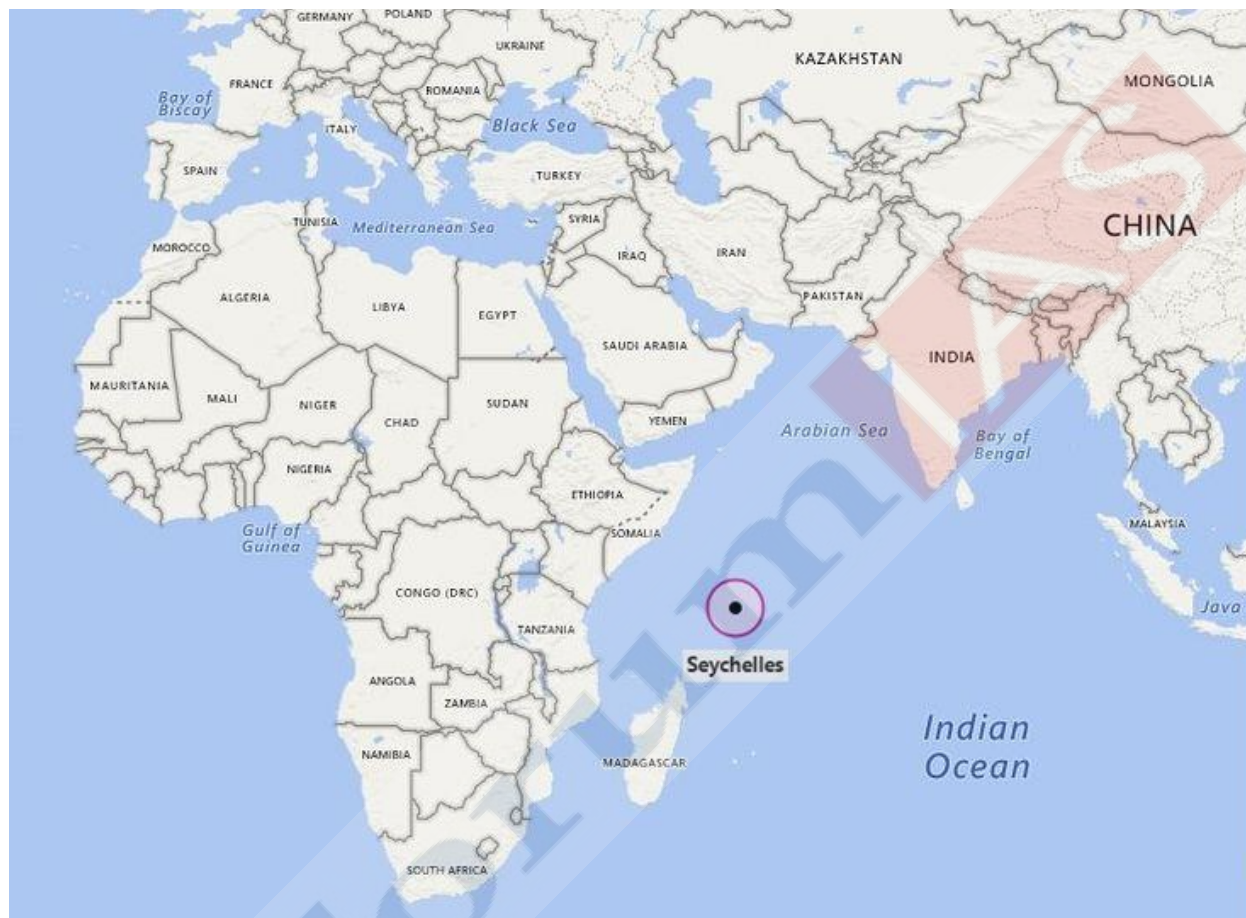
Conclusion:

The seismic activity intensifying globally as well as regionally, from Greece to Indonesia to Chile-Argentina border & Ecuador signals a dynamic earth. India cannot afford delay & must bridge the enforcement gap to prevent large-scale devastation.

Read More: [Indian Express](#), [Wikipedia](#)
USPC GS-1: Geography

India-Seychelles Relations – Explained Pointwise

India and Seychelles share a longstanding, time-tested partnership rooted in historical, cultural, and robust maritime ties. Elevating this relationship, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is embarking on a historic state visit to Seychelles as the Guest of Honour for the Golden Jubilee celebrations of their National Day from June 27–29, 2026.



Evolution of India-Seychelles Relations:

<p>Pre-Independence Period (1770-1975)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The First Inhabitants: In 1770, a small group of five Indians landed in Seychelles as plantation workers alongside French colonists and African slaves, becoming recorded among the very first inhabitants of the islands. ● Colonial Governance: Under British rule, Seychelles was administered for a period from the Bombay Presidency. This fostered regular shipping routes, facilitating the migration of an Indian trading community (predominantly from Tamil Nadu and Gujarat) that integrated tightly into the Creole social fabric.
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<p>Post-Independence Period</p> <p>(1976-2014)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diplomatic Relations: When Seychelles achieved independence on June 29, 1976, India immediately established diplomatic ties, marked symbolically by the participation of the Indian Naval Ship <i>INS Nilgiri</i> in the celebrations. ● Operation Flowers are Blooming (1986): India actively supported the stability of Seychelles. In June 1986, the Indian Navy deployed <i>INS Vindhyagiri</i> to Victoria to help abort an attempted coup against President France-Albert René. ● Anti-Piracy & EEZ Patrols: In response to escalating piracy in the late 2000s, the Indian Navy began regularly patrolling Seychelles' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to secure global shipping lanes.
<p>Recent History (2015-)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The SAGAR Launch (2015): Prime Minister Modi's landmark 2015 visit (the first by an Indian PM in 34 years) saw the rollout of India's SAGAR (<i>Security and Growth for All in the Region</i>) vision, with Seychelles placed at its core. India inaugurated the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CRS) during this visit. ● The Assumption Island Friction: In 2015, both nations signed a pact to develop a joint naval facility on Seychelles' Assumption Island. However, internal political changes and sovereignty concerns within Seychelles led to the project being stalled. ● The MAHASAGAR Era (2024): The bilateral dynamic has evolved into a sophisticated, multi-aligned model under India's upgraded Vision MAHASAGAR (<i>Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions</i>). Rather than pure military posturing, the focus has shifted toward tackling climate change, digital governance, and maritime scientific research.

What is the significance of Seychelles for India?

1. Geopolitical Importance:

- 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.
- 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:

- 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.
- 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 5% 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 Opposition to Infrastructure Projects:** A prominent challenge has been domestic friction within Seychelles over joint agreements, such as the proposed joint coast guard facility on the Assumption Island. Concerns over compromising sovereignty have led to public and political debates within the island nation.
 - b. **Regional Instability:** Political instability in neighboring countries or within Seychelles itself can complicate wider regional cooperation and affect bilateral dynamics.
6. **Maritime Security Threats:** The region remains highly vulnerable to non-traditional threats, including piracy, drug trafficking, and Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, requiring continuous, resource-heavy coordination.

What are the various initiatives to boost the bilateral ties?

1. **Special Economic Package:** India announced a \$175 million economic assistance package to fund public housing, social infrastructure, e-mobility, health services, and capacity building.
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. **Training Programs:** India facilitates regular deputation of experts and professional training schemes, with over 1% of Seychelles' population having received professional or vocational training in India.

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.

What Should be the Way Forward in India-Seychelles Relations?

1. **Strengthen Maritime Security, Non-Maritime Security and Defense:**
 - a. **Operationalize Strategic Infrastructure:** Accelerate the joint development of facilities on Assumption Island to combat piracy, drug trafficking, and illegal fishing.
 - b. **The Colombo Security Conclave (CSC):** With Seychelles actively participating as a full member of the CSC, India should leverage this platform to institutionalize joint efforts against maritime crimes, including illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, narcotics trafficking, and marine pollution.
 - c. **Expand Real-Time Data Sharing:** Integrate Seychelles more deeply into India's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) for enhanced maritime domain awareness.
 - d. **Increase Hydrographic Cooperation:** Emphasize on joint hydrographic surveys, capacity building for the Seychelles People's Defence Forces (SPDF), and shared Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) to protect Seychelles' massive 1.3-million-square-kilometer Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
2. **Accelerate Green Energy and Climate Resilience:**
 - a. **Scale Up Solar Infrastructure:** Deploy distributed solar grids and solar-powered desalination plants across Seychelles' remote islands using Indian line-of-credit funding.
 - b. **Enhance Disaster Risk Management:** Train Seychellois first responders through India's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to build resilience against sea-level rise and extreme weather.
 - c. **Invest in Blue Carbon Projects:** Collaborate on mangrove restoration and marine conservation projects to monetize blue carbon credits.
3. **Export Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):**
 - a. **Deploy the India Stack:** Assist Seychelles in building unified biometric ID systems, digital payment gateways (like UPI), and paperless governance portals.
 - b. **Boost Cybersecurity Support:** Establish a joint cyber-security center in Mahé to protect Seychelles' financial and telecommunications infrastructure from state-sponsored threats.
4. **Diversify Economic and Cultural Ties:**
 - a. **Promote Medical Tourism:** Establish seamless medical visa pathways and direct healthcare referral networks between Seychellois hospitals and Indian medical centers.
 - b. **Expand Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Links:** Create B2B matchmaking platforms for Indian textile, pharmaceutical, and IT firms to partner with local Seychellois businesses.
 - c. **Enhance Educational Exchange:** Increase the number of Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scholarships specifically tailored to marine biology, tourism management, and artificial intelligence.

UPSC GS-2: International Relations
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MSMEs – Significance & Challenges – Explained Pointwise



The United Nations designated 27 June as **Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Day**. The observance raises awareness of the significant contribution of MSMEs towards achieving the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**. The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector is a crucial pillar of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to industrial output, employment generation, and exports. **Driven by formalisation, digital transformation and sustained policy interventions**, the sector continues to expand. It is strengthening its contribution to the economy while advancing the vision of *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* and *Viksit Bharat 2047*.

What are MSMEs?

- **MSMEs:** MSME stands for **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises**. They are businesses classified by their size, based on investment in plant, machinery, or equipment and annual turnover.
- **MSME Regulation in India:** MSMEs are regulated under the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006. In 2007, the Ministry of Small Scale Industries and the Ministry of Agro and Rural Industries were merged to form the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises.

What is the role of MSMEs in India's economic growth?

1. Job Creation & Livelihood Opportunities:

- After agriculture, the MSME sector is the **largest employer** in India. They absorb unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled labor, acting as a major safety net for India's growing workforce.
- Government programs like PM Vishwakarma and Mudra Yojana have expanded self-employment prospects.
- Currently, more than 1 crore registered MSMEs employ nearly 7.5 crore people across the country.

2. Contribution to GDP & Industrial Development:

- MSMEs play a pivotal role in India's economic framework, accounting for around 30% of the GDP and 45% of the total manufacturing output.
- They play a crucial role in industrial clusters by supplying raw materials and intermediates to large industries.
- The Udyam portal has streamlined the formalization of MSMEs, promoting a more structured and organized industrial sector.

3. Rural Development: 51% of MSMEs are located in rural areas. In contrast to large corporations, MSMEs have aided in the industrialization of rural areas at a low capital cost. The sector has made significant contributions to rural socio-economic growth while also supplementing major industries.

4. Enhancing Exports & Foreign Exchange Reserves:

- MSMEs contribute significantly to export promotion by manufacturing a wide range of goods and services for international markets. They often specialise in niche products and cater to specific market demands, enhancing the country's export competitiveness and widening its global market reach.
- Schemes such as the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) program have strengthened MSMEs' integration into global supply chains.

5. Advancing Digital & Technological Innovations:

- Initiatives like the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) are fostering digital transformation within the MSME sector.
- Currently, 72% of MSME transactions are conducted digitally, enhancing financial inclusion and operational efficiency.

6. Social Inclusion: According to the Annual Report of The Ministry of MSMEs (2021-22), the socially backward groups owned almost 66.27% of MSMEs. In rural areas, almost 73.67% of MSMEs were owned by socially backward groups.

Statement No. 2.4: Percentage Distribution of enterprises by social group of owner in rural and urban Areas.

Sector	SC	ST	OBC	Others	Not known	All
Rural	15.37	6.70	51.59	25.62	0.72	100.00
Urban	9.45	1.43	47.80	40.46	0.86	100.00
All	12.45	4.10	49.72	32.95	0.79	100.00

Source: Annual Report, Ministry of MSMEs (2021-22)

7. Promoting Women & Social Entrepreneurship:

- Women-led MSMEs are contributing to gender equality and economic empowerment.
- Under the Mudra Yojana, loans worth ₹32.36 lakh crore have been sanctioned, benefiting 51.41 crore entrepreneurs, with 68% of them being women.

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Source: PIB

What are various government initiatives for MSMEs?

1. **Revised Classification Criteria:** To help MSMEs scale operations and access better resources, the investment and turnover limits for classification have been increased by 2.5 times and 2 times, respectively.

Category	Investment in Plant & Machinery/ Equipment	Annual Turnover
Micro Enterprise	Up to ₹ 2.5 crore	Up to ₹ 10 crore
Small Enterprise	Up to ₹ 25 crore	Up to ₹ 100 crore
Medium Enterprise	Up to ₹ 125 crore	Up to ₹ 500 crore

Source: PIB

2. Udyam Registration Portal:

- A paperless, free digital portal for formalizing MSMEs, integrated with PAN and Aadhaar.
- Provides simplified, online registration giving MSMEs formal recognition, essential for availing benefits across schemes.
- **Registrations** under the Udyam Registration Portal and Udyam Assist Platform crossed **8.7 Crore as on June 2026**.
- The expansion of the formal enterprise base improved access to institutional finance, government schemes and market opportunities for millions of micro and small businesses.

3. Enhanced Credit Availability:

- **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY):** It was launched in April, 2015 for providing loans up to INR 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises. It encompasses 3 financing loans: **Tarun** (loans up to INR 10 Lakhs), **Kishore** (loan up to INR 5 Lakhs), **Shishu** (loan up to INR 50,000).

- **Credit Guarantee:** The credit guarantee cover for micro and small enterprises has been increased from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore, enabling an additional credit infusion of ₹1.5 lakh crore over five years.
 - **Credit Cards for Micro Enterprises:** A customized Credit Card scheme to provide ₹5 lakh in credit to micro enterprises registered on the Udyam portal.
 - **Credit Guarantee Trust Fund for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE):** It provides collateral-free credit to the micro and small enterprise sector.
 - **Special Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (SCLCSS):** This scheme was launched to help the enterprises in the services sector meet various technology requirements. It also has a provision to grant 25% capital subsidy for procurement of plant & machinery and service equipment through institutional credit to MSMEs owned by SC/ST entrepreneurs without any sector specific restrictions on technology upgradation.
 - **PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme):** A credit-linked subsidy scheme aimed at creating employment. It provides subsidies ranging from 15% to 35% on bank loans for setting up new micro-enterprises (up to ₹50 lakhs for manufacturing and ₹20 lakhs for services).
 - **Self- Reliant India (SRI) Fund:** Launched under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package, the SRI Fund is a Fund of Funds (FoF) initiative aimed at providing **equity support to promising MSMEs**. It is helping them overcome funding constraints, scale operations and attract further investment. The SRI Fund has assisted **761 MSMEs** by way of investment worth **₹2,851 crore** (as of May 2026).
4. **Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP):** The scheme aims at strengthening institutions and governance at the Centre and State, improving Centre-State linkages and partnerships and improving access of MSMEs to market and credit, technology upgradation and addressing issues of delayed payments and greening of MSMEs.



Source: PIB

5. Skill Development:

- **A Scheme for Promotion of Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE):** The objectives of this scheme are to create new jobs, promote entrepreneurship culture in the country, and promote innovation in the MSME sector.
 - **Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programmes (ESDP):** Under this, the Ministry of MSME has been organising several programmes focusing on the process of improving skills and knowledge of entrepreneurs, and enhancing the capacity to develop, manage and organise a business venture.
 - **PM Vishwakarma Scheme:** Launched to support traditional artisans and craftspeople (like weavers, blacksmiths, and potters). It provides end-to-end support, including skill upgradation, toolkit incentives, collateral-free enterprise development loans, and digital transaction incentives.
6. **Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI):** The objectives are to organise traditional industries and artisans into clusters to make them competitive and provide support for their long-term sustainability, enhance marketability of products of such clusters, build innovative products, improve technologies etc.
7. **Entrepreneurship & Inclusion:**
- **Stand-Up India:** Loans of ₹10 lakh–1 crore to support women and SC/ST entrepreneurs in setting up new businesses.
 - **First-Time Entrepreneurs Scheme:** Loans up to ₹2 crore and capacity-building for disadvantaged groups.
 - **PM Vishwakarma:** Focuses on enabling traditional artisans and crafts people through training and access to markets, with special financial support.
8. **Technology & Quality Upgradation:**
- **MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme:** Encourages sustainable and high-quality manufacturing with incentives for adopting energy efficiency and zero-defect practices.
 - **Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS):** Supports technology upgradation for MSMEs to make them globally competitive.
 - **MSME Champions Scheme:** An umbrella initiative helping small businesses modernize. It includes components like **Digital MSME** (promoting cloud computing and software adoption), **Lean Manufacturing** (reducing waste and increasing productivity), and **Design Clinics** (for product innovation).



Source: PIB

9. **Public Procurement Policy:** The government has mandated that Central Ministries, Departments, and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) must procure a **minimum of 25%** of their total annual purchases from MSEs (with specific sub-targets reserved for women and SC/ST entrepreneurs).
10. **SAMADHAAN Portal:** One of the biggest complaints of MSMEs is large buyers delaying payments. The MSME Samadhaan portal allows small entrepreneurs to directly file cases against buyers who delay payments beyond 45 days. Buyers are legally liable to pay compound interest at three times the bank rate notified by the RBI if they default.
11. **ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce):** A government-backed initiative aimed at breaking the monopoly of massive e-commerce platforms, allowing local micro-retailers and MSMEs equal access to digital consumer markets.

Digital Initiatives in the MSME Sector

- **Udyog Aadhar Memorandum:** It is a 1-page **online registration system** for MSMEs based on **self-certification**.
- **MSME Databank:** It enables the Ministry of MSME to **streamline and monitor the schemes** and pass on the benefits directly to MSMEs. MSMEs can update their enterprise information as and when required.
- **MY MSME:** It is a web-based application module in the form of a mobile app to facilitate the MSMEs to enjoy benefits of various schemes.
- **MSME Sampark:** It is a digital platform wherein jobseekers (students or trainees of MSME Technology Centres) and recruiters can register themselves for mutually beneficial interactions.
- **MSME Sambandh:** For effective implementation of the Public Procurement Policy, Central Ministries and Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) must procure 25% annual procurement from MSEs. The Ministry of MSME has launched MSME Sambandh.
- **MSME Samadhaan:** This portal gives information about pending payments with the Central Ministries, State Governments, with respect to micro and small enterprises (MSEs).
- **MSME Sambhav:** It is a national-level awareness programme to push economic growth by promoting entrepreneurship and domestic manufacturing.
- **Grievance Monitoring:** The Ministry of MSME has started an **MSME internet grievance monitoring system** (e-Samadhan) to help track and monitor the grievances and suggestions.

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What are the challenges faced by the MSME Sector?

1. **Lack of Formalisation:** Almost 86% of the country's manufacturing MSMEs are unregistered. Only about 1.1 crore of the 6.3 crore MSMEs are registered with the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, and the number of income tax filers is even lower. As a result of limited availability and access to data, as well as legacy underwriting methods, the credit requirements of Indian MSMEs have largely gone unmet.
2. **Access to Technology:**
 - The majority of MSMEs use outdated technology that prevents them from keeping up with the modern world. Adoption of new technology and training employees is difficult and expensive, especially in manufacturing where both physical equipment and software are involved.
 - Lack of access to IT education contributes to the technological gap.
 - Another significant factor is a **lack of awareness**, which **reduces willingness to invest in advanced technology solutions**.

3. **Regulatory and Compliance Burden:** Small businesses frequently struggle with navigating complex and overlapping legal, taxation, and environmental regulations. The resources and time required to manage these compliance tasks can drain a small firm's operational capacity.
4. **Cumbersome Registration Process:** Lengthy registration procedures and inefficient single-window clearance systems create bureaucratic hurdles for MSMEs, delaying their formalization and operational setup.
5. **Lack of Awareness About Government Schemes:** Many MSMEs struggle to navigate the complex landscape of government schemes due to inadequate awareness and poor coordination between the Centre and States.
6. **Financial Constraints:** Limited access to institutional finance, stringent collateral requirements, and high interest rates make it difficult for MSMEs to secure the funds necessary for expansion and modernization.
7. **Delayed Payments:** Large corporate buyers and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) frequently delay paying their MSME vendors far beyond the legally mandated 45-day limit. Although the *MSME Samadhaan* portal exists, many small suppliers hesitate to legally pursue large clients for fear of being blacklisted or losing future contracts.
8. **Export-Related Challenges:** Poor infrastructure, inadequate trade facilitation, and difficulty in meeting Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards restrict MSME participation in global markets.
9. **Labour Shortages and Skill Gaps:** A lack of skilled workers, wage disparities across regions, and inefficient training centers result in low productivity and reduced competitiveness for MSMEs.
10. **Marketing and Supply Chain Issues:** Smaller enterprises often have limited marketing budgets and lack the expertise to build strong brand identities. Furthermore, they struggle to penetrate distribution networks and supply chains, which are typically dominated by larger businesses.

What should be the way forward?

1. **Strengthening Credit Access & Financial Support:**
 - Expand collateral-free lending via fintech platforms and alternative credit assessment models.
 - Mandate strict payment timelines under the MSME Samadhan portal to ensure timely dues from large corporations and government agencies.
 - Enhance the role and reach of MUDRA and SIDBI to facilitate easier credit access.
 - Develop tailored fintech solutions and promote financial literacy programs for MSMEs.
2. **Reducing Compliance Burden & Regulatory Bottlenecks:**
 - Implement single-window clearance for faster approvals and streamlined processes.
 - Establish state-level MSME facilitation councils for quicker grievance redressal.
 - Simplify GST registration and reduce the frequency of regulatory amendments to ensure ease of doing business.
 - Set up a dedicated MSME Coordination Council to streamline policy implementation and address sector-specific challenges.
3. **Enhancing Digital & Technological Adoption:**
 - Expanding schemes like *RAMP* to provide direct, hassle-free subsidies for green energy adoption (like solar rooftops), smart manufacturing tools, and cloud-based inventory management.
 - Facilitate adoption of AI, IoT, and automation through MSME technology hubs.
 - Launch Digital MSME 2.0 to improve cybersecurity, cloud computing access, and digital marketing capabilities.

- Strengthen the Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS) to support MSMEs investing in advanced technologies.
 - Promote MSME Innovation & Incubation Hubs in collaboration with academic and research institutions.
4. **Workforce Development & Skilling Initiatives:**
- Ensure uniform labor wages and introduce affordable labor insurance schemes for MSME employees.
 - Align skill training programs under Skill India, PMKVY, and NAPS to address MSME workforce needs.
 - Promote women entrepreneurs through targeted vocational training and credit linkage schemes.
5. **Infrastructure Development & Cluster-Based Growth:**
- Strengthen MSME clusters under the Micro & Small Enterprises – Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP).
 - Encourage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to set up Common Facility Centers (CFCs) for shared resources.
 - Develop MSME Industrial Parks with subsidized utilities, logistics support, and better last-mile connectivity.

Conclusion:

MSMEs can play a vital role in growth of the economy as India enters the *Amrit Kaal* phase. They can help in inclusive and balanced development and make India a global manufacturing hub. The Government has been supporting the MSMEs through various initiatives, the need is to focus on the implementation and realizing the outcomes.

UPSC GS-3: Economics

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Food Safety Regulations in India – Explained Pointwise



Food safety is a critical public health concern in India, directly affecting nutrition, health, and economic productivity. The recent rise in food poisoning incidents across schools, restaurants, and public gatherings has highlighted persistent gaps in food handling, storage, and regulation. Ensuring safe food is essential for protecting public health and consumer confidence.



FSSAI Initiatives For Food Safety

<p>Eat Right India Movement</p>	<p>This movement has been launched to transform the country's food system in order to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all Indians. It is aligned to the National Health Policy 2017 with its focus on preventive and promotive healthcare.</p>
<p>Eat Right Station Certification</p>	<p>It is awarded by FSSAI to railway stations that set benchmarks (as per the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006) in providing safe and wholesome food to passengers.</p>
<p>Food Hygiene Rating Scheme</p>	<p>It is a certification system developed by FSSAI for food businesses supplying food directly to consumers, either on or off-premise.</p>
<p>Food Safety Mitra scheme</p>	<p>The scheme aims to create an ecosystem of Food Safety Mitras (FSM) who will help Food Business organisations (FBO) with licensing and registration, training and auditing hygiene among others</p>
<p>State food safety index</p>	<p>It is an index developed by FSSAI to measure the performance of states on five significant parameters of food safety- compliance, Human resources and institutional data, Food testing- infrastructure and surveillance, training & capacity building and consumer empowerment</p>

Created By Forum IAS

What are the operational Food Safety regulations in India?

- **Food Safety:** Food safety refers to the **procedures, practices, and regulations** implemented to **ensure that food is safe for consumption**. It **encompasses all measures** taken to **prevent foodborne illnesses, contamination, and other hazards** that may arise during the **production, processing, storage, distribution, and preparation of food**.
- **Food Safety Regulator in India:** Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is the food safety regulator in India. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an **autonomous statutory body** established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** (FSS Act). **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India** is the administrative Ministry of FSSAI. Its headquarter is in Delhi.

- **Role of FSSAI:** The main role of the authority is to **regulate and monitor** the **manufacturing, processing, distribution, sale and import of food** while ensuring **safe and wholesome food** to the consumers.

Food Safety Regulations in India:

<p>Food Safety and Standard Act, 2006</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The parent Act that outlines the responsibilities of Food Business Operators (FBOs), consumer rights, penalties for adulteration, and established the FSSAI. ● The Act aims to establish a single reference point for all matters relating to food safety and standards, by moving from multi- level, multi-departmental control to a single line of command. ● The Act established FSSAI and the State Food Safety Authorities for each State.
<p>Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Regulations, 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Regulations, 2011 is the core rulebook. It consolidates standards for various food product categories, including dairy, spices, and cereals, into a single comprehensive document. ● These rules outline the procedures for the appointment of food safety officers, functioning of the Food Safety Appellate Tribunal and the Registrar of the Appellate Tribunal, food safety and standards on Organic Food and regulates Food Advertising in India. ● The rule prohibits and restrict sales or approval for Non- Specified Food and Food Ingredients. ● It also covers Licensing and Registration, Packaging and Labelling of Food Businesses, Food Product Standards and Food Additives Regulation.
<p>Licensing and Registration</p>	<p>The Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulations, 2011 classifies food businesses based on size (petty, small, or large) and requires them to obtain either a registration or a state/central license to operate legally.</p>
<p>Packaging and Labeling</p>	<p>The Food Safety and Standards (Packaging and Labeling) Regulations, 2011 mandates specific information on food packages (e.g., ingredient lists, nutritional information, and vegetarian/non-vegetarian logos). There are also separate, specific regulations for Alcoholic Beverages and Food Additives.</p>

Contaminants, Toxins and Residues	The Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regulations, 2011 sets maximum permissible limits for heavy metals, pesticide residues, and mycotoxins in food products.
Proprietary Foods and Novel Foods	The Food Safety and Standards (Proprietary Foods and Novel Foods) Regulations, 2019 governs foods that do not have a standardized category, requiring them to meet specific safety criteria before being sold.
Import Regulations	The Food Safety and Standards (Import) Regulations, 2017 details the procedure for customs clearance of food shipments, which often involves sampling and laboratory testing at the port of entry.

What are the challenges to food Safety in India?

- Rampant Adulteration:** Widespread and rampant adulteration of food products which includes milk, spices, and edible oils, remains a grave challenge to food safety in India. **For ex- A 2012 study conducted by the FSSAI across 33 states** found that **milk in India** was **adulterated with diluted water, detergent, fat and even urea**.
- Feeding of 'empty calories':** Major packed food brand products **contain items that have no nutritive value** like **added sugar**. These are major causes of diabetes, cardio vascular diseases and obesity in India.
- Weak Enforcement and Accountability:** The enforcement of food safety regulations is often lax in India. **Many food businesses operate without proper licenses** and **continue to compromise on safety standards**.
- Corrupt practices on part of FMCG players:** The Fast Moving Consumer Goods industry players are often **found to indulge in violation of the labelling requirements** about the ingredients in their products. **For ex- Maggi noodles ban due to high levels of lead and MSG**.
- Lack of Infrastructure and Resources:** The food safety standards domain in India suffers from the **challenge of shortage of laboratories, trained personnel, and funds necessary for regular and stringent food inspections**. **For ex- Use of synthetic sweetener in cake** leading to death of teenage girl in Punjab.
- Severe Manpower Shortage:** There is a critical shortage of food safety officers (FSOs) across the country, who are the primary enforcers of the law. In some states, vacancies have been as high as 93%. A Parliament committee has specifically criticized the FSSAI for its "non-serious" approach and lack of manpower. The vacancies in FSSAI saw an increase from 30% to almost 40% in last 5 years, on the other hand, only 2997 of the sanctioned positions of the 4208 Food Safety Officers (FSOs) have been filled as of the third quarter of FY 2025-26.
- Testing Facilities:** There is a shortage of well-equipped, accredited laboratories, especially in tier-2/tier-3 cities and rural areas, leading to delays in monitoring and quality control.
- Vast Informal Sector:** The bulk of India's food industry consists of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) and street vendors. These operators often lack the knowledge, resources, or regulatory capacity to implement robust Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS).

9. **Limited Public Awareness:** A significant proportion of the Indian population remains unaware of food safety practices, including proper food handling, storage, and hygiene. **For ex- Over use of pesticides and fruit ripening agents in agriculture cause cancer.**
10. **Complex Regulatory Framework:** The complex regulatory framework for food safety makes it **difficult for small and medium enterprises businesses, to adhere to the necessary standards.** These also lead to **regulatory gaps and inconsistencies in enforcement.**

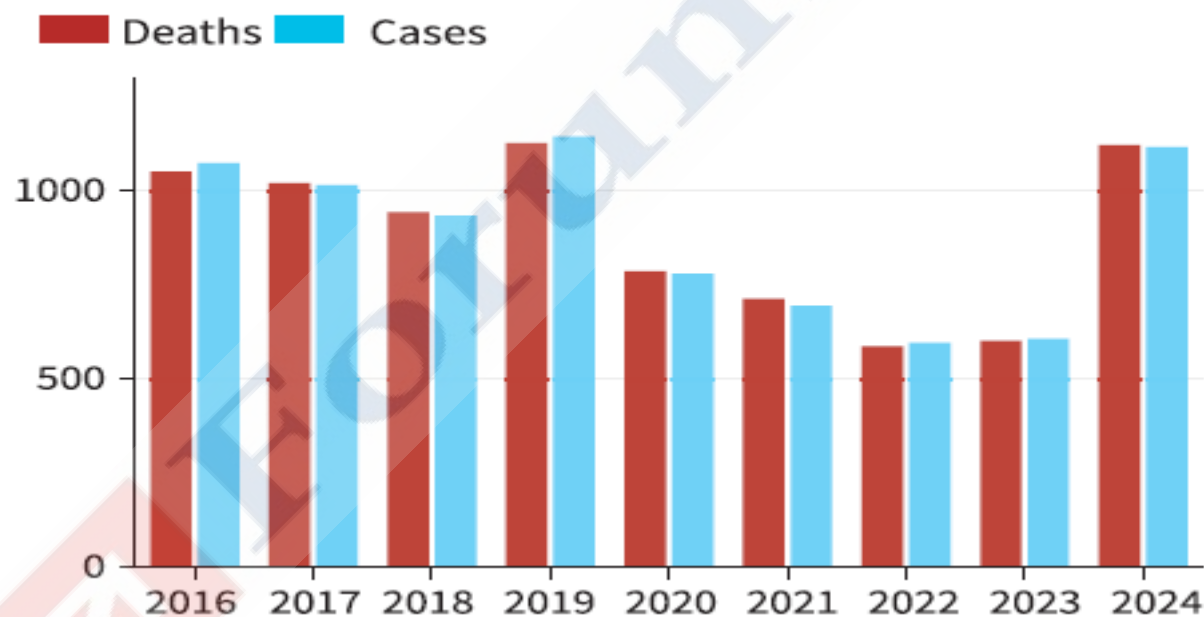
What are the consequences of the Decline in Food Safety Standards in India?

The deteriorating state of food safety and the violation of food safety standards in India have far reaching consequences, which are mentioned below:

1. Deterioration of Public Health:

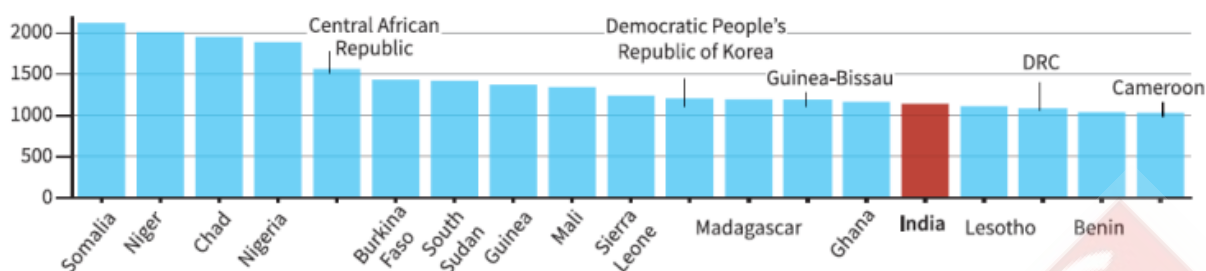
- Consumption of contaminated or adulterated food leads to a range of public health issues like **foodborne illnesses, gastrointestinal disorders, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and diabetes.** The impact is particularly severe on vulnerable populations like children and the elderly.
- As per the latest **Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India Report**, a total of 1122 people died due to food poisoning in India in 2024:

CHART 1: More than a thousand cases and deaths due to food poisoning were reported in 2024



Source: The Hindu

- Though, the total foodborne disease burden has declined since 2000, a country-wise analysis of the rate of years of life lost due to foodborne diseases showed that India ranked 15th, along with several low income African nations.

CHART 4: "Foodborne years of lives lost" per 1,00,000 persons. India is ranked 15th, along with many African countries

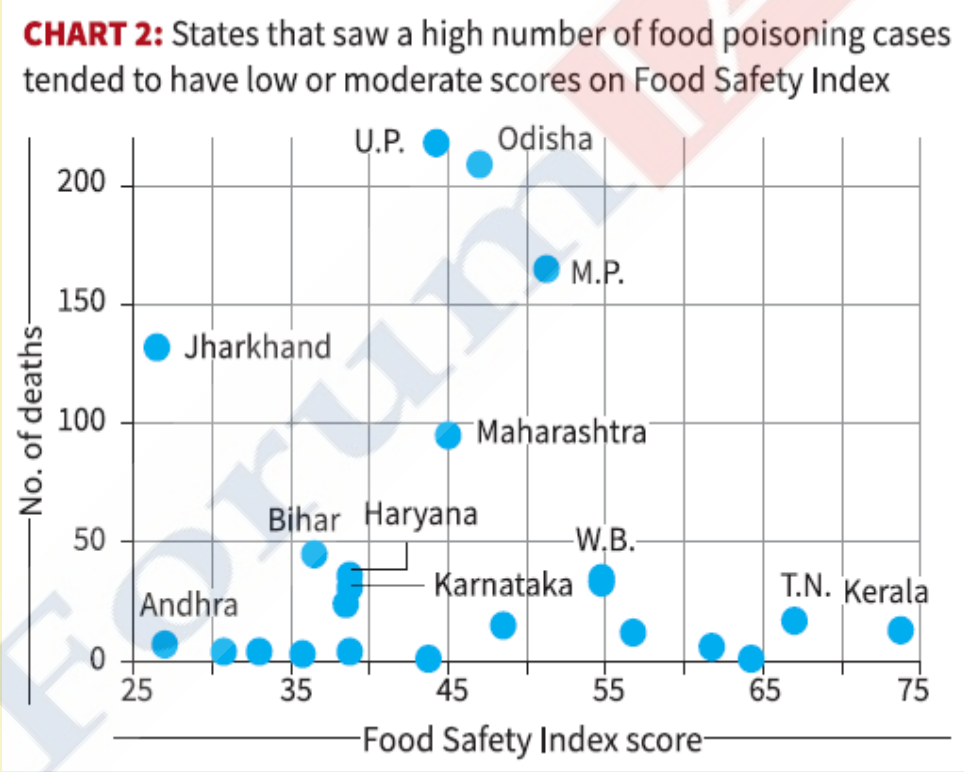
Source: The Hindu

- Economic Implications:** Contaminated and unsafe food products often leads to massive product recalls, loss of consumer trust, and damage to the reputation of the food brand. **For ex- Recall of Maggi after test results confirmed of high levels of lead and MSG. US FDA have halted shipments from major Indian spice brands due to issues like salmonella.**
- Undermining of 'Make in India' Initiative:** The **decline in food safety standards** become a significant roadblock in India's effort to promote indigenous manufacturing and boost exports under the 'Make in India' initiative. Safety concerns deter both domestic and international consumers from embracing Indian products. **For ex- Rejection of Indian agricultural and food products from EU markets on account of violation of food standards.**
- Environmental Impact:** The use of substandard and unsafe agricultural practices harm the environment through **soil and water contamination**. The overuse of pesticides and the mishandling of food waste contribute to **ecological degradation**.
- Loss of Consumer Trust:** In a hyper-connected digital market, a single safety warning or viral report about adulteration can destroy a brand's reputation overnight. Regulatory clampdowns by the FSSAI on prominent brands for misleading claims (e.g. using deceptive "100% Natural" or unproven medicinal claims) show that consumers and authorities are increasingly intolerant of transparency loopholes.
- Straining the Healthcare Infrastructure:** India's public healthcare system is already heavily burdened. A surge in foodborne illnesses or pesticide-linked chronic diseases exponentially increases the load on government hospitals, diverts critical medical funds, and lowers the overall productivity of the national workforce due to medical leaves and disability.

Read More- [In FSSAI index, nearly all major states slip on food safety](#)**What are the initiatives taken by the government and FSSAI to promote Food Safety?**

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Food Safety on Wheels (FSW)	FSSAI has deployed over 300 Mobile Food Testing Laboratories (MFTLs) nationwide. These mobile vans perform on-the-spot testing for everyday adulterants in milk, ghee, and spices, alongside conducting public awareness campaigns.
FoSCoS Portal (Food Safety Compliance System)	A unified digital platform that has completely paper-and-bureaucracy proofed the application for registrations and licenses, drastically boosting compliance and formalization.
FoSTaC (Food Safety Training and Certification)	A mandatory program designed to train food handlers across small, medium, and large FBOs. To date, over 3 lakh street food vendors have undergone free hygiene and cross-contamination training.
Waste Management (RUCO)	The Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative has led to the collection of over 55 lakh litres of used cooking oil, with 39 lakh litres converted into biodiesel, tackling both health and environmental issues.

<p>State Food Safety Index</p>	<p>It is an index developed by FSSAI to measure the performance of states on five significant parameters of food safety:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compliance 2. Human resources and institutional data 3. Food testing- infrastructure and surveillance 4. Training & capacity building 5. Consumer empowerment <p>The latest report of the Index showed that the States that saw high number of food poisoning cases also tend to have low or moderate scores on the index:</p> <p>CHART 2: States that saw a high number of food poisoning cases tended to have low or moderate scores on Food Safety Index</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="446 682 1404 1449"> <caption>Data points from Chart 2</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>State</th> <th>Food Safety Index score (approx.)</th> <th>No. of deaths (approx.)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>U.P.</td><td>45</td><td>210</td></tr> <tr><td>Odisha</td><td>50</td><td>200</td></tr> <tr><td>M.P.</td><td>55</td><td>160</td></tr> <tr><td>Jharkhand</td><td>25</td><td>130</td></tr> <tr><td>Maharashtra</td><td>45</td><td>90</td></tr> <tr><td>Bihar</td><td>35</td><td>45</td></tr> <tr><td>Haryana</td><td>40</td><td>35</td></tr> <tr><td>W.B.</td><td>55</td><td>35</td></tr> <tr><td>Karnataka</td><td>45</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>Andhra</td><td>25</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>T.N.</td><td>65</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>Kerala</td><td>75</td><td>10</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: The Hindu</p>	State	Food Safety Index score (approx.)	No. of deaths (approx.)	U.P.	45	210	Odisha	50	200	M.P.	55	160	Jharkhand	25	130	Maharashtra	45	90	Bihar	35	45	Haryana	40	35	W.B.	55	35	Karnataka	45	15	Andhra	25	10	T.N.	65	15	Kerala	75	10
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What should be the Way Forward?

1. **Strengthen Infrastructure and Resources:** There must be an increase in the investment in food safety infrastructure, including laboratories, training facilities, and regulatory bodies. Adequate funding and resources are needed to conduct regular inspections and ensure compliance with safety standards.

2. **Simplification of Regulations:** The regulatory framework for food safety should be **made more accessible and business-friendly**. Simplification and streamlining of regulations **can encourage compliance**, especially among **small and medium-sized enterprises**.
3. **Strict Enforcement and Accountability:** Regulatory bodies must rigorously enforce food safety standards. This includes imposing stringent penalties for violations and taking legal action against non-compliant businesses. **For ex- Specification of an upper limit for added sugars**.
4. **India-Specific Research:** Launch Total Diet Studies (TDS) and localized toxicological analyses to ensure safety standards accurately reflect Indian dietary habits and agricultural practices.
5. **Empowering Third-Party Auditing:** Scaling up the network of certified, private third-party food safety auditors to regularly inspect mid-to-large restaurants and food factories, freeing up state resources to focus on unorganized sectors.
6. **Enhancement of Public Awareness:** A comprehensive public awareness campaign on food safety should be launched targeting both consumers and producers regarding the importance of food safety. A 24/7 consumer helpline, easier grievance redressal, and access to inspection reports are seen as vital for building public trust and enabling citizen participation in the system.
7. **Encouragement of Responsible Agricultural Practices:** **Promoting responsible and sustainable agricultural practices** can reduce contamination risks at the source. **Encouraging the use of organic farming, reducing pesticide usage, and implementing proper waste management** are essential steps.
8. **Aligning with Global Standards:** Continuously matching FSSAI standards with the *Codex Alimentarius* to ensure that Indian food products face zero entry barriers or chemical residue rejections in stringent international markets like the EU and the USA.

Conclusion: By bridging infrastructural gaps, empowering informal street vendors, and enforcing zero-tolerance policies against adulteration, India can secure public health and establish itself as a trusted global food exporter.

Read More: [The Hindu](#)

UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Government Intervention and regulation of various sectors