



TATHASTU
Institute of Civil Services

MONTHLY

CURRENT

AFFAIRS

**INDIA'S Q1
GDP
GROWTH**

OUTPACE
MAJ
ECONOM

4.9%
2023
1.0%
**DECEMBER
2023**

COP 28

UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE
CONFERENCE COP28 UAE



THE BLUE PLAN
TO



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JEWELS OF THE MONTH



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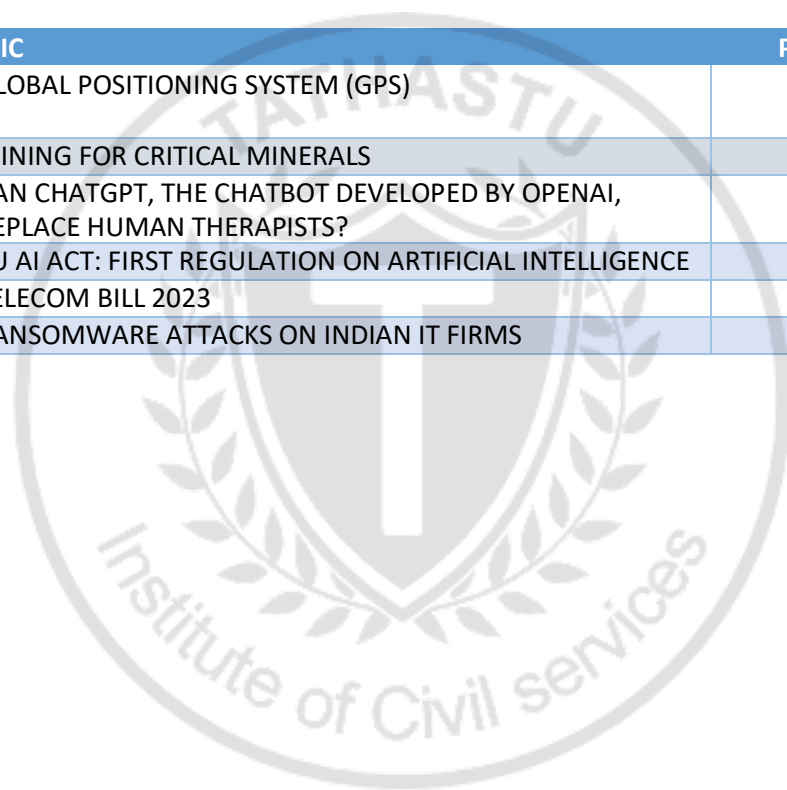
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TEST YOUR QUEST

(A MYSTERY INSIDE!!!)



JEWELS OF THE MONTH



COP-28 CLIMATE SUMMIT

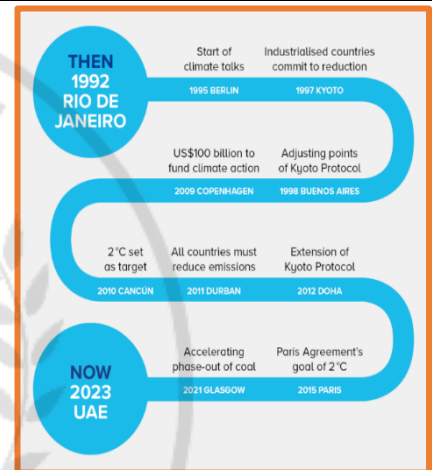
SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- An inter-ministerial delegation from India attended the 28th Session of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 28) held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates from 30th November'2023 to 13th December'2023.
- The major outcome from **COP 28 included the decision on Outcome of the First Global Stocktake, ratcheting up global climate ambition** before the end of the decade.
- These global efforts will be taken up by the countries in a **nationally determined** manner taking into account the Paris Agreement and their different national circumstances.
- Another major outcome of COP 28 is **the agreement on the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund** and its funding arrangements.

UNDERSTANDING OF COP:

- **Institutional Genesis:**
 - ✓ Originated from the **United Nations Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.**
 - ✓ Establishment of the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** provided a **legal foundation** for global collaboration against climate change.
- **COP Definition:**
 - ✓ COP signifies "**Conference of Parties.**"
 - ✓ Involves **high-level conferences uniting states**, regional organizations, and **non-state actors.**
 - ✓ **Encompasses 198 official Parties, including 197 countries** and the **European Union.**
- **Scope and Usage:**
 - ✓ Any meeting among the Convention's Parties officially adopts the term COP.
 - ✓ Commonly associated with the UN Climate Summit, an annual event recognized as the world's paramount decision-making body on climate issues.
 - ✓ COP is the governing body **overseeing the Paris Agreement**, a groundbreaking climate treaty established in 2015.
- **Paris Agreement Influence:**
 - ✓ The COP is entrusted with the implementation and progress monitoring of the Paris Agreement.
 - ✓ COP28 UAE marks the 28th session dedicated to discussions and decisions related to climate action.
- **Evolution of COPs:**
 - ✓ Originally confined to government negotiators, **COPs have transformed into global mega-events.**
 - ✓ Contemporary COPs **draw participants from diverse sectors**, including **political leaders, business figures, sectoral experts, climate activists**, and the general public.
 - ✓ Essential platforms for both **governmental and non-governmental entities** to deliberate, exchange ideas, form networks, and **strike deals pertaining to climate efforts.**



UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (UNFCCC COP 28):

- **COP28 UAE Overview:**
 - ✓ COP28 UAE is scheduled from November 30 to December 12, 2023, at Expo City, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

- ✓ **It will comprise:**
 - The **28th** meeting of the **Conference of the Parties (COP 28)**;
 - The fifth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the **Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 5)**;
 - The **18th** meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the **Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 18)**;
 - The **59th** meeting of the **Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 59)**; and
 - The **59th** meeting of the **Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 59)**.



➤ **Purpose and Framework:**

- ✓ It is part of the United Nations Climate Change Conferences, convened **yearly under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
- ✓ The conferences serve as a formal meeting of **UNFCCC Parties (Conference of the Parties, COP)** to **negotiate and agree on climate action strategies**.

➤ **Decision-Making Authority:**

- ✓ The UN Climate Change Conferences are the **highest decision-making body globally for climate-related issues**.
- ✓ They focus on negotiating actions to **address climate change**, limit emissions, and combat global warming.

UNSG	UNFCCC Global Climate Action	LGMA	COP28 Presidency & BP	Others
UN Climate Ambition Summit Accountability Checklist	High Level Champions/Marrakech Partnership • Breakthrough/Adaptation Agenda • Race-To-Zero/Resilience • Thematic Pathways • Solutions Pathways Regional Climate Weeks Track2	COP28 Position COP/59/ Intersessional Statements Multilevel Action Pavilion Stocktake/ClimateEmergency	2 Dec, Local Action Summit 6 Dec, Multilevel Action, Urbanization and Built Environment/Transport Day COP28 Presidency Teams on Subnational, WLC, Youth and Mayor Abigail Binay at COP28 Advisory Committee	NOC Dialogue UNH/UNDP/SOU NOC Urban Component 67 Subnational Roundtable with U7 Regional Urban Forums National /Regional/ Global Urban and Subnational Initiatives
SURGE/Urban-Climate Ministerial - UNFCCC Friends of Multilevel Action				

➤ **Host Country:**

- ✓ **The 28th edition, COP28**, will be hosted by the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.

➤ **Objectives and Paris Agreement Goals:**

- ✓ COP28 UAE is seen as a milestone **opportunity for global collaboration, course correction, and progress to align with the goals of the Paris Agreement**.
- ✓ **Aims to keep the 1.5°C temperature target** within reach.

Conference Zones:

➤ **Blue Zone (UNFCCC-Managed):**

- ✓ Open to accredited parties, including **country negotiators, observer delegates (NGOs, IGOs, UN Agencies), media, and world leaders**.
- ✓ Hosts formal negotiations, official side events, panel discussions, speaking events, and cultural activities.

➤ **Green Zone (COP28 UAE Presidency):**

- ✓ **Managed by the COP28 UAE Presidency**, offering a platform to **non-accredited delegates such as youth groups, civil society, private sector, and indigenous groups**.
- ✓ Fosters dialogue, awareness about climate action, and showcases contributions and solutions from the private sector.
- ✓ Hosts technical **conferences, panels, and activations focusing on climate change mitigation solutions**.

COP28 ACTION AGENDA:

➤ **North Star Objective:**

- ✓ Guided by achieving and **maintaining 1.5°C temperature limit**.

➤ **Emission Reduction Mandate:**

- ✓ Global Stocktake indicates the need to **reduce 22 gigatons of emissions by 2030**.

➤ **Four Key Focus Areas:**

- ✓ **Fast-tracking Transition:** Aiming for a just and orderly transition.
- ✓ **Fixing Climate Finance:** Addressing financial aspects for **effective climate action**.
- ✓ **Nature, Lives, and Livelihoods:** Prioritizing **nature-related initiatives** and community well-being.
- ✓ **Inclusivity for All:** Ensuring participation and representation of diverse stakeholders.

➤ **World Climate Action Summit:**

- ✓ Involves heads of state, civil society, businesses, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and more.
- ✓ Showcases progress and discusses **forward-looking policies across Paris Agreement pillars.**

➤ **New Themes - Health/Relief, Recovery, and Peace:**

- ✓ Integrating human perspectives to address climate impacts.
- ✓ Focus on **health system response, adaptation, and loss and damage.**

➤ **Finance/Trade/Gender Equality/Accountability:**

- ✓ Targets reform in **international financial structures for climate goals.**
- ✓ Includes discussions on trade's role and ensuring gender-responsive policies.

➤ **Energy, Industry, and Just Transition:**

- ✓ Aims for **rapid decarbonization** and just transition across sectors.
- ✓ Focus on renewable energy, innovation, and job growth.

➤ **Multilevel Action, Urbanization, and Built Environment/Transport:**

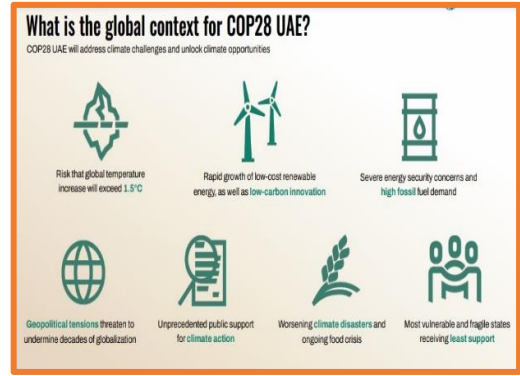
- ✓ Local leaders unite for climate action across various government levels.
- ✓ Highlights solutions for **low-carbon infrastructure, circular waste systems, and sustainable transport.**

➤ **Youth, Children, Education, and Skills:**

- ✓ Empowering youth in **climate decisions and policy-making.**
- ✓ Emphasis on green jobs, skills training, and transformative education.

➤ **Nature, Land Use, and Oceans:**

- ✓ Integration of **nature-positive initiatives in climate strategies.**
- ✓ Focus on sustainable management of natural carbon sinks and biodiversity hotspots.



OUTCOMES OF COP28: EVALUATING KEY DEVELOPMENTS

➤ **Fossil Fuel Transition:**

- ✓ Acknowledgment of **fossil fuels as the primary cause of climate change.**
- ✓ **Disappointing language on transitioning away from, rather than fully phasing out, fossil fuels.**
- ✓ **Intentional loophole allowing the use of carbon capture and storage, justifying continued oil and gas burning.**

➤ **Loss and Damage Fund:**

- ✓ **Pledged US\$700 million for loss and damage, falling significantly short of the required US\$400 billion.**
- ✓ Unclear fund operation, funding streams, and **potential for community-driven allocation.**
- ✓ Controversial decision for the **World Bank to administer the fund with a 24% fee.**

➤ **Renewable Energy Commitments:**

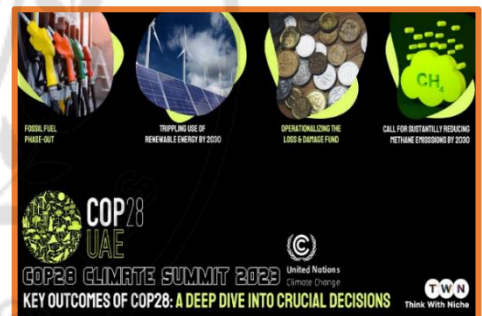
- ✓ Pledge by 118 countries to **triple renewable energy capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030.**
- ✓ Recognition of **transitional fuels' role** in maintaining energy security, accepting the **use of liquefied petroleum gas.**

➤ **Oil and Gas Decarbonisation Charter:**

- ✓ **Over 50 oil companies, representing 40% of global production, signed a charter.**
- ✓ **Aims to achieve net-zero emissions, near-zero methane leakage, and zero routine flaring by 2030.**
- ✓ **Excludes 60% of global oil and gas production from the charter's coverage.**

➤ **Global Stock take and 1.5°C Goal:**

- ✓ The first global stocktake reveals **inadequate progress since the Paris Agreement, putting the 1.5°C limit at risk.**



- ✓ **Discrepancy between COP28's call for fossil fuel transition** and the weak language in the official global stocktake.

India's Stand at COP-28: Evaluating Key Positions

- **UAE Declaration on Climate and Health:**
 - ✓ The UAE and WHO collaboration led to the **climate and health declaration at COP-28**.
 - ✓ Recognizes health impacts of climate change, endorsing climate action benefits.
 - ✓ **Signed by 123 nations committing \$1 billion**; however, **India abstained**.
- **Reasons Behind India's Non-Participation:**
 - ✓ India refrained due to **concerns that health-related emission reduction may compromise cooling gases**.
 - ✓ With a **growing healthcare system, emission reduction might impact healthcare accessibility**, especially in rural areas.
- **Green Credit Initiative:**
 - ✓ Encourage **pro-environment actions** to combat climate change.
 - ✓ **Issues Green Credits for planting on degraded lands** and river catchment areas.
 - ✓ Revitalize natural ecosystems through voluntary initiatives.
- **LeadIT 2.0 (Leadership Group for Industry Transition):**
 - ✓ Inclusive and fair industry transition.
 - ✓ **Co-development and transfer of low-carbon technology**, financial support for industry transition in emerging economies.
 - ✓ Phase II launch for **enhanced impact**.
- **Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA):**
 - ✓ Introduced at COP 28, led by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**.
 - ✓ Emphasizes **India's commitment to sustainable river-centric development** and climate resilience.
 - ✓ Facilitates knowledge exchange, **river-city twinning**, and **shares best practices**.
- **Quad Climate Working Group (QCWG) on Localised Climate Action:**
 - ✓ Acknowledging and amplifying the role of **local communities and regional governments**.
 - ✓ Emphasizes **supporting sustainable lifestyles**.
 - ✓ Recognizing grassroots **efforts for effective climate action**.
- **Global Methane Pledge:**
 - ✓ COP-26's **Global Methane Pledge** gains attention at COP-28 with renewed commitments.
 - ✓ **Climate and Clean Air Coalition takes over**, pledging over \$1 billion in grants for methane reduction projects.
 - ✓ Despite 150 countries signing, **India abstains due to a shift from CO2 to methane focus**.
- **India's Methane Emission Context:**
 - ✓ India's methane emissions primarily from **rice cultivation and livestock activities**.
 - ✓ These emissions are essential for the **livelihoods of small and marginal farmers**.



COP-28 TAKEAWAYS: ISSUES

- **Landmark Declarations:**
 - ✓ **Positive Aspect:** Acknowledgment of **critical issues such as climate and health, nature-based solutions**, and the commitment to sustainable food systems.
 - ✓ **Challenges:** Despite positive strides, **disparities between developed and developing nations persist**.
- **Fossil Fuel Subsidies:**
 - ✓ **Controversy: Disagreements** on phasing out fossil fuel subsidies.
 - ✓ **Developed vs. Developing:** Developed nations advocate for phase-out, **while developing countries, including India, resist due to economic growth concerns** and social implications.
- **Common and Differentiated Responsibilities:**

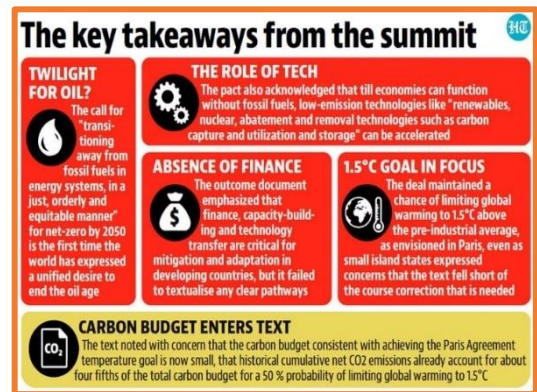
- ✓ **Principle Emphasis:** Developing countries stress the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities.
- ✓ **Calls for Action:** Urgent need for increased climate finance and technology transfer for just job transitions and inclusive development.

➤ **Contentious Issues:**

- ✓ **Diverse Challenges:** Disputes on market mechanisms, financial resource allocation, World Bank's role in managing Loss and Damage (L&D) fund, and private sector engagement.
- ✓ **Addressing Concerns:** Requires comprehensive strategies for **metric definition, fund management, market mechanisms, technological risks, and continued fossil fuel use.**

➤ **Mixed Bag of Outcomes:**

- ✓ **Positive Step:** Commitment to **ramp up renewable energy targets.**
- ✓ **Unresolved Issues:** Challenges in **L&D metrics, fund management and disbursement, market mechanisms, risky technologies, continued fossil fuel use, and the role of natural gas.**



WAY FORWARD:

- **Collaborative Solutions:**
 - ✓ Emphasize the need for collaborative solutions that **address both environmental concerns and socio-economic realities.**
- **Balanced Approach to Subsidies:**
 - ✓ Recognize the **economic implications of fossil fuel subsidy phase-out** and work towards a balanced approach that considers developmental needs.
- **Equitable Climate Finance:**
 - ✓ **Fulfill commitments to increase climate finance and technology transfer**, ensuring a fair distribution to facilitate inclusive development.
- **Holistic Metric Definition:**
 - ✓ Develop clear and **comprehensive metrics for Loss and Damage (L&D)**, ensuring a robust understanding of the impact and **effective fund allocation.**
- **Strategic Market Mechanisms:**
 - ✓ Address challenges in market mechanisms, **ensuring transparency, fairness, and effective participation by all stakeholders.**
- **Renewable Energy Transition:**
 - ✓ **Actively pursue the ramp-up of renewable energy targets**, encouraging innovation and adoption of sustainable practices.
- **Technological Innovation and Risks:**
 - ✓ Implement strategies for **managing risks associated with technologies**, fostering innovation while ensuring safety and sustainability.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - ✓ Enhance engagement with **diverse stakeholders, including private sectors**, to ensure comprehensive and effective climate action.
- **Natural Gas Transition Plan:**
 - ✓ Develop a **transparent and time-bound plan for transitioning away from natural gas**, aligning with the broader goal of reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

INDIAN PENAL CODE TO NYAYA SANHITA,2023

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

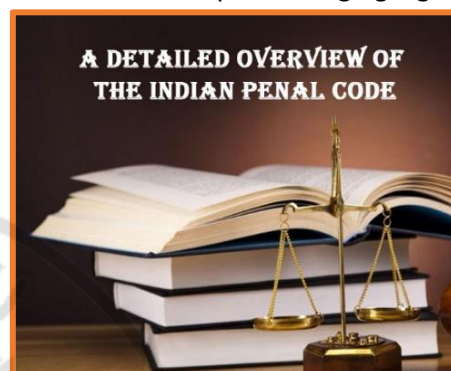
- *The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Bill, 2023 seeks to replace the Indian Penal Code, ushering in substantial changes.*
- Departing from the existing legal framework, the **BNS introduces new offenses, eliminates certain provisions, and modifies existing laws.**
- *From addressing issues of terrorism and organized crime to introducing gender neutrality, the bill represents a departure from existing legal frameworks.*

WHAT WAS INDIAN PENAL CODE, 1860?

- **Introduction:**
 - ✓ The Indian Penal Code (IPC) is the **primary body of law governing criminal acts** in India.
 - ✓ **Enacted in 1860 during British colonial rule**, it has undergone revisions to adapt to changing legal requirements and societal norms.

Historical Background:

- **Role of Thomas Babington Macaulay:**
 - ✓ **Thomas Babington Macaulay**, a prominent legal mind and Whig politician, saw codification as essential to modernize India and fulfill the **British "civilizing mission."**
- **Influence of Jeremy Bentham:**
 - ✓ **Macaulay was influenced by Jeremy Bentham**, the father of modern utilitarianism, who advocated for the codification of law to replace the cumbersome legal system in England.
- **Drafting of the IPC:**
 - ✓ In 1833, the **British Parliament passed the Government of India Act**, leading to the creation of a **law commission under Macaulay** to modernize laws.
 - ✓ **Macaulay focused on criminal law**, completing the **first version of the IPC in 1837.**
- **Foundation on British Common Law:**
 - ✓ **The IPC completely ignored existing Indian laws** and was founded on British common law, prompting scholars to view it as the **transplanting of English law in India.**
- **Mutiny and Enactment:**
 - ✓ The IPC remained in **limbo for years due to governmental inertia**, resistance from European residents, and a loss of reform momentum.
 - ✓ The **Rebellion of 1857 changed the landscape**, leading to the **demise of the East India Company** and the **British Crown taking direct control in 1858.**
 - ✓ The IPC's genesis lies in the **aftermath of the Rebellion of 1857**, a significant event that prompted the British colonial government to **reconsider legal administration in India.**



REASONS FOR REVAMPING: MAJOR DRAWBACKS UNDER IPC,1860

- **Comprehensive Criminal Code:**
 - ✓ The IPC **addresses various offenses**, categorizing crimes **against the state, public peace, public employees, property, morality, and individual integrity.**
- **Intent and Act:**
 - ✓ **To be found guilty**, a person must **demonstrate both intent (mens rea) and the physical act (actus reus)** of committing a crime.
- **Defined Offenses:**
 - ✓ Crimes like **murder, theft, robbery, abduction, rape, fraud, defamation**, etc., are defined with specific requirements and **standards for criminal responsibility.**
- **Legal Framework:**

- ✓ Establishes the **legal framework for determining the age of criminal responsibility**, outlines accused parties' rights, and prescribes protocols for investigation and trial.

➤ **Outdated Provisions:**

- ✓ The IPC lacks provisions to address **contemporary crimes like mob lynching, financial crimes, white-collar crimes, and economic offenses.**

➤ **Uneven Punishments:**

- ✓ **Disparities exist in the punishment for crimes of grievous hurt.**
- ✓ Standardization is needed to address **incidents like chain-snatching**, which may be **life-threatening but is inconsistently** categorized under robbery or theft.

➤ **Technological Advances:**

- ✓ **Technological advancements and economic developments demand** a reevaluation of IPC to include provisions for **cybercrimes and other modern offenses.**

Three bills introduced in Lok Sabha

Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860
TO BE REPLACED BY
Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023

- It will have 356 sections (instead of 511 sections in IPC)
- 175 sections have been amended
- 8 sections have been added, and 22 sections have been repealed

Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973
TO BE REPLACED BY
Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023

- It will have 533 sections (instead of 478 sections in CrPC)
- 160 sections have been changed
- 9 sections have been added, and 9 sections have been repealed

Indian Evidence Act, 1872
TO BE REPLACED BY
Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023

- It will have 170 sections (instead of 167 sections in IEA)
- 23 sections have been changed
- 1 section has been added, and 5 sections have been repealed

"From 1860 to 2023, the country's criminal justice system functioned as per the laws made by the British. I can assure the House that these bills will transform our criminal justice system. The aim will not be to punish, it will be to provide justice."
— AMIT SHAH

WHAT NEXT
The three bills will be studied by the standing committee on home affairs, which is chaired by BJP MP Prithvi (who is a retired IPS officer).

BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA (BNS) BILL, 2023: KEY CHANGES

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Bill, 2023 aims to replace the Indian Penal Code, bringing significant changes:

New Offenses:

➤ **Promise to Marry: (Section 69)**

- ✓ **Criminalizes deceitful promises to marry**, addressing concerns related to "love jihad."
- ✓ **Involves consensual sexual activity**, punishing those making **false promises with imprisonment up to ten years.**

➤ **Mob Lynching: (Section 101(2))**

- ✓ Codifies offenses related to **mob lynching and hate-crime murders.**
- ✓ **Imposes punishment** ranging from **life imprisonment to death** for murders **committed by mobs** based on factors like **race, caste, community, or personal belief.**

➤ **Organized Crime:**

- ✓ Tackles organized crime **within ordinary criminal law.**
- ✓ Differentiates punishment based on whether the **offense caused death**, with a mandatory **minimum sentence of five years** for cases without death.

➤ **Stricter Laws on Sexual Offences:**

- ✓ Enhancement of punishment for **rape from seven to ten years (Section 64).**
- ✓ Death penalty for **gang rape of women below 18 years (Section 70).**
- ✓ Introduction of a **law protecting the identities of sexual assault victims (Section 72).**

➤ **Petty Organized Crime: (Section 302)**

- ✓ Introduces a category criminalizing offenses like **theft, snatching, cheating, unauthorized selling of tickets, unauthorized betting, or gambling.**

➤ **Terrorism: (Section 111)**

- ✓ Incorporates language from the **Unlawful Atrocities Prevention Act**, bringing terrorism under ordinary criminal law.
- ✓ Broader definition of offenses related to **terror financing compared to UAPA.**

➤ **Attempt to Suicide:**

- ✓ **Criminalizes attempted suicide** with the intent to restrain public servants from performing their duties.
- ✓ Prescribes a **jail term of up to one year** with community service.

Deletions:

Changes proposed in criminal laws

Union home minister Amit Shah has introduced three key bills in the Lok Sabha that, if approved, will overhaul India's criminal justice system. A look at key aspects of the bills

THE BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA (BNS) BILL, 2023
Proposed to replace Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860

The IPC, which was framed by the British, is the official criminal code of India that lists various crimes and its punishments

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Sedition deleted, but another provision penalising secessionism, separatism, rebellion and acts against sovereignty, unity and integrity of India brought in
- Provision of **death penalty** for gang rape of minors and for mob lynching
- **Community service** introduced as one of the punishments for the first time

THE BHARATIYA NAGARIK SURAKSHA SANHITA, 2023
Proposed to replace Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973

The CrPC lays down the procedure for investigation, arrest, court hearing, bail and punishment in criminal cases

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Time-bound investigation**, trial and judgment within 30 days of the completion of arguments
- **Video-recording** of the statement of sexual assault victims to be made mandatory
- New provision for **attachment of property and proceeds of crime**

THE BHARATIYA SAKSHYA BILL, 2023
Proposed to replace the Indian Evidence Act, 1872

The IEA applies to all judicial proceedings in the country and defines the particulars of evidence produced and admissible in courts

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Documents to also include** electronic or digital records, e-mails, server logs, computers, smart phones, laptops, SMS, websites, locational evidence, mails, messages on devices
- **Digitisation of all records** including case diary, FIR, charge sheet and judgement
- Electronic or digital record shall have the same legal effect, validity and enforceability as paper records

- **Unnatural Sexual Offenses:** (*Section 377*)
 - ✓ **Repeals Section 377**, decriminalizing homosexuality but raises concerns **regarding non-consensual sexual acts**.
- **Adultery:**
 - ✓ **Omission of the offense of adultery**, previously struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional in 2018.
- **Thugs:** (*Section 310*)
 - ✓ **Omission of the provision labeling individuals as "thugs"** based on habitual association for committing robbery or child-stealing.
- **Gender Neutrality:**
 - ✓ **Amends laws related to children to introduce gender neutrality.**
 Offenses like **procurement of a girl and kidnapping of minors** have uniform age limits.

Other Tweaks:

- **Fake News:**
 - ✓ Introduces a **provision criminalizing the publishing of false and misleading information**, extending beyond existing hate speech laws.
- **Sedition:** (*Section 150*)
 - ✓ **Renames 'rajdroh' to 'deshdroh'** and **widens the definition**, including aiding subversive activities and encouraging separatist feelings.
- **Mandatory Minimum Sentence:**
 - ✓ **Modifies (*Section 303*) to allow for a punishment of "death or imprisonment for life"** instead of a mandatory death sentence.
- **Damage to Public Property:** (*Section 4*)
 - ✓ Offenses related to **causing damage to public property** now carry a graded fine corresponding to the amount of damage caused.

NEGATIVE CHANGES AND LOOPHOLES:

- **Lack of Definition for Community Service:**
 - ✓ While the introduction of **community service as a punishment** is a positive change, the BNS **fails to provide a clear definition** of what community service entails.
 - ✓ This absence of **clarity may lead to sentencing disputes and inconsistencies** in the application of community service.
 - ✓ Some instances of **unusual community service mandates**, such as **donating money to a gaushala or engaging in temple service**, raise concerns about potential biases or religious overtones.
- **Lack of Gender Neutrality in Rape and Sexual Assault:**
 - ✓ Despite progressive changes being introduced, the **BNS, like its predecessor IPC, does not embrace gender neutrality in recognizing victims and perpetrators of rape and sexual assault.**
 - ✓ This **perpetuates a gender-biased approach**, overlooking the fact that **men and transgender individuals can also be victims of such crimes.**
 - ✓ The **failure to recognize male victims** may contribute to an incomplete understanding of sexual offenses.
- **Limited Change in Sedition Law:**
 - ✓ **Section 150 of BNS** maintains the criminalization of acts that **"excite or attempt to excite"** secessionist activities or **encourage separatist feelings**, without making **incitement to violence or disruption of public order** a prerequisite for charges.
 - ✓ The **broad scope of Section 150** may lead to the **criminalization of various expressions**, including speeches, newspaper articles, books, and plays, similar to Section 124A of IPC.

WAY FORWARD & CONCLUSION:

- **Recommendation:**
 - ✓ The BNS should include a defined **list of possible community service activities** or guidelines to ensure uniformity and prevent the imposition of tasks that may **carry religious or patriarchal undertones.**

- ✓ BNS should align with the spirit of the proposed 2019 Criminal Law Amendment Bill, moving towards gender-neutral language to acknowledge that individuals of any gender can be victims or perpetrators of rape and sexual assault.
- ✓ A more nuanced approach is needed, specifying that charges under sedition laws should require a direct incitement to violence or a clear threat to public order.
- ✓ This would prevent the misuse of sedition charges to stifle free expression.
- **Political Neutrality:**
 - ✓ Ensure that the reformed IPC is free from political biases and serves the interests of all citizens impartially.
 - ✓ Uphold democratic principles and maintain a fair and unbiased justice system.
- **Effective Implementation:**
 - ✓ Address challenges in the implementation of reformed laws, including training law enforcement agencies, creating awareness among the public, and establishing mechanisms for efficient enforcement.

Conclusion:

- In the context of recent changes from IPC to Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, it's essential to evaluate how these suggestions align with the new legal framework.
- The transition provides an opportunity to address longstanding issues and create a criminal justice system that reflects the values and needs of contemporary India.
- Continuous monitoring, public engagement, and periodic reviews will be crucial to ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of the reformed legal framework.

ULFA PEACE ACCORD

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#), [PIB](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- The recent signing of a historic tripartite peace deal involving the Government of India, the Assam state government, and the pro-talks faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) has garnered significant attention.
- In last 5 years, 9 peace and border related agreements have been signed with different states in the Northeast, these have established peace in large part of the Northeast.
- In ULFA conflict, about 10 thousand people from both sides were killed, who were citizens of this country, but today this problem is being completely resolved.
- After formation of Modi government in 2014, violent incidents in Assam decreased by 87%, deaths by 90% and kidnappings by 84%.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ULFA (UNITED LIBERATION FRONT OF ASOM):

- **Overview:**
 - ✓ The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), an extremist organization formed in 1979, has been a prominent player in the northeastern Indian state of Assam.
 - ✓ The group's primary objective has been the establishment of a separate and sovereign Assamese nation independent of Indian rule.
 - ✓ Over the years, ULFA has been involved in numerous terrorist operations in Assam and other northeastern states, making it a significant security concern.
- **Formation and Early Years:**
 - ✓ Formed on April 7, 1979, by students associated with the All Assam Students' Union, ULFA aimed to promote an armed struggle against the Indian government for the creation of an independent socialist Assam.
 - ✓ The group remained relatively inactive until the mid-1980s, with some reports of recruitment but no major activities.
- **Links and Funding:**

- ✓ In 1986, ULFA established connections with organizations like the *Kachin Independence Army (KIA)* and the *Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)*, leading to increased fund-gathering activities.
- ✓ Funding reportedly involved extortions from businesses and trading houses, with claims of strong links with the ruling **Assam Gana Parishad (AGP)** in the late 1980s.

➤ **Government Ban and Violent Tactics:**

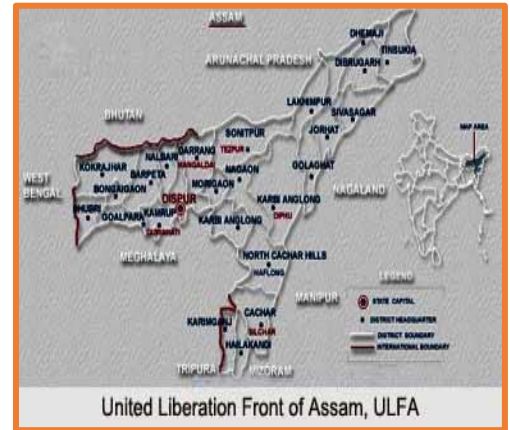
- ✓ **Banned by the Indian government in 1990**, ULFA turned to violent tactics in the 1990s and early 2000s.
- ✓ The group targeted state government buildings, security personnel, rail infrastructure, and politicians opposing their ideologies.

