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TOPIC

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| 1. | PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT (PoSH) ACT, 2013 |
| 2. | PM FLAGS OFF COUNTRY'S FIRST REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM 'NAMO BHARAT' |

PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT (PoSH) ACT, 2013

SOURCE: [TH](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

Supreme Court orders States to appoint District Officers under law against sexual harassment in workplaces. The Bench said women found protection under a law against sexual harassment in workplace beyond their reach for the simple reason that there was no one to go to with their complaints

BACKGROUND OF PoSH ACT:

- The **Bhanwari Devi incident in 1992** involved the gang-rape of a social worker associated with the Women's Development Project in Rajasthan. This incident occurred when she attempted to stop the marriage of a one-year-old girl.
- In 1997, the Supreme Court (SC) responded to petitions filed against such crimes and recognized the absence of a specific law addressing "sexual harassment at workplaces."
- The SC established a set of guidelines ('Vishakha guidelines') to address this legal gap until a dedicated law could be enacted.
- These guidelines were based on:
 - Article 15** of the Indian constitution, which deals with protection against discrimination related to religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth.
 - International conventions and norms, including the General Recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, which India had ratified in 1993.
- The **Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) Bill** was introduced by the Women and Child Development Ministry in 2007. It underwent multiple amendments and eventually became law on December 9, 2013, following approval by the Indian Parliament.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is meant to address grievances of women across all formal & informal employment, including clients, customers, domestic workers, contract employees, volunteers, probationers, trainees and interns, and applies to all workplaces, including non-traditional set-ups

Remedies

- A woman who has experienced harassment can directly lodge a complaint with the police
- It is mandatory for the police to register an FIR without delay
- The complainant's statement is always recorded by a woman officer, or in presence of a woman police
- If the police probe finds the complainant employer's internal committee did not do its job, the company management and the panel members are liable to face penal action

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE POSH ACT:

- Provides a definition of sexual harassment**, encompassing unwelcome behaviours like physical contact, verbal and non-verbal actions, requests for sexual favors, sexually suggestive comments, and displaying explicit materials, among others.
- Enumerates five circumstances that qualify as sexual harassment:
 - Promising or implying preferential treatment in employment.
 - Threatening or implying detrimental consequences for employment.
 - Threatening present or future job status.
 - Creating interference with work or fostering an intimidating, offensive, or hostile work environment.
 - Subjecting individuals to humiliating treatment likely to impact their health or safety.
- Defines the term "employee" more broadly**, extending protection to all women employees, including those regularly employed, temporary workers, contractual workers, ad hoc employees, daily wage laborers, apprentices, and interns, ensuring they can seek recourse for workplace sexual harassment.
- Expands the scope of the "workplace"** to include a variety of settings, not limited to traditional offices, covering a wide range of organizations across sectors, including non-traditional workplaces such as telecommuting arrangements, and places visited by employees for work-related purposes.



THE INTERNAL COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE (ICC) AND LOCAL COMMITTEES (LC):

1. The law mandates that **any employer with more than 10 employees establish an ICC**, allowing women to file formal sexual harassment complaints.
2. The composition of the **ICC must include a minimum of four members, with at least half being women:**
 - a. A Presiding Officer, who should be a senior-level female employee within the workplace.
 - b. Two Members selected from the workforce, possessing experience in social work or legal knowledge.
 - c. One "External Member" from NGOs to mitigate potential undue influence from higher-ranking personnel.
3. Additionally, the **Act requires every district in the country to establish a LC to receive complaints from women employed in organizations with fewer than 10 employees and those in the informal sector, including domestic workers.**

ROLE OF ICCS AND LCS:

1. Both committees are responsible for conducting investigations in accordance with the PoSH Act and adhering to the "principles of natural justice" as specified in the Act's regulations.
2. A woman can submit a written complaint to either the internal or local complaints committee within three to six months of the occurrence of the sexual harassment incident.
3. The committees have **two methods to address complaints:**
 - a. **Facilitating "conciliation"** between the complainant and the respondent (which cannot involve financial settlements).
 - b. **Initiating an inquiry** and taking appropriate action based on their findings.

DUTIES OF THE EMPLOYER:

1. Employers are obligated to file an annual audit report with the district officer, detailing the number of sexual harassment complaints received and the actions taken during the year.
2. Employers must organize regular workshops and awareness programs to educate employees about the Act and conduct orientation and training for ICC members.
3. Failure by the employer to establish an ICC or comply with any other provisions results in fines, with penalties of up to ₹50,000, escalating for repeated violations.

OTHER ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN SAFETY IN INDIA:

PRE-BIRTH:

- ❖ **Female Foeticide:** This refers to the deliberate termination of pregnancies carrying female fetuses, driven by a preference for sons and the devaluation of female births.

INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD:

- ❖ **Deep-Rooted Gender Inequality:** Traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms play a role in sustaining unequal power dynamics.

Recommendations of the **Justice Verma Committee on Sexual Harassment at Workplace:**

The Justice JS Verma committee was set up after the Nirbhaya incident of December 2012

- **Domestic workers** should be included within the purview of the PoSH Act.
- It proposes a **conciliation process** where the complainant and the respondent are initially encouraged to resolve the issue through negotiation and agreement.
- The **employer should pay compensation** to the woman who has suffered sexual harassment.
- **Setting up of an Employment tribunal instead of an internal complaints committee (ICC)** in the PoSH Act.



- ❖ **Gender Disparities in Education:** The limited availability of quality education perpetuates inequality and restricts women's economic and social mobility.
- ❖ **Child Marriage:** Despite legal prohibitions, child marriages are still openly practiced in many regions of India. Notably, events like Akshay Tritiya are popular for mass child marriages.

ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD:

- ❖ **Online Abuse:** Women often face online harassment, abuse, and trolling, rendering the internet unsafe. Emerging challenges include cyberbullying, online harassment, and the sharing of explicit images without consent, as seen in cases like "Sulli deals."
- ❖ **Domestic Violence:** Cruelty by husbands ranks among the top crimes against women. Cultural norms and societal stigma deter victims from reporting such incidents, while inadequate legal frameworks hinder the pursuit of justice.
- ❖ **Sexual Violence:** A significant portion of Indian women, as revealed in the NFHS-5 report, have experienced physical or sexual violence. According to the NCRB, India reported an average of 86 rapes daily and 49 offenses against women per hour in 2021.
- ❖ **Honor Killings:** This refers to the act of murdering female family members by male family members due to the perception that the women have brought dishonour to the family.

ELDERLY:

- ❖ **Lack of Access to Healthcare:** Limited access to healthcare facilities and cultural taboos surrounding women's health contribute to healthcare disparities among elderly women.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN SAFETY:

Scheme Name	Objective and Description
Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Launched in 2015○ To address the declining child sex ratio and promote the education and empowerment of girls.
Nirbhaya Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Established in 2013○ Funds various projects, such as the "One-Stop Centre" (OSC) scheme and the "Safe City" project○ To enhance the safety and security of women by supporting initiatives related to women's safety.
One-Stop Centre (OSC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Operates in over 700 locations.○ Provides medical aid, legal aid, counselling, and shelter for women in distress.○ Provides integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces.
Mahila Police Volunteer (MPV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Launched in 2016○ Empowers women by involving them as community volunteers in addressing safety concerns.○ Over 1 lakh (100,000) MPVs have been deployed in various states.
Swadhar Greh	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Provides temporary accommodation and support to women in distress, such as victims of domestic violence and trafficking.○ Over 2,800 Swadhar Greh centers have been established across India.
Women Helpline (181)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A 24/7 helpline for women in distress to seek assistance, information, and support.



PM FLAGS OFF COUNTRY'S FIRST REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM 'NAMO BHARAT'

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) and emphasized its significance for the nation's development.
- The RRTS is part of the government's plan to improve connectivity, reduce travel times, and stimulate economic growth.

REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM (RRTS):

- **About:**
 - ✓ The RRTS is a new rail-based, semi-high-speed, high-frequency commuter transit system.
 - ✓ It is designed for intercity commuting, with a design speed of 180 kmph.
 - ✓ The system offers high-speed trains running every 15 minutes, which can increase to every five minutes when required.
- **Connectivity Corridors in NCR:**
 - ✓ Eight Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridors identified.
 - ✓ Prioritized corridors for the first phase include Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut, Delhi-Gurugram-SNB-Alwar, and Delhi-Panipat.
- **Authority:**
 - ✓ National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) is responsible for RRTS projects.
 - ✓ NCRTC is a joint venture involving the Indian government, and the state governments of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

NEED FOR SPEED

- 82 km** | Length of Delhi-Meerut RRTS corridor
- 160 kmph** | Operational speed of RRTS trains
- 180 kmph** | Design speed
- 5-10 km** | Distance between RRTS stations
- 2022** | Year when the first train will start operating
- 30** | Six-coach trains for RRTS corridor
- 10** | Three-coach trains for local transit in Meerut
- 6** | Automatic and wide plug doors, three on each side
- 4** | Doors in business class coach, two on each side

FEATURES

- Transverse 2x2 seats with adequate leg room
- Optimised aisle width with grab handles and railings for standing passengers
- Overhead luggage rack
- Onboard Wi-Fi, mobile and laptop charging sockets
- Double glazed, large safety glass windows for panoramic view of the outside
- Lighting and temperature control systems
- Public announcement system, dynamic route map display, infotainment display, etc
- Automatic plug doors to reduce air friction and noise
- CCTV, fire and smoke detector, fire extinguisher, and door indicator
- Dedicated wheelchair space located near train doorway for easy access
- Lightweight and compact propulsion system
- Push buttons for selective opening of doors. All doors will not open at every station
- One business-class coach per train, with spacious and reclining seats
- Special business lounge at platform
- One coach in every train reserved for women
- All RRTS stations will have platform screen doors



IMPORTANCE OF RRTS

- Integrated with various transport modes, Connects Airports, Railway Stations, Bus Terminals, Delhi Metro Stations, etc.
- Fast connectivity with satellite towns reduces urbanization burden in Delhi.
- Decreases reliance on fossil fuel vehicles for travel between outskirts and the city.
- Significant reduction in air pollutants like PM 2.5, Nitrogen Oxide, Hydrocarbons, and Monoxide.
- Increases the public transport share from 37% to 63% in the region.
- Potential to remove one lakh passenger vehicles from the roads.
- Enhances traffic decongestion.
- Reduces travel time significantly, Delhi to Meerut's Modipuram in less than an hour.

210 COACHES ORDERED

Six coaches in each RRTS train

Standard	Premium (with reclining seats, extra leg space)	For women	210 coaches ordered for the 82km RRTS corridor
4	1	1	

Features of the coaches

- Ergonomically designed and cushioned seats with overhead luggage racks
- Wi-Fi, mobile/laptop charging facilities at every seat
- The last coach in each train will have space for stretchers
- Wheelchairs and an emergency alarm system



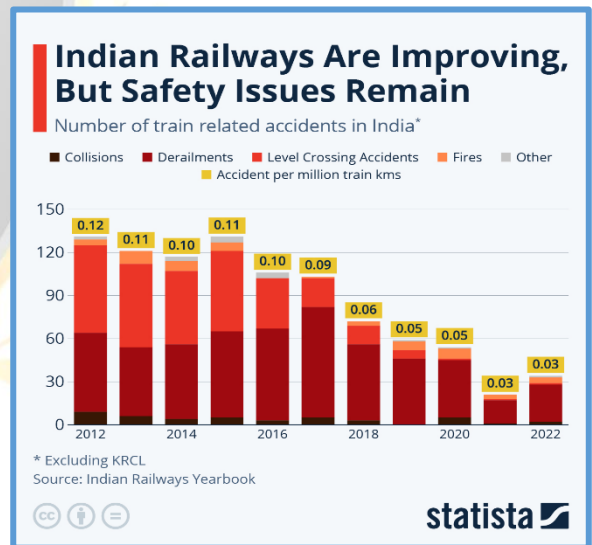
RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE IN INDIA

- Indian Railways is one of the **world's largest rail networks, covering 70,000 km.**
- It operates **21,000 trains daily**, serving **23 million passengers** and transporting **3 million tonnes of freight.**
- Total **route length of 68,043 km (42,280 mi)**, running track length of **102,831 km (63,896 mi)** and track length of **128,305 km (79,725 mi)** as of **31 March 2022.**
- India's railway network is the **4th largest railway network in the world and 2nd largest in Asia**, under single management.
- Indian Railways is the **largest government undertaking in the country.**
- Beyond transportation, it supports various activities like business, tourism, and pilgrimage.
- Facilitates long-distance travel effectively.
- Plays a crucial role in national integration.



CHALLENGES FACED BY THE INDIAN RAILWAY SYSTEM:

- **Overcrowding:**
 - ✓ **Crowded trains and stations lead to passenger discomfort, safety issues, and operational problems.**
- **Aging Infrastructure:**
 - ✓ **Much of the railway tracks and stations are outdated, requiring repairs or replacement, leading to safety concerns and inefficiencies.**
- **Safety Concerns:**
 - ✓ **Accidents, crashes, and safety lapses demand significant investments in safety measures and training.**
- **Operational Delays:**
 - ✓ **Frequent delays affect passengers and freight transportation.**
- **Technological Lag:**
 - ✓ **The railway technology in India needs significant upgrades to meet global standards in areas like signaling, communication, and train control systems.**

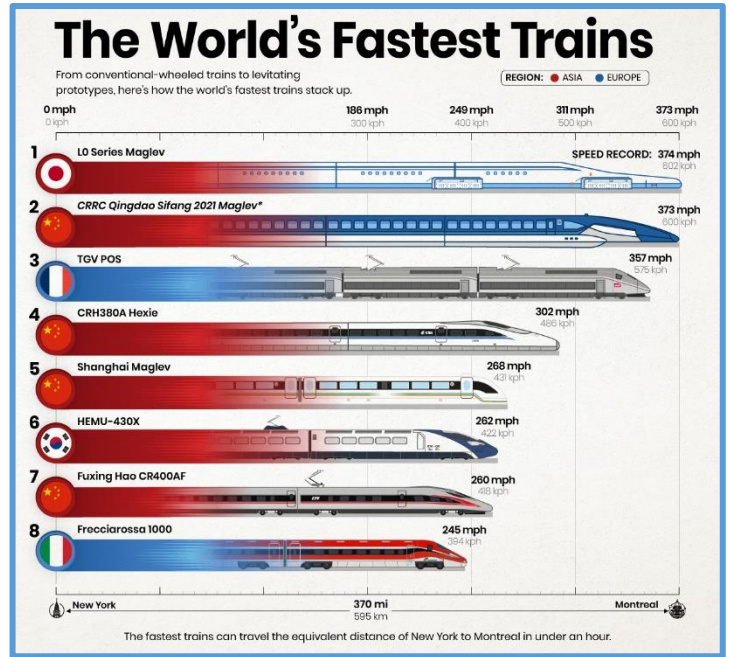


GLOBAL COMPARISON OF RAILWAY SYSTEMS:

- **China:**
 - ✓ **China's high-speed rail network is extensive and rapidly expanding.**
 - ✓ **They have trains that can reach speeds of over 400 km/h (248 mph) on dedicated high-speed lines.**
 - ✓ **In contrast, India's high-speed rail projects, like the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor, are still in the planning and construction stages, with lower projected speeds.**
- **Japan:**



- ✓ Japan's Shinkansen, or "bullet trains," are known for their **punctuality, safety, and speeds exceeding 320 km/h (199 mph).**
- ✓ India's **fastest trains, like the Vande Bharat Express, reach speeds of around 160 km/h (99 mph), less than half the speed of Japan's Shinkansen.**
- **Europe:**
 - ✓ European countries, such as **France and Germany, have well-established high-speed rail networks with trains traveling at speeds up to 320 km/h (199 mph).**
 - ✓ These systems are **known for their integration with other modes of transport and sustainability.**
 - ✓ **India's rail network faces challenges in seamless integration and sustainability.**
- **United States:**
 - ✓ While the **U.S. has an extensive freight rail network, its passenger rail services, like Amtrak, are often criticized for lagging behind in terms of speed and efficiency.**
 - ✓ **India, too, faces challenges in developing high-speed passenger rail services.**



GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN RAILWAYS SECTOR

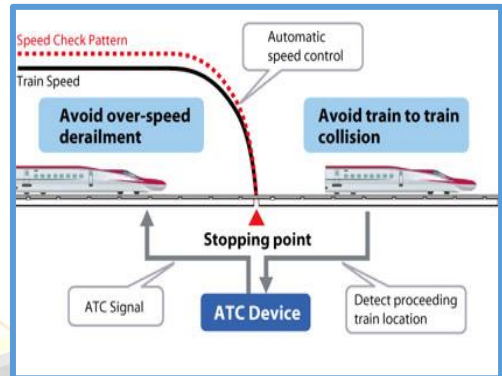
Initiative/Action	Details
<i>Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) from Uttar Pradesh to Mumbai. ✓ Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) from Ludhiana, Punjab, to Dankuni, West Bengal. ✓ Funding from the World Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). ✓ Expected completion by 2023-24.
<i>PM Gati Shakti</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Transformational approach driven by Roads, Railways, Ports, Airports, Waterways, Mass Transport, and Logistics Infrastructure. ✓ Aims to develop modern infrastructure and provide multi-modal integrated connectivity.
<i>Atma Nirbhar Bharat</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Over 97% of equipment for electric locomotive production sourced domestically. ✓ Manufacturing smart coaches with advanced features.
<i>Kisan Rail</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Operates 157 trains on eight routes, transporting agricultural commodities.
<i>Green Fuel Initiatives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Targeting 100% electrification of railway lines by December 2023. ✓ Eliminates the need for separate power cars, reducing energy costs.
<i>Station Infrastructure Redevelopment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Redeveloping 400 railway stations under PPP model. ✓ Aims for self-sustainable, technologically advanced, passenger-friendly stations.
<i>Digitization</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wi-Fi facility provided at 6,045 railway stations.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implementation of video surveillance systems and IP-based CCTV cameras.
North-East and Mining District Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Expanding railway connectivity in the North-East. ✓ Mapping mining districts for enhanced connectivity.
Avataran: The Seven Missions of Indian Railways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Includes missions like Mission 25 Tonne, Mission Zero Accident, Mission PACE, Mission Raftaar, Mission Hundred, Mission Beyond Bookkeeping, and Mission Capacity Utilization.

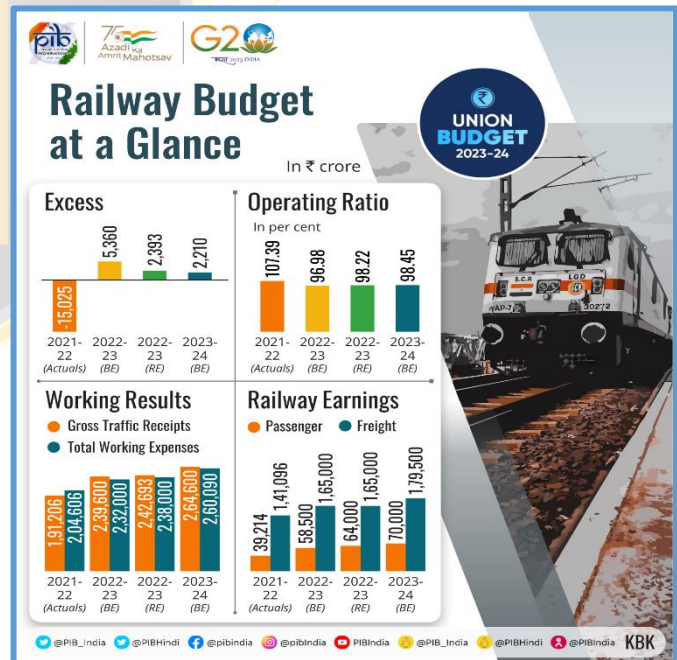
STEP TAKEN BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT FOR THE RAILWAYS SAFETY

- Provision of **Electronic Interlocking (EI)** to increase Safety and Flexibility.
- **Automatic Signaling (ABS).**
- **KAVACH** – In the spirit of vision **Atam Nirbhar Bharat**, Kavach has been adopted as National Automatic Train Protection system.
- **Intermediate Block Signaling.**
- **Signal Design Automation Tool for Electronic Interlocking (SigDATE)**, an indigenously developed automatic Route Control Chart.



WAY FORWARD

- there is a need to implement the recommendations of the Bibek Debroy committee, such as the expansion of Indian Railways manufacturing company, Corporatization of core functions of railways, etc.
- The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet line is prohibitively expensive.
- High-speed railway lines at 160 kmph and 200–250 kmph are more practical.
- India's flat terrain and broad gauge are advantageous for high-speed lines.
- The project includes upgrading 15,000 km of trunk routes and constructing 10,000 km of high-speed Broad-Gauge lines.
- Estimated cost: Rs 7 lakh crore; 15-year timeline for completion.
- Aim to make railways reliable, safe, and competitive with air and road transport.
- Modern safety measures, improved performance, and safety research are essential.
- The ultimate goal is to reduce consequential train accidents.





Prelims Specific

Other High Speed Trains project in India

- ✓ In 2017, India started **building an ultra-high-speed (Bullet Train) line on Standard Gauge** between Mumbai and Ahmedabad.
- ✓ Progress on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train line has been slow, and **plans for more bullet train lines are limited.**
- ✓ **Vande Bharat Express/Train 18, India's first semi-high-speed train, was built under the Make in India initiative.**
- ✓ The first train ran between **New Delhi and Varanasi in 2019**, and there are now **34 Vande Bharat Express trains in operation (sept 2023).**
- ✓ These trains feature an intelligent braking system with power regeneration **for energy efficiency, making them cost, energy, and environmentally efficient.**

UPSC PYQs

Q Bring out the socio-economic effects of the introduction of railways in different countries of the world. (2023 GS – I Mains)