➤ **Military Wing and Training Camps:**

- ✓ In 1996, ULFA formed its military wing, the **Sanjukta Mukti Fouj (SMF)**, specifically for planning and executing terrorist activities.
- ✓ **Training camps** were reportedly set up in neighboring countries like **Bhutan and Bangladesh** during the 1990s.

➤ **Philosophy and Tactics:**

- ✓ ULFA's aim is to "**liberate**" Assam from India, proposing a **socialist government** for an independent Assam.
- ✓ The group employs **violent tactics, targeting government officials**, security forces, and civilians, believing that armed struggle is the only means to achieve liberation.
- ✓ **Extortion, kidnappings, and drug trafficking** are cited as funding sources, with legal business holdings in other countries, particularly Bangladesh.



United Liberation Front of Assam, ULFA

BACKGROUND OF ULFA INSURGENCY:

➤ **Assamese Anxieties:**

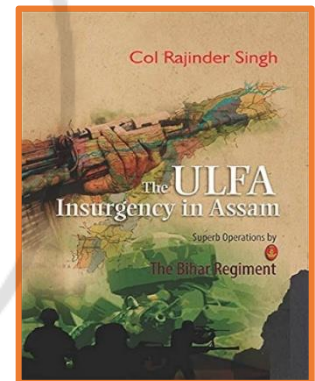
- ✓ Assamese people, with their distinct culture and language, began feeling insecure as the 19th-century economy attracted migrants.
- ✓ This insecurity intensified with the Partition and subsequent influx of refugees from East Pakistan.

➤ **Assam Accord:**

- ✓ The six-year-long mass movement led to the signing of the **Assam Accord in 1985**, aimed at addressing the issue of foreigners in Assam.

➤ **Formation of ULFA:**

- ✓ In 1979, radical thinkers, including Bhimakanta Buragohain, Arabinda Rajkhowa, Anup Chetia, Pradip Gogoi, Bhadreswar Gohain, and Paresh Baruah, founded **ULFA to establish a sovereign Assamese nation through armed struggle.**



CONFLICT AND CONCERNS:

➤ **Violent Struggle:**

- ✓ ULFA's armed struggle included kidnappings, extortion, executions, and bomb blasts, causing tragic loss of life in Assam and beyond.

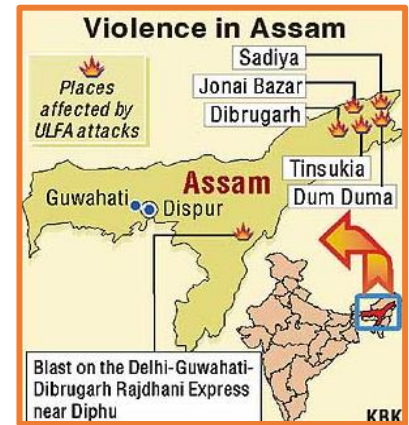
➤ **Government Response:**

- ✓ The Indian state responded with **Operation Bajrang in 1990**, declaring Assam a 'disturbed area,' imposing **President's rule**, and invoking the **Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)**.

➤ **Internal Divisions:**

- ✓ ULFA faced internal divisions, with factions like **Surrendered ULFA (SULFA)** allegedly supporting the government, leading to secret killings of ULFA insurgents.

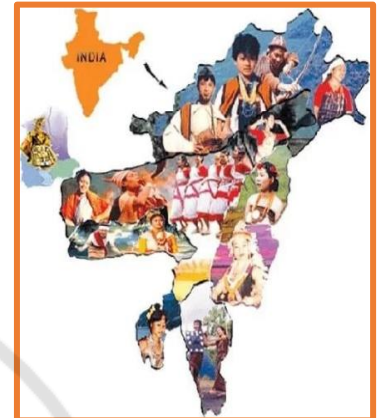
- **International Support:**
 - ✓ Despite government actions, **ULFA survived with support from outside India**, maintaining camps in Myanmar and previously in Bangladesh and Bhutan.
- **Global Connections:**
 - ✓ **ULFA had links with insurgent outfits in the Northeast, Myanmar**, and terrorist groups like **Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami and Al-Qaeda**.
 - ✓ **Paresh Baruah, ULFA's military chief**, reportedly met Osama Bin Laden.



GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR THE PEACE AGREEMENT IN NORTH-EASTERN REGION:

Major Initiatives and Peace Process in North Eastern Region (NER):

- **Improved Security Situation in NER (2014-2022):**
 - ✓ **76% reduction in insurgency incidents.**
 - ✓ **90% decrease in Security Forces casualties.**
 - ✓ **97% drop in civilian deaths.**
- **Reduction of 'Disturbed Areas' under AFSPA (2022):**
 - ✓ **AFSPA removed from 24 districts in Assam.**
 - ✓ Partial removal from 1 district in Assam, 15 Police Station areas in 6 districts of Manipur, and 15 Police Station areas in 7 districts of Nagaland.
 - ✓ **Gradual reduction in Arunachal Pradesh.**
- **Peace Accords/Agreements in NER:**
 - ✓ **NLFT(SD) Agreement (2019):** Memorandum of Settlement signed with NLFT(SD), leading to **surrender of 88 cadres.**
 - ✓ **Bru Agreement (2020):** Agreement for permanent **settlement of Bru (Reang) families in Tripura.**
 - ✓ **Bodo Accord (2020):** Memorandum of Settlement signed with Bodo Groups, **resulting in the surrender of 1615 NDFB cadres.**
 - ✓ **Karbi Accord (2021):** Memorandum of Settlement signed to **end the crisis in Karbi Anglong**, leading to over **1000 armed cadres abjuring violence.**
 - ✓ **Adivasi Peace Accord (2022):** Memorandum of Settlement **signed with 8 Adivasi Groups**, resulting in the **surrender of 1182 cadres.**
- **Other Peace Processes in NER:**
 - ✓ **ULFA (Pro Talks):** Under Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement with the Government of India.
 - ✓ **NSCN(IM) Framework Agreement (2015):** Signed on 03.08.2015.
 - ✓ **Ceasefire Agreements in Nagaland (2022):** Extended with NSCN(NK), NSCN(R), and NSCN(K-Khango).
 - ✓ **Ceasefire Agreement with NSCN(K)Niki group (2022):** Extended for one year.
 - ✓ **SoO Agreements in Manipur (2023):** Extended with UPF and KNO.
 - ✓ **CoO Agreement with ZUF (2022):** Signed on 27.12.2022.
- **Mass Surrender:**
 - ✓ Various outfits' **cadres surrendered in 2020, 2021, and 2022**, including ULFA/I, NDFB, KLO, RNLF, CPI/Maoist, NSLA, ADF, and NLFB.
- **Inter-State Boundary Agreements:**
 - ✓ **Assam-Meghalaya (2022):** MoU signed to resolve **interstate boundary issues.**
 - ✓ **Assam-Arunachal Pradesh (2022):** Declaration signed to minimize border disputes, with 12 Regional Committees formed for resolution.



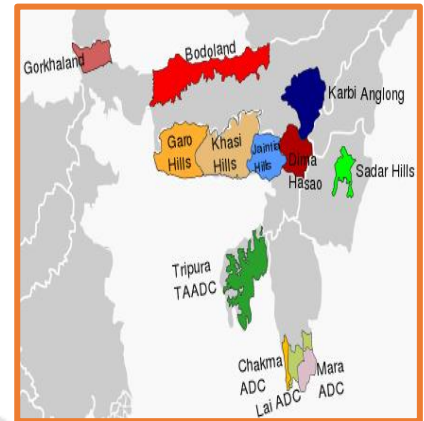
Peace Agreement for ULFA:

- **People's Consultative Group (PCG):**

- ✓ In 2005, **ULFA formed PCG to mediate talks**, but ULFA later walked out, unleashing a new wave of terror.
- **Pro-Talks Faction:**
 - ✓ **Some ULFA commanders**, led by **Arabinda Rajkhowa**, sought **peace talks from 2008 onwards**, leading to a split with **Paresh Baruah** opposing dialogue.
- **Peace Talks Initiated:**
 - ✓ The pro-talks faction **submitted a 12-point charter of demands in 2012**, responded to by the government earlier this year, **culminating in the tripartite peace agreement in 2023**.

CHALLENGES IN THE PEACE DEAL:

- **Government's Commitment:**
 - ✓ **Rajeev Bhattacharya** emphasizes that the **success of the peace deal depends on the commitment of the government**.
 - ✓ **Uncertainty about the government's sustained effort** to address the root causes and implement the agreed-upon measures.
- **Incompleteness of the Deal:**
 - ✓ **Bhattacharya refrains from assessing the completeness of the deal**, pointing to lingering uncertainties.
 - ✓ **Unresolved issues and potential obstacles** that might arise during the implementation phase remain a concern.
- **Anti-Talks Faction's Demands:**
 - ✓ **Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma** expresses a **willingness to engage with the anti-talks faction**.
 - ✓ **Paresh Baruah's insistence on Assam's sovereignty** poses a significant challenge to achieving a comprehensive resolution.
- **Sovereignty Demand:**
 - ✓ **Baruah remains steadfast in his demand for Assam's sovereignty**, indicating a potential stumbling block in reaching a final and universally accepted settlement.
- **Divergent Views:**
 - ✓ Divergence in perspectives **between the government's confidence in a "complete solution" and the reservations** expressed by experts and factions raises questions about the shared understanding of the agreement's depth.
- **Future Engagements:**
 - ✓ The **intent to engage with the anti-talks faction** raises questions about the **nature and scope of these engagements**.
 - ✓ Ensuring the **participation and cooperation** of all relevant stakeholders remains a challenge.
- **Long-Term Development and Stability:**
 - ✓ The success of the peace deal should be measured **not only by the immediate cessation of hostilities** but also by its **long-term contribution** to the development and stability of Assam.
- **Public Sentiment:**
 - ✓ Public sentiment, **especially among the Assamese people**, will play a crucial role in determining the sustainability of the peace deal.
 - ✓ Ensuring that the **local population supports** the accord is essential for its success.
- **Implementation Hurdles:**
 - ✓ The practical challenges of **implementing the terms of the agreement**, such as **integrating former insurgents into mainstream society** and addressing socioeconomic issues, may pose obstacles.



Way forward:

- **Sustained Government Commitment:**
 - ✓ The government **must demonstrate unwavering commitment** to addressing the **root causes of insurgency**, ensuring that promises made in peace agreements are fulfilled.
 - ✓ **Continuous engagement with all stakeholders**, including the **anti-talks faction**, is vital for building trust and sustaining peace efforts.
- **Inclusive Dialogue and Reconciliation:**

- ✓ **Foster inclusive and meaningful dialogue** that addresses the concerns of all factions, including those demanding sovereignty.
- ✓ **Prioritize reconciliation efforts to bridge ideological gaps and promote a shared vision** for the future, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and considered.
- **Implement Comprehensive Development Plans:**
 - ✓ **Focus on long-term socio-economic development** initiatives that **benefit the local population**.
 - ✓ **Address issues related to unemployment, poverty, and disparities**, contributing to a more equitable and stable environment.
- **Community Involvement and Public Awareness:**
 - ✓ Engage **local communities actively in the peace process**, seeking their **input and involvement** to ensure grassroots support.
 - ✓ **Raise public awareness about the benefits of peace, dispelling any misconceptions** and garnering support for the government's initiatives.
- **International Cooperation and Monitoring:**
 - ✓ **Collaborate with neighbouring countries**, particularly those with **historical links to insurgent groups**, to prevent external support for insurgency.
 - ✓ **Establish mechanisms for international monitoring and assistance** to ensure the transparent implementation of peace agreements and prevent any backsliding.



Polity & Governance

SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- In September, the Union Government **initiated a six-member panel** to explore **the feasibility of holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, State assemblies, and local bodies.**
- This panel is tasked with proposing specific amendments to the Constitution and other legal changes required for such an endeavour.

UNDERSTANDING OF SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS:

- **About:**
 - ✓ Normally understood to mean that **Elections to all the three tiers of Government – Lok Sabha, State Assemblies (Vidhan Sabha) and Panchayats/Urban Municipal Bodies** happen at the same time.
 - ✓ This means that a voter casts his vote for electing members for all tiers of the Government on a single day, normally **once every five years.**
 - ✓ Though, for logistics, **elections can be conducted in a phase-wise manner nation-wide** as per the existing practice provided voters in a particular constituency **vote for Lok Sabha + Vidhan Sabha + Third Tier on the same day (the day polling is scheduled in his/her constituency).**
- **History of Simultaneous Elections in India:**
 - ✓ Simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas in India were initially held in **1951-52, 1957, 1962, and 1967.**
 - ✓ However, **the schedule for simultaneous elections could not be maintained thereafter**, leading to a misalignment in subsequent years.
 - ✓ The **subsequent General Election to the Lok Sabha** was scheduled for 2019, while elections for Vidhan Sabhas in different states were planned for various years, **ranging from 2017 to 2021.**



Precedent of Simultaneous Elections in Other Countries:

- **South Africa:**
 - ✓ In South Africa, elections to national and provincial legislatures are held simultaneously for a **five-year term.**
 - ✓ Municipal elections are conducted two years later.
- **Sweden:**
 - ✓ Sweden conducts elections to its **National Legislature (Riksdag), provincial legislature/county council (Landsting), and local bodies/municipal assemblies (Kommunfullmaktige)** on a fixed date.
- **United Kingdom (U.K.):**
 - ✓ In the U.K., the **Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011**, governs the term of the Parliament.
 - ✓ This **act establishes a fixed term for parliamentary elections**, contributing to a predictable election schedule.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions on Election Terms: RPA, 1951

- **Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly Terms:**
 - ✓ **Article 83(2)** of the Constitution stipulates a **standard term of five years for the Lok Sabha.**
 - ✓ **Article 172(1)** establishes a similar **tenure for State Legislative Assemblies** from the date of their first sitting.
- **Flexibility in Terms:**

- ✓ **Neither Lok Sabha nor State Assemblies have fixed terms and can be dissolved earlier than the stipulated period.**
- **Limitations on Term Extension:**
 - ✓ Despite flexibility, the terms of **both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies cannot be extended beyond five years**, except in emergency situations.
- **Election Commission's Authority:**
 - ✓ The Election Commission of India holds the **authority to notify elections for both Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.**
 - ✓ This notification occurs **six months before the normal terms of the Houses conclude.**
- **Jurisdiction of State Election Commissions:**
 - ✓ Elections to the third tier, encompassing **Panchayats and Urban Municipal Bodies**, fall under the jurisdiction of State Subjects.
 - ✓ Therefore, these elections are **overseen by State Election Commissions.**

ARGUMENT IN SUPPORT OF SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS:

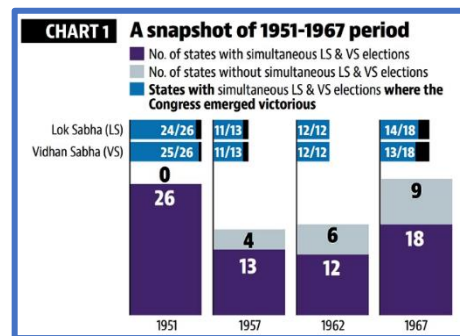
- **Model Code of Conduct (MCC):**
 - ✓ During general elections to Lok Sabha or State Assemblies, **the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) is applicable nationwide or in entire states, respectively.**
 - ✓ MCC **suspension of routine administrative activities, development programs, welfare schemes, and capital projects**, leading to substantial suspension periods.
 - ✓ NITI Aayog's analysis **suggests an average MCC period of 2 months for State Assembly elections**, causing an **estimated applicability of MCC for about 4 months or more annually in various regions.**
- **Recurring Expenditures:**
 - ✓ Frequent elections **lead to substantial recurring expenses** for the Indian government (**bears 100% cost of Lok Sabha and 50% of Vidhan Sabha**) and state governments (**50% of Vidhan Sabha and 100% of third-tier elections**).
 - ✓ While **individual election costs may not be exorbitant**, the cumulative effect is significant.
 - ✓ Simultaneous elections **offer optimization opportunities, reducing costs.**
 - ✓ The **need for continuous fundraising by political parties** to sustain the constant cycle is a concern.
 - ✓ The 2019 Lok Sabha elections reportedly **cost around INR 60,000 crores**, almost **twice the amount spent in 2014**, contributing to **concerns about corruption and black-money** in elections.
- **Prolonged Engagement:**
 - ✓ Conducting elections **involves a complex and time-consuming process**, requiring **significant government officials and security forces.**
 - ✓ In 2019, the Lok Sabha election **stretched for over 75 days** with a **vast number of polling booths.**
 - ✓ **More than 1 crore government officials**, including **armed forces**, were engaged, taking away resources that could be better deployed for **other internal security purposes.**
 - ✓ Frequent elections strain the capabilities of these forces developed for broader security responsibilities.
- **Impact on Policy Making and Governance:**
 - ✓ Frequent elections keep governments and **political parties in perpetual "campaigning" mode.**
 - ✓ Electoral compulsions **shift focus from long-term structural reforms to short-sighted and populist measures.**
 - ✓ This **hinders optimal governance and affects policy design and delivery.**
 - ✓ Governments **become risk-averse, opting for safer approaches** instead of pursuing transformational measures.
 - ✓ Simultaneous elections could **offer a structural change, allowing governments to focus on long-term measures without constant electoral concerns.**



ARGUMENT IN AGAINST OF SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS: CHALLENGES

➤ **Political Motivation and Voter Influence:**

- ✓ Critics argue that simultaneous elections **may be politically motivated**, potentially influencing voter behaviour.
- ✓ Concerns that **voters might end up voting on national issues even for state elections**, favoring **larger national parties over smaller regional ones**.
- ✓ Critics suggest that voters are mature enough to **differentiate between voting choices for state and national elections**, citing instances like the **Delhi Elections in 2019** where **different outcomes occurred for Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections**.
- ✓ **Over-simplifying the complex factors influencing voter behavior and underestimating the maturing of the Indian electorate** are key criticisms against this argument.



➤ **Operational Feasibility:**

- ✓ Simultaneous elections are **not operationally feasible**, raising several questions:
- ✓ How to **synchronize the terms of Assemblies and Lok Sabha initially?**
- ✓ Feasibility of extending or **curtailing existing terms of some State Assemblies**.
- ✓ Handling scenarios **where the ruling party loses majority mid-term** in either Lok Sabha or State Assemblies.
- ✓ **Whether terms should be fixed.**
- ✓ Operational challenges for the Election Commission of India (ECI) in **conducting elections on such a massive scale, considering logistics, security, and manpower resources**.

➤ **Cost effective challenges:**

- ✓ The ECI acknowledges **the need for a substantial investment in EVMs and VVPAT machines**.
- ✓ Estimated cost for procuring **these machines is around Rs 9,284.15 crore**.
- ✓ **Replacement of machines every fifteen years** adds to the expenditure.
- ✓ **Storing machines between elections increases warehousing costs**.
- ✓ Financial implications **underscore the challenges of implementing simultaneous elections on a large scale**.

➤ **Accountability:**

- ✓ Facing the electorate frequently, **not just every five years, boosts politicians' accountability**.
- ✓ Regular interactions with **voters keep politicians vigilant** and responsive to public concerns.
- ✓ Elections contribute **to job creation, especially at the grassroots level**.
- ✓ **Increased economic activity** during elections stimulates the **local economy**.
- ✓ The accountability and economic benefits highlight **the positive aspects of facing the electorate more frequently**.

SUSTAINING SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS IN INDIA: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ **ECI Recommendations for Stability:**

- ✓ The Election Commission of India (ECI) **has put forth specific suggestions to enhance stability:**
- ✓ **No-Confidence Motion:** Proposes that **any 'no-confidence motion' should also include a 'confidence motion'** for a named Prime Minister simultaneously.
- ✓ **Preventing Premature Dissolution:** In case of a **situation where dissolution cannot be avoided**, options include the **President administering the country or holding fresh elections**.

➤ **Legislative Stability Measures:**

- ✓ **Enhanced Stability:** ECI's recommendations **aim to make premature dissolutions rare by linking confidence and no-confidence motions**.
- ✓ **Legal Safeguards:** The **Anti-Defection Act of 1985** and the **Supreme Court judgment in the S. R. Bommai vs. Union of India** case further **discourage premature dissolution**.

➤ **Past Instances of Concern:**

- ✓ Acknowledging **past instances of unstable governments** and premature dissolutions, the **Law Commission of India highlights the negative impact on governance and the economy**.

➤ **Addressing Inevitable Dissolutions:**

- ✓ Recognizing the **possibility of inevitable premature dissolutions**, a **two-phased simultaneous** election approach has been proposed:
 - **Tweaking ECI Recommendations:** Adjustments have been **suggested to the ECI's recommendations to fit the two-phased model.**
 - **Conceptual Solutions:** The proposal envisions addressing **unforeseen events by leveraging the two-phase electoral approach.**

Way Forward for Simultaneous Elections in India:

- **Political Responsibility:**
 - ✓ Acknowledges the responsibility of the **political class to provide an effective governance framework**, especially given **India's young and demanding population.**
 - ✓ Highlights the Prime Minister's emphasis on **rapid transformation rather than gradual evolution.**
- **Structural Change Necessity:**
 - ✓ Argues that the current system of **frequent elections hinders the focus on transformative measures** due to **perpetual campaigning.**
 - ✓ Proposes simultaneous elections as a **structural change to break the cycle** and enable governments **to concentrate on long-term development.**
- **Flexibility of the Constitution:**
 - ✓ **Stresses the flexibility of the Constitution to adapt to changing times**, urging governments to **provide the best governance systems** for citizens.
- **Compelling Reasons for Simultaneous Elections:**
 - ✓ **Enumerates the compelling reasons in favour of simultaneous elections**, including the **suspension of development programs, excessive expenditures**, and the impact on **policy making and governance.**
- **Feasible Implementation Solutions:**
 - ✓ Proposes workable solutions for implementing simultaneous elections, addressing issues related to the starting date, synchronization of terms, fixing terms of Assemblies/Lok Sabha, and ensuring continuity.
- **Operational Feasibility:**
 - ✓ Affirms the operational feasibility of simultaneous elections, highlighting that while there would be **incremental pressure on resources**, the **implementation is clearly viable.**
- **Call for Consensus:**
 - ✓ Stresses the need for consensus **among key stakeholders, including constitutional experts, think tanks, government officials, and political party representatives.**
 - ✓ Emphasizes that **without a broad consensus**, the **intent and efficacy of simultaneous elections** could be compromised.
- **Short-Term Pain for Long-Term Gain:**
 - ✓ Recognizes that implementing simultaneous elections **may cause short-term disruptions** but **asserts that it is a crucial step toward improved governance** and broader electoral reforms.

BROADCASTING SERVICES (REGULATION) BILL, 2023

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The recently **released Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill** is part of a series of attempts to regulate broadcasting comprehensively.*
- *This analysis explores the **key propositions and concerns within the bill.***
- *Traces the historical context, **noting previous attempts in 2007 and 1997 to establish an integrated regulatory framework for broadcasting.***
- *Highlights the **recent efforts following a pre-consultation paper on 'National Broadcasting Policy' by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).***

OVERVIEW OF BROADCASTING SERVICES (REGULATION) BILL, 2023:

- **Introduction of the Bill:**
 - ✓ Ministry of Information and Broadcasting releases the **draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023, on November 10.**
 - ✓ Aims to replace the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995**, regulating broadcasting, **OTT, Digital Media, DTH, IPTV.**
- **Government's Vision:**
 - ✓ The Bill aligns with the Prime Minister's vision for "**ease of doing business**" and "**ease of living.**"
 - ✓ Raises concerns about potential **control and regulation**, considering the **controversy around the IT Rules 2021.**
- **Digitization Impact:**
 - ✓ Technological **advancements, including DTH, IPTV, and OTT platforms**, have transformed the broadcasting sector.
 - ✓ The existing regulatory framework **needs restructuring for ease of business and improved adherence to codes by broadcasters and Distribution Platform Operators.**

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE BROADCASTING SERVICES (REGULATION) BILL, 2023:

- **Consolidated Framework:**
 - ✓ Introduces a **unified framework for regulating broadcasting services.**
 - **Expansion to OTT Content:**
 - ✓ **Extends regulatory purview to cover Over-the-Top (OTT) content and digital news.**
 - **Contemporary Definitions:**
 - ✓ **Updates definitions and provisions to align with emerging technologies.**
 - **Self-Regulation:**
 - ✓ **Proposes Content Evaluation Committees and a Broadcast Advisory Council** for broadcasters to self-regulate.
 - **Diversity in Codes:**
 - ✓ Introduces **different program and advertisement codes** for various Broadcasting Network Operators.
 - **Accessibility Measures:**
 - ✓ Includes provisions for accessibility measures **for persons with disabilities.**
 - **Statutory Penalties:**
 - ✓ **Establishes statutory penalties for non-compliance.**
- Decoding the legislation**

WHAT IS THE BROADCASTING BILL?

 - The proposed Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2023, seeks to directly regulate streaming platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+Hotstar as over-the-top broadcaster, in addition to regulating terrestrial channels, radio, local cable operators, etc.
 - Anybody who broadcasts news and current affairs programmes online as a "systematic business, professional or commercial activity" is liable to attract the same obligations as OTT streaming services

WHO IS EXCLUDED?

 - A physical newspaper and its e-replica
 - Online users who occasionally post news are excluded. For instance, a civilian who decides to stream a riot live will not be covered

There is no change in the status of how online news publishers are governed. If they are governed under the IT Rules, they [textual news websites] will continue to be governed here.
— a senior govt official familiar with the matter

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE BROADCASTING SERVICES REGULATIONS BILL 2023:

- **Facilitating Business Transactions:**
 - ✓ **Emphasizes Dispute Resolution mechanisms** to enhance **ease of doing business** in the broadcasting sector.
- **Digital India Boost:**
 - ✓ Supports **technological advancements and service evolution**, contributing to the '**Digital India**' initiative.
- **Streamlining 'Right of Way':**
 - ✓ Simplifies the **process for cable operators to obtain permissions for network expansion** in new areas.
- **Encouraging Infrastructure Sharing:**
 - ✓ **Promotes benefits similar to telecom operators**, fostering infrastructure sharing among broadcasters.
- **Self-Regulation Empowerment:**
 - ✓ **Establishes Content Evaluation Committees for self-certification**, providing autonomy to the broadcasting industry.
- **Advancing Accessibility:**

- ✓ **Enhances accessibility for persons with disabilities** through subtitles, audio descriptors, and sign language, contributing to ease of living.
- **Consumer Empowerment:**
 - ✓ Provides consumers with a transparent and accountable grievance redressal mechanism, empowering them.
- **Fostering Content Diversity:**
 - ✓ Encourages the creation of a diverse and inclusive content ecosystem that reflects India's rich cultural tapestry.

CONCERNS OF THE BROADCASTING SERVICES REGULATIONS BILL 2023:

- **Inclusion of OTT Content Suppliers:**
 - ✓ Raises concerns about the bill including Over-the-Top (OTT) content suppliers in the definition of broadcasting services, overlapping with discussions initiated by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY).
- **Impact on News Media:**
 - ✓ Expresses concerns about the bill's expanded definition of broadcasting affecting journalists and news outlets outside large television networks.
- **Content Evaluation Committee:**
 - ✓ Questions the necessity of a 'Content Evaluation Committee' for self-certification of news programming, emphasizing the role best left to individual news outlets.
- **Silence on Ownership Issues:**
 - ✓ Highlights the bill's silence on cross-media and vertical ownership, essential aspects impacting media diversity.
- **Lack of Independent Broadcast Regulator:**
 - ✓ Notes the absence of an independent broadcast regulator, proposing a 'Broadcast Advisory Council' instead, raising autonomy and capacity concerns.
- **Government Empowerment:**
 - ✓ Expresses concerns over government empowerment to inspect broadcasters without prior notice, impound equipment, and curtail broadcasting in undefined "public interest."

WAY FORWARD:

Proposals for Advancing Broadcasting Regulations:

- **Legislative Overhaul:**
 - ✓ Propose a new broadcasting law that consolidates and modernizes the existing regulatory framework.
 - ✓ Address the convergence of traditional broadcasting and online streaming services.
 - ✓ Clearly define roles and responsibilities for stakeholders, including broadcasters, cable operators, and content aggregators.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration:**
 - ✓ Establish consistent and meaningful consultations with industry stakeholders such as broadcasters, content creators, civil society organizations, and consumer groups.
 - ✓ Solicit feedback on proposed regulations to ensure a well-informed and balanced approach.
 - ✓ Encourage collaboration to tackle emerging challenges and leverage opportunities in the broadcasting sector.
- **Technology Adaptability:**
 - ✓ Develop a flexible regulatory framework that adapts to rapid advancements in broadcasting technologies.
 - ✓ Create monitoring mechanisms to assess the impact of new technologies on the broadcasting landscape.
 - ✓ Ensure regulations support innovation and facilitate the growth of new media services.
- **Content Classification and Ratings:**
 - ✓ Implement a robust content classification and rating system to safeguard minors and vulnerable audiences from harmful content.

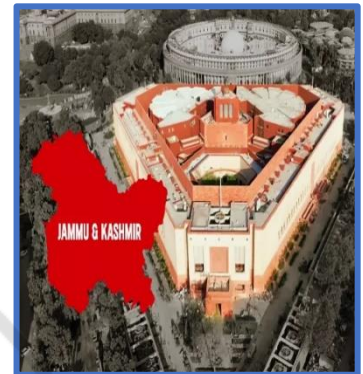
- ✓ Establish clear guidelines for content producers and broadcasters to ensure compliance with standards.
- ✓ Empower viewers with informed choices regarding the content they choose to consume.
- Independent Regulatory Oversight:
 - ✓ Strengthen the independence and autonomy of the **broadcasting regulatory authority**.
 - ✓ Ensure the regulator possesses **adequate resources** and expertise for effective mandate execution.
 - ✓ Promote **transparency and accountability** in the regulatory process.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR REORGANISATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, have become noteworthy due to their recent passage in the Lok Sabha.*
- **Legislative Changes in Jammu and Kashmir:**
 - ✓ The bills pertain to amendments in the **legal framework of Jammu and Kashmir**, focusing on **reservation policies** and the **reorganization of the legislative assembly**.
- **Enhancements in Reservation Policies:**
 - ✓ The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, introduces **changes in the reservation criteria for jobs and admissions in professional institutions**.
 - ✓ This addresses **social and educational backwardness**, including **Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other specified classes**.




KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR REORGANISATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023:

- **Seat Reservations:**
 - ✓ The bill aims to reserve seats in the **yet-to-be-constituted 114-seat Jammu and Kashmir Assembly** for "**Kashmiri migrants**, people displaced from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir [PoK], and **Scheduled Tribes**."
- **Increase in Assembly Seats:**
 - ✓ The **total number of seats in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly will increase from 107 to 114**, with the addition of **nine seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes**.
- **Nomination Powers of Lieutenant-Governor:**
 - ✓ The **Lieutenant-Governor is empowered to nominate three members in the Assembly**, including **two from the Kashmiri migrant community** (one being a **woman**) and a representative of people from PoK who sought refuge in India after the wars with Pakistan.
- **Voice for Kashmiri Migrants:**
 - ✓ The reservation of seats for Kashmiri migrants, **displaced in the 1990s**, aims to **ensure their strong representation** in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

Making changes

A look at the J&K Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill and the J&K Reservation (Amendment) Bill

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Reorganisation Bill increases the total number of seats in the J&K Assembly to 114 from 107 ■ Nine seats are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes for the first time ■ It also empowers the Lieutenant-Governor to nominate three members to the Assembly - two members from the Kashmiri migrant 	 <p style="font-size: x-small;">Point of view: Home Minister Amit Shah speaks in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. PTI</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community, with one nominee being a woman, and one member from among the people from PoK who took refuge in India following the wars with Pakistan in 1947, 1965 and 1971 ■ The Reservation Bill seeks to replace the term "weak and underprivileged classes (social castes)" in the J&K Reservation Act, 2004 to "other backward classes"
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KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR RESERVATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023:

- **Term Replacement:**
 - ✓ The bill seeks to replace the term "weak and underprivileged classes (social castes)" in the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004, with "Other Backward Classes" as declared by the Union Territory.
- **Reservation Criteria:**
 - ✓ The 2004 Act deals with reservation in appointments and admissions in professional institutions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other Socially and Educationally Backward Classes.

- **Response to Opposition Claims:**
 - ✓ Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed the Opposition's claim that **amending the law is not valid due to the legal challenge** to the principal Act passed on August 5, 2019.
 - ✓ He argued that the **Supreme Court has not stayed the implementation**, and there is "status quo."

POLITICAL CHANGES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR POST ARTICLE 370 ABROGATION:

- **Introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions:**
 - ✓ **Establishment:** All three tiers of Panchayati Raj institutions set up.
 - ✓ **Grassroots Democratic Process:** Efforts to enhance democratic representation at the local level.
- **District Development Council Elections (Nov-Dec 2020):**
 - ✓ **Democratic Hopes:** Elections held in all 20 districts, aiming for democratic governance at the grassroots.
 - ✓ **Complaints:** Concerns raised by some DDC chairpersons about limited influence in development planning.
- **Formation of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD):**
 - ✓ **Unlikely Unity:** Traditional rivals NC and PDP, along with other parties, joined forces under PAGD in 2020.
 - ✓ **DDC Polls:** PAGD fielded candidates in DDC elections, securing 112 seats.
- **Delimitation Commission (Constituted on March 6, 2020):**
 - ✓ **Constituent Change:** Three-member commission, led by Justice Ranjana Desai, formed for delimitation.
 - ✓ **Seat Adjustments:** Jammu and Kashmir's Assembly seats revised, with increased representation for Jammu and Kashmir divisions
 - ✓ **Reserved Seats:** Recommendations for reserved seats for STs, SCs, and nomination provisions.
- **Protests Over ST List Inclusion:**
 - ✓ **Expansion of ST List:** Centre's proposal to include new groups in the ST list triggers widespread demonstrations.
 - ✓ **Gujjar-Bakerwal Concerns:** Gujjars and Bakerwals protest, fearing dilution of their political empowerment.
 - ✓ **Counter Demonstrations:** Paharis, intended beneficiaries, plan supportive marches.
- **Reduction in Stone Pelting and Militancy:**
 - ✓ **Decreased Stone-Pelting Incidents:** Significant drop from 618 (2019) to 76 (Jan-Jul 2021).
 - ✓ **Decline in Injuries to Security Forces:** Reduced from 64 (2019) to 10 (2021).
 - ✓ **Civilian Injuries from Pellet Guns:** Decreased from 339 (2019) to 25 (2021).
 - ✓ **Law and Order Improvement:** Only 20 law and order incidents reported in 2022.
- **Arrests of Militants and OGWs (Over-Ground Workers):**
 - ✓ **Increased Arrests of OGWs:** Rose from 82 (2019) to 178 (2021).
 - ✓ **Decline in Terrorism Acts:** 32% decrease in terrorism acts (Aug 2019-June 2022).
- **Development Projects:**
 - ✓ Launch of various projects for road and rail connectivity, healthcare, education, tourism, and sports.
 - ✓ 54 projects sanctioned under the Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP).
 - ✓ Implementation of flagship schemes like Ayushman Bharat, Ujjwala Yojana, PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, and PM Awas Yojana.

Before	After
Article 370 accorded special status to J&K	J&K will be like any other Indian state or union territory
J&K residents had dual citizenship of Kashmir and India	J&K residents will have single citizenship of India
State Assembly tenure: 6 years	Union Territory assembly tenure: 5 years
J&K had its own flag	Indian national flag prevails
Centre's authority limited to external affairs, defence, finance, communication	Centre responsible for administrative, local regulations also
State assembly defined 'permanent residents' of the state	Kashmiris won't need permanent resident certificate
Non-residents of J&K could not permanently settle in the state	Any Indian can settle in Kashmir
Non-residents could not buy immovable property, acquire land	Anyone can buy property, land in Kashmir
Kashmiri women married to non-Kashmiri could not inherit property	Kashmiri women married to non-Kashmiri can inherit property

ARTICLE 370: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

- **Introduction (1949):**
 - ✓ **Temporary Provision:** Added to the Indian constitution on **October 17, 1949**, as a temporary measure.
 - ✓ **Special Status:** Granted Jammu & Kashmir the authority to draft its own Constitution, limiting the legislative powers of the Indian Parliament.
- **Origins and Inclusion:**

- ✓ **Drafting by N Gopalaswami Ayyangar:** Included as **Article 306 A** in the draft constitution.
- ✓ **Empowered J&K Constituent Assembly:** Granted authority to **recommend the application of specific articles from the Indian Constitution to the state.**
- **Scope and Powers:**
 - ✓ **Constituent Assembly's Role:** Empowered the J&K Constituent Assembly to decide which Indian Constitution articles would be applicable.
 - ✓ **Presidential Power: Article 370, Clause 3,** gave the President the authority to amend its provisions.
- **Article 35A (1954):**
 - ✓ **Introduction:** Stemmed from Article 370
 - ✓ **Presidential Order:** Introduced through a **Presidential Order in 1954**, based on the J&K Constituent Assembly's recommendation.
 - ✓ **Special Provisions:** Empowered the J&K legislature to define permanent residents and grant special rights and privileges.
- **Modification in 2019:**
 - ✓ **Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019:** Issued by the President of India on August 5, 2019.
 - ✓ **Focused Changes:** Modified **Article 370 itself**, not a revocation.
 - ✓ **Government Action:** Empowered the Government of India to make **specific adjustments in the application of Article 370.**



CHALLENGES OF THE RECENT AMENDMENTS:

J&K Reservation (Amendment) Bill:

- **Controversy Over Constitutional Validity:**
 - ✓ The amendment faces opposition, **raising questions about its constitutional validity.**
- **Potential Polarization:**
 - ✓ Reservation based on specific criteria may **lead to political and social polarization.**
- **Implementation Challenges:**
 - ✓ Ensuring **effective implementation and addressing concerns** of diverse communities may pose challenges.

J&K Reorganization (Amendment) Bill:

- **Opposition Contention:**
 - ✓ Some opposition members challenge the amendment, **citing potential legal issues and questioning the timing.**
- **Historical and Political Controversies:**
 - ✓ References to historical decisions and political figures, such as **Jawaharlal Nehru**, create **controversies and may impact bipartisan cooperation.**
- **Security and Terrorism Concerns:**
 - ✓ Despite the **commitment to a "zero-terror" plan**, challenges remain in **fully curbing terrorism**, as highlighted by opposition members.

WAY FORWARD FOR JAMMU AND KASHMIR AMENDMENT BILLS (2023):

- **Engage in Constructive Dialogue:**
 - ✓ **Inclusive Consultation:** Foster open and **inclusive dialogue with stakeholders**, including political parties, **community leaders, and legal experts**, to address concerns and build consensus.
 - ✓ **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Implement **public awareness campaigns** to inform citizens about the amendments, **dispel misinformation, and ensure a well-informed public discourse.**
- **Legal Scrutiny and Compliance:**
 - ✓ **Constitutional Review:** Subject the amendment bills to **thorough constitutional review**, ensuring compliance with **legal principles and addressing any potential discrepancies.**

- ✓ **Collaboration with Legal Experts:** Seek collaboration with constitutional law experts and scholars to strengthen the legal foundation of the amendments.
- **Enhanced Security Measures:**
 - ✓ **Comprehensive Security Strategy:** Develop and implement a comprehensive security strategy aligned with the "zero-terror" plan, focusing on intelligence gathering, border control, and counter-terrorism efforts.
 - ✓ **Community Engagement:** Involve local communities in security initiatives, fostering cooperation and trust to create a shared responsibility for maintaining peace.
- **Address Historical Concerns:**
 - ✓ **Historical Reconciliation:** Initiate a platform for historical reconciliation, acknowledging past decisions and addressing grievances, especially those related to historical figures like Jawaharlal Nehru.
 - ✓ **National Unity Narratives:** Promote narratives that emphasize national unity and shared history, fostering a sense of common identity and purpose.
- **Empowerment Initiatives:**
 - ✓ **Community Empowerment Programs:** Implement programs that empower marginalized communities, including Kashmiri migrants and PoK refugees, providing them with educational, economic, and political opportunities.
 - ✓ **Skill Development:** Focus on skill development and job creation initiatives to enhance the socio-economic well-being of displaced communities.
- **Transparent Implementation:**
 - ✓ **Transparent Governance:** Prioritize transparency in the implementation of the amendments, ensuring that processes are clear, accessible, and accountable.
 - ✓ **Regular Reporting:** Provide regular updates and reports on the progress of the amendments, addressing concerns and demonstrating commitment to democratic principles.

THE ADVOCATES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- On December 4, the first day of the Parliament's Winter Session, the Lok Sabha passed the **Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023**.
- This bill aims to address issues within the legal system, specifically targeting the presence of 'touts.'
- The legislation repeals the outdated **Legal Practitioners Act of 1879** and amends the **Advocates Act of 1961**, streamlining legal regulations and eliminating obsolete laws.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE REPEALED 1879 ACT:

- **Enactment and Scope:**
 - ✓ The **Legal Practitioners Act of 1879**, coming into force in 1880, aimed to consolidate and amend the law related to **Legal Practitioners** in specific provinces.
 - ✓ Initially applied to areas in **West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Orissa, and Delhi**, other state governments had the option to extend its applicability through official notifications.
- **Definition of "Legal Practitioner":**
 - ✓ **Section 2 of the 1879 Act** defined the term "legal practitioner" broadly, encompassing **advocates, vakils, or attorneys of any High Court**.
- **Introduction of the Term "Tout":**
 - ✓ The 1879 Act introduced a **new definition of the term "tout."**
 - ✓ A "tout" was identified as an individual who, in consideration of remuneration from any legal practitioner, procures the employment of a legal practitioner in any legal business.
 - ✓ This also included **someone proposing to procure, for remuneration, the employment of a legal practitioner** to anyone interested in legal business.

- **Role of a Tout:**
 - ✓ Simply put, a tout was someone **engaged in procuring clients for a legal practitioner** in exchange for payment.
 - ✓ The definition expanded to include **individuals frequenting civil or criminal courts, revenue offices, railway stations, etc.**, for the purpose of procuring clients for legal practitioners.

TRANSITION TO THE ADVOCATES ACT OF 1961:

- **Enactment of the Advocates Act of 1961:**
 - ✓ Post-independence, the need for legal reforms in **India led to the creation of the Advocates Act, 1961.**
 - ✓ This legislation **aimed to amend and consolidate laws related to legal practitioners**, also providing for the constitution of **Bar Councils and an All-India Bar.**
- **Pre-1961 Legal Governance:**
 - ✓ Prior to **the Advocates Act of 1961**, legal practitioners were governed by **three Acts:**
 - **The Legal Practitioners Act, 1879,**
 - **The Bombay Pleaders Act, 1920, and**
 - **The Indian Bar Councils Act, 1926.**
- **Reform Initiatives:**
 - ✓ The impetus for legal reform **came after independence**, with the Law Commission tasked to prepare a report on necessary changes.
 - ✓ The **249th Report titled 'Obsolete Laws: Warranting Immediate Repeal'** recommended the repeal of the 1879 Act.
 - ✓ The **All-India Bar Committee** also made **recommendations in 1953.**
 - ✓ Considering these inputs, **the Advocates Act of 1961** was enacted.

PROVISIONS UNDER THE ADVOCATES AMENDMENT BILL, 2023:

- **Introduction of New Provisions**
 - ✓ The Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023, **introduces significant amendments to the Advocates Act of 1961.**
 - ✓ The new provisions **primarily focus on addressing the issue of individuals engaging in illegal practices** within courts and other authorities.
- **Section 45A: Empowering High Courts and District Judges:**
 - ✓ A key **addition is Section 45A**, inserted immediately after Section 45 of the 1961 Act.
 - ✓ This section **prescribes a penalty of six months of imprisonment for individuals found to be illegally practicing** in courts and before other authorities.
- **Lists of Touts by High Courts and District Judges:**
 - ✓ Section 45A **empowers every High Court (HC) and district judge to frame and publish lists** of touts.
 - ✓ Importantly, **no individual's name can be included** in these lists **without providing them with an opportunity to present their case against such inclusion.**
- **Inquiry Process for Alleged Touts:**
 - ✓ The **bill outlines a structured inquiry process** for alleged or suspected touts.
 - ✓ **Any authority with the power to create these lists** can send the **names to subordinate courts.**
 - ✓ These lower courts will then **conduct inquiries into the conduct of the individuals in question**, offering them an opportunity to present their case.
 - ✓ Subsequently, the lower court reports **back to the authority that initiated the inquiry.**
- **Publication of Touts' Lists:**
 - ✓ If proven to be a tout, **the person's name will be included in the list of touts published by the relevant authority.**
 - ✓ These lists are to be prominently displayed in every court.
 - ✓ Additionally, **the court or judge has the authority to exclude any individual** whose name appears on the list from the court's vicinity.
- **Penalties for Acting as a Tout:**

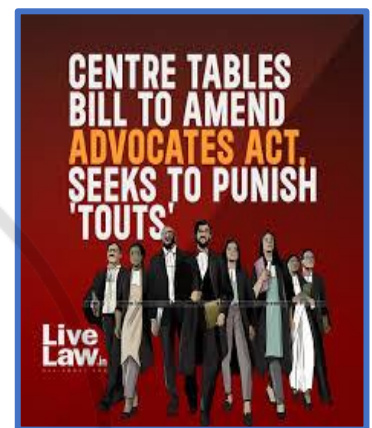
- ✓ The provision introduces **penalties for individuals acting as touts while their names are on the published lists.**
- ✓ Such individuals may **face imprisonment for up to three months, a fine extending to five hundred rupees, or both.**

OBJECTIVE OF THE ADVOCATES AMENDMENT BILL, 2023:

- **Objective of Reducing Redundant Enactments:**
 - ✓ The **Bill's accompanying Statement of Objects and Reasons** emphasizes the government's **commitment to reducing the number of superfluous enactments** in the statute book.
 - ✓ The **inclusion of Section 45A** addresses **the absence of a similar provision in the 1961 Act** and aims to **streamline legal regulations.**
 - ✓ This aligns with the **government's broader policy of repealing obsolete laws or pre-independence Acts** that have lost their utility.
 - ✓ The **consultation with the Bar Council of India** further **supports the decision to repeal the Legal Practitioners Act** and amend the Advocates Act.

CHALLENGES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATIONS OF AMENDMENT ACT:

- **Implementation Issues:**
 - ✓ **Ensuring effective implementation** of the amended provisions may pose a challenge.
 - ✓ This includes the **proper framing and publication of lists of touts, conducting inquiries, and enforcing penalties for illegal practices.**
- **Judicial Capacity and Resources:**
 - ✓ The inquiry process for alleged touts **involves lower courts.**
 - ✓ **Adequate resources and judicial capacity** will be required to conduct these inquiries promptly.
 - ✓ Courts may face challenges in **managing additional responsibilities** arising from the new provisions.
- **Definition and Identification of Touts:**
 - ✓ The definition of "tout" and the criteria for identifying individuals **engaging in illegal practices might be subjective.**
 - ✓ **Clear guidelines and criteria will be necessary to prevent misuse** and ensure fair implementation.
- **Legal Safeguards for Accused Individuals:**
 - ✓ Providing individuals accused of **being touts with an opportunity to show cause is essential for a fair legal process.**
 - ✓ Ensuring that these **individuals have proper legal representation** and due process may be a challenge.
- **Enforcement and Compliance:**
 - ✓ **Enforcing penalties on individuals acting as touts may face challenges,** and compliance may vary.
 - ✓ The effectiveness of **deterrence measures will depend on the willingness** and capacity to enforce legal consequences.
- **Integration with Existing Legal Framework:**
 - ✓ Integrating the new provisions **seamlessly with the existing legal framework,** particularly the **Advocates Act of 1961,** requires **careful consideration.**
 - ✓ Any **inconsistencies or conflicts** may lead to **confusion and legal disputes.**
- **Impact on Legal Practitioners:**
 - ✓ Legal practitioners may express concerns about the potential impact on their profession.
 - ✓ **Balancing the need to curb illegal practices** with ensuring a conducive environment for legal professionals is crucial.



WAY FORWARD:

- **Effective Implementation Strategy:**
 - ✓ Develop a **comprehensive implementation strategy,** including guidelines for framing lists of touts, conducting inquiries, and enforcing penalties.

- **Capacity Building and Resources:**
 - ✓ Allocate adequate resources for training judges and court staff, ensuring lower courts have the capacity to conduct inquiries efficiently.
- **Transparent Criteria for Identifying Touts:**
 - ✓ Establish clear and transparent criteria for identifying individuals engaged in illegal practices, preventing misuse and ensuring fairness in the legal process.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:**
 - ✓ Conduct public awareness campaigns to inform the public about the amended provisions, the consequences of illegal practices, and the importance of a transparent legal system.
- **Collaboration with Legal Community:**
 - ✓ Foster collaboration with the legal community, addressing concerns through ongoing dialogue and garnering support for the bill to positively impact the legal profession.

ARTICLE 370 ABROGATION UPHELD

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- A Constitution Bench, led by **CJI DY Chandrachud**, delivered the verdict on challenges to the abrogation of **Article 370** by the Central government in 2019.
- The case was **heard for 16 days** before the court reserved its judgment on September 5.
- The verdict addresses a **historical and contentious issue** related to the **special status of Jammu and Kashmir**, its accession to India, and the **subsequent abrogation of Article 370**.

VERDICT HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir:**
 - ✓ The court ruled that J&K did not retain any sovereignty after accession to India in 1947.
 - ✓ Despite the erstwhile ruler's proclamation, subsequent proclamations affirmed integration, akin to other princely states.
 - ✓ **CJI DY Chandrachud** said that Jammu and Kashmir held no internal sovereignty after accession to India.
 - ✓ He said there was no prima facie case that the President's 2019 orders were mala fide or extraneous exercise of power.
- **Temporary Nature of Article 370:**
 - ✓ The court held **Article 370** as a temporary, transitional provision based on historical context and its placement in Part XXI of the Constitution.
- **Abrogation of Article 370:**
 - ✓ **Upheld both presidential proclamations of August 2019**, justifying the abrogation to counter persistent challenges, particularly from Pakistan.
 - ✓ The court referred to the 1994 '**SR Bommai v Union of India**' ruling to validate the President's actions during President's rule.
- **Restoration of Statehood:**
 - ✓ The Centre was **directed to restore statehood**, and **Legislative Assembly elections** were recommended to be held.



CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S ARGUMENTS:

- **No Special Status:**
 - ✓ J&K had **no special status from the beginning**; the draft accession agreement was the same for all princely states.
- **End of Psychological Duality:**

- ✓ **Abrogation ended psychological duality**, granting fundamental rights to a larger population.
- **Self-Extinguishing Legislation:**
 - ✓ Article 370 was **not a privilege and could be taken away**; it was a self-extinguishing legislation.
- **Parliamentary Role in President's Rule:**
 - ✓ During President's rule, **Parliament exercises the role of the state legislature**, applicable to **all states**.
- **Justified Abrogation:**
 - ✓ Done to **counter consistent challenges**, not a knee-jerk decision; policy considerations involved.
- **Temporary Union Territory Status:**
 - ✓ **J&K as a Union Territory is temporary**; statehood will be restored over time, while Ladakh remains a Union Territory.
- **End of Integration Purpose:**
 - ✓ Article 370's purpose for **national integration in J&K was over**; making it permanent is unconstitutional.
- **Federalism and Basic Structure:**
 - ✓ Federalism is **part of the Constitution's basic structure**, but **Article 370 has no place**; making it permanent violates the Constitution.
 - ✓ **Sovereignty with Union Government:** Legal sovereignty rests with the Union government; **Article 370 can be removed without restrictions**.



PETITIONERS' ARGUMENTS AGAINST ABROGATION:

- **Permanent Article 370:**
 - ✓ Became permanent after the **Constituent Assembly dissolved in 1957**; cannot be repealed without its recommendation.
- **Colourable Exercise of Power:**
 - ✓ Article 370 repealed **indirectly by amending Article 368**, substituting 'Constituent Assembly' with 'Legislative Assembly.'
- **Implied Restrictions During President's Rule:**
 - ✓ Proclamation suspending the Legislative Assembly implies restrictions on Article 370(3).
- **Misuse of Article 3 Powers:**
 - ✓ Central government's powers under **Article 3 cannot change a state into a Union Territory without state consent**.
- **Absence of Merger Agreement:**
 - ✓ **No merger agreement executed**; J&K chose to be with India under Article 370's constitutional promise.

FOR	AGAINST
Article 370 was a temporary provision of Constitution	The same provision of Article 370 cannot be used to dilute it
Special privileges were temporary, cannot confer rights	Parliament cannot replace state legislature with the governor
In opposition with Article 14 which guarantees equality	Not seeking state legislature's nod is against spirit of consultation
Can be revoked through Presidential order	SC precedents cite Parliament's approval for abrogation

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUPREME COURT'S ARTICLE 370 VERDICT:

- **Restoration of Statehood:**
 - ✓ The Supreme Court **directed the Centre to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir**.
 - ✓ This recommendation aims to **reinstate the region as a full-fledged state**, indicating a move towards normalcy.
- **Holding Legislative Assembly Elections:**
 - ✓ The court recommended **holding Legislative Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir**.
 - ✓ Conducting elections is a crucial step in **re-establishing democratic governance** and representation in the region.
- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission:**
 - ✓ **Justice Kaul** suggested the creation of a **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** in Jammu and Kashmir.



- ✓ This commission **aims to address and acknowledge alleged violations** committed by the **State and its actors**, promoting transparency and accountability.
- **Acknowledgment of Internal Sovereignty Loss:**
 - ✓ **CJI DY Chandrachud** emphasized that Jammu and Kashmir **held no internal sovereignty after accession to India**.
 - ✓ This acknowledgment clarifies the **legal status of Jammu and Kashmir in the context of internal sovereignty**.

CHALLENGES OF SUPREME COURT'S ARTICLE 370 VERDICT:

- **Implementation Hurdles:**
 - ✓ Executing the **restoration of statehood** and **organizing elections might face logistical and administrative challenges**, requiring careful planning and execution.
- **Political and Social Reintegration:**
 - ✓ Reintegrating Jammu and Kashmir **politically and socially into the Union**, post the Article 370 abrogation, may **encounter resistance and necessitate comprehensive strategies** for inclusion.
- **Security Concerns:**
 - ✓ The region has **experienced security concerns**, and the **restoration process must consider maintaining law and order** while ensuring the safety of the residents.
- **Truth and Reconciliation Commission Challenges:**
 - ✓ Establishing a **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** involves navigating complex issues, including **obtaining cooperation, ensuring impartiality**, and addressing the **sensitivity of historical grievances**.
- **Public Sentiment:**
 - ✓ Public sentiment in Jammu and Kashmir is **diverse**, and any decisions made in the process of **restoration and establishment** may need to **consider and manage varying opinions**.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Implementation Roadmap:**
 - ✓ Develop a comprehensive and detailed roadmap **for the restoration of statehood and the conduct of Legislative Assembly elections** in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - ✓ **Outline specific timelines and milestones** for the phased implementation of the recommendations.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:**
 - ✓ Engage in meaningful **consultations with various stakeholders**, including **political representatives, local communities, and civil society**, to address concerns and ensure inclusive decision-making.
- **Security and Law Enforcement:**
 - ✓ Prioritize **security measures to maintain law and order** during the transition process.
 - ✓ Collaborate with law enforcement agencies to address any potential challenges and ensure the safety of residents.
- **Constitutional and Legal Reforms:**
 - ✓ Undertake **necessary constitutional and legal reforms** to facilitate the restoration of statehood in compliance with the Supreme Court's directives.
 - ✓ Ensure that the **legal framework aligns with the evolving political status** of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Electoral Preparedness:**
 - ✓ Work towards **creating an environment conducive to free and fair Legislative Assembly elections**.
 - ✓ **Facilitate the functioning of election-related institutions** and ensure the active participation of political parties and candidates.
- **Public Awareness and Communication:**
 - ✓ Conduct awareness **campaigns to inform the public about the changes**, emphasizing the constitutional and legal aspects.
 - ✓ **Maintain transparent** communication to address any **misinformation and build public confidence**.

ELECTION COMMISSIONERS (APPOINTMENT, CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND TERM OF OFFICE) BILL

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Rajya Sabha has **approved the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill**, focusing on the appointment process for the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs).
- **Introduced in August 2023**, the Bill addresses the **legal gaps in appointing Election Commissioners**, as highlighted by a Supreme Court judgment
- The legislation, **aimed at introducing transparency**, faced opposition claims that it **sidelines the Supreme Court's role** in the selection process.
- Notably, the legislation outlines a **selection committee chaired by the Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS & PROVISIONS UNDER THE BILL:

- **Overview:**
 - ✓ The Bill replaces the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991.
 - ✓ It addresses the **appointment, salary, and removal** of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs).
- **Transparency in Appointment:**
 - ✓ The Bill, **responding to a directive from the Supreme Court**, establishes a **transparent process for appointing the CEC and ECs**.
 - ✓ Previously, appointments were **not governed by specific laws**.
- **Search-and-Selection Committee:**
 - ✓ A **new search-and-selection committee** will now oversee the appointment process, **replacing the government's earlier role in deciding the names** of commissioners.
- **Legal Protection:**
 - ✓ The Bill **introduces a clause offering protection from legal proceedings** against the CEC and ECs for actions taken in the course of their duties.
- **Amendments for Parity:**
 - ✓ Following suggestions from former CECs, **two amendments were introduced, aligning the protocol, salaries, and emoluments of the CEC and ECs with those of Supreme Court judges**.
- **OPPOSITION'S CONCERNS:**
 - ✓ The **Opposition raised concerns about the Bill's constitutionality**, alleging that it undermines the **Election Commission's independence** by subjecting it to executive authority and contravening the Supreme Court's judgment.
- **Rejection of Select Committee:**
 - ✓ Despite Opposition calls to send the Bill to a select committee, the **proposal was rejected by the House**.



ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA: AUTONOMOUS CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

- **Introduction:**
 - ✓ The **Election Commission of India, established in 1950**, is an **autonomous constitutional authority** entrusted with overseeing and **administering election processes** in India at various levels, including **national, state, and district**.
 - ✓ Operating under the **authority of the Constitution, specifically Article 324**, and the Representation of the People Act, it plays a crucial role in ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections.



Constitutional Provisions:

- **Creation and Composition:**
 - ✓ **Article 324 provides for the creation of the Election Commission**, consisting of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners appointed by the President.
 - ✓ The President may also **appoint Regional Commissioners**, in consultation with the Election Commission, to aid in its functions.
- **Independence Safeguards:**
 - ✓ The Chief Election Commissioner **enjoys protection against arbitrary removal**, similar to a Judge of the Supreme Court.
 - ✓ Conditions of service for the CEC cannot be **altered to their disadvantage post-appointment**.
- **Multi-Member Commission:**
 - ✓ Prompted by controversies and court observations, the **President enacted the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Conditions of Service) Amendment Act in 1993**, establishing a **multi-member Election Commission**.
 - ✓ The Act ensures equal status, powers, and authority among the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners, emphasizing the principle of unanimity in decision-making.
- **Independence and Authority:**
 - ✓ The Constitution envisions **an independent, autonomous Election Commission to maintain impartiality** in conducting elections.
 - ✓ **Article 324 specifies safeguards to ensure the independence of the Chief Election Commissioner**, protecting against political influence.
 - ✓ The Election Commission can requisition staff from the Central and State Governments when necessary for election-related functions.
- **Functions of the Election Commission:**
 - ✓ The Election Commission **holds superintendence, direction, and control over the preparation of electoral rolls** and the **conduct of elections at various levels**, including Parliament, State Legislatures, and offices of the President and Vice-President.
 - ✓ It **advises the President or Governor on disqualification matters** concerning Members of Parliament or State Legislatures.
 - ✓ The Commission operates within the **bounds of parliamentary laws and principles of natural justice**.

CURRENT SELECTION PROCESS OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS:

- **Appointment Procedure:**
 - ✓ As per the Supreme Court ruling in **Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India**, a **three-member high-level committee advises the President** on the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (EC).
- **Constitutional Provision:**
 - ✓ **Governed by Article 324 (2)**, the **President**, with the **aid and advice of the Council of Ministers**, appoints the CEC and ECs until Parliament enacts a law specifying the criteria for selection, conditions of service, and tenure.
- **Legislative Void Addressed:**
 - ✓ *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar highlighted the need for constitutional provisions to prevent unsuitable individuals from holding the position, emphasizing the importance of criteria for selection.*
- **Tenure Regulations:**
 - ✓ Under the **Election Commission Act, 1991**, an Election Commissioner can **serve for a tenure of six years or until reaching the age of 65**, whichever comes earlier.
 - ✓ Typically, the **senior-most Election Commissioner assumes the role of the Chief Election Commissioner**.
- **Removal Safeguards:**
 - ✓ The Chief Election Commissioner **enjoys protection against removal through Parliamentary impeachment after appointment**.

- ✓ In contrast, Election Commissioners **lack such tenure protection** and **can be removed by the government** based on the Chief Election Commissioner's recommendation.


CONCERNS & CHALLENGES WITH THE BILL:

- **Selection Committee Dominated by the Government:**
 - ✓ The bill proposes the establishment of a committee **comprising the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Cabinet Minister** nominated by the PM to select Election Commission members.
- **Supreme Court Verdict Overturned:**
 - ✓ The bill aims to overturn the **Supreme Court's March 2 verdict**, which recommended a **high-power committee** involving the **PM, LoP in Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India** for appointing the CEC and ECs.
- **Alleged Executive Subjugation:**
 - ✓ Opposition argue that the **proposed legislation "subjugates" the Election Commission** to the executive, **violating the Constitution**.
 - ✓ Concerns are raised about the **alleged dilution of the independence of the Election Commission** by placing it under the authority of the executive.
- **Impact on Independence:**
 - ✓ The bill's opponents claim that it **negatively affects the independent character of the Election Commission**, as the appointment committee becomes an **"empty formality"** with members nominated by the Prime Minister.
- **Validity of Selection Committee Recommendations:**
 - ✓ The bill upholds the **Selection Committee's validity even in the case of vacancies or defects**, potentially resulting in a committee exclusively comprised of ruling party members.
- **Search Committee Oversight:**
 - ✓ The Selection Committee may choose **candidates beyond those suggested by the Search Committee**, potentially undermining the latter's role.
- **Government Control Over Salary:**
 - ✓ Equating the salary of the CEC and ECs with that of the **Cabinet Secretary allows executive influence, unlike fixing it through an Act of Parliament**.
- **Eligibility Criteria Concerns:**
 - ✓ **Limiting eligibility to those equivalent to the Secretary** may exclude potentially suitable candidates, restricting the pool to senior bureaucrats.
- **Lack of Parity in Removal Procedures:**
 - ✓ Concerns **arise about the removal process's lack of parity** between the CEC and ECs, with the Constitution providing different removal methods.
- **Administrative Independence:**
 - ✓ Recommendations for **an independent secretariat, akin to other constitutional bodies**, have not been addressed in the Bill.

Unevenly Balanced

Clause 7 (1) of The Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service And Term of Office) Bill, 2023, says **CEC and ECs shall be appointed by President on the recommendation of a selection committee consisting of the PM (chairperson), the Leader of the Opposition in the House of the People (or leader of the single largest party in the Lok Sabha) and Union Cabinet minister nominated by the PM**

Clause 6 says search committee will be headed by the Cabinet Secretary, and comprise of two other members not below the rank of secretary of the Government of India



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMITTEE'S FOR COMPOSITION OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE:

Suggestions made by various Commissions/Courts for composition of the Selection Committee:

Body	Members
Goswami Committee (1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ For CEC: Appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice + Leader of Opposition of Lok Sabha (or leader of the largest party in Lok Sabha). ✓ For EC: Appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice + Leader of Opposition of Lok Sabha (or leader of the largest party in Lok Sabha) + CEC.

<i>The Constitution (Seventieth Amendment) Bill 1990*</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Chairman of Rajya Sabha + Speaker of Lok Sabha + Leader of the Opposition (or the leader of the largest party) in Lok Sabha. ✓ The CEC was further made a part of the consultative process in the appointment of the Election Commissioners.
<i>National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution Report (2002)</i>	✓ Prime Minister + Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha + the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha + the Speaker of Lok Sabha + the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha.
<i>Law Commission (2015)</i>	✓ Prime Minister + the Leader of Opposition of Lok Sabha (or the leader of the largest opposition party in Lok Sabha) + the Chief Justice.
<i>Supreme Court (2023)</i>	✓ Prime Minister + Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha (or leader of single largest opposition party in Lok Sabha) + Chief Justice.

SELECTION PROCESS OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES:

<i>Country</i>	<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Selection Committee/Process</i>
<i>South Africa</i>	President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ President of the Constitutional Court (Chairperson), representative of the Human Rights Court, representative of the Commission on Gender Equality, and the public prosecutor.
<i>United Kingdom</i>	The monarch, upon approval by the House.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission with MPs as members, oversees the recruitment of electoral commissioners. ✓ The candidates for these posts are then approved by the House of Commons and appointed by the British monarch. ✓ The Speaker asks the Leader of the House to table a motion for an address to appoint the recommended candidates.
<i>United States</i>	President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Commission is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.
<i>Canada</i>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appointed by a resolution of the House of Commons.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Legislative Refinement:**
 - ✓ The proposed amendments **seeking to retain the status of the Election Commissioners (ECs) on par with Supreme Court Judges should be thoroughly discussed in both Houses of Parliament.**
 - ✓ Ensure that the legislative language is clear and **unambiguous in equating the status, salary, perks, and allowances of ECs** with that of Supreme Court Judges.
- **Consultation and Consensus:**
 - ✓ Encourage a consultative and consensus-driven approach in Parliament to address concerns raised by former Chief Election Commissioners and Opposition parties.
 - ✓ **Parliamentary committees can play a crucial role** in facilitating discussions and arriving at a consensus on the amendments.
- **Public Awareness and Participation:**
 - ✓ Foster public awareness about the proposed amendments and their **implications on the Election Commission's independence.**
 - ✓ Consider seeking public opinion through forums such as public consultations, expert discussions, or **parliamentary committees to ensure a well-informed decision-making process.**
- **Addressing Concerns:**

- ✓ Specifically address concerns raised by Opposition parties and former Chief Election Commissioners regarding the **potential downgrade of the Election Commission's status**.
- ✓ Provide comprehensive explanations on why **changes were made to the initial proposal, addressing issues related to the composition of committees and the role of the Chief Justice of India**.
- **Committee Composition:**
 - ✓ Evaluate the **rationale behind changing the head of the search committee** from the Cabinet Secretary to the Law Minister.
 - ✓ **Ensure transparency in the selection process**.
 - ✓ Consider potential amendments or clarifications to uphold the integrity of the search committee's role and independence.
- **Timely Passage:**
 - ✓ Prioritize the timely passage of the **amended bill to provide clarity on the appointment process and the status of ECs**.
 - ✓ Aim for a **smooth transition from the existing law to the proposed amendments** to avoid any legal uncertainties.
- **Continuous Review:**
 - ✓ **Establish mechanisms for continuous review and evaluation of the functioning of the Election Commission under the amended law**.
 - ✓ Allow for future amendments based on the evolving needs of the electoral process and the principles of fairness and independence.

SPECIAL STATUS OF CERTAIN STATES

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

The recent discussions on special provisions for states in India, beyond the well-known Article 370, have gained prominence due to several key factors:

- **Supreme Court's Clarification on Article 370:**
 - ✓ **Background:** The Supreme Court's ruling on December 12 regarding Article 370 in the context of Jammu and Kashmir.
 - ✓ **Significance:** The clarification that Article 370 represents **asymmetric federalism**, not internal sovereignty, **sparked renewed discussions on the nature and implications of special provisions**.
- **Broader Understanding of Asymmetric Federalism:**
 - ✓ **Exploration:** Beyond Article 370, attention **shifted to other states enjoying varying degrees of autonomy**.
 - ✓ The exploration of **asymmetric federalism as a constitutional feature** became a focal point in understanding **state-Centre relationships**.
- **Diversity and Constitutional Framework:**
 - ✓ **Contextualization:** The discussions **highlighted India's diversity as a driving factor for differentiated equality among states**.
 - ✓ **Constitutional Adaptability:** The adaptability of the Constitution to accommodate **diverse political, historical, and administrative contexts** came to the forefront.

SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS (SCS) IN INDIA: KEY POINTS

- **Historical Background:**
 - ✓ **Initiation (1969):** Introduced by the **fifth Finance Commission** to aid disadvantaged states.
 - ✓ **Architect:** Named after Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Dr. Gadgil Mukherjee.
 - ✓ **Original Beneficiaries (1969-1979):** Assam, Nagaland, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura.
- **Expansion of Special Category States:**
 - ✓ **1990:** Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram added.

- ✓ **2001: Uttarakhand** granted special category status.
- **Gadgil Formula and NITI Aayog Transition:**
 - ✓ **Implementation (1974-2015):** Guided the transfer of assistance to states.
 - ✓ **Changes (2015):** Dissolution of Planning Commission, adoption of **14th Finance Commission** recommendations, discontinuation of **Gadgil formula-based grants**.
- **Rationale for Special Status:**
 - ✓ **Resource Challenges:** Aimed at supporting states with low resource bases for development.
 - ✓ **Inherent Features:** Recognition of challenges like **hilly terrains, economic backwardness, and non-viable state finances**.
- **Granting Authority:**
 - ✓ **National Development Council (NDC):** Comprising the prime minister, union ministers, chief ministers, and planning commission members.
 - ✓ **Responsibility:** Decides on the allocation of special category status based on specific criteria.
- **Criteria for Special Category Status:**
 - ✓ Hilly and Difficult Terrain
 - ✓ Low Population Density or Tribal Population
 - ✓ Strategic Location Along International Borders
 - ✓ Economic and Infrastructural Backwardness
 - ✓ Non-Viable Nature of State Finances
- **Current Status:**
 - ✓ **Limitation:** No provision in the Indian Constitution for categorizing states as "**special category states**."
 - ✓ **Alternatives:** Certain states covered under **Articles 371, 371-A to 371-H, and 371-J** with specific provisions.
- **Delhi's Unique Arrangement:**
 - ✓ Delhi, **not classified as a state**, has a distinctive arrangement under **Article 239AA**.
 - ✓ **Despite not being a state**, Delhi has **legislative powers on state and concurrent list subjects**, showcasing tailored governance.

ADVANTAGES OF SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS IN INDIA:

- **Developmental Support:**
 - ✓ **Tailored Assistance:** Special Category Status provides **targeted aid to states** facing inherent challenges in development.
- **Inclusive Growth:**
 - ✓ **Addressing Disparities:** Focus on states with **hilly terrains, low population density**, and economic backwardness promotes inclusive growth.
- **Strategic Importance:**
 - ✓ **Border Security:** Recognizing states with **strategic locations along international borders** ensures enhanced attention to security and development.
- **Financial Assistance:**
 - ✓ **Central Assistance:** **Grants and tax breaks help states with non-viable finances** mobilize resources for development projects.
- **Social and Educational Benefits:**
 - ✓ **Reservation Benefits:** Special status often **comes with reservation in local government jobs** and educational institutions, fostering social and educational upliftment.

CONCERNS OF SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS IN INDIA:

- **Regional Disparities:**
 - ✓ **Seeds of Regionalism:** Critics argue that special status **might fuel regionalism and hinder the spirit of national integration**.
- **Subjectivity in Granting:**
 - ✓ **Decision-Making Challenges:** The process of deciding which **states qualify for special status** can be subjective, leading to potential disparities.
- **Changes in Governance Framework:**

- ✓ **Post-NITI Aayog:** Dissolution of the **Planning Commission** and adoption of new frameworks like the **NITI Aayog** have altered the approach, raising concerns about continuity and effectiveness.
- **Exclusion of States:**
 - ✓ **Constitutional Limitations:** The Indian Constitution lacks provisions for expanding the list of special category states, potentially leaving deserving states without additional support.
- **Long-Term Dependency:**
 - ✓ **Risk of Dependency:** States with special status might become overly reliant on central assistance, potentially impeding efforts towards self-sufficiency.
- **Evolutionary Challenges:**
 - ✓ **Shifts in Governance:** Changes in finance commission recommendations and evolving governance structures may pose challenges in maintaining consistency and relevance in special status criteria.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Balancing regional needs with national cohesion** remains crucial.
- **Continuous dialogue and periodic reviews of special provisions** can ensure relevance without compromising unity.
- **Encouraging inclusive policies and shared economic growth** can mitigate concerns of regionalism.
- Understanding and **navigating the complexities of special provisions is integral** to preserving India's diverse yet unified fabric.
- **Strategic considerations and continuous evaluation** will guide the nation toward a **harmonious coexistence** of regional autonomy and national integration.

POST OFFICE BILL, 2023

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The Bill seeks to **repeal the 125-year-old the long-standing Indian Post Office Act of 1898**, drawing attention due to its historical significance.*
- *Contains provisions allowing the **Centre to intercept, open, or detain any item**.*

POST OFFICE BILL, 2023 OVERVIEW:

- **Repealing a 125-Year-Old Act:**
 - ✓ The Bill seeks to repeal the **long-standing Indian Post Office Act of 1898**, a central government departmental undertaking drawing attention due to its historical significance.
 - ✓ **Previous attempts to amend the 1898 Act** faced obstacles and lapses.
 - ✓ It falls under the **Union List of the Constitution**.
 - ✓ Under the new legislation, **India Post, a central government departmental undertaking**, will no longer be under the **exclusive privilege** of the government for conveying letters.
 - ✓ Instead, services provided by **India Post will be outlined in Rules**.
 - ✓ The bill **appoints a Director General of Postal Services** to lead India Post, **granting powers to establish regulations**, including tariffs for services and postage stamp supply.

KEY FEATURES OF THE BILL:

- **Exclusive Privileges:**
 - ✓ The 1898 Act granted **exclusive privileges to the central government** for conveying letters.
 - ✓ The Bill, however, **eliminates these privileges**, emphasizing India Post's **exclusive privilege to issue postage stamps**.
- **Prescribed Services:**
 - ✓ While the Act **specified services such as delivering postal articles and money orders**, the Bill empowers India Post to provide services as prescribed by the central government.
- **Director General's Regulations:**
 - ✓ Both the Act and the Bill **allow for the appointment of the Director General of Postal Services**.

- ✓ The Bill expands the Director General's regulatory powers **to cover various activities related to postal services.**
- **Interception Powers:**
 - ✓ The Act **permitted interception based on public emergencies** or public safety grounds.
 - ✓ The Bill **broadens the scope, allowing interception for reasons like state security**, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, emergency, public safety, or contravention of laws.
- **Examination of Postal Articles:**
 - ✓ The **Bill removes the power of officers** to examine postal articles and suggests empowering officers to deliver suspicious articles to customs authorities for examination.
- **Exemptions from Liability:**
 - ✓ Both the Act and the Bill exempt the government and officers from liability for loss or damage to postal articles.
 - ✓ The Bill **introduces the central government's authority to prescribe liability through Rules.**
- **Removal of Offences and Penalties:**
 - ✓ **The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023**, removed offences and penalties under the 1898 Act.
 - ✓ The **Bill does not reintroduce offences**, except for **the recovery of unpaid amounts** as arrears of land revenue.

KEY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS OF THE BILL:

- **Lack of Procedural Safeguards:**
 - ✓ The Bill **lacks specified procedural safeguards for intercepting articles** transmitted through India Post, potentially violating freedom of speech, expression, and the right to privacy.
 - ✓ The absence of safeguards **goes against established principles**, as demonstrated by Supreme Court rulings **mandating safeguards for interception of telecommunications.**
- **Grounds for Interception:**
 - ✓ The **inclusion of 'emergency'** as a ground for interception may **surpass reasonable restrictions under the Constitution.**
 - ✓ The broad term 'emergency' **lacks explicit definition**, raising concerns about **its constitutionality and potential infringement on freedom of speech and expression.**
- **Exemption from Liability:**
 - ✓ The Bill exempts **India Post from liability**, with liability to be prescribed through Rules by the central government, **leading to a possible conflict of interest.**
 - ✓ **Consumer rights may be inadequately protected**, and the conflict of interest arises as the central government, administering India Post, determines liability.
- **Regulation of Postal Services vs. Courier Services:**
 - ✓ **Distinct regulatory frameworks for public and private postal services** create disparities in interception provisions and consumer protection.
 - ✓ While the 1898 Act regulates India Post, **private courier services lack specific legislation.**
 - ✓ The **Bill retains provisions exempting the government from liability**, unlike private courier services regulated by the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- **Removal of Offences and Penalties:**
 - ✓ The **Bill does not introduce offences or penalties**, potentially **impacting the right to privacy**, with no consequences for unauthorized opening of postal articles.
 - ✓ The absence of penalties for offenses such as **illegal opening of postal articles raises concerns about the protection of individuals' privacy.**
- **Clarity on Consequences:**
 - ✓ The Bill **lacks clarity on consequences for officers committing fraudulent or willful acts** causing loss, delay, or mis-delivery of services.
 - ✓ **Without specified consequences**, the Bill **leaves ambiguity regarding accountability for officer misconduct**, potentially undermining the protection of consumer rights.

WAY FORWARD AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Incorporate Procedural Safeguards:**

- ✓ Introduce **well-defined procedural safeguards in the bill** to govern the interception of articles transmitted through India Post.
- ✓ Clearly articulated safeguards, **including the necessity for interception**, limited validity of orders, and **oversight by high-ranking officials or review committees**, will help protect fundamental rights and prevent misuse.
- **Precise Definition of Grounds for Interception:**
 - ✓ Define and narrow down **the grounds for interception, particularly the term 'emergency,'** to ensure its constitutionality and prevent arbitrary use.
 - ✓ Clarity in defining grounds **reduces ambiguity, aligning interception practices with constitutional principles** and preventing potential overreach.
- **Balanced Approach to Liability:**
 - ✓ **Strike a balance between exempting India Post from liability** and ensuring adequate consumer protection.
 - ✓ **This approach avoids conflicts of interest, enhances consumer rights,** and ensures that individuals have recourse in case of lapses in postal services.
- **Uniform Regulatory Framework:**
 - ✓ **Establish a uniform regulatory framework** for both public postal services and private courier services, ensuring consistency in interception provisions and consumer protection.
 - ✓ Consistency in **regulations promotes fairness, equal treatment for consumers,** and a level playing field between different service providers.
- **Reintroduce Offences and Penalties:**
 - ✓ **Reintroduce specific offences and penalties within the bill** to address unauthorized actions, such as the unapproved opening of postal articles.
 - ✓ Clear consequences for misconduct provide deterrence, uphold the right to privacy, and maintain public trust in the integrity of postal services.
- **Define Consequences for Officer Misconduct:**
 - ✓ Clearly define the **consequences for officers engaging in fraudulent or willful acts** that cause loss, delay, or mis-delivery of service.
 - ✓ Clarity in consequences **ensures accountability, discourages misconduct, and strengthens** the ethical standards within the postal system.
- **Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - ✓ **Conduct public consultations and engage stakeholders,** including legal experts, civil society, and consumer advocacy groups, to gather diverse perspectives on the bill.
 - ✓ Inclusive consultations enhance the bill's robustness, **address concerns from various quarters, and contribute to a more comprehensive and well-balanced legislative framework.**
- **Regular Review Mechanism:**
 - ✓ Establish a **mechanism for regular reviews of the bill's implementation and its impact on fundamental rights, consumer protection,** and the evolving landscape of postal services.
 - ✓ Periodic reviews ensure the bill **remains aligned with changing needs,** technological advancements, and constitutional principles over time.

COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL (CAG)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *In the calendar year 2023, a noticeable decline in the **number of audit reports on the Union government's accounts**, prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), was observed.*
- ***Only 18 reports were tabled in Parliament**, a significant decrease from the **average of 22 reports per year between 2019 and 2023.***
- *This represents a stark contrast to the **period between 2014 and 2018**, where an **average of 40 reports were tabled each year.***
- *The trend highlights a **consistent decrease in the number of audits**, with 2015 marking a peak at 53 reports.*

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR-GENERAL (CAG):

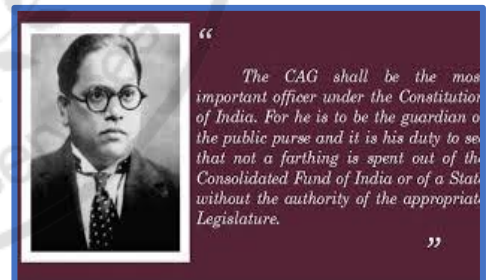
- **Article 148 - Appointment and Removal:**
 - ✓ The **President appoints the CAG**, and **removal** occurs **similarly to a Supreme Court Judge**.
 - ✓ CAG takes an **oath before assuming office**, as per the form in the **Third Schedule**.
 - ✓ **Salary and conditions determined by Parliament**, with no adverse changes post-appointment.
 - ✓ **Ineligibility for further government office** after tenure.
 - ✓ Conditions of service for audit department personnel prescribed by the President.
- **Article 149 - Duties and Powers:**
 - ✓ CAG performs duties and exercises powers **related to Union and State accounts**, as prescribed by **Parliament**.
 - ✓ Responsibilities include overseeing financial committees and **ensuring compliance with legal procedures**.
- **Article 150 - Form of Accounts:**
 - ✓ The President, **advised by the CAG**, prescribes the **form of accounts for the Union and States**.
- **Article 151 - Audit Reports:**
 - ✓ CAG **submits reports to the President**, who presents them to Parliament for review.
- **Article 279 - Calculation of "Net Proceeds":**
 - ✓ CAG certifies "**net proceeds**" of **taxes after deducting collection costs**.
 - ✓ Parliament or the President's order may specify procedures for calculating proceeds, payments, adjustments, etc.
- **Third Schedule - Oath or Affirmation:**
 - ✓ Specifies the oath or affirmation for the CAG at the time of assuming office.
- **Sixth Schedule - District and Regional Funds:**
 - ✓ Pertains to the **administration of tribal areas in specific states**.
 - ✓ **District and Regional Funds managed** according to rules set by the Governor.
 - ✓ CAG prescribes the form of accounts and **audits District and Regional Councils**, with reports submitted to the **Governor for presentation before the Council**.



Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL (CAG) IN INDIAN DEMOCRACY:

- **Ambedkar's Emphasis:**
 - ✓ Dr. B. R. Ambedkar highlighted the **paramount importance of the CAG**, considering their **duties even more critical than the judiciary**.
 - ✓ The CAG plays a **pivotal role in upholding constitutional ideals and ensuring good governance**.
 - ✓ Positioned as a guardian of the Constitution, the CAG aligns with the goals of "**AAZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV**," contributing to national awakening, peace, and development.
- **Pillars of Democracy:**
 - ✓ India's democratic structure rests on three pillars: **the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary**.
 - ✓ Despite their independent functions, **institutions like the CAG, operating autonomously under Article 148**, monitor and contribute to the accountability of these pillars.
 - ✓ Article 151 mandates **CAG reports to be submitted to the President or Governor**, emphasizing the role of public audit in governance.
- **CAG's Autonomous Constitutional Role:**
 - ✓ As an **autonomous constitutional body**, the CAG remains **distinct from the legislature and the executive**.
 - ✓ This autonomy enables the CAG to **impartially scrutinize** and assess the functioning of government entities.



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- ✓ **Envisioned by the founding fathers**, the CAG plays a significant role in public audit, upholding the vision for good governance in India.
- **CAG's Contributions to Good Governance:**
 - ✓ The CAG has been instrumental in addressing issues **related to corruption, black money, and ineffective government policies**.
 - ✓ Notable instances include the **scrutiny of the Ganga Action Plan 1979**, inflation in the Food Corporation of India's accounts, and **exposing financial discrepancies in Bihar in 2000-01**.
 - ✓ **High-profile cases such as the 2G scam and Commonwealth Games irregularities** underscore the CAG's impact in uncovering lapses and ensuring accountability.
- **Historical Roots of Auditing:**
 - ✓ Auditing's historical significance can be traced to **ancient practices**, with references in old treatises like **Arthashastra and Kautilya**.
 - ✓ The financial stewardship arrangement, with **distinct roles for Treasurer and Comptroller-Auditor**, dates back to ancient times.
 - ✓ The king's emphasis on transparent public audits conducted by honest officials aligns with the **enduring role played by the CAG in contemporary India**.

ROLE OF CAG IN INDIAN DEMOCRACY:

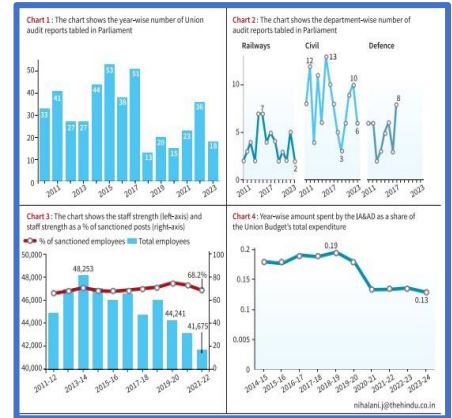
- **Financial Management Oversight:**
 - ✓ CAG ensures **transparency and good governance** by auditing government **spending, verifying legal availability, and alignment with regulations**.
 - ✓ **Proposed change to Comptroller and Auditor-General reflects the role beyond auditing**, actively overseeing government expenditure.
- **Regulatory Audit for Revenue Assurance:**
 - ✓ **Conducts regulatory audits** to ensure **revenue assessment, collection, and allocation align** with established legal procedures.
- **Propriety Audit for Efficiency:**
 - ✓ CAG has the authority to **conduct propriety audits**, scrutinizing government **spending for wasteful or extravagant expenses**.
 - ✓ This discretionary audit contributes to efficient and prudent use of public funds.
- **Transparency and Accountability:**
 - ✓ CAG plays a pivotal role in maintaining transparency, **preventing corruption and inefficiency in the system**.
 - ✓ **Reports presented under Article 151** are crucial for **parliamentary review**, enhancing **ethical standards, and ensuring accountability**.
- **Welfare Activities and Oversight:**
 - ✓ CAG's oversight helps **ensure that government actions align with the welfare objectives of a "for the people" state**.
 - ✓ Reports, **like the audit on the KG-D6 block**, highlight instances of rule-bending and benefit-granting, contributing to better governance.
- **Parliamentary Engagement:**
 - ✓ CAG reports are **presented before both Houses of Parliament**, encouraging thorough **review by MPs**.
 - ✓ Positive outcomes depend on prompt actions by both legislative and executive branches, working in harmony.
- **Independence in Reporting:**
 - ✓ **CAG maintains independence by declining requests** to allow criticized private companies to influence audit reports.
 - ✓ Responses from private firms are **not sought during the draft phase**, ensuring **unbiased and unaltered reporting**.



RECENT CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS FOR CAG IN INDIA:

➤ **Decline in Audit Reports (2019-2023):**

- ✓ In 2023, a significant drop in CAG audit reports, with only **18 presented in Parliament.**
- ✓ Contrast to the **average of 22 reports per year from 2019 to 2023.**
- ✓ Sharp decline from the **40 reports per year between 2014 and 2018.**



➤ **Department-wise Analysis: Railways and Civil Departments:**

- ✓ Railways Department reports decreased from **27 to 14 in the last five years.**
- ✓ Civil Department audit reports reduced from **42 to 34 during the same period.**
- ✓ Defence Department's reports less accessible, with the latest from **2017.**

➤ **Supreme Audit Institution of India (SAI): Staff Strength and Budget Allocation:**

- ✓ Staff strength decline in IA&AD, from **48,253 in 2013-14 to 41,675 in 2021-22.**
- ✓ IA&AS officers reduced from **789 (2014-15) to 553 (2021-22).**
- ✓ Budget allocation to IA&AD decreasing as a share of the Union Budget's total expenditure.

➤ **Challenges for CAG in India:**

- ✓ Audits becoming more complex, involving **public-private partnerships (PPPs).**
- ✓ **No defined criteria for CAG appointment**, relying on executive discretion.
- ✓ **Difficulty in obtaining timely access** to crucial government records for audits.
- ✓ **Calls for complete independence of CAG**, making it part of the **Public Accounts Committee (PAC).**
- ✓ **Shorter tenure due to age cap (65 years)** affecting leadership continuity and expertise.
- ✓ **Lack of statutory recognition for IA&AD's work** in India compared to global counterparts.
- ✓ **Criticism of audit estimates**, emphasizing the need for rigorous standards to maintain audit integrity.

WAY FORWARD & REFORMS SUGGESTED BY VINOD RAI (FORMER CAG):

➤ **Expanding CAG's Jurisdiction:**

- ✓ **Bring all private-public partnerships (PPPs), Panchayati Raj Institutions,** and government-funded societies under CAG scrutiny.
- ✓ **Adapt audit mechanisms** to address changes in the **exploitation of government funding** and public goods.

➤ **Amending CAG Act of 1971:**

- ✓ Amend the CAG Act of 1971 to **keep pace with evolving governance structures.**
- ✓ Align the Act with contemporary challenges, such as **climate change, Sustainable Development Goals, and Goods and Services Tax.**

➤ **Collegium Mechanism for CAG Appointment:**

- ✓ **Establish a collegium-type mechanism** for selecting the CAG, similar to the **Chief Vigilance Commissioner (CVC)** selection process.

➤ **Auditing Evolving Issues:**

- ✓ **Prepare CAG to audit emerging issues**, including the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and the **impact of Goods and Services Tax.**

➤ **Utilizing Technology in Audit:**

- ✓ Embrace technology in public audit by **implementing Big Data management policies.**
- ✓ Establish centres, like the **Centre for Data Management and Analytics**, to leverage technology for effective audits.

➤ **Global Collaboration:**

- ✓ **Foster partnerships and collaborations with international counterparts** through conferences and forums.
- ✓ **Share best practices and enhance capacity development** in areas like public and environmental audit.

➤ **Auditing Multifarious Operations:**

- ✓ **Demonstrate credibility** by successfully auditing complex operations, such as **the United Nations headquarters**.

TRIBUNALS SYSTEM IN INDIA

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- The news highlights a recent clarification by the **Supreme Court regarding the limitations of tribunals in directing government policy**.
 - “**Tribunals Cannot Direct Framing Of Policy By Government: Supreme Court**”
- Justices A.S. Oka and Sanjay Karol emphasized that tribunals, **operating within the confines of their governing legislation, lack the authority to mandate government policy decisions**.
- This clarification came during a case involving the **Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT)**, questioning whether it could **instruct the government to formulate a policy for the appointment of the Judge Advocate General (Air)**.
- The court underscored that even though the **AFT possesses powers akin to a civil court, it does not have the authority equivalent to the Supreme Court or the High Courts**.
- The judgment emphasized that **not even High Courts, exercising their powers under Article 226 of the Constitution, can direct the government or a department to establish a specific policy**.

TRIBUNAL SYSTEM IN INDIA:

- **Definition and Purpose of Tribunals:**
 - ✓ **Quasi-judicial Nature** and Independence from the Executive.
 - ✓ Resolution of **Administrative and Tax Disputes**.
 - ✓ Multifaceted Functions.

Evolution of the Tribunal System:

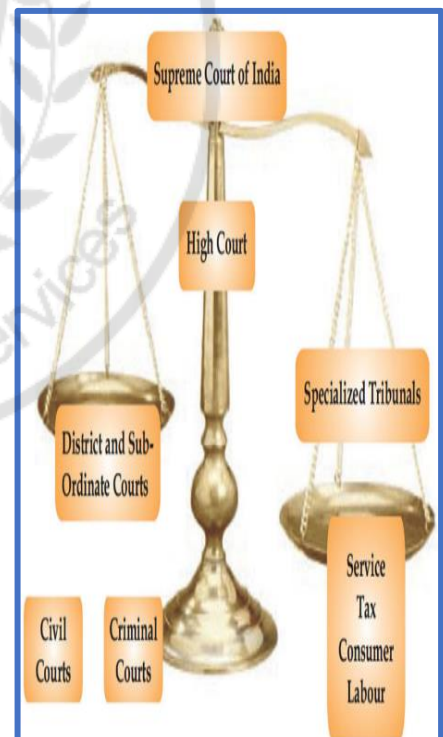
- **Historical Context:**
 - ✓ Origin from 'Tribunes' in the **Roman Republic**.
 - ✓ Role of Magistrates in **Citizen Protection**.
 - ✓ Evolution of the Term in Modern Context.
 - ✓ **Constitutional Amendments (Articles 323A and 323B)**.
 - ✓ Development of Tribunals **Over Eight Decades**.
 - ✓ Recent Reforms and Bill Introductions.

Structure of the Indian Tribunal System:

- **Current Framework:**
 - ✓ **Dual Roles:** Substitutes and Subordinates to High Courts.
 - ✓ Reorganization and Consolidation (Finance Act, 2017).
 - ✓ **Ongoing Changes:** Bill of **2021 Abolishing Tribunals**.

Functions of a Tribunal:

- **Versatile Responsibilities:**
 - ✓ **Adjudication of Disputes**.
 - ✓ Rights Determination between Parties.
 - ✓ **Administrative Decision-Making**.
 - ✓ Reviewing Existing Administrative Actions.



CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION AND COMPETENCE OF TRIBUNALS IN INDIA:

➤ **Constitutional Standing and Competence:**

- ✓ Parliament can establish **alternatives to High Courts**, affirmed by the **Supreme Court in 1986**.
- ✓ Tribunals can decide on constitutional validity, but they are **supplements to High Courts**, ruled in 1997.
- ✓ High Courts can review **tribunal decisions on constitutional matters**.



➤ **Independence of Tribunals:**

- ✓ Noted **lack of complete tribunal independence** in 2010.
- ✓ Emphasized tribunal freedom from **executive interference in 2014**.

✓ **Independence components:** Selection process, **tribunal composition**, and terms of office.

➤ **Selection Process of Members:**

- ✓ **Judicial insulation** from executive **interference is crucial (1986)**.
- ✓ **Lack of judicial dominance in selection committees** violates separation of powers (2019).
- ✓ 2020 ruling specified selection committees, including **Chief Justice, presiding officer, and ministry representatives**.

➤ **Composition of Tribunals:**

- ✓ Members from various fields or **central government departments**.
- ✓ Vital **presence of technical members** with judicial members.
- ✓ No need for technical members if jurisdiction transfers to tribunals.
- ✓ Technical members' inclusion could undermine judicial independence.

➤ **Term of Office:**

- ✓ **Short tenure with re-appointment provisions** increases executive influence (2019).
- ✓ Recommended **five-year term with a maximum age limit (2020)**.

DIFFERENT TRIBUNALS IN INDIA:

➤ **Administrative Tribunals:**

- ✓ Established under the **Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985**, based on **Article 323A of the Constitution**.
- ✓ Adjudicates disputes related to recruitment and conditions of service in public services of the Union and States.

✓ **Types:**

- **Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)** for Central Government employees.
- **State Administrative Tribunal** for State employees.
- **Joint Administrative Tribunal (JAT)** for two or more States.

✓ **Other tribunals for administrative and tax-related disputes:**

- *Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT), National Green Tribunal (NGT), Competition Appellate Tribunal (COMPAT), Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT), etc.*

➤ **Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT):**

- ✓ Established on **November 1, 1985**.
- ✓ **Jurisdiction:** Central Government employees, Union Territory employees, and local or other governments under the Government of India.
- ✓ **17 regular benches, 15 at principal High Court seats**, and two at Jaipur and Lucknow.
- ✓ Members from judicial and administrative backgrounds.

➤ **State Administrative Tribunal:**

- ✓ **Empowered by Article 323B** of the Constitution.
- ✓ Set up by state legislatures for matters like tax-related issues.

➤ **Water Disputes Tribunal:**



- ✓ Enacted under the **Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956.**
- ✓ Adjudicates disputes on waters of **inter-State rivers and their valleys.**
- ✓ **Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2019** aims for a standalone Tribunal, streamlining the dispute resolution process.
- **Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT):**
 - ✓ Established under the **Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007.**
 - ✓ Adjudicates disputes on commission, appointments, and conditions **of service for personnel under Army Act, 1950; Navy Act, 1957; and Air Force Act, 1950.**
 - ✓ Principal Bench in New Delhi, with Regional Benches in various cities.
- **National Green Tribunal (NGT):**
 - ✓ Formed under the **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.**
 - ✓ **Specialized quasi-judicial body** for environmental cases.
 - ✓ Comprises judges and environment experts for expeditious case disposal.
 - ✓ **Principal Place of Sitting: New Delhi**, with additional sittings in **Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata, and Chennai.**
 - ✓ Mandated to dispose of applications or **appeals within 6 months.**
- **Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT):**
 - ✓ Constituted **under Section 252 of the Income Tax Act, 1961.**
 - ✓ Consists of Judicial and Accountant Members.
 - ✓ Exercises powers conferred **by the Income Tax Act.**



SUPREME COURT'S RECENT PRONOUNCEMENT ON TRIBUNAL POWERS:

- **Decision:**
 - ✓ This clarification arose during the examination of whether the **Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT)** could **direct the government** to create a policy for **filling the post of the Judge Advocate General (Air).**
- **Quasi-Judicial Limitations:**
 - ✓ The Court, comprising **Justices A.S. Oka and Sanjay Karol**, emphasized that tribunals, including the AFT, **function as quasi-judicial bodies**, operating within the defined parameters established by governing legislation.
 - ✓ It explicitly stated that these **tribunals lack the power to mandate specific policy** formulations by government authorities.
- **Comparison with High Courts:**
 - ✓ **Drawing parallels**, the judgment highlighted that even High Courts, in the **exercise of powers under Article 226 of the Constitution**, **cannot direct the government** or a department to formulate a particular policy.
 - ✓ This **underscores a consistent legal principle** that courts, whether tribunals or **higher judiciary**, **cannot compel legislative** or policy-making actions by the government.
- **Sole Prerogative of Government:**
 - ✓ The Supreme Court underscored that the creation or sanctioning of schemes or policies related to the **service of defense personnel rests as the "sole prerogative of the government."**
 - ✓ This **reinforces the government's exclusive authority** in determining policies pertaining to defense personnel.
- **Writ Jurisdiction and Fundamental Rights:**
 - ✓ The judgment noted that **even a court with writ jurisdiction**, faced with situations **conflicting with fundamental rights**, **does not possess the power to direct the formation of policies.**
 - ✓ This underscores the **judiciary's limitations in compelling policy decisions** even in the face of **alleged violations of fundamental rights.**



KEY ISSUES IN TRIBUNAL FUNCTIONING:

- **Challenges:**
 - ✓ **Lack of autonomy in the appointment** and funding of tribunals.
 - ✓ In the case of **L. Chandra Kumar vs. Union of India & Ors. (1997)**, the Supreme Court held that **appeals against orders of a tribunal could be made in the High Court**, defeating the purpose of reducing the burden of the normal courts.
- **Pendency of Cases:**
 - ✓ Tribunals, designed to **expedite case disposal**, face substantial backlogs, impacting their effectiveness.
 - ✓ Examples include the **central government industrial tribunal, Armed Forces Tribunal, and Income-tax Appellate Tribunal**.
- **Tribunal Abolition and Impact:**
 - ✓ The **Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021** abolished nine tribunals, potentially increasing workload in High Courts.
 - ✓ Concerns raised about the impact on pending cases and efficiency.
- **Human Resource Challenges:**
 - ✓ Insufficient human resources, including a **shortage of judges**, contribute to case pendency.
 - ✓ Vacancies in crucial tribunals, **such as the Armed Forces Tribunal**, hinder their functionality.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BETTER TRIBUNAL FUNCTIONS:

- **Administration of Tribunals:**
 - ✓ **1997:** Recommended an **independent mechanism** for uniform tribunal management.
 - ✓ **2014:** Administrative support from **Ministry of Law and Justice**; no facilities from parent ministries.
 - ✓ **2020:** Supreme Court **reiterated NTC importance**.
- **National Tribunals Commission (NTC):**
 - ✓ Establish a dedicated, independent NTC to provide essential resources—infrastructural, financial, and human—**for effective tribunal functioning**.
 - ✓ Address vacancies in tribunals to **enhance their operational capacity**.
- **Judicial Impact Assessment:**
 - ✓ Conduct a **judicial impact assessment** to ascertain the additional resources required to handle new cases resulting from the enactment of new laws.
 - ✓ The Supreme Court's recommendation for a **thorough analysis during the amalgamation of tribunals should be heeded**.
- **Transparency and Reporting:**
 - ✓ Release reports on judicial **impact assessments related to the amalgamation of tribunals**, ensuring transparency and accountability.
 - ✓ **Regularly update the status of vacancies in tribunals** to enable prompt corrective actions.
- **Efficient Case Management:**
 - ✓ **Implement efficient case management strategies to reduce pendency** and ensure timely resolution.
 - ✓ **Periodic reviews and audits of tribunal functions** can aid in identifying and rectifying inefficiencies.

SUO-MOTU POWERS OF NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The **ammonia gas leak from the Coromandel International Limited fertiliser manufacturing unit in Ennore** has prompted the **southern bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT)** to take **Suo Motu cognisance of the incident**.*
- *The NGT acted in response to media reports highlighting the **adverse effects of the leak on residents in Periakuppam, Ernavur, and Burma Nagar**, who experienced **breathlessness, eye irritation, and skin irritation**.*

- Expressing concern over the environmental impact, the NGT issued **directions to the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) to submit a detailed report on the ammonia gas leak incident.**

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL (NGT):

➤ About:

- ✓ The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** was established on **October 18, 2010**, under the **National Green Tribunal Act 2010**.
- ✓ It serves as a **specialized judicial body** dedicated to the **effective and expeditious disposal of cases related to environmental protection**, conservation of forests, and natural resources.
- ✓ The NGT operates **independently of the procedures laid down in the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**, and instead follows the principles of natural justice.



➤ Composition:

- ✓ **The NGT has a presence in five zones:** North, Central, East, South, and West.
- ✓ The **Principal Bench is located in Delhi**, with additional benches in **Bhopal, Kolkata, Chennai, and Pune**.
- ✓ The Tribunal is headed by a **Chairperson and comprises judicial and expert members**.

FUNCTIONS OF NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL (NGT):

➤ Jurisdiction:

- ✓ The NGT has jurisdiction over **civil cases** involving **substantial environmental questions** and disputes related to statutes listed in **Schedule I of the NGT Act, including acts like the Water Act, Air Act, and Environment Protection Act.**

➤ Relief and Compensation:

- ✓ Individuals seeking **relief and compensation** for environmental damage falling under the specified legislations can approach the NGT.

➤ Legislative Coverage:

- ✓ The NGT covers cases related to laws such as the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, Forest (Conservation) Act, Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, and more.**

➤ Enforcement:

- ✓ **The Tribunal's orders are binding**, and it has the **power to grant relief in the form of compensation and damages.**
- ✓ Its decisions are **enforceable similar to a civil court** under the **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.**

➤ Review and Appeal:

- ✓ The NGT has the **authority to review its own decisions.**
- ✓ If necessary, decisions can be **challenged before the Supreme Court within ninety days.**

➤ Current Functioning:

- ✓ The **Principal Bench in Delhi is remotely hearing applications from other jurisdictions through video conferencing to address the needs of litigants**, especially in regional benches where the full strength of members may be lacking.

BACKGROUND: GAS LEAK INCIDENT AND NGT'S ACTION

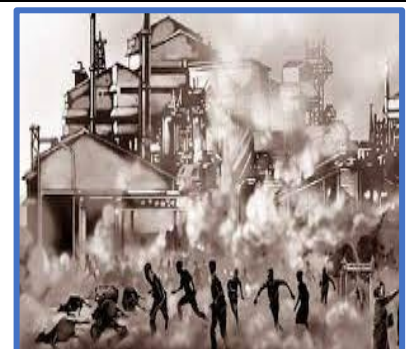
➤ Suo Motu Action:

- ✓ The NGT, acting on its own accord, has taken notice of the ammonia gas leak incident, highlighting **the severity of the environmental concern.**

➤ Affected Areas:

- ✓ Residents in **Periakuppam, Ernavur, and Burma Nagar** experienced health issues such as **breathlessness and irritation in their eyes and skin due to the ammonia leak.**

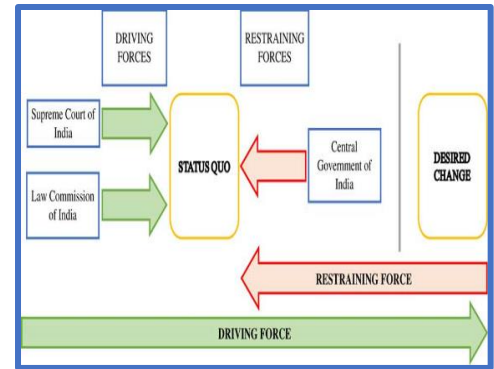
➤ Ammonia Levels:



- ✓ During the TNPCB's inspection, the ammonia level in the air was recorded at 3 ppm or 2,090 microgram/m³, significantly exceeding the allowed 24-hour average of 400 microgram/m³.
- **Evacuation and Impact:**
 - ✓ In response to the leak's effects, many families near the site have evacuated their homes.
 - ✓ The incident has raised concerns about the health and well-being of the affected locals.
- **Statutory Tribunal's Nature:**
 - ✓ A statutory tribunal, like the NGT, is a quasi-judicial body with limited powers within its statutory jurisdiction, not a general-purpose constitutional court.

LEGAL CHALLENGE: NGT'S SUO MOTO POWERS:

- **SC Directive:**
 - ✓ In gas leak in Visakhapatnam incident in May 2020 LG Polymers, appealed the NGT's order at the Supreme Court, challenging the NGT's suo moto powers.
 - ✓ The SC directed LG Polymers to present its argument before the NGT first.
- **NGT's Stand:**
 - ✓ On June 6, 2020, the NGT asserted its suo moto powers under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 (NGT Act), justifying it based on fulfilling the NGT Act's purpose.
- **NGT's Justification:**
 - ✓ The NGT highlighted the NGT Act's objective of providing relief and compensation for environmental damage, asserting that Section 19 allows regulating its own procedure, thereby conferring suo moto powers.



Legal Precedents and Interpretation: Suo Moto Powers

- **Express Grant of Powers:**
 - ✓ Some statutes expressly grant suo moto powers to tribunals, like the Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1961, which mentions it in Section 122A.
- **Interpretation in Absence of Express Powers:**
 - ✓ Other tribunals, like the Debt Recovery Tribunal, have denied suo moto powers when not expressly granted in the governing statute, as seen in the Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunal's decision.

SUPREME COURT AFFIRMS SUO MOTU POWER FOR NGT:

The Supreme Court, in a landmark judgment, has upheld the suo motu power of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in discharging its functions under the NGT Act. The court emphasized that the NGT, as a specialized forum for environmental matters, cannot afford to be a passive observer, especially in the absence of external complaints.

Key Highlights of the Judgement:

- **Suo Motu Jurisdiction:**
 - ✓ The Supreme Court affirmed that the NGT possesses suo motu power to initiate actions in the interest of environmental protection.
 - ✓ This authority enables the NGT to proactively address environmental concerns without waiting for specific complaints.
- **Constitutional Mandate:**
 - ✓ The court emphasized that the right to a healthy environment is integral to the right to life under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.
 - ✓ The NGT, being established under constitutional mandate, plays a crucial role in enforcing Article 21 in the context of environmental protection.
- **Rejecting Statutory Limitations:**

The argument that the NGT is a creature of statute and cannot exercise Suo motu powers was rejected by the Supreme Court.

 - ✓ The judgment highlighted that procedural provisions should align with the substantive rights invoked in environmental matters, ensuring a broader interpretation.

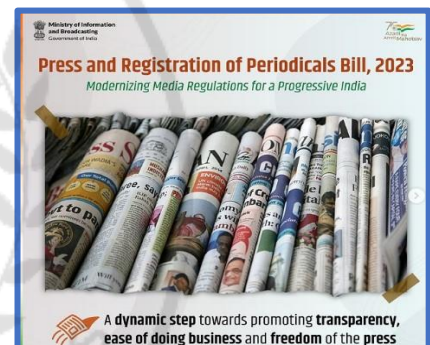
- **NGT's Role and Responsibility:**
 - ✓ The NGT was recognized as a specialized forum, **inheriting a broad conception of environmental concerns.**
 - ✓ The court emphasized that the **NGT's functions must not be narrowly construed**, and it should be empowered to take necessary actions to protect the environment in the larger public interest.
- **Flexible Mechanism:**
 - ✓ Considering the **looming dangers of environmental disasters** and climate change, the court stressed the need for a flexible mechanism.
 - ✓ The NGT was encouraged to address urgent **environmental issues effectively, leaving a positive environmental legacy for future generations.**
- **Effective Procedure:**
 - ✓ The judgment emphasized that the **NGT's role should not be mechanical or ornamental.**
 - ✓ Instead, **it should have a meaningful and effective procedure** to address urgent environmental concerns, avoiding unnecessary procedural hindrances.

THE PRESS AND REGISTRATION OF PERIODICALS BILL, 2023

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023, has garnered attention due to its passage in both houses of Parliament, Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha.*
- *The uniqueness of the bill lies in its provisions, particularly the exclusion of persons convicted of terrorist acts or unlawful activities from publishing periodicals.*
- *The bill seeks to modernize regulations related to publishing, aiming at "ease of doing business" and removing procedural obstacles for publishers.*
- *The shift from jail terms to fines, the creation of an appellate mechanism, and the transfer of power to the Press Registrar General are significant changes.*
- *The bill's impact on the publishing industry, coupled with its emphasis on efficient registration processes, has made it a subject of interest and discussion in the news.*



ABOUT THE PRESS AND REGISTRATION OF PERIODICALS BILL, 2023:

- **Introduction and Repeal:**
 - ✓ Introduced in **Rajya Sabha on August 1, 2023.**
 - ✓ Seeks to repeal the **Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867.**
 - ✓ After being passed in the **Rajya Sabha on August 3** amid uproar from the Opposition, the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023, **was passed in the Lok Sabha on December 21, 2023**

Key Features of the Bill:

- **Registration of Periodicals:**
 - ✓ Provides for the **registration of periodicals, excluding books or scientific and academic journals.**
 - ✓ Periodicals encompass **publications containing public news or comments on public news.**
- **Registration Process:**
 - ✓ **Replaces the declaration to the District Magistrate (DM)** with an online application to the Press Registrar General and local authority.
 - ✓ **Prohibits individuals convicted of terrorist acts** or unlawful activities from publishing periodicals.
- **Foreign Periodicals:**

ONLINE REGISTRATION

Salient features of the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bill provides for simple online mechanism to apply for title verification and grant of certificate of registration by the Press Registrar General to a periodical as a simultaneous process ➤ No requirement of furnishing any declaration before local authority or its authentication by local authority ➤ A person who has been convicted by any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> court for an offence involving terrorist act or unlawful activity, or having done anything against the security of the State not permitted to bring out a periodical ➤ Facsimile edition of a foreign periodical can be printed in India with prior approval of the Central government and its registration with the Press Registrar General
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- ✓ **Reproduction of foreign periodicals in India** requires prior approval from the central government.
- ✓ Prescribes the manner of **registration for such periodicals**.
- **Press Registrar General:**
 - ✓ Introduces the **position of Press Registrar General of India**.
 - ✓ Responsibilities include **issuing registration certificates**, maintaining a **register of periodicals**, **setting guidelines for title admissibility**, verifying circulation figures, and overseeing registration revisions, suspensions, or cancellations.
- **Registration of Printing Press:**
 - ✓ **Replaces the declaration of a printing press** before the DM with an online submission to the Press Registrar General.
- **Suspension and Cancellation of Registration:**
 - ✓ **Empowers the Press Registrar General to suspend** a periodical's registration **for 30 to 180 days**.
 - ✓ **Grounds for suspension include false information** during registration, failure to publish continuously, or providing false particulars in annual statements.
 - ✓ **Registration may be cancelled for various reasons**, including having a similar title to another periodical or the **owner/publisher being convicted of terrorism** or unlawful activities.
- **Penalties and Appeals:**
 - ✓ **Authorizes the Press Registrar General to impose penalties** for unregistered periodicals or late submission of annual statements.
 - ✓ Penalties include **fines up to Rs 5 lakh**.
 - ✓ **Non-compliance with registration** may lead to the cessation of publication, **punishable by imprisonment up to six months**.
 - ✓ **Appeals against refusal, suspension, cancellation**, or penalties can be made to the Press and Registration Appellate Board **within 60 days**.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE 2023 BILL AND THE 1867 ACT:

Aspect	1867 Act	2023 Bill
Scope Regarding Books	✓ Enacted for the regulation, preservation, and registration of printing presses , newspapers, books, and newspapers printed in India.	✓ Excludes books from its scope , placing them under the jurisdiction of the HRD Ministry .
Penalties and Decriminalization	✓ Criminalizes offenses with up to six months of imprisonment, including violations of Section 3 (keeping a press without a declaration).	✓ Decriminalizes by replacing jail terms with fines . ✓ Appellate mechanism under the Press and Registration Appellate Board, headed by the Chairman of the Press Council of India .
Financial Penalties	✓ Imposes fines with an upper limit of Rs 2,000 .	✓ Raises the upper limit significantly, with fines reaching up to Rs 5 lakh .
Shift in Regulatory Power	✓ Power held by the DM , with a limited role for the Press Registrar appointed by the Centre.	✓ Shifts regulatory authority to the newly created Press Registrar General (PRG) , enhancing powers and responsibilities. ✓ Sections 5 and 6 delineate the PRG's functions and powers.
Role and Functions of the PRG	✓ Limited powers for the Press Registrar .	✓ Empowers the PRG with tasks such as issuing certificates of registration to periodicals, maintaining records, collecting fees, and managing funds for the Act's implementation.

CHALLENGES OF THE PRESS AND REGISTRATION OF PERIODICALS BILL, 2023:

- **Exclusion of Books from Regulation:**
 - ✓ The exclusion of books from the scope of the **bill might create a regulatory gap**, and **oversight issues**, as books are significant **contributors to the publishing industry**.
- **Shift in Regulatory Power:**
 - ✓ The shift in regulatory power **from the District Magistrate to the Press Registrar General** raises concerns about **centralized control** and **potential bureaucratic hurdles**.
- **Decriminalization and Penalties:**
 - ✓ While decriminalization is a **positive step**, the effectiveness of penalties, especially the substantial increase in fines, **needs to be assessed to ensure they act as deterrents without burdening publishers disproportionately**.
- **Foreign Periodicals Approval Process:**
 - ✓ The **requirement for prior approval** from the central government for **reproducing foreign periodicals** may introduce complexities and delays in the publishing process.
- **Suspension and Cancellation Criteria:**
 - ✓ The grounds for suspension and cancellation, such as the **subjective nature of "false information"** or **failure to publish continuously**, may lead to **discretionary decisions** and **legal ambiguities**.

IMPACTS OF THE PRESS AND REGISTRATION OF PERIODICALS BILL, 2023:

- **Ease of Doing Business:**
 - ✓ The emphasis on "**ease of doing business**" can benefit publishers by simplifying registration processes, **reducing bureaucratic delays**, and facilitating a **quicker turnaround for title registrations**.
- **Financial Penalties:**
 - ✓ The **increased upper limit of fines** may act as a deterrent **against non-compliance**, potentially **promoting better adherence to registration requirements**.
- **Role of Press Registrar General:**
 - ✓ **Empowering the Press Registrar General** may enhance the **efficiency of the registration process** and **ensure** better coordination within the regulatory framework.
- **Decriminalization for Certain Violations:**
 - ✓ **Replacing imprisonment with fines for certain violations aligns** with efforts to modernize laws and may contribute to a more business-friendly environment for publishers.
- **Shift in Power Dynamics:**
 - ✓ The shift in regulatory power can either **streamline processes** or **lead to concerns about centralized control**.
 - ✓ The **impact will depend on how the new structure is implemented** and whether it effectively addresses industry needs.

International relations

INDIA-SRI LANKA RELATIONS

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- **President Ranil Wickremesinghe's** recent announcement on **land connectivity with India** echoes a proposal he made **20 years ago** about a **bridge between Rameswaram (India) and Talaimanar (Sri Lanka)**.
- The initial vision aimed at **regional economic integration**, fostering growth opportunities for both countries.

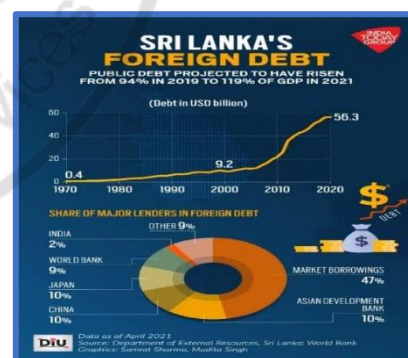
India-Sri Lanka Relations: A Brief Overview

- **Historical and Cultural Ties:**
 - ✓ The relationship between **India and Sri Lanka** dates back **more than 2500 years**, marked by **intellectual, cultural, religious, and linguistic** interactions.
 - ✓ Both nations share a rich legacy of historical connections, **fostering a deep-rooted bond**.
- **Trade and Investment:**
 - ✓ Over the years, **trade and investment between India and Sri Lanka** have grown significantly, contributing to economic cooperation.
 - ✓ Bilateral engagements extend to various sectors, including development, **education, culture, and defence**.
- **International Cooperation:**
 - ✓ India and Sri Lanka collaborate on major **international issues**, reflecting a shared understanding and alignment on global matters.
 - ✓ The **two countries engage in diplomatic efforts** to address common challenges and contribute to regional stability.



Recent Status:

- **Power Grid Cooperation:**
 - ✓ Despite a **memorandum of understanding signed in 1970**, the progress on the bilateral power grid between India and Sri Lanka has been slow.
 - ✓ The **transmission network project, aiming for a 1,000 MW transfer and a High Voltage Direct Current link**, faces delays, impacting Sri Lanka's power supply.
- **Trade and Economic Ties:**
 - ✓ The **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement, signed in 1998**, has not seen substantial progress.
 - ✓ Bilateral economic ties have faced challenges, with **India regaining its position as the largest source of imports for Sri Lanka, contributing to about 26% of total imports**.
- **Tourism and Economic Potential:**
 - ✓ Tourism, a major revenue source for Sri Lanka, sees **India as the largest single country of tourist arrivals, constituting 17% of the total**.
 - ✓ Despite the potential for **stronger economic ties**, Sri Lanka's underperformance, **compared to its trade with Bangladesh**, raises questions about the current state of affairs.
- **Recent Developments and Initiatives:**
 - ✓ Positive momentum has been witnessed in the past year, with **resumed air services between Chennai and Jaffna**, passenger ferry services, and a joint venture in the dairy sector.



- ✓ These developments indicate a **potential shift towards a more mutually beneficial economic relationship.**

INDIA-SRI LANKA BILATERAL RELATIONS:

➤ Political Relations:

- ✓ **High-level Exchanges:** Regular visits and **engagements at the highest levels**, showcasing the importance both countries place on their relationship.
- ✓ **Virtual Bilateral Summit (VBS):** Prime Minister Modi and Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa held a VBS in September 2020, strengthening bilateral ties.
- ✓ A joint statement, '**Mitratva Maga**,' covered various areas of cooperation.
- ✓ **Official Visits:** Key visits include **Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's visit in 2019**, **PM Mahinda Rajapaksa's visit in 2020**, and **Indian EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar's visit in 2021**, enhancing diplomatic ties.
- ✓ **Historical Visits:** Recounts visits by former leaders like **Narendra Modi's 2015 and 2017 visits**, **expressing solidarity after Easter Sunday attacks**, and visits by former leaders Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe.



➤ Commercial Relations:

- ✓ **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA):** Initiated in **2000**, significantly contributing to bilateral trade expansion.
- ✓ **Bilateral Trade:** India is Sri Lanka's **largest trading partner**, with merchandise trade reaching USD 5.45 billion in 2021.
- ✓ Both countries **benefit from economic ties**, with Sri Lankan exports to **India utilizing ISFTA benefits**.
- ✓ **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** India a major contributor to FDI in Sri Lanka, with investments in **various sectors like petroleum, tourism, manufacturing, real estate, and more.**

➤ Development Cooperation:

- ✓ **Grant Projects:** India's **commitment of over USD 3.5 billion** in grants for projects spanning education, health, livelihood, housing, and industrial development.
- ✓ **Indian Housing Project:** Building **62,500 houses**, showcasing India's commitment to post-war reconstruction.
- ✓ **Lines of Credit:** 11 LOCs extended for projects in **railways, transport, connectivity, defense**, and solar, reinforcing economic collaboration.

➤ Cultural Relations:

- ✓ **Shared Heritage:** A 2,500-year legacy of historical, cultural, religious, spiritual, and linguistic ties.
- ✓ **Buddhism:** Deep-rooted Buddhist ties, with **India announcing a USD 15 million grant** for promoting bilateral Buddhist connections.
- ✓ **Cultural Exchange:** **Cultural Cooperation Agreement** forms the basis for periodic cultural exchange programs.

➤ People-to-People Ties:

- ✓ **Pilgrimages:** Prime Minister Modi's announcement of a **USD 15 million grant for Buddhist ties** and the **inaugural flight to Kushinagar strengthens** people-to-people connections.
- ✓ **International Day of Yoga:** Celebrated annually, fostering wellness and therapeutic yoga.
- ✓ **India-Sri Lanka Foundation:** Facilitating civil society exchanges, enhancing contact between younger generations.

➤ Tourism:

- ✓ **E-Tourist Visa:** **Launched in 2015**, enhancing tourism between the two nations.
- ✓ **Open Sky Agreement:** Signed in 2016, enabling increased connectivity with unlimited flights to six Indian airports.
- ✓ **Air Travel Bubble:** **Arrangement in 2021 to restore air connectivity affected by pandemic-related travel restrictions.**

➤ Human Resource Development:

- ✓ **Scholarships:** India offers about **710 scholarship slots annually to Sri Lankan students**, fostering education ties.
- ✓ **ITEC Program:** Offering **402 fully-funded slots** annually for short-term training programs, enhancing skill sets.
- **Fisheries Issue:**
 - ✓ Joint efforts to **address the issue of fishermen crossing maritime boundaries**, with ministerial and JWG meetings.
- **Indian Community:**
 - ✓ **People of Indian Origin (PIOs):** Diverse communities engaged in business ventures, contributing to economic prosperity.
 - ✓ **Indian Origin Tamils (IOTs):** Employed in plantations, and a **growing population in Colombo engaged in business.**
 - ✓ **Indian Expatriates:** An **estimated 14,000 Indian expatriates living in Sri Lanka**, contributing to diverse sectors.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA- SRI LANKA RELATIONS:

- **Strategic Geopolitical Position:**
 - ✓ Sri Lanka's **strategic location in the Indian Ocean** is crucial.
 - ✓ The **East-West maritime route** around the island handles a significant portion of global oil and container transportation.
- **Maritime Security and Trade Potential:**
 - ✓ Sri Lanka's ports **hold potential as essential maritime hubs.**
 - ✓ Plays a vital role in ensuring maritime security and **securing Sea Lanes of Communication.**
- **Chinese Influence and Regional Stability:**
 - ✓ Chinese influence, notably through the **Belt and Road Initiative, has increased.**
 - ✓ India prioritizes **stability, peace, and security**, intensifying Sri Lanka's regional significance.
- **Indian Ocean Strategic Importance:**
 - ✓ Sri Lanka's position in **major shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean is critical.**
 - ✓ Control over these lanes is **pivotal for India's trade and military operations.**
- **Ease of Doing Business and Tourism:**
 - ✓ The adoption of **UPI enhances economic integration** and business ease.
 - ✓ UPI facilitates **trade and boosts connectivity for tourism** between India and Sri Lanka.

CHALLENGES OF INDIA- SRI LANKA RELATIONS:

- **Fishermen Issue:**
 - ✓ Both countries have often **faced disputes related to fishing rights** in the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar.
 - ✓ Conflicts arise **when fishermen from one country are apprehended by the other** for crossing maritime boundaries.
- **Economic Ties:**
 - ✓ **Trade imbalances and economic competition** can strain relations.
 - ✓ It's important to assess the **economic dynamics, trade agreements**, and any issues related to market access or trade barriers between the two nations.
- **Political Dynamics:**
 - ✓ **Political differences or changes in leadership** can influence bilateral relations.
 - ✓ **Shifts in foreign policy priorities or diplomatic approaches** can impact how the two countries interact on regional and global platforms.
- **China's Influence:**
 - ✓ The influence of external actors, particularly China, in the region can be a source of concern.
 - ✓ **India and Sri Lanka may perceive each other's relationships** with external powers as potential threats to their own strategic interests.
- **Security Concerns:**
 - ✓ **Security issues, such as terrorism or cross-border activities**, can strain relations.
 - ✓ Both countries **need to collaborate on security matters** to ensure regional stability.

- **Ethnic and Cultural Ties:**
 - ✓ Given the **shared history, ethnicity, and cultural ties**, any issues related to the **treatment of Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka can affect bilateral relations.**
 - ✓ India has historically been **concerned about the welfare of Tamils in Sri Lanka.**

WAY FORWARD:

- **Diplomatic Dialogue:**
 - ✓ **Continued diplomatic dialogue** is crucial for **addressing concerns and finding common ground.**
 - ✓ **High-level meetings and communication channels** between the governments can foster mutual understanding.
- **Trade and Economic Cooperation:**
 - ✓ **Strengthening economic ties** through **trade agreements and partnerships** can be mutually beneficial.
 - ✓ **Addressing trade imbalances and facilitating** smoother trade can contribute to improved relations.
- **Cultural and People-to-People Ties:**
 - ✓ **Encouraging cultural exchanges, tourism, and educational collaborations** can enhance people-to-people ties.
 - ✓ Promoting a better understanding of each other's cultures can help build stronger relations.
- **Security Cooperation:**
 - ✓ **Collaborating on security matters, including counter-terrorism** efforts and maritime security, can contribute to regional stability.
 - ✓ Joint efforts to address common security challenges can strengthen the strategic partnership.
- **Conflict Resolution:**
 - ✓ If there are **outstanding issues or historical grievances**, both countries can work towards finding mutually acceptable solutions.
 - ✓ This might involve addressing concerns related to **minority rights, border disputes, or historical issues.**
- **Regional Cooperation:**
 - ✓ Engaging in regional forums and organizations can provide **opportunities for collaboration on shared challenges.**
 - ✓ Both countries can work **together to address regional issues**, fostering a sense of common purpose.
- **Environmental and Climate Change Collaboration:**
 - ✓ Given the **shared geographical and ecological features**, collaboration on environmental and climate change issues can be an avenue for positive engagement.
 - ✓ Joint efforts to **address climate challenges** can contribute to regional sustainability.

INDIA-VENEZUELA RELATIONS

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *India has made headlines as **Union Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri announced the country's readiness to purchase Venezuelan oil.***
- *The move comes in response to **the lifting of U.S. sanctions on Venezuela in October** prompting Indian refiners, including Paradip, to resume imports of heavy Venezuelan crude.*
- *Minister Puri emphasized **India's willingness to buy oil from any non-sanctioned country and highlighted the capabilities of Indian refineries to process such crude.***
- *This decision **aligns with India's strategy to diversify its oil sources, enhance energy security, and optimize refining capacities.***
- *It also signals **India's pragmatic approach to adapt to evolving global market dynamics and explore economic opportunities, including addressing pending financial matters related to Indian investments in Venezuelan projects, such as those by ONGC.***

- *The resumption of Venezuelan oil imports reflects India's commitment to **securing cost-effective and diverse energy supplies** amid the complexities of the international oil market.*

INDIA-VENEZUELA RELATIONS:

➤ Political Relations:

- ✓ Cordial diplomatic ties marked by **similarity of views on major global issues**.
- ✓ Significant visit by **former President Hugo Chavez to India in 2005**, boosting bilateral relations.
- ✓ Exchange visits by high-level officials, including former **Foreign Minister of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro**.
- ✓ **Ongoing diplomatic engagements**, including meetings between **External Affairs Ministers and Vice Presidents**.



➤ Commercial Relations:

- ✓ **MOU** signed during **President Chavez's visit in 2005**, setting up the Indo-Venezuelan Joint Commission.
- ✓ Venezuela emerges as **one of India's largest oil suppliers**, contributing to **diverse bilateral trade**.
- ✓ Joint ventures in the oil sector, with **ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL)** and **PDVSA** collaborating in projects.
- ✓ **Reliance Industries Limited (RIL)** and **Nayara Energy** among major Indian importers of Venezuelan oil.
- ✓ Bilateral trade statistics provided for the past five years, indicating fluctuations in exports and imports.

➤ Cultural Exchanges:

- ✓ Growing interest in Indian art and culture in Venezuela.
- ✓ Establishment of **academic chairs, study centres**, and yoga centres promoting Indian culture.
- ✓ Celebrations of **International Day of Yoga, Holi festival, and other cultural events**.
- ✓ **Gandhi Hall inauguration and participation** in international book fairs to showcase Indian literature.
- ✓ Various initiatives, including **'Bollywood y Arepa,'** promoting Indian cinema and cuisine.

➤ People-to-People Ties:

- ✓ **ITEC program** facilitating the exchange of experts and professionals.
- ✓ **Around 50 NRIs and 30 PIOs** contributing to the Indian community in Venezuela.

➤ Recent Developments:

- ✓ **High-level visits in 2021 and 2022**, with meetings **between External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Venezuelan counterparts**.
- ✓ **Shramdaan and cleanliness drive** organized by the Embassy on October 1, 2023, commemorating Mahatma Gandhi's birthday.
- ✓ Ongoing **educational scholarships** and cultural exchanges.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA'S DECISION TO IMPORT OIL FROM VENEZUELA:

➤ Sanctions Easing and Diplomatic Shift:

- ✓ The resumption of oil imports from Venezuela by India comes after the **United States eased sanctions on Caracas in October 2023**.
- ✓ This marks a **significant diplomatic shift and a response to changing international relations**, providing India **with the opportunity to diversify** its sources of crude oil.

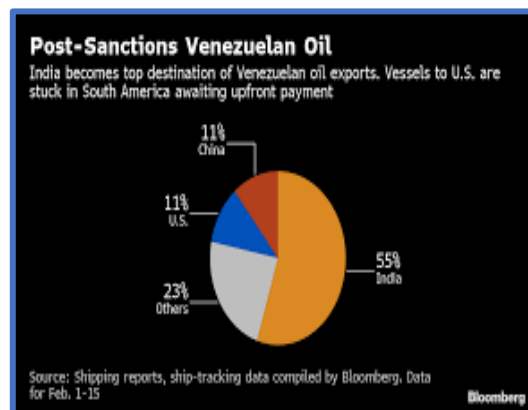
➤ Energy Security and Diversification Strategy:

- ✓ India, as the **world's third-largest consumer of crude oil**, prioritizes energy security and aims to diversify its oil sources **to reduce dependence on specific regions**.
- ✓ The decision aligns with India's broader strategy **to secure oil from countries not under sanctions**, ensuring a stable and diversified energy supply.

➤ Utilization of Indian Refinery Capacities:

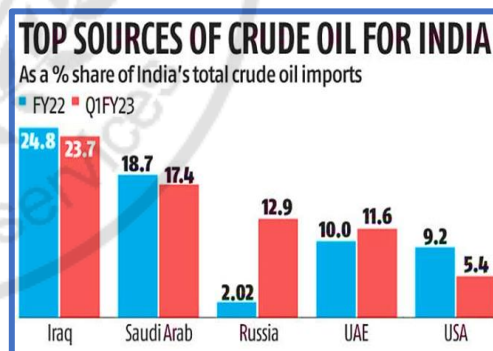
- ✓ Indian refineries, including **Reliance Industries (RIL)**, **Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)**, and **HPCL-Mittal Energy (HMEL)**, have booked Venezuelan oil cargoes.

- ✓ The move indicates India's readiness **to utilize the capacities of its refineries**, capable of processing heavy Venezuelan crude, contributing to efficient and flexible refining operations.
- **Economic Considerations and Competitive Pricing:**
 - ✓ The Indian government emphasizes **buying oil from cost-effective sources** to mitigate the impact of volatile global oil prices.
 - ✓ By resuming imports from Venezuela, **India aims to secure competitive pricing and maintain economic stability** in the face of uncertainties in the global oil market.
- **Impact on Global Oil Market Dynamics:**
 - ✓ Venezuela, with the **largest proven oil reserves in the world**, seeks to **expand its market presence by offering oil to countries** beyond its traditional buyers.
 - ✓ The move contributes to **evolving dynamics in the global oil market**, with Venezuela adapting its strategies amid the easing of sanctions.
- **Geopolitical Considerations and International Relations:**
 - ✓ India's decision reflects its diplomatic approach, **engaging with countries based on mutual interests and economic benefits**.
 - ✓ It signals India's stance on **pursuing economic and energy partnerships** with nations that align with its strategic objectives.
- **Response to Changing Market Conditions:**
 - ☛ The resumption of oil imports from Venezuela reflects **India's agility in responding to changing market conditions**, geopolitical developments, and the evolving landscape of international sanctions.
- **Potential Impacts on Bilateral Relations:**
 - ☛ The decision to import oil from Venezuela may have implications for **India-Venezuela bilateral relations, fostering economic ties and potentially leading** to deeper cooperation in various sectors.



KEY CHALLENGES:

- **Oil Market Volatility:**
 - ☛ **Dependence on oil trade** makes both nations vulnerable to **global oil market fluctuations**, impacting economic stability.
- **Geopolitical Considerations:**
 - ☛ **Venezuela's geopolitical challenges** and alliances may pose **obstacles to India's diplomatic engagement** and economic partnerships.
- **Sanctions and International Relations:**
 - ☛ **Ongoing sanctions on Venezuela** could **complicate trade agreements** and limit the scope of diplomatic cooperation between the two nations.
- **Economic Instability:**
 - ☛ Venezuela's **economic instability and India's efforts** to diversify energy sources may create uncertainties in long-term bilateral trade relations.
- **Internal Dynamics:**
 - ☛ The **internal political and economic dynamics of both countries** could influence the stability and depth of their diplomatic and economic ties.



WAY FORWARD:

- **Diversification of Trade:**
 - ☛ **Explore and expand bilateral trade beyond oil**, focusing on sectors like **agriculture, pharmaceuticals, technology, and renewable energy** to reduce dependence on a single commodity.
- **Investment and Infrastructure:**

- Foster **mutual investments in key sectors**, encouraging **Indian businesses to invest in Venezuela** and vice versa.
- **Develop infrastructure projects** that benefit both nations.
- **Diplomatic Collaboration:**
 - Strengthen diplomatic ties through **cultural exchanges, educational programs**, and collaboration in international forums, fostering a deeper understanding between the two nations.
- **Energy Collaboration:**
 - Collaborate on renewable **energy initiatives and technology transfer**, aligning with India's commitment to sustainable development and **Venezuela's energy potential beyond traditional oil resources**.
- **People-to-People Ties:**
 - Enhance people-to-people ties **through cultural events, tourism, and educational exchanges**, **fostering a stronger connection** and promoting mutual understanding between the citizens of India and Venezuela.

MARITIME SECURITY CONCERNS IN THE RED SEA

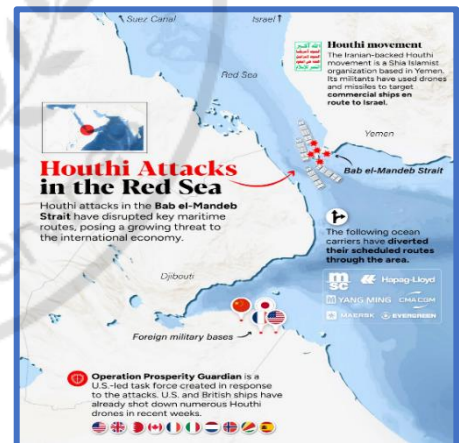
SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the **escalating threats to maritime security in the Red Sea**.
- Tensions in the Red Sea have escalated due to **Houthi militants from Yemen attacking or seizing commercial ships**, impacting major entities like **AP Møller-Maersk and British Petroleum**.
- The situation is a **spillover from the Israel-Hamas conflict**.

RECENT TENSIONS IN THE RED SEA - OPERATION PROSPERITY GUARDIAN:

- **Houthi Attacks:**
 - ✓ In the past four weeks, Houthi militants from Yemen have **attacked or seized commercial ships in the Red Sea 12 times**.
- **Affected Companies:**
 - ✓ Major companies, including **AP Møller-Maersk and British Petroleum**, have halted movements through the Red Sea due to the attacks.
- **International Response:**
 - ✓ U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin announced "Operation Prosperity Guardian," a multinational security initiative to address the Red Sea's security challenges.
- **Reasons for Attacks:**
 - ✓ The Houthis claim to be **targeting vessels with links to Israel**, protesting Israel's military offensive in Gaza.
 - ✓ The attacks are seen as a **spillover from the Israel-Hamas conflict**.
- **Hijacking Incident:**
 - ✓ In a previous incident, **Houthi militants hijacked the India-bound ship "Galaxy Leader"** in November.
- **Operation Prosperity Guardian Leadership:**
 - ✓ The operation falls under the **Combined Maritime Forces**, led by Task Force 153, focusing on enhancing security in the Red Sea.



SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RED SEA: A GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE:

- **Geopolitical importance:**
 - ✓ It connects the **Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean** via the strategically vital **Suez Canal and Bab al-Mandab**.

- ✓ Approximately **12% of global trade** relies on the **Suez Canal**, making it vital for maritime traffic
- **Population and GDP Growth:**
 - ✓ The region surrounding the Red Sea, encompassing **northeastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula**, is poised for significant growth.
 - ✓ The **population is projected to rise from 620 million to nearly 1.3 billion by the early 2050s**, with GDP expected to increase from **\$1.8 trillion to \$6.1 trillion**.
- **Underdeveloped African Coast:**
 - ✓ Despite the potential for growth, the African coast of the Red Sea is **largely underdeveloped**, hindered by a **lack of infrastructure and deepwater commercial ports**.
- **Rising Interest and Conflict:**
 - ✓ Growing awareness of the region's potential has led to increased **political, economic, and military interest**.
 - ✓ However, this interest is accompanied by rising armed conflicts and political instability.
- **Security Challenges:**
 - ✓ Proxy activities and **regional rivalries contribute to insecurity**.
 - ✓ While **piracy off the coast of Somalia has diminished**, the **war in Yemen, fueled by Saudi-Iranian rivalry**, has become a leading source of instability.
- **Houthi Threats:**
 - ✓ **Houthi rebels in Yemen pose** a significant threat to Red Sea shipping.
 - ✓ They **have employed various tactics**, including rocket attacks, anti-ship missiles, mines, and naval drones, targeting both commercial and military vessels.
- **Gulf State Rivalries:**
 - ✓ Rivalries among Gulf states, **particularly the Saudi-Qatar dispute**, have extended to the Red Sea region.
 - ✓ This has **led to political interference**, supporting different factions in countries **like Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia**.



IMPACT ON GLOBAL TRADE AND REGIONAL STABILITY:

- **Oil Price Surge:**
 - ✓ Oil prices experienced an increase **due to concerns over challenges in global shipping and logistics**.
 - ✓ The Atlantic Council highlighted potential journey delays of up to two weeks as a result of rerouting through Africa.
- **Freight Forwarders and War Risk Surcharge:**
 - ✓ Credit rating firm S&P noted that freight forwarders, **integral to the transportation industry**, are **raising rates on shipments**.
 - ✓ Containers bound for the **Middle East are now subject to a war risk surcharge**, reflecting heightened security concerns.
- **Limited Impact on Crude and LNG Prices:**
 - ✓ Goldman Sachs analysts suggested that the disruption is **unlikely to significantly affect crude and liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices**.
 - ✓ **Production itself is not being directly impacted**, according to the analysis.
- **Market Assurance and Operation Prosperity Guardian:**
 - ✓ Reports of countries working to mitigate the threat have provided some reassurance to the market.
 - ✓ The **US-led Operation Prosperity Guardian** involves **joint patrols in the Red Sea**, with increased military presence to offer **umbrella protection**.
- **International Coalition Response:**



- ✓ The United Kingdom, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, and Spain have joined Operation Prosperity Guardian.
- ✓ Several other nations, though not publicly disclosed, have agreed to participate in the multinational security initiative.
- **Combined Maritime Forces and Task Force 153:**
 - ✓ The Combined Maritime Forces, **comprising 39 members, including India and the United States, is coordinating Operation Prosperity Guardian.**
 - ✓ Task Force 153, established in April 2022, focuses on **enhancing maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Gulf of Aden.**

CHALLENGES AND IMPACT ON INDIA:

- **Concerns for Indian Exporters:**
 - ✓ Ajay Sahai, Director General of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), expresses serious concern as the **Bab-el-Mandeb Strait is a crucial route.**
 - ✓ If ships opt for the **longer Cape of Good Hope route**, it could lead to a **significant cost increase, affecting Indian exporters.**
- **Impact on India's Economy and Security:**
 - ✓ India's **heavy reliance on the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait for crude oil, LNG imports, and trade underscores the potential impact on its economy and security.**
 - ✓ Disruptions could **lead to increased energy costs and longer shipping routes.**
- **Global Trade Implications:**
 - ✓ Large shipping firms, **including Maersk, Hapag-Lloyd, MSC, and CMA CGM**, have already halted operations in the region, posing a global trade challenge.
 - ✓ Major shipments, such as **basmati rice, face risks, impacting both India and global trade.**
- **Multinational Security Response:**
 - ✓ The US-led multinational force, comprising 10 countries, **aims to protect trade in the Red Sea.**
 - ✓ While this initiative may alleviate risks, the situation's resolution remains uncertain.
- **Impact on India's Merchandise Exports:**
 - ✓ The disruption comes at a time **when India's merchandise exports have fallen back into negative territory in November**, with concerns about **sluggish global demand and the additional challenges posed by the Red Sea crisis.**



WAY FORWARD:

- **Multinational Security Collaboration:**
 - ✓ Establish a collaborative **multinational task force**, building on the **U.S. initiative, to enhance security in the Red Sea**, with a focus on critical areas like the Bab al-Mandab Strait.
- **Balanced Diplomatic Approaches:**
 - ✓ **Advocate for balanced diplomatic approaches**, taking cues from Riyadh's call for restraint and ongoing negotiations with the Houthis.
 - ✓ Draw inspiration from successful **diplomatic detents, such as the Saudi-Iran dialogue** facilitated by China.
- **Acknowledging Non-State Actors' Roles:**
 - ✓ Acknowledge the **growing military capabilities of non-state actors**, particularly groups like the Houthis.
 - ✓ Adapt strategies to factor in the **influence of these entities in shaping regional stability.**
 - ✓ **Strengthen India's naval presence in the Indian Ocean**, strategically positioning itself to safeguard **economic interests and secure maritime routes.**
 - ✓ **Intensify patrols and foster collaboration with foreign fleets**, drawing lessons from successful initiatives like Operation Sankalp.
 - ✓ Leverage India's expertise in relief work to **actively support global efforts** in assisting populations **affected by the Yemeni crisis.**

- ✓ Contribute humanitarian aid to alleviate the **impact on affected communities**.

INDIA- FRANCE RELATION

SOURCE: [INDIA EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed in a statement saying: “At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, H.E. **Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of France**, will be visiting India as the **Chief Guest for the 75th Republic Day celebrations.**”
- “**As Strategic Partners**, India and France share a **high degree of convergence** on a range of regional and global issues.
- This year, we are celebrating the **25th anniversary of the India- France Strategic Partnership**”, said the MEA in the announcement.

FRENCH GUESTS

1976	Prime Minister Jacques Chirac
1980	President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
1998	President Jacques Chirac
2008	President Nicolas Sarkozy
2016	President Francois Hollande

INDIA-FRANCE RELATIONS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- **Strategic Partnership (1998):**
 - ✓ Initiation of a **Strategic Partnership in 1998** marked the beginning of close and friendly relations between India and France.
 - ✓ **Emblematic of shared views on international issues**, fostering a growing bilateral relationship.
- **Principal Pillars of Cooperation:**
 - ✓ **Defence & Security cooperation**, Space Cooperation, and **Civil Nuclear Cooperation** are the key pillars of the Strategic Partnership.
 - ✓ Reflects the depth and breadth of **collaboration between the two nations**.
- **Robust Economic Partnership:**
 - ✓ Beyond traditional areas, India and France have a **robust economic partnership**.
 - ✓ French businesses contribute significantly to **India's goal of becoming 'Atmanirbhar Bharat.'**
- **Diverse Areas of Cooperation:**
 - ✓ Engagement in new **areas such as maritime security** in the Indo-Pacific, **counter-terrorism**, climate change, **renewable energy**, and sustainable growth.
 - ✓ Reflects the evolving **nature of the bilateral relationship** to address contemporary challenges.
- **Global and Regional Alignment:**
 - ✓ **Convergence on regional and global issues**, including support for **India's claim for permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council**.
 - ✓ France played a vital role in **India's accession** to the **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)**, **Wassenaar Arrangement (WA)**, and **Australia Group (AG)**.
 - ✓ Continued French support for **India's bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**.
- **Economic Linkages:**
 - ✓ Bilateral trade reached **\$13.4 Bn in 2022-23**, a **7.72% increase from the previous year**.
 - ✓ **France ranks as the 11th largest investor in India**, contributing **\$10.5 Bn in FDI** from April 2000 to March **2023**.
 - ✓ Economic synergy fosters linkages between French businesses and the Indian economy, **supporting India's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision**.
- **Cultural and Educational Ties:**



- ✓ Vibrant bilateral **cultural and educational linkages** enhancing mutual understanding.
- ✓ Growing people-to-people contacts strengthening the bond between the two nations.
- **Diaspora Presence:**
 - ✓ Significant **Indian diaspora presence** in metropolitan France and its overseas departments/territories.
 - ✓ Illustrates the depth of **people-to-people connections** and cultural exchange.

RECENT TIES BETWEEN INDIA AND FRANCE:

- **Building Sovereign Defence Capabilities:**
 - ✓ France is a key partner in **India's self-reliant defence efforts**.
 - ✓ Cooperation in co-development of advanced defence technologies.
 - ✓ Timely delivery of **36 Rafale aircraft**, highlighting a **five-decade partnership**.
 - ✓ Joint development of a combat aircraft engine and industrial cooperation for the **Indian Multi-Role Helicopter (IMRH) program**.
 - ✓ Success in the **Scorpene submarine construction program (P75 – Kalvari)**, showcasing the **Make in India initiative**.
- **Indo-Pacific Cooperation for Stability:**
 - ✓ Shared vision on **Indo-Pacific for economic and security interests**.
 - ✓ Adoption of a new Indo-Pacific Roadmap for stability and sustainability.
 - ✓ Trilateral cooperation with **the United Arab Emirates and Australia**.
 - ✓ Introduction of **Indo-Pacific Triangular Cooperation (IPTDC) Fund** for green technologies.
- **Space Collaboration at the Core:**
 - ✓ Deepening cooperation in space, including **scientific and commercial partnerships**.
 - ✓ Strengthened partnership between **CNES and ISRO on climate**, space exploration, and more.
 - ✓ Commitment to enhancing sovereign access to space.
 - ✓ **Institutionalized bilateral strategic** space dialogue.
- **Counterterrorism and Internal Security:**
 - ✓ Strengthened cooperation in counterterrorism, **covering operational aspects and online radicalization**.
 - ✓ Emphasis on **internal security collaboration**.
 - ✓ **Formalization** of cooperation between **NSG of India and GIGN of France**.
 - ✓ Focus on technology utilization by internal security agencies.
- **Promoting Effective Multilateralism:**
 - ✓ **Rejection** of attempts to undermine **international order**.
 - ✓ Support for reforming global governance.
 - ✓ **Advocacy for UN Security Council reform**, including the G4 nations.
 - ✓ Commitment to a comprehensive **international convention on countering ICT-related crimes**.
- **Science, Technology, and Academic Cooperation:**
 - ✓ Establishment of an **India-France Joint Strategic Committee** for scientific cooperation.
 - ✓ **Bilateral cooperation on advanced digital technologies**, supercomputing, and AI.
 - ✓ Intensified cooperation in health and medicine, including digital health.
 - ✓ Collaborative **efforts in cyber cooperation, digital regulation**, and digital public infrastructure.
- **Innovation Ecosystems and Start-ups:**
 - ✓ Commitment to **deepen cooperation** in promoting research partnerships.
 - ✓ Support for bilateral cooperation in **digital infrastructure, AI, and cybersecurity**.
 - ✓ Emphasis on the **power of start-ups in driving innovation**.
 - ✓ Implementation of **Unified Payment Interface (UPI) in France and Europe**.

India's expanding sphere of influence in the World

- PM's visit to France to **deepen the strategic ties** (22-23 August 2019)
- PM termed **India - France cooperation as IN-FRA** meaning India France Alliance.
- France and India further **strengthened their cooperation** in the areas of bilateral trade, space, defence and others.
- The two countries decided to **train medical personnel for supporting the Indian astronauts**, who will be a part of the India's manned space mission by 2022. The training will be carried out in France and in India.
- Space Climate Observatory** launched enhancing Indo-French cooperation on combating climate change.

- ✓ Advancement of **multi-stakeholder exchanges** through platforms like **Infrastructures and Infinity**.
- **Promoting Exchanges and Mobility:**
 - ✓ Implementation of the **Partnership Agreement on Migration and Mobility**.
 - ✓ Mutual visa exemptions for official passport holders.
 - ✓ Encouragement of student mobility, **joint training programs**, and linguistic cooperation.
 - ✓ France's commitment to **welcome 20,000 Indian students by 2025 and 30,000 by 2030**.
- **Cultural Dialogue and Exchanges:**
 - ✓ Establishment of foundational programs for cultural exchanges.
 - ✓ **Cooperation in museums, heritage, cinema, and literary endeavours.**
 - ✓ Promotion of French language teaching in India and vice versa.
 - ✓ Exploration of India's potential participation in the **Organisation internationale de la francophonie**.



CHALLENGES IN FRANCE-INDIA RELATIONS:

- **Defence Sector Dynamics:**
 - ✓ India's pursuit of military capabilities through **orders like Rafale Marine aircrafts**.
 - ✓ Negotiations on **Scorpene-class submarines** and co-development of a **fighter plane engine**.
 - ✓ Challenges in aligning strategic objectives in military equipment and satellite development.
- **Trade Imbalance and Focus Areas:**
 - ✓ Breakdown of trade products, with a heavy reliance on **aeronautics for French exports**.
 - ✓ Key imports by France include **petroleum products, clothing, and machinery**.
 - ✓ **Addressing trade imbalances** and diversifying focus areas for sustainable economic growth.
- **Educational Objectives:**
 - ✓ Macron's **target of 20,000 Indian students by 2025**, with current **enrollment at around 10,000**.
 - ✓ Promoting educational exchange and cultural understanding despite numerical disparities.
- **Investment Landscape:**
 - ✓ Presence of **700 French subsidiaries in India**, contributing to jobs and economic turnover.
 - ✓ Industrial successes, such as **Renault's localization efforts**, reflecting market competitiveness.
 - ✓ Encouraging continued investments, including in **green hydrogen, smart factories, and infrastructure projects**.
- **Cultural Differences Impacting Business:**
 - ✓ Varied perceptions of individualism and collectivism, affecting work dynamics.
 - ✓ Importance of **hierarchy in Indian companies** contrasting with French matrix organizations.
 - ✓ Challenges in communication, interpersonal relations, and **flexibility due to cultural disparities**.
- **Time Management and Decision-Making:**
 - ✓ Differences in perceptions of time, punctuality, and meeting expectations.
 - ✓ **Cultural nuances influencing flexibility** and decision-making processes.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Shared Convergence on Global Issues:**
 - ✓ Highlighting a **high degree of convergence between India and France** on regional and global matters.
 - ✓ **Strengthening ties as strategic partners** with a shared commitment.
- **Defence Partnership Milestones:**
 - ✓ Recognizing France as a **key defence partner for India**.
 - ✓ Emphasizing the consistent **high-level engagements and collaborations in defence**.
- **Bilateral Commitment:**
 - ✓ Macron's acceptance of the invitation **reflects a commitment to bilateral relations**.
 - ✓ Building on the **momentum of past interactions**, including PM Modi's participation in the **Bastille Day parade**.
- **25th Anniversary Celebrations:**

- ✓ Capitalizing on the **symbolic 25th anniversary of the India-France Strategic Partnership**.
- ✓ Exploring opportunities for **deepening collaboration across sectors**.
- **Global Diplomacy:**
 - ✓ Leveraging the visit to **enhance diplomatic efforts on regional and global platforms**.
 - ✓ Mutual engagement on shared global challenges, including climate change, terrorism, and economic cooperation.
- **Economic and Trade Discussions:**
 - ✓ Exploring avenues for **boosting economic and trade relations**.
 - ✓ Discussing potential collaborations in areas such as **technology, innovation, and green initiatives**.
- **Strategic Dialogues:**
 - ✓ Holding strategic dialogues on geopolitical **issues of mutual interest**.
 - ✓ Addressing evolving geopolitical landscapes and strategizing on shared security concerns.
- **Innovation and Technology Collaboration:**
 - ✓ Emphasizing joint **efforts in innovation and technology**.
 - ✓ Exploring opportunities for collaborative projects in areas like **space exploration, renewable energy, and advanced technologies**.

LATEST BLIP IN INDIA-MALDIVES TIES

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The decision by the **Maldives Cabinet not to renew the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with India for hydrography cooperation** is significant in the context of **evolving diplomatic relations** between the two countries.*
- *The move **comes shortly after President Mohamed Muizzu's pledge to send back Indian troops** and reflects a **shift from the previous administration's 'India first' policy**.*
- *The termination of the hydrographic agreement raises questions **about the future trajectory of India-Maldives ties, impacting regional dynamics and India's influence in the Indian Ocean region**.*

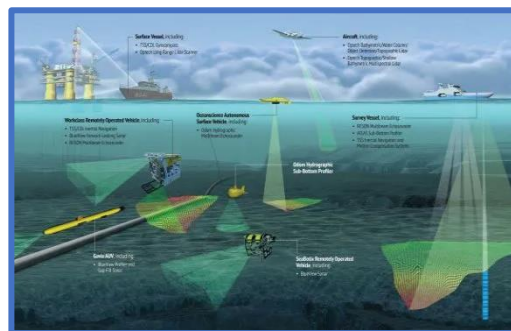
MALDIVES-INDIA HYDROGRAPHY COOPERATION:

- **Understanding Hydrography:**
 - ✓ Hydrography is the **scientific discipline dedicated to the study of oceans, seas, and various water bodies**.
 - ✓ Involves **compiling and analysing data, maps, and charts** to understand the **physical attributes of water bodies**.
 - ✓ Primarily undertaken for **ensuring safety in navigation**.
 - ✓ Supports economic development, contributes to **security and defense measures**, aids in scientific research, and facilitates environmental protection.
 - ✓ Hydrographical assessments **encompass tidal patterns, current movements, and wave information**.
- **Origins of Agreement:**
 - ✓ **Signed on June 8, 2019**, during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Maldives.
 - ✓ Focused on collaboration in hydrography, **involving the study of Maldivian territorial waters**.
- **Hydrographic Survey by India:**
 - ✓ Agreement involved India conducting hydrographic surveys of Maldivian waters.
 - ✓ Studies encompassed **reefs, lagoons, coastlines, and ocean currents and tide levels**.

INDIA'S HYDROGRAPHIC EXPERTISE:

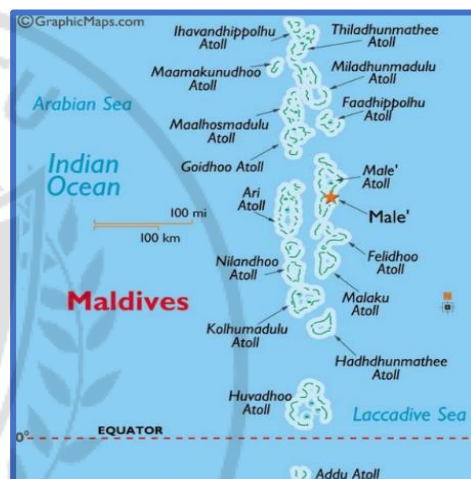
- **International Collaboration:**
 - ✓ India, an **IHO member since 1955**, actively contributes to **international hydrography standards**.
 - ✓ Collaborates with countries in the **Indian Ocean Region, Africa, and East Asia** for hydrographic initiatives.
- **Indian Naval Hydrographic Department (INHD):**

- ✓ **Established in 1874 in Kolkata**, the INHD serves as the **central agency** for hydrographic surveys in India.
- ✓ Operates a fleet of modern survey ships equipped for comprehensive hydrographic studies.
- **Global Partnerships:**
 - ✓ Engages with countries like **Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania, Maldives, Mozambique, Vietnam, Myanmar, Kenya, and Sri Lanka**.
 - ✓ Supports these nations in **developing their hydrographic capabilities**.
- **Maritime Diplomacy and Force Multiplier:**
 - ✓ Recognized for leveraging hydrography as a **"force multiplier" in maritime diplomacy**.
 - ✓ Acknowledged by the INHD for **contributing to global hydrographic advancements**.
- **Training and Capacity Building:**
 - ✓ The **National Institute of Hydrography**, under the INHD, provides training.
 - ✓ **Personnel from 39 countries** have undergone hydrographic training, showcasing India's commitment to capacity building.



SIGNIFICANCE OF 2019 MOU:

- **Strategic Timing:**
 - ✓ Signed during PM Modi's state visit to the **Maldives in June 2019**.
 - ✓ Occurred amid **President Solih's victory** and growing ties between the nations.
- **Political Commitment:**
 - ✓ Resulted from a **joint commitment by leaders for close cooperation** in development, **defence, and maritime security**.
 - ✓ Demonstrated collaboration between India and the Maldives post-election.
- **Landmark Joint Commission Meeting:**
 - ✓ Marked the **initiation of the Joint Commission on Hydrography**.
 - ✓ First meeting held in the **Maldives in September 2019**, highlighting the priority given to hydrographic cooperation.
- **Operational Implementation:**
 - ✓ Led to practical collaboration between MNDF and the Indian Navy.
 - ✓ **Three joint hydrographic surveys conducted in 2021, 2022, and 2023** showcased the operationalization of the agreement.
- **Bilateral Defence Engagement:**
 - ✓ **Strengthened the defence ties** between both nations.
 - ✓ **MNDF and Indian Navy's joint surveys** emphasized the collaborative approach in ensuring maritime security.
- **Continuity in Collaboration:**
 - ✓ **Set the stage for ongoing hydrographic cooperation**.
 - ✓ Laid the foundation for **sustained engagement in the maritime domain**.



Decision Against Agreement Renewal:

- **National Security Concerns:**
 - ✓ Cabinet decision aligned with the **administration's commitment to terminate agreements** deemed detrimental to Maldives' national security.
 - ✓ Emphasizes the **importance of safeguarding sovereignty**.
- **Capacity Building Within Military:**
 - ✓ Decision driven by the **intent to enhance the Maldivian military's capability**.

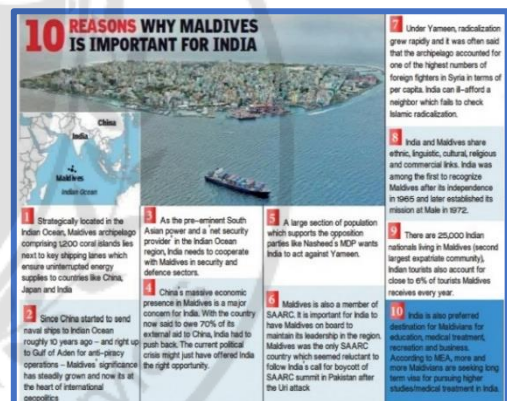
- ✓ Aims to **entrust them with responsibilities for surveillance** and policing of waters, reducing reliance on foreign participation.
- **Exclusion of Foreign Involvement:**
 - ✓ Focus on excluding **foreign parties from critical endeavours**.
 - ✓ A strategic move to ensure complete control over **sensitive information related to national security**.
- **Implementation of Election Pledges:**
 - ✓ Reflects President Muizzu's commitment to fulfil election promises.
 - ✓ Part of a broader agenda, including the **removal of Indian troops, aligning with the 'India Out' campaign**.
- **Sovereignty Restoration:**
 - ✓ Decision resonates with the **pledge to restore Maldives' sovereignty**.
 - ✓ Highlights the government's determination to reclaim control over crucial aspects of national interest.
- **Core Demand Acknowledged:**
 - ✓ **Acknowledgment of the core demand from the 'India Out' campaign** in President Muizzu's initial official announcements.
 - ✓ Demonstrates a proactive approach to address **public sentiments and campaign promises**.

WAY FORWARD IN INDIA- MALDIVES RELATIONS:

- **India's Response to Cabinet Decision:**
 - ✓ Ministry of External Affairs highlights **India's established track record in hydrography**.
 - ✓ Emphasizes India's successful cooperation with various nations in the Indian Ocean region.
- **Visible Benefits to Partner Countries:**
 - ✓ Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi underscores **the tangible advantages experienced by partner countries through collaboration with India in hydrography**.

Implications for India-Maldives Ties:

- **Challenging Phase Ahead:**
 - ✓ Recent developments suggest a **forthcoming challenging phase in the India-Maldives partnership**.
 - ✓ The decision to **skip the Colombo Security Conclave's NSA-level meet** signals potential strains in maritime security collaboration.
- **Missed Conclave Meeting:**
 - ✓ **Maldives' absence from the Conclave's** recent meeting coincides with critical decisions regarding the hydrographic agreement.
 - ✓ Raises questions about the **continuity of joint efforts in maritime security among member countries**.
- **Shift in Alliances:**
 - ✓ Vice-President Latheef's visit to China, expressing **eagerness for collaboration, hints at potential shifts in diplomatic alliances**.
 - ✓ Points to the Maldives exploring **alternative avenues for cooperation beyond the traditional partnerships**.
- **MEA's Stance on Expertise Benefits:**
 - ✓ Ministry of External Affairs underscores the **belief that neighboring countries should leverage the benefits of India's hydrographic expertise**.
 - ✓ Suggests that India sees itself as a **valuable resource for regional nations**.
- **Navigating Choppy Waters:**
 - ✓ The termination of the hydrographic initiative necessitates **careful navigation of diplomatic relations**.
 - ✓ India faces the challenge of **maintaining ties amid evolving dynamics in the Indian Ocean region**.



INDIA -RUSSIA RELATIONS

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- In a meeting with **Russian President Vladimir Putin** in Moscow, **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar** emphasized the **robust and enduring nature of India-Russia relations**.
- Both leaders expressed confidence that the **annual India-Russia leadership summit**, skipped for the past two years, would resume in 2024.
- Russian President Putin welcomed the **prospect of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia**, discussing bilateral ties and the **situation in Ukraine during the meeting**.

INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS:

- **Historical Background:**
 - ✓ India's relationship with Russia traces back to the **mid-1950s during the Cold War era**, where the then-**Soviet Union became a pivotal ally**.
 - ✓ The foundation of this alliance was strengthened significantly as **India faced conflicts, particularly with Pakistan**.
 - ✓ **During the 1965 war** over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir, the Soviet Union played a crucial role in **mediating a cease-fire between India and Pakistan**.
 - ✓ This demonstrated **early Soviet support for India in regional conflicts**.
 - ✓ The partnership reached a turning point in **December 1971 during India's war with Pakistan**.
 - ✓ The **Soviet Union exercised its veto power** at the United Nations in **support of India**, while the U.S. took a contrasting stance by deploying a task force into the Bay of Bengal in support of Pakistan.
- **Formalization of Ties:**
 - ✓ In **August 1971**, India and the Soviet Union formalized their relationship by **signing a treaty of peace, friendship, and cooperation**.
 - ✓ This treaty solidified the **strategic alliance between the two nations** during a crucial period in South Asian geopolitics.
 - ✓ With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the partnership evolved, and in **January 1993**, the **Treaty of Indo-Russian Friendship and Cooperation** replaced the earlier agreement.
 - ✓ This demonstrated the commitment of **both nations to maintain the historical bond established during the Cold War**.
- **India's Current Stance on Russia:**
 - ✓ **Despite historical ties**, India navigates a complex landscape, **carefully balancing its historical alliance with Russia and evolving geopolitical dynamics**.
 - ✓ The partnership remains significant, **especially in areas of defense, oil, nuclear energy, and space exploration**.
 - ✓ However, India must contend with the **changing dynamics in global politics**, particularly **Russia's ties with China and its actions in Ukraine**.



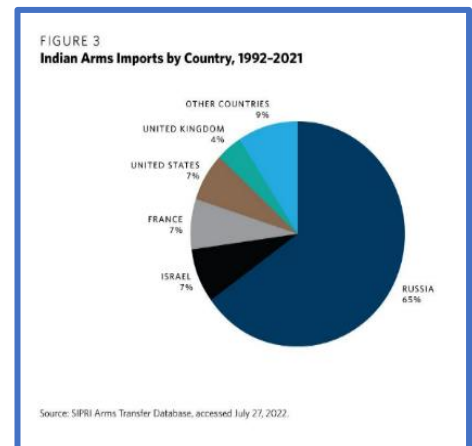
Bilateral Ties Between India and Russia:

- **Historical Foundations (Cold War Era):**
 - ✓ **Arms Sales:** During the Cold War, the Soviet Union became India's prime arms supplier, with Soviet-designed **weapons dominating India's military**.
 - ✓ **Economic Cooperation:** The Soviet Union played a **substantial role in building India's public sector**, fostering economic ties in **steel, power generation, and heavy industry**.

- ✓ **Geopolitical Alignment:** The Sino-Soviet split and shared concerns about China led to a close alignment between the Soviet Union and India against common adversaries, including the United States.

➤ **Post-Cold War Dynamics:**

- ✓ **Arms Sales Remain Central:** Despite the end of the Cold War, arms sales continued as a crucial element of Russian-Indian relations, with Russia supplying a significant portion of India's weaponry.
- ✓ **Economic and Technical Aid Shifts:** The economic and technical assistance provided by the Soviet Union diminished in importance post-Cold War, while trade remained a less influential pillar in the relationship.
- ✓ **Geopolitical Shifts:** The geopolitical landscape changed, with Russia's diminished global standing and India's increasing engagement with the United States altering the dynamics of their partnership.



➤ **Leaders' Engagements:**

- ✓ **Annual Summits** between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Russia, with the latest in December 2021.
- ✓ Regular telephone conversations to review bilateral cooperation and discuss global issues.
- ✓ The encounter between President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the September 2022 summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, captured the change that is occurring in the partnership between Russia and India.

➤ **Ministerial Engagements:**

- ✓ Regular meetings between Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers.
- ✓ Institutionalized dialogue mechanisms such as the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission (IRIGC).

➤ **Inter-Governmental Commission:**

- ✓ IRIGC-TEC focuses on trade, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural cooperation.
- ✓ Efforts to address trade deficit and market access issues.

➤ **Multilateral Engagement:**

- ✓ Active collaboration at UN, G20, BRICS, and SCO.
- ✓ India's Presidency of G20 & SCO in 2023 facilitated meetings between officials and ministers.

➤ **Trade & Economic Relations:**

- ✓ Bilateral trade at an all-time high of \$45 billion in April-December 2022.
- ✓ Targets to increase bilateral investment to \$50 billion and bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2025.

➤ **Defence & Security Cooperation:**

- ✓ Longstanding cooperation in defence, guided by the Agreement on the Programme for Military Technical Cooperation.
- ✓ Bilateral projects include S-400, T-90 tanks, Su-30 MKI, MiG-29, Kamov helicopters, and BrahMos missiles.

➤ **Parliamentary Cooperation:**

- ✓ Bilateral visits of Parliamentarians, with a focus on strengthening ties.
- ✓ Presence of India-Russia Friendship Groups in the State Duma and the Federation Council.

➤ **Science & Technology Cooperation:**

- ✓ Historical collaboration in key areas like space, nuclear energy, and cutting-edge technologies.
- ✓ New roadmap signed during the 21st Annual Summit in 2021 to boost innovation-related engagements.

➤ **Education:**

- ✓ Around 25,000 Indian students studying in Russia.



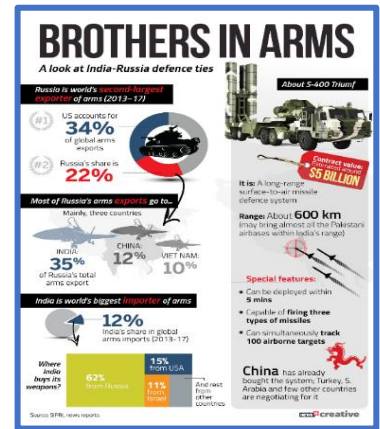
- ✓ Emphasis on the study of Indology, and collaboration on innovations at school level.

➤ **Cultural Cooperation:**

- ✓ Rich cultural relations predating India's independence.
- ✓ Collaboration on contemporary initiatives, including a **Festival of India in Russia.**

➤ **Diaspora & People-to-People Ties:**

- ✓ Strong historical ties dating back to the 15th century.
- ✓ Gradual increase in bilateral **tourism and exchange of state honours.**



Russia's Importance to India: A Strategic Partnership

➤ **Global Standing:**

- ✓ Russia holds a **prominent position internationally as a nuclear and energy power.**
- ✓ Maintaining a permanent seat in the **UN Security Council underscores Russia's significance.**

➤ **Multipolar World Dynamics:**

- ✓ In an evolving multipolar world, **India strategically aligns with both Russia and the United States.**
- ✓ A robust partnership with **Russia provides India with diplomatic leverage for international engagements.**

➤ **UNSC Permanent Seat:**

- ✓ Russia publicly expresses **support for India's quest to secure a permanent seat** on the UN Security Council.

➤ **Countering Chinese Aggression:**

- ✓ India navigates a **delicate balance with the U.S. and Russia to manage tensions with China.**
- ✓ **Russia's strained relations with the West keep it watchful of China,** aligning with India's interests.

➤ **Energy Security:**

- ✓ **Russia's substantial oil reserves make it a crucial player in India's energy security strategy.**
- ✓ Amid escalating concerns in the Middle East, India views **Russia as an alternative energy source,** reducing dependence on volatile regions.



CHALLENGES IN INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS: NAVIGATING GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS

➤ **Rapid Expansion of India-US Relations:**

- ✓ Tensions arise **due to the swift expansion of India's defense cooperation with the United States since 2008.**
- ✓ The **U.S. surpasses Russia as India's primary arms supplier in 2014.**
- ✓ India's agreements with the U.S., including **LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA,** contribute to a strategic realignment.

➤ **Shift in Russian Arms Supply:**

- ✓ Russia adjusts its policy and supplies advanced weaponry, like **Sukhoi-35 and the S-400 missile system, to China.**
- ✓ This move is perceived as a **response to India's deepening ties with the U.S.,** altering the dynamics of India-Russia defense cooperation.

➤ **Deepening Russia-China Ties:**

- ✓ **Russia proposes the Russia-India-China (RIC) Foreign Ministers' Forum,** but India's unresolved issues with China limit diplomatic success.
- ✓ Sino-Russian relations strengthen, driven by shared **interests against the United States.**
- ✓ Geopolitical competition in the region intensifies, leading Russia, with a hostile stance toward the **U.S., to align more closely with China.**



- **Russia's Alignment with Belt and Road Initiative:**
 - ✓ Russia's collaboration with China in initiatives like the **Belt and Road** reflects a **strategic partnership against perceived U.S. influence**.
 - ✓ The alignment **challenges India's position**, creating complexities in its relations with both **Russia and China**.
- **Contemporary Challenges:**
 - ✓ While historically strong, the **India-Russia partnership has encountered complexities** in recent times.
 - ✓ Moscow's growing **closeness with India's main rival, China**, adds a layer of complication to the relationship.
 - ✓ The situation is exacerbated by **Russia's involvement in the conflict in Ukraine**, leading to **nuanced considerations in India's stance**.

WAY FORWARD IN INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS: STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIONS

- **Reinvigorating Leadership Summits:**
 - ✓ The **commitment to resume** the annual India-Russia **leadership summit in 2024** reflects a positive step forward.
 - ✓ Both nations **should prioritize these high-level engagements** to address key bilateral and global issues, **fostering stronger diplomatic ties**.
- **Enhancing Economic Collaboration:**
 - ✓ The numerous agreements on **trade, connectivity, nuclear energy, and military technology** underscore the potential for deeper economic collaboration.
 - ✓ Both India and Russia **should focus on implementing and expanding these agreements**, fostering a more robust economic partnership.
- **Navigating Geopolitical Challenges:**
 - ✓ Acknowledging the **geopolitical complexities**, India and Russia must navigate the **challenges arising from Russia's ties with China and the situation in Ukraine**.
 - ✓ Diplomatic finesse is crucial to **maintain strategic convergence** while addressing contemporary geopolitical shifts.
- **Diversifying Trade and Investment:**
 - ✓ Beyond traditional sectors, **both nations should explore diversification in trade and investment**.
 - ✓ This involves identifying new areas of collaboration, encouraging innovation, and adapting to evolving global economic trends.
- **Addressing Payment Mechanism Challenges:**
 - ✓ **While trade has crossed \$50 billion**, resolving the **rupee-rouble payment mechanism is crucial**.
 - ✓ Both sides should work towards **finding solutions that circumvent challenges posed by Western sanctions on Russia**, ensuring the sustainability of trade relations.
- **Strategic Regional Partnerships:**
 - ✓ India's intention to **host governors from Russia's Far East at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit** presents an opportunity to strengthen regional partnerships.
 - ✓ Collaborative initiatives can be **explored to enhance connectivity, trade, and cultural exchanges** between different regions of both countries.

HOUTHİ ATTACKS: A THREAT TO GLOBAL SHIPPING?

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

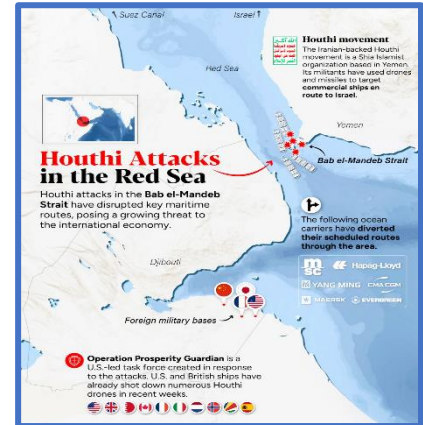
- *The recent surge in missile and drone attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea, particularly targeting commercial shipping, represents a significant escalation of hostilities. This has garnered global attention due to its potential impact on maritime security.*

- On December 23, the Red Sea crisis **reached Indian waters as the Liberian-flagged vessel Chem Pluto, en route to Mangalore, was hit by a projectile near Gujarat.** This follows a surge in missile and drone attacks on shipping by Houthi rebels in Yemen **after Israel's offensive against Hamas.**

HOUTHIS COMMUNITY: RECENT CONFLICT

➤ About Houthis:

- ✓ The Houthis, also known as **Ansar Allah (Supporters of God)**, originated in Yemen's northwestern **Saada province** and **began their movement in the 1990s** against the dictatorship of Yemeni President **Ali Abdullah Saleh.**
- ✓ Currently embroiled in Yemen's civil war since 2014, the **Houthis control significant territories in the west and northwest**, including the **capital Sana'a.**
- ✓ The movement is associated with the **Zaidi Shia sect** and is **part of Iran's "Axis of Resistance,"** an informal coalition against Israel and the West.
- ✓ Iran provides backing to the Houthis. In Yemen, the **Houthis are in conflict with the internationally recognized Yemeni government**, supported by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.



➤ Houthi Attacks on Commercial Ships:

- ✓ The Red Sea, a **critical global shipping route**, is witnessing **increased tensions due to a series of attacks by Houthi militants** from Yemen.
- ✓ In the last four weeks, there have **been 12 attacks or seizures of commercial vessels** by the Houthis, leading to concerns about the safety of maritime traffic.

➤ Houthi Motivation:

- ✓ The Houthi rebels **claim to target vessels with links to Israel in protest of Israel's military offensive in Gaza** following an attack by the Palestinian militant group Hamas.
- ✓ This adds a **geopolitical dimension to the conflict**, with Houthi actions reflecting regional tensions and alliances.
- ✓ The **Houthis, backed by Iran**, have **targeted vessels with ties to Israel**, further complicating the geopolitical landscape in the area

➤ International Response:

- ✓ The United States, in response to the escalating situation, has announced **the establishment of "Operation Prosperity Guardian,"** a multinational security initiative **aimed at ensuring the security of maritime activities in the Red Sea.**
- ✓ The international community, including India, is **closely monitoring and actively participating in efforts to maintain free shipping in the region.**

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF RED SEA: IMPACT THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

➤ Geopolitical Significance:

- ✓ The **Red Sea is a vital geopolitical waterway**, connecting the **Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean** through the **Suez Canal** and the **Bab el-Mandeb strait.**
- ✓ Its location **facilitates global trade and maritime transportation.**

➤ Key Trade Route:

- ✓ Approximately **12% of global shipping traffic**, including a significant **portion of oil shipments**, passes through the Red Sea.
- ✓ The **Suez Canal, a crucial shortcut**, allows ships to **avoid the lengthy journey around the Cape of Good Hope**, reducing travel time and costs.

➤ Economic Impact:

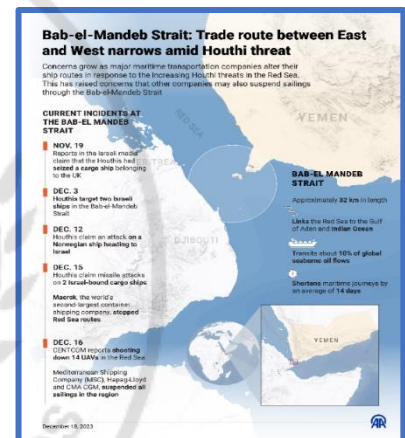
- ✓ Disruptions in the Red Sea, such as **recent attacks on commercial vessels**, can lead to significant economic consequences.



- ✓ **Shipping delays, increased fuel expenses, and rising freight rates affect the global supply chain** and contribute to higher costs for businesses.
- **Impact on Oil Industry:**
 - ✓ The **Red Sea is a major route for energy shipments**, with the attacks by Houthi militants prompting oil industry giants like **BP to temporarily pause oil tanker shipments through the region**.
 - ✓ This has led to a **surge in oil prices** and increased costs for shipping companies.
- **Alternative Trade Routes:**
 - ✓ Due to security concerns, some shipping companies, including **Maersk, have rerouted vessels away from the Red Sea**, choosing longer routes around Africa.
 - ✓ This decision adds to shipping time, **causes delays in cargo deliveries**, and results in higher fuel expenses.
- **Military Response:**
 - ✓ In response to the escalating threats in the region, **the United States, along with several other countries, has established Operation Prosperity Guardian**—a multinational security initiative aimed at **protecting commercial vessels** and ensuring the free flow of commerce in the Red Sea.
- **Impact on India's Exports:**
 - ✓ The disruption in the Red Sea **affects Indian exporters, leading to increased shipping costs and delays**.
 - ✓ An **alternative route around the Cape of Good Hope is considered**, potentially impacting the flow of **approximately \$200 billion** worth of Indian exports through the Suez Canal.

CHALLENGES IN RECENT RED SEA CONFLICT:

- **Escalating Threats to Shipping:**
 - ✓ Houthi attacks on **commercial vessels pose a growing threat**.
 - ✓ Use of **sophisticated arsenal, including ballistic missiles and long-range drones**.
- **Implications for Suez Canal Revenue:**
 - ✓ Avoidance of Red Sea **affects revenue generated by the Suez Canal**.
 - ✓ Strategic shift prompts **longer voyages**, disrupting shipping schedules.
- **Impact on Trade and Economic Factors:**
 - ✓ Increased shipping costs **affect trade and economic dynamics**.
 - ✓ Delays in voyages and **potential price rises in goods**.
 - ✓ Strategic decisions by shipping companies **influence fuel and insurance costs**.
- **Humanitarian Concerns:**
 - ✓ **Safety of mariners and crew** on commercial vessels.
 - ✓ Potential **loss of life or injury** in the event of major attacks.
 - ✓ **Balancing economic interests** with human security considerations.
- **Uncertainties and Questions:**
 - ✓ With Indians constituting **close to 15% of commercial sailors and limited Indian-owned vessels**, the country **faces critical decisions** in the event of a **major attack resulting in loss of life or precious cargo**.
 - ✓ The **question of where to draw the line in responding to such incidents** remains a subject of concern among officials.



GLOBAL INITIATIVES: ADDRESSING THE CRISIS:

- **Multinational Security Initiative:**
 - ✓ In response to the escalating threats in the Red Sea, **U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd J. Austin announced** the establishment of **Operation Prosperity Guardian (OPS)**.
 - ✓ This multinational security initiative, led by **the Combined Maritime Forces and Task Force 153**, focuses on enhancing **security in the Red Sea**.
 - ✓ The announcement prompted several companies to **reevaluate their shipping routes**.
- **Indian Naval Measures:**

- ✓ From the Indian side, both the **Navy and Coast Guard** have intensified their presence and surveillance in the region.
- ✓ Navy Chief Admiral R. Hari Kumar revealed that **four destroyers and various assets, including Project 15B and 15A class vessels, P8I long-range patrol aircraft, Dorniers, Sea Guardian Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, helicopters, and Coast Guard ships,** are deployed to counter piracy and drone attacks on merchant shipping.



➤ **Mission-Based Deployments:**

- ✓ Since October 2008, the **Indian Navy has maintained a continuous presence with at least one ship** deployed on **anti-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Aden.**
- ✓ Under **Mission-Based Deployments since 2017,** one capital warship is stationed at critical maritime chokepoints in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR).**

➤ **Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR):**

- ✓ The **Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram** is actively **monitoring the region.**
- ✓ The centre coordinates in the backend to facilitate communication, especially during critical incidents like the **hijacking of m.v. Ruen in the Gulf of Aden.**

➤ **Coordination and Response:**

- ✓ Captain Rohit Bajpai, Director IFC-IOR, highlighted the **coordination efforts to provide operational responses and assistance to vessels in the Indian Ocean Region.**
- ✓ The international organization's removal of **the high-risk area in the Gulf of Aden** on January 1 adds significance to the **recent piracy incident involving m.v. Ruen.**

➤ **Global Economic Impact:**

- ✓ The **looming crisis poses a threat to global economies,** with potential delays and price rises.
- ✓ The regional instability and its **impact on shipping routes through the Red Sea contribute to uncertainties,** emphasizing the **need for coordinated international efforts** to address the situation and **mitigate economic repercussions.**



Economy & Agriculture

MANUFACTURING PURCHASING MANAGERS' INDEX (PMI)

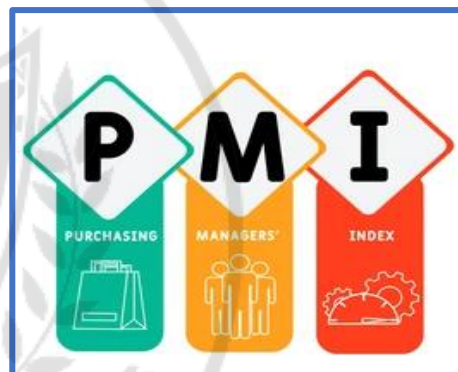
SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- India's manufacturing sector **demonstrated strong performance in November**, rebounding from an eight-month low in October.
- The **S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) increased to 56**, indicating expansion.
- The noteworthy aspect of the results was a **significant easing of price pressures, with inflation reaching its lowest level in the current 40-month sequence**.
- This, coupled with growing **demand from both domestic and international clients**, contributed to the sector's success.
- The report suggests a positive outlook for India's manufacturing economy as **it concludes 2023, with expectations of continued strength in 2024**.
- The **data is based on responses from around 400 manufacturers**, reflecting increased output, easing inflationary pressures, and positive business sentiment.

UNDERSTANDING PURCHASING MANAGERS' INDEX (PMI):

- **Definition:**
 - ✓ The **Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)** serves as a **crucial indicator** reflecting the **prevailing economic trends** in both **manufacturing and service sectors**.
 - ✓ It operates as a **diffusion index**, providing insights into whether **market conditions are expanding, contracting, or remaining stable**, as perceived by purchasing managers.
- **Purpose:**
 - ✓ The **primary objective** of the PMI is to **furnish timely and relevant information** about **current and future business conditions**.
 - ✓ It **caters to the decision-makers, analysts, and investors**, aiding them in **understanding the economic landscape**.
- **Key Components:**
 - ✓ The PMI encompasses a **monthly survey involving supply chain managers across 19 industries**, covering both upstream and downstream activities.
 - ✓ It captures the sentiments and perceptions of purchasing managers **regarding market conditions**, thus **servicing as a leading indicator** of overall economic activity.
- **Interpretation:**
 - ✓ **The PMI is a number from 0 to 100**.
 - ✓ A PMI **above 50 indicates an expansion** compared to the **previous month**.
 - ✓ A PMI **below 50 represents a contraction**.
 - ✓ A reading at **50 signifies no change**.
 - ✓ The **greater the deviation from 50**, the more **significant the level of change**.

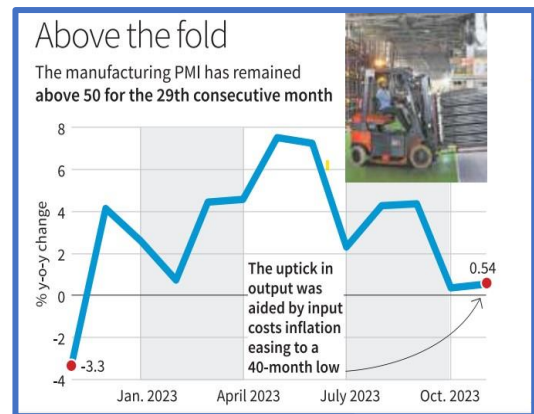


INDIA'S RECENT MANUFACTURING SECTOR PERFORMANCE:

India's manufacturing sector **demonstrated a robust performance in November**, rebounding from an eight-month low, according to the **seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)**.

Key Points:

- **PMI Increase:**
 - ✓ The PMI rose from **October's 55.5 to 56 in November**, indicating expansion, as any **value above 50 signifies growth**.
- **Price Pressures Eased:**
 - ✓ A notable feature of the results was a **significant easing of price pressures**.
 - ✓ Although **average purchasing costs increased**, **inflation rates reached the lowest point** in the current 40-month sequence of increases.
- **Output Growth:**
 - ✓ The manufacturing industry **showcased robust performance**, with output regaining growth momentum.
 - ✓ The growth of **output gathered pace in November**, driven by **strengthening client demand and favourable input supply conditions**.
- **New Business and Recruitment:**
 - ✓ Firms' ability to **secure new business**, both **domestically and internationally**, remained pivotal.
 - ✓ **Sustained growth in new orders** brought positive **implications for the labour market**, with recruitment on an **upward trajectory**.



Significance of the Recent Growth:

- **Overall Economic Health:**
 - ✓ The **expanded capacities**, increasing workloads, and the necessity to replenish finished goods stocks collectively signal a robust state **for India's manufacturing economy as 2023 concludes**.
 - ✓ Expectations for a **strong performance continue into 2024**.
- **Inflationary Pressures:**
 - ✓ **Inflationary pressures saw a retreat**, marked by the **weakest rise in purchase costs since August 2020**.
 - ✓ The majority of firms opted to **maintain their fees unchanged since October**, contributing to a **stabilized economic environment**.
- **Concerns and Sentiment:**
 - ✓ While concerns about **near-term price increases were evident in business sentiment data**, there was a **muted increase in output charges** amid a **reduced inflationary atmosphere**.
 - ✓ This nuanced sentiment **reflects a cautious yet optimistic outlook**.
- **Supply and Demand Dynamics:**
 - ✓ **Despite the rise in prices for raw materials and components in November**, **improved availability at suppliers and subdued global demand resulted** in a significant retreat in cost pressures.
 - ✓ This highlights the **resilience of supply and demand dynamics** in managing economic challenges.

ADVANTAGES OF PURCHASING MANAGERS' INDEX (PMI):

- **Timeliness:**
 - ✓ The PMI is a **monthly release**, providing **real-time insights** into the economic activity of the manufacturing or services sector.
 - ✓ This timeliness enables **swift assessments by policymakers, analysts, and investors**.
- **Leading Indicator:**
 - ✓ Recognized as a **leading indicator**, the PMI offers an **early indication of economic trends**, often **preceding changes** seen in **other indicators like GDP growth or employment numbers**.
 - ✓ It serves as an **anticipatory tool for understanding economic shifts**.



- **Comprehensive Insight:**
 - ✓ **By capturing information from various sub-components** such as **new orders, production, employment, supplier deliveries**, and inventories, the PMI offers a comprehensive view of economic activity.
 - ✓ This **multifaceted perspective aids** in identifying potential bottlenecks or strengths within the sector.
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - ✓ The **PMI is constructed for easy comparison** across different periods and countries.
 - ✓ Its **standardized scale facilitates interpretation**, and the **availability of PMI data** for numerous countries **globally allows for meaningful comparative analysis**.

Disadvantages of Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI):

- **Sample Bias:**
 - ✓ The PMI relies on surveys from a **limited sample of companies**, potentially introducing sample bias.
 - ✓ The surveyed companies **may not fully represent the diversity of the entire sector or economy**, leading to skewed insights.
- **Lack of Industry Details:**
 - ✓ The index **might not offer detailed information** on which **industries are the primary drivers of growth or contraction**.
 - ✓ This **limitation hinders a more nuanced understanding of the specific sectors** influencing the overall economic health.
- **Subjectivity in Survey Responses:**
 - ✓ As the PMI **relies on subjective survey responses** from purchasing managers, **individual perceptions, biases, and temporary fluctuations** in business conditions can **impact the accuracy** of the data.
 - ✓ The **interpretive nature of responses** introduces a level of subjectivity.
- **Volatility and Revisions:**
 - ✓ Monthly PMI readings can be **volatile due to factors like seasonal variations**, supply chain disruptions, or shifts in market sentiment.
 - ✓ This **volatility poses challenges in discerning longer-term trends**.
 - ✓ Additionally, initial readings may be **subject to revisions based on more accurate information**, potentially altering the original interpretation.
- **Influence of External Factors:**
 - ✓ The PMI **might not fully capture the influence of external factors** such as **geopolitical events, changes in trade policies, or natural disasters**.
 - ✓ These **significant external forces can have substantial impacts on economic activity**, and their absence in the PMI **limits its ability to reflect all potential implications** accurately.

Way Forward:

To leverage the recent growth in PMI for economic advancement in India:

- **Strategic Policy Adjustments:**
 - ✓ Policymakers should **assess the PMI trends** and consider **making strategic adjustments** in economic policies.
 - ✓ Aligning policies with the insights from **PMI data can help capitalize on areas of strength and address potential challenges**.
- **Investment Promotion:**
 - ✓ A **positive PMI reflects growth opportunities**.
 - ✓ India can **use this momentum to attract investments** by showcasing a vibrant and expanding manufacturing sector.
 - ✓ Investment promotion campaigns can highlight the **conducive business environment indicated** by the PMI.
- **Skill Development Initiatives:**
 - ✓ As the **manufacturing sector expands**, investing in skill development programs becomes crucial.

- ✓ Ensuring the **workforce is equipped with the necessary skills** can enhance productivity and contribute to the **sustained growth indicated by the PMI**.
- **Global Trade Opportunities:**
 - ✓ **Strengthening manufacturing capabilities** can position India favourably in global trade.
 - ✓ **Leveraging the demand indicated by the PMI**, India can explore and **expand its export opportunities**, contributing to economic growth.

INDIA'S GDP GROWTH

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The National Statistical Office's provisional estimates India's GDP growth for Q2 FY24 stood at an impressive 7.6%, surpassing market expectations and triggering upward revisions in full-year GDP forecasts.*
- *The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) initial forecast of a 6.5% growth rate now aligns with the revised projections, indicating the RBI's accurate anticipation of economic trends.*

Analysis of GVA Data for Q2: Sectoral Trends:

- **Agriculture and Allied Sectors:**
 - ✓ **Steady Decline:** Contribution from agriculture and allied sectors has witnessed a consistent decline.
 - ✓ **Q2 Growth:** Agriculture grew by just 1.2%, a significant drop from the 4.3% during the pandemic year, indicating economic stress in rural India.
 - ✓ **Persistent Deceleration:** This marks a steady deceleration, with consecutive quarters showing a decline, raising concerns about farm production recovery.
- **Industrial GVA Growth:**
 - ✓ **Remarkable Spike:** Industrial GVA growth rate surged by over 13%, showcasing impressive performance.
 - ✓ **Manufacturing Contribution:** Manufacturing, a key component, grew close to 14%, reminiscent of the high-growth phase seen between 2004 and 2008.
 - ✓ **Low Base Effect:** Growth rates benefit from a low base, especially considering manufacturing GVA was almost minus 4% in the same quarter of the previous financial year.
 - ✓ **Employment Implications:** Higher GVA in manufacturing, construction, and mining bodes well for employment, particularly for low-skilled workers.
- **Services Sector:**
 - ✓ **Sharp Deceleration:** The services sector, a crucial part of the economy, experienced a significant deceleration.
 - ✓ **Growth Rate:** At 5.8%, the services economy slowed compared to the same quarter last year.
 - ✓ **Sub-Sector Performance:** Sub-sectors like "trade, hotels, transport, communication, and broadcasting services" grew just over 4%, resembling the slow growth typical of agriculture.
 - ✓ **Concerns:** The slowdown in services raises concerns about overall economic growth, as services play a pivotal role in the economy.

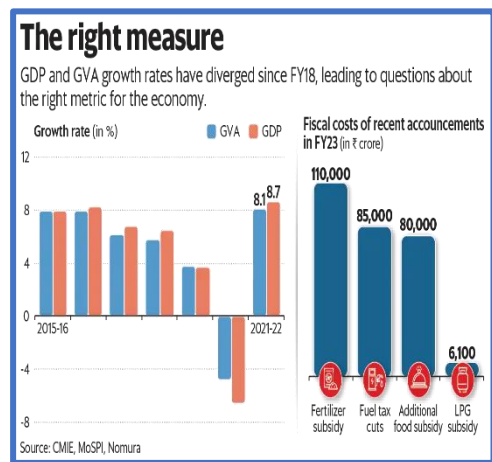
REAL GROSS VALUE ADDED					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GVA total	4.23	-5.12	9.33	5.41	7.42
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5.32	4.32	4.84	2.49	1.22
Industry	-2.14	3.24	8.11	-0.55	13.18
Mining and quarrying	-5.8	-8.06	10.63	-0.12	9.97
Manufacturing	-3.57	9.01	6.55	-3.83	13.91
Electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services	1.96	-3.93	10.8	5.96	10.06
Construction	1.09	-4.88	10.75	5.66	13.28
Services	7.43	-11.09	11.07	9.35	5.8
Trade, hotels, transport, communication and broadcasting services	6.44	-18.42	13.12	15.63	4.26
Financial services, real estate and professional services	8.38	-5.07	7.05	7.06	6.02
Public administration, defence and other services	7.04	-12.24	16.81	5.59	7.56

Base Year 2011-12 Y-o-Y % change (All data for Q2) Source: CMIE

UNDERSTANDING ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE: NAVIGATING GDP AND GVA PERSPECTIVES

- **Overview:**
 - ✓ Two primary metrics for assessing economic health: **GDP and GVA**.
 - ✓ **GDP** focuses on **expenditure**, while **GVA** emphasizes **income**.
 - ✓ **GVA** defined by RBI as output value minus intermediary inputs, allocating "value added" to labour and capital.

- **GVA: Examining Income Side:**
 - ✓ Reveals **income side of the economy**.
 - ✓ **Captures sector's value** after **deducting intermediary inputs**.
 - ✓ Allocates "**value added**" to primary factors like **labour and capital**.
 - ✓ Crucial for understanding **quarterly trends** without government interventions.
- **GDP: Unveiling Expenditure Patterns:**
 - ✓ Focuses on **how people spend money (expenditure side)**.
 - ✓ Incorporates **indirect taxes** earned and **subtracts subsidies**.
 - ✓ Provides a **comprehensive view of national spending**.
 - ✓ Analysed for **broader, annual trends** in economic performance.
- **Discrepancy and Controversies:**
 - ✓ Difference between GDP and GVA termed as a discrepancy.
 - ✓ Controversies arise **during data releases**.
 - ✓ **Vital to resolve discrepancies for accurate economic assessments**.



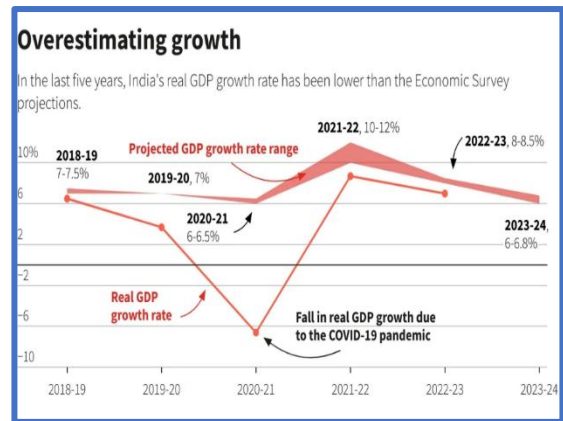
Significance of Recent GDP Growth estimation:

- **Economic Recovery Indicator:**
 - ✓ Q2 GDP growth serves as a **crucial indicator of India's economic recovery** post the challenges faced in the preceding quarters.
 - ✓ Reflects the **resilience of the economy and its ability to bounce back from adverse conditions**.
- **Policy Effectiveness Assessment:**
 - ✓ Provides **insights into the effectiveness of recent economic policies** and reforms implemented by the government.
 - ✓ Indicates whether **initiatives like the Atmanirbhar Bharat package and production-linked incentives** are yielding positive results.
- **Consumer and Investor Confidence:**
 - ✓ Positive GDP growth in Q2 can **boost confidence among consumers and investors**.
 - ✓ Rising confidence often **leads to increased spending, investment, and overall economic activity**.
- **Impact on Employment:**
 - ✓ GDP growth is **closely linked to job creation and employment opportunities**.
 - ✓ A robust Q2 performance can signify potential **improvements in the labour market**, positively impacting livelihoods.
- **Contribution to Global Economic Landscape:**
 - ✓ Demonstrates the ability to maintain stability despite global uncertainties and shocks.
 - ✓ A positive performance can **influence perceptions of India as a significant player in the international economic landscape**.
- **Investor Attractiveness:**
 - ✓ Positive GDP growth enhances **India's attractiveness to domestic and foreign investors**.
 - ✓ Signals a **favourable environment for investment and business expansion**.
- **Long-Term Growth Potential:**
 - ✓ A strong Q2 GDP performance **contributes to the assessment of India's long-term growth potential**.
 - ✓ Shapes expectations for **sustained economic development and prosperity**.

CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR GROWTH:

- **Sectoral Slowdown:**
 - ✓ **Services and agriculture sectors** experienced a perceptible slowdown in year-on-year growth during Q2.
 - ✓ **Services grew at 5.8%, and agriculture at 1.2%**, posing challenges for sustaining overall economic momentum.

- **Dependency on Government-Led Expenditure:**
 - ✓ **Government-led capital expenditure** played a **significant role in Q2 growth**, with **GFCF jumping 11.04%**.
 - ✓ **Overreliance on government spending raises concerns** about the sustainability of growth without diversified sources.
- **Private Consumption Slowdown:**
 - ✓ **Private final consumption expenditure (PFCE)** recorded **slower growth at 3.1%**, impacting overall consumption demand.
 - ✓ **Private consumption as a share of GDP reduced to 56.8%**, signaling potential challenges in stimulating private spending.
- **Shift in Consumption Composition:**
 - ✓ While government expenditure increased, **private consumption expenditure as a share of GDP decreased**.
 - ✓ Implies a shift in **the composition of spending**, potentially affecting the overall balance of economic growth.
- **Agri Outlook and Global Growth Concerns:**
 - ✓ Weak agricultural outlook poses a challenge, **impacting rural demand and overall economic growth**.
 - ✓ Trepid global growth **adds external pressures**, influencing India's export-oriented sectors.
- **Base Normalization and Global Trends:**
 - ✓ **Normalizing base and global economic trends** contribute to challenges in sustaining growth rates.
 - ✓ The risk of external factors affecting India's growth trajectory remains a concern.



Way Forward:

- **Diversification of Growth Sources:**
 - ✓ **Encourage diversification of sources** driving economic growth **beyond government-led initiatives**.
 - ✓ **Promote private sector participation** and investment to create a more balanced growth ecosystem.
- **Addressing Consumption Slowdown:**
 - ✓ Implement measures to boost private consumption, **including income growth initiatives and policies to enhance consumer confidence**.
 - ✓ Balancing government and **private sector contributions to overall demand**.
- **Ensuring Agriculture Sector Resilience:**
 - ✓ Implement policies to **address challenges in the agriculture sector**, ensuring resilience and **sustainable growth**.
 - ✓ Support rural development to **bolster agricultural income and demand**.
- **Monitoring Global Economic Conditions:**
 - ✓ Stay vigilant on **global economic trends and adjust policies** to navigate external challenges.
 - ✓ Strategic interventions to **mitigate the impact of external factors on India's export-oriented sectors**.
- **Long-Term Structural Reforms:**
 - ✓ Continue with long-term structural reforms to **enhance the resilience and competitiveness of the Indian economy**.
 - ✓ Address systemic issues that may **hinder sustained economic growth over the coming years**.

THE NEED TO TRANSFORM AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- A comprehensive report from the **United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** has brought attention to the **hidden costs within global agri-food systems**, surpassing a **staggering \$10 trillion**.
- Published recently, the report highlights the **far-reaching implications of these costs on various aspects of society**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT:

- **Staggering Hidden Costs:**
 - ✓ The report reveals that the **hidden costs of global agri-food systems surpass an astonishing \$10 trillion.**
 - ✓ This staggering figure **underscores the magnitude of the economic impact** associated with current agricultural practices.
- **Impact on Middle-Income Countries, Especially India:**
 - ✓ In middle-income countries, with a **specific focus on India**, the disclosed costs constitute nearly **11% of the GDP.**
 - ✓ This **financial burden translates into higher poverty levels**, environmental harm, and health-related impacts, including issues like undernourishment and unhealthy dietary patterns.
- **Attribution to Unsustainable Practices:**
 - ✓ The report attributes the **escalating costs to "unsustainable business-as-usual activities and practices"** within agri-food systems.
 - ✓ It points out that these practices **contribute significantly to the economic, environmental, and health-related challenges** observed.
- **Call for Transformation in Agri-Food Systems:**
 - ✓ Recognizing the urgent need for change, the report **advocates for a transformative approach to agri-food systems.**
 - ✓ It highlights the **necessity of moving away from conventional practices** that have led to the identified issues and calls for a **shift towards more sustainable alternatives.**
- **Proposed Solution: Shift to Multi-Cropping Systems:**
 - ✓ A key recommendation in the report is the **adoption of multi-cropping systems.**
 - ✓ This **strategic shift is presented as having the potential to protect farmers' well-being**, enhance nutritional outcomes within communities, and positively impact ecological health.
- **Importance of Sustainable Agricultural Practices:**
 - ✓ The report **underscores the critical importance of transitioning to sustainable agricultural practices.**
 - ✓ It emphasizes the **need for a holistic transformation** to address the **hidden costs associated with global agri-food systems effectively.**

IMPACT OF INTENSIVE AGRICULTURE IN INDIA: REPORT

- **Enhanced Agricultural Productivity:**
 - ✓ Significant advancements in India's agricultural productivity have been witnessed in the past five decades through the widespread adoption of mono-cropping systems and chemical-intensive farming practices.
- **Green Revolution Impact:**
 - ✓ The Green Revolution, emphasizing high-yield varieties of paddy and wheat, has played a pivotal role, constituting over 70% of India's agricultural production.
- **Erosion of Seed Sovereignty:**
 - ✓ The introduction of seeds from multinational corporations has eroded seed sovereignty, disrupting traditional indigenous knowledge systems.
- **Shift to Monoculture Plantations:**
 - ✓ Adoption of intensive practices has led to a shift from diverse crop varieties like pulses and millets to monoculture plantations, impacting biodiversity.
- **Compromised Nutritional Needs:**



- ✓ The dominance of a few crops has compromised the nutritional needs of households, sidelining traditional staples and contributing to dietary challenges.
- **Adverse Ecological Consequences:**
 - ✓ Intensive farming has resulted in adverse ecological consequences, including the excessive extraction of groundwater, posing environmental concerns.
- **Privatization and Deregulation Impact:**
 - ✓ Privatization and deregulation of agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers, have influenced farming dynamics and economic sustainability.
 - ✓ The privatization drive **has contributed to increased indebtedness** among agrarian households, with the **debt to asset ratio soaring by 630% from 1992 to 2013.**
- **Economic Viability Challenges:**
 - ✓ Agriculture in India faces growing challenges in economic viability, as reflected in the average monthly household income of farming households at ₹10,816.
 - ✓ The overall impact underscores the necessity for a **transition towards sustainable agricultural practices** that balance productivity, ecological well-being, and economic sustainability.

CHALLENGES OF AGRI- FOOD SYSTEM IN INDIA: REPORT

- **Hidden Costs in Agricultural Systems:**
 - ✓ The FAO report highlights the **staggering hidden costs of global agri-food systems, surpassing \$10 trillion, with India's share at \$1.1 trillion**, showcasing the need for transformative measures.
- **Procurement Policy Bias:**
 - ✓ The **National Food Security Act's procurement policy**, managed by the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)**, heavily **favours rice and wheat**, neglecting coarse grains.
 - ✓ This skewed focus has **led to a decline in the cultivation of diverse crops.**
- **Impact on Food Security:**
 - ✓ The preference for water-intensive cash crops like sugarcane threatens food security, affecting small and marginal farmers who are among the most food and nutrition insecure in India.
- **Global Trade Influence:**
 - ✓ Historical trends show how global trade relations have shaped food production systems in the Global South, emphasizing the need to address the impact of global structures on local farming.



SOLUTION OF FOOD SYSTEM IN INDIA: REPORT

- **Crop Diversification as a Solution:**
 - ✓ **Crop diversification, rooted in agroecology principles**, is proposed as a solution to revitalize degraded land and soil.
 - ✓ Local efforts, such as 'akkadi saalu' in Karnataka, involve **intercropping to enhance biodiversity and improve soil health.**
- **Hidden Costs Consideration:**
 - ✓ The FAO report emphasizes that **alternative farming systems**, despite **potential income declines**, address **substantial hidden costs associated with current practices**, reinforcing the need for a holistic evaluation.
- **Millets as Nutrient-Rich Alternatives:**
 - ✓ Millets are highlighted as a **nutritious alternative**, comparable in **yield to rice and wheat**, with the **advantage of growing in semi-arid conditions** without burdening groundwater tables.
 - ✓ This diversification contributes to a more varied food basket.
- **Transitioning for Sustainability:**
 - ✓ The transition to sustainable agriculture **should be systematic, allowing farmers to adjust gradually.**
 - ✓ **Shifting from chemical-intensive to non-pesticide management** and adopting natural farming practices is advocated for reducing input costs.
- **Diversified Farming Model:**

- ✓ A visual representation suggests a diversified farm allocation, **with 70% for commercial crops, 20% for food and fodder, and 10% for environmental services like oilseeds.**
- ✓ This model, **over time, envisions lowering the fraction of commercial crops** and integrating livestock for improved incomes.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA:

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Objective</i>
<i>National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013</i>	✓ Ensure access to affordable and good-quality food by subsidizing food grains to those below the poverty line.
<i>National Food Security Mission</i>	✓ Increase food production and productivity through area expansion and productivity enhancement interventions in rice, wheat, pulses, oilseeds, etc.
<i>National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Platform</i>	✓ Create an online marketplace for farmers to trade their products without geographical boundaries.
<i>National Food Processing Mission</i>	✓ Promote agri-based industries for efficient use of farm produce and reduce post-harvest losses.
<i>NFSA and PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)</i>	✓ Provide subsidized food grains to states , aiming to prevent hunger and malnutrition.
<i>Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Decentralized Procurement (DCP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reimburse FCI for the gap between the cost and subsidized price of food grains. ✓ DCP states receive direct subsidies based on the quantity they procure and distribute.
<i>Free-of-Cost Foodgrains Initiative</i>	✓ Provide free-of-cost food grains to approximately 80 crore NFSA beneficiaries for one year, emphasizing the commitment to food security.
<i>One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strengthen foodgrain distribution, allowing beneficiaries, especially migrant workers and marginalized communities, to easily procure food grains across the country. ✓ Ensure nationwide portability of ration cards.
<i>Nationwide Achievement of ONORC</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Successfully expand ONORC to all 36 states and Union Territories, promoting efficient and accessible food distribution. ✓ Record 105+ crore inter/intra state transactions.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Systematic Transition Approach:**
 - ✓ Farmers cannot shift abruptly **from mono-cultivation to diversified crops overnight.**
 - ✓ A **systematic and gradual approach** is essential.
 - ✓ **Initiatives should focus on a step-by-step transition**, starting with **moving away from chemical-intensive practices.**
- **Reducing Input Costs:**
 - ✓ A key strategy **involves transitioning from chemical-intensive practices to non-pesticide management.**
 - ✓ Adoption of **natural farming practices** can further **reduce input costs, promoting sustainable agriculture.**
- **Diversification for Income Generation:**

- ✓ Encourage farmers to diversify income sources through **value addition**, such as **incorporating livestock and poultry** into their farming systems.
- ✓ Experimentation with **these practices on specific portions of the land can facilitate a smoother transition.**
- **Strategic Land Allocation:**
 - ✓ Propose a **visual representation of a diversified farm, allocating 70% for commercial crops, 20% for food and fodder, and 10% for environmental services like oilseeds (trap crops).**
 - ✓ Over time, gradually **reduce the fraction of commercial crops and replace border crops with locally-suitable tree species for fruits and fodder.**
- **Livestock Integration:**
 - ✓ Integrate **livestock rearing as part of the diversified farming approach** to enhance farm incomes.
 - ✓ **Livestock can contribute to the overall sustainability** of the farming system and provide additional revenue streams.
- **Economic Modelling and Sustainability:**
 - ✓ Preliminary economic modelling of these transition pathways indicates potential ecological and economic benefits.
 - ✓ These pathways can contribute to improving ecological outcomes for the landscape and sustaining farm incomes in the short run (up to three years) and the long run (up to 25 years).
- **Addressing Challenges:**
 - ✓ Recognize and **address challenges related to local seeds, institutional arrangements** for market access, **drudgery in farming practices**, and **the need for farm labour.**
 - ✓ Robust solutions must be in place to ensure a smooth and effective transition for farmers.
- **Collaboration and Policy Support:**
 - ✓ **Scaling up these practices requires** collaboration among **institutions, policymakers**, and social groups.
 - ✓ **Articulate economic incentives** for farmers to **encourage the shift from high-input monoculture to diversified cropping systems.**



NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (MPI): A PROGRESS REVIEW 2023

SOURCE: [UNEP](#)

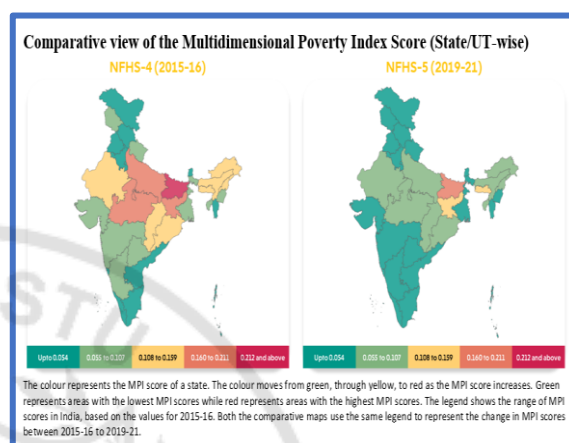
WHY IN NEWS?

- *The **National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report for 2023** released by **NITI AAYOG** offers comprehensive estimates of multidimensional poverty in India, covering **36 States & Union Territories and 707 administrative districts.***
- *The data is derived from the **5th round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)** conducted between **2019-21.***
- *The report evaluates changes in **multidimensional poverty from the previous survey (NFHS-4, 2015-16).***
- *Beyond just **identifying the number of poor (headcount ratio)**, it delves into the intensity of poverty, providing insights into the severity of deprivations.*
- *This holistic approach **enhances the understanding of poverty dynamics in the country.***

Key Highlights of MPI Progress Report 2023:

- **Significant Reduction in Multidimensional Poverty:**
 - ✓ **135 million individuals** escaped multidimensional poverty **between 2015-16 and 2019-21.**
 - ✓ India's national MPI value **nearly halved, decreasing from 24.85% to 14.96%.**
- **Positive Impact of Government Interventions:**
 - ✓ Improved indicators suggest the **increasing visibility of government interventions.**

- ✓ **Progress in nutrition, years of schooling, sanitation, and cooking fuel** contributed to reducing the MPI value.
- **Intensity of Poverty Improvement:**
 - ✓ The Intensity of Poverty, measuring average deprivation, **improved from 47.14% to 44.39%**.
 - ✓ Nutrition, schooling, sanitation, and cooking fuel improvements played a significant role.
- **Early Achievement of SDG Target 1.2:**
 - ✓ **India is on track to achieve SDG Target 1.2** (*reducing multidimensional poverty by at least half*) well ahead of 2030.
- **Disparities Across Rural and Urban Areas:**
 - ✓ **Rural areas experienced a faster reduction in MPI value** compared to urban areas.
 - ✓ Proportion of multidimensional poor in **rural areas: 19.28%, urban areas: 5.27%**.
- **State-wise Progress:**
 - ✓ **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan** recorded the **steepest decline** in the number of MPI poor.
- **Fastest Absolute Reduction in MPI:**
 - ✓ **Bihar showed the fastest reduction in MPI value** in absolute terms.
 - ✓ **Uttar Pradesh had the most significant number of people escaping multidimensional poverty (3.43 crore).**
- **State and UT Performance:**
 - ✓ States and UTs displayed **notable improvements in MPI scores from 2015-16 to 2019-21.**
- **District-level Analysis:**
 - ✓ Disaggregated estimates at the district level showed the **most rapid reduction in MPI in districts of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.**
- **Indicator-wise Comparison of Deprivations:**
 - ✓ Statistically significant reduction in **deprivations across all 12 indicators.**
 - ✓ **Sanitation and cooking fuel** saw the most substantial reductions.



NATIONAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (NATIONAL MPI):

- **Initiative by NITI Aayog:**
 - ✓ **NITI Aayog, serving as the nodal agency,** takes responsibility for constructing an **indigenized index to monitor States and Union Territories (UTs)** in addressing multidimensional poverty.
- **MPI Coordination Committee (MPICC):**
 - ✓ NITI Aayog establishes the MPICC, an **inter-ministerial committee,** including relevant ministries and departments.
 - ✓ The committee spans areas such as **health, education, nutrition, rural development, drinking water, sanitation, electricity, and urban development.**
 - ✓ MPICC's composition draws from the multidimensional nature of the **index indicators, ensuring cross-sectoral perspectives.**
- **Technical Rigor and Robustness:**
 - ✓ MPICC collaborates with survey implementers, including the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.**
 - ✓ Technical partners, **such as OPHI and UNDP,** contribute expertise, ensuring the technical rigor and robustness of the national MPI.
- **Cross-Sectoral Perspectives:**
 - ✓ The composition of MPICC, enriched by experts from the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI),** brings cross-sectoral perspectives.
 - ✓ This holistic approach informs policies and **interventions necessary to enhance achievements at the household level.**

DIMENSIONS OF THE NATIONAL MPI:

- **Health Dimension:**
 - ✓ Includes specific health-related indicators.
- **Education Dimension:**
 - ✓ Comprises indicators related to educational well-being.
- **Standard of Living Dimension:**
 - ✓ Encompasses indicators reflecting the living conditions of households.

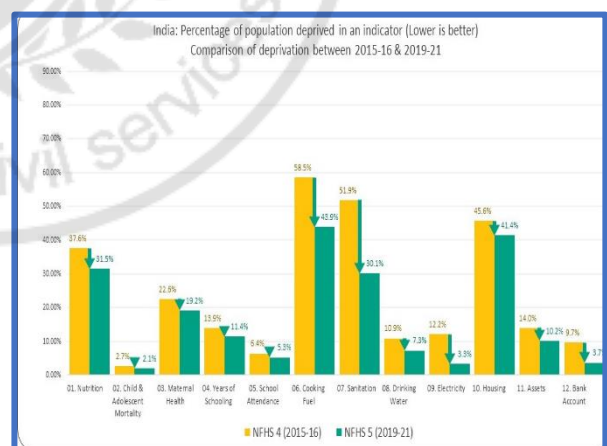


Sub-indices of the National MPI:

- **Headcount Ratio (H):**
 - ✓ **Objective:** Measures how many **individuals in the population are considered** multidimensionally poor.
 - ✓ **Calculation:** Proportion of multidimensionally **poor individuals divided by the total population.**
- **Intensity of Poverty (A):**
 - ✓ **Objective:** Assesses the **average proportion of deprivations experienced** by multidimensionally poor individuals.
 - ✓ **Calculation:** **Sum of the weighted deprivation scores** of all poor individuals divided by the total number of poor individuals.
- **Purpose of the Sub-indices**
 - ✓ **Headcount Ratio (H):** Provides information on the percentage of the population living in multidimensional poverty.
 - ✓ **Intensity of Poverty (A):** Offers insights into the depth or severity of poverty experienced by individuals.

CHALLENGES IN INDIA:

- **Data Reliability and Source Concerns:**
 - ✓ **Reliance on National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 4 and 5 data for MPI estimation** raises questions about reliability, especially considering the **controversies surrounding NFHS 5**, which was blocked for alleged unreliability.
- **Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic:**
 - ✓ The MPI estimates **do not fully account for the severe economic impact** of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, including loss of livelihoods, reverse migration, and disruptions in health and education services.
- **GDP Decline and Economic Shock:**
 - ✓ The MPI reduction contrasts with a **significant decline in GDP growth from 8% in 2015-16 to 3.78% in 2019-20**, and a slump of **-6.60% in 2020-21.**
 - ✓ The economic shock may have **intensified poverty challenges.**
- **Limited Coverage of Variables:**
 - ✓ Aggregation with **uniform weighting in MPI overlooks nuances.**
 - ✓ Factors like criminality among **State MPs**, which correlates with **higher MPI**, point to the need for a **more comprehensive set of variables.**
- **Rural-Urban Dynamics:**
 - ✓ **While urbanization is associated with higher MPI**, the impact is **less than proportionate**, potentially due to reverse migration during the pandemic.
 - ✓ Understanding **rural-urban dynamics** is crucial for accurate poverty assessments.
- **Education and Health Expenditure Decline:**
 - ✓ **State-level decline in educational expenditure** raises concerns as education spending correlates with lower MPI.



- ✓ Health expenditure, **while rising, may not have met the demands of the pandemic.**
- **Criminal Involvement in Governance:**
 - ✓ The **rising share of Members of Parliament with criminal backgrounds**, associated with higher MPI, **indicates governance challenges.**
 - ✓ Corrupt practices diverting funds **from social safety nets may hinder poverty alleviation efforts.**

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE TO REDUCE MPI:

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Poshan Abhiyan</i>	✓ Reduce deprivations in health , particularly addressing issues related to nutrition.
<i>Anaemia Mukta Bharat</i>	✓ Combat and reduce instances of anemia , contributing to improved health outcomes.
<i>Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)</i>	✓ Enhance sanitation facilities nationwide , resulting in a swift 21.8 percentage points improvement in sanitation deprivations.
<i>Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)</i>	✓ Improve access to clean drinking water , contributing to the overall reduction in multidimensional poverty.
<i>Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)</i>	✓ Provide subsidized cooking fuel to households , leading to a significant 14.6 percentage points improvement in cooking fuel deprivations.
<i>Saubhagya</i>	✓ Ensure electrification of households , contributing to low deprivation rates in electricity access.
<i>Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)</i>	✓ Address housing needs, aiming to improve living conditions and reduce housing-related deprivations.
<i>Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)</i>	✓ Promote financial inclusion by increasing access to bank accounts , aligning with the broader goal of poverty reduction and the SDG target.
<i>Samagra Shiksha</i>	✓ Enhance educational outcomes by addressing issues related to schooling , contributing to the reduction of educational deprivations.

WAY FORWARD: NITI AAYOG'S COMMITMENT

- **Significant Decline:**
 - ✓ India witnessed a **substantial 9.89 percentage points** reduction in multidimensional poverty from 2015-16 to 2019-21.
- **Rural Impact:**
 - ✓ Rural areas experienced the **fastest decline, from 32.59% to 19.28%**, contributing significantly to overall poverty reduction.
- **State-wise Progress:**
 - ✓ Uttar Pradesh **recorded the highest decline, with 3.43 crore people escaping poverty**, followed by Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Sectoral Contributors:**
 - ✓ **Improvements in nutrition, schooling, sanitation, and cooking fuel** played pivotal roles in driving down poverty levels.
- **SDG Target Achievement:**
 - ✓ **India is on track to achieve SDG Target 1.2**, aiming to reduce multidimensional poverty by at least half, well before the 2030 deadline.
- **Government Initiatives:**
 - ✓ Flagship programs like **Poshan Abhiyan, Swachh Bharat Mission**, and others were instrumental in achieving positive outcomes.

- **Continued Support:**
 - ✓ NITI Aayog reaffirms its commitment to sustained collaboration, technical support, and policy guidance for further poverty reduction efforts.

TEXTILE INDUSTRY CRISIS

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- The distress in India's textile and garment industry has captured headlines due to its far-reaching economic implications and challenges faced by the MSME sector.
- Reports of factory closures, machinery disposals, and dwindling working hours highlight a sector grappling with reduced demand and export challenges.
- The situation has prompted concerns about job losses and economic hardship for laborers, emphasizing the industry's strategic importance in India's economy.
- Policy issues, including raw material prices, import duties, and quality control orders, contribute to the complexities, necessitating a comprehensive and sustainable approach to address the industry's distress.

INTRODUCTION TO INDIA'S TEXTILE INDUSTRY:

➤ Overview:

- ✓ India's textile sector boasts a rich history, dating back centuries, and stands as one of the oldest industries in the country.
- ✓ Characterized by diversity, the industry spans from traditional hand-spun textiles to modern, capital-intensive mills.
- ✓ The sector's strength lies in its robust production base, encompassing a wide array of natural and synthetic fibers.
- ✓ The decentralization of power looms, hosiery, and knitting forms a significant portion of the textile landscape, with strong ties to agriculture and cultural traditions.



➤ Industry Strength and Diversification:

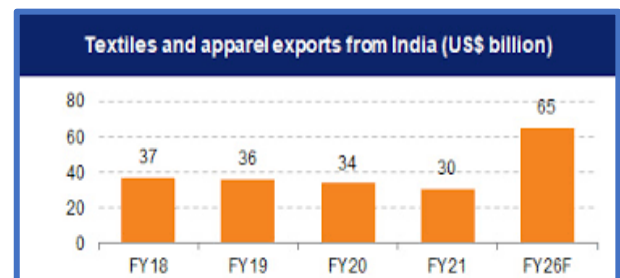
- ✓ 5th largest global producer of technical textiles.
- ✓ Aiming for a \$300 billion market size by 2047.
- ✓ Highly diversified, covering traditional and organized manufacturing.

➤ Cotton's Economic Role:

- ✓ Sustains 6 million cotton farmers and 40-50 million related workers.
- ✓ Largest global cotton producer (23% share).

➤ Technical Textile Exports and Industry Growth:

- ✓ Technical textile exports grew 28.4% YoY, reaching \$2.85 billion.
- ✓ Record textile and apparel exports of \$44.4 billion in FY 2021-22.



➤ Market Size and Growth Projections:

- ✓ Textile and apparel market at \$165 billion in 2022.
- ✓ Projected CAGR of 10%, targeting a \$350 billion market by 2030.

➤ Employment and Global Standing:

- ✓ Employs 45 million workers.
- ✓ 2nd largest textile and garment producer globally.
- ✓ 6th largest exporter with a 4% share in global trade.

- **Innovations in Textiles:**
 - ✓ Smart textiles with embedded sensors.
 - ✓ **Nanotechnology enhancing textile properties.**

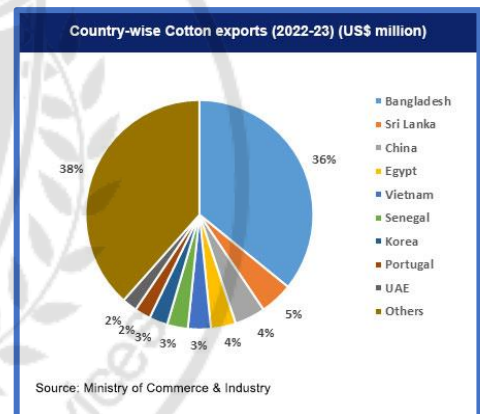
RECENT TEXTILE AND GARMENT INDUSTRY DISTRESS:

- **Impact on Foundries and Weaving Clusters:**
 - ✓ Foundry operator in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, shifted from buying scrap locally to receiving 250 tonnes from a Salem-based textile mill.
 - ✓ In Somanur's powerloom cluster, more than 10 looms are being sold monthly, indicating distress.
- **Current State of Textile and Garment Industry:**
 - ✓ **MSME sector**, mainly comprising the **textile and garment industry**, faces a **crisis comparable to the late 1960s**.
 - ✓ **Factories shutting down**, disposing of machinery, **selling excess lands to sustain operations**, and **reduced working hours** for laborers.
 - ✓ Textiles and apparel's **share in the Index of Industrial Production** has **shrunk**.
 - ✓ **Andhra Pradesh reports 8-9 textile mills closed**, with more on the verge, citing **high cotton prices**, **increased electricity charges**, and **lack of government support**.
- **Reasons for Crisis:**
 - ✓ **Prolonged period of low demand** in both export and domestic markets.
 - ✓ **Tepid domestic demand despite festival season** retail sales on par with the previous year.
 - ✓ **Textile shipments decline** in export markets, impacting the industry.



SIGNIFICANCE OF TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY:

- **Historical Importance:**
 - ✓ The Indian textile industry is **one of the oldest and most diverse sectors in the country**, encompassing **hand-woven, hand-spun, and mill-produced textiles**.
- **Employment Generation:**
 - ✓ The industry is a major employer, **providing jobs to around 4.5 crore workers**, including **35.22 lakh handloom workers nationwide**.
- **Global Export Hub:**
 - ✓ India is a significant **exporter of various textiles and raw materials**, with exports **reaching US\$ 29.8 billion between April-December 2021**.
 - ✓ The global market is **expected to surpass US\$ 209 billion by 2029**.
- **Cotton Production Leadership:**
 - ✓ India holds the title of the **world's largest producer of cotton**.
 - ✓ In the period October 2021-September 2022, cotton **production stood at 360.13 lakh bales**.
- **Export Contribution:**
 - ✓ The industry plays a crucial role in **India's global trade**, with **the export of 1.13 million tonnes of cotton yarn in the year 2020-21**.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):**
 - ✓ The textile industry, **including dyed and printed segments**, attracted significant FDI, amounting to **US\$ 3.93 billion from April 2000-December 2021**.
- **Economic Boost:**
 - ✓ The textile industry has been a **driving force behind the growth of India's economy**.
 - ✓ Worldwide trade in clothing and textiles has significantly **contributed to boosting India's GDP**, **generating substantial revenue for the country**.
- **Growth Trajectory:**
 - ✓ The industry's size has witnessed remarkable **expansion**, growing from **USD 37 billion in 2004-05 to USD 49 billion in 2006-07**.



- ✓ Textile exports also experienced substantial growth, **increasing from USD 14 billion to USD 19 billion during the same period.**
- ✓ The local market demonstrated growth **from USD 23 billion to USD 30 billion.**

CHALLENGES:

➤ Export and Domestic Market Challenges:

- ✓ Textile shipments **declined by 0.41% in April-October 2023** compared to the same period last year.
- ✓ **Apparel exports saw an 8.08% decline** in October and a **14.58% decline in April-October 2023** compared to the corresponding periods last year.
- ✓ **Geo-political situation, inflation, and high retailer inventory** dampening orders.

➤ Issues Affecting Growth:

- ✓ **Multiple issues** impacting the textile and clothing industry's growth include **escalating input costs, raw material prices, quality control orders (QCO), and garment imports.**
- ✓ **Raw material (fiber) constitutes 60-70% of manufacturing costs**, and cotton prices have been volatile.
- ✓ **Cotton production and yield in India are on a downward trend**, impacting the cotton-based textile sector.
- ✓ Introduction of **QCO and limited domestic supply of man-made fiber (MMF)** are additional challenges.

➤ Call for Consistent and Long-Term Government Policies:

- ✓ Stakeholders emphasize the **need for consistent and long-term government policies** to benefit farmers and the consumer industry.
- ✓ **Cotton prices, imposition of import duties**, and stabilization are critical factors for industry recovery.
- ✓ **Lack of import duty on cotton for more than a decade from 2008** is highlighted.



GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN INDIA:

<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Objective</i>
<i>Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SAMARTH)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Address the skilled manpower requirement in the textile sector. ✓ Formulated under the "Skill India" initiative and aligned with the skilling program by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. ✓ Valid till March 2024.
<i>National Technical Textile Mission</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop the use of technical textiles in various flagship missions and programs, including strategic sectors. ✓ Four-year mission (2020-21 to 2023-24) with an outlay of Rs. 1480 crore.
<i>PM-MITRA Scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attract investment for the 'Make In India' initiative and boost employment through the setting up of seven Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel Parks. ✓ Budgeted at Rs. 4445 crore for seven years up to 2027-28.
<i>Special Package for Textile and Apparel Sector</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhance employment and export potential in the apparel and made-up segments. ✓ Launched in June 2016 with a package of Rs. 6000 crore.
<i>Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide support for creating world-class infrastructure facilities for the setup of textile units.

Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Textile

- ✓ Incentivize manufacturing and **export of textile products**.
- ✓ **Cover various aspects of the manufacturing process**, including **raw material support, skill development, credit facilities**, infrastructure support, and technological upgradation.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Harnessing Innovation and Technology:**
 - ✓ **Leveraging innovations and adopting the latest technology** to enhance productivity and efficiency.
 - ✓ Embracing **advancements in textile manufacturing processes** for a competitive edge.
- **Organizing the Sector:**
 - ✓ **Establishing mega apparel parks** and common infrastructure to **streamline the textile industry**.
 - ✓ Focusing on **organizational structure and efficiency** to boost overall competitiveness.
- **Modernization of Machinery:**
 - ✓ **Prioritizing the modernization of outdated machinery** and technology.
 - ✓ Investing in **state-of-the-art equipment to improve manufacturing capabilities**.
- **Comprehensive Blueprint:**
 - ✓ Developing a comprehensive and **strategic blueprint for the textile sector's growth**.
 - ✓ Formulating a detailed plan that addresses challenges, **sets goals, and outlines a roadmap for the industry's future**.
- **Sustainability and Eco-Friendly Practices:**
 - ✓ Continuing the industry's **focus on sustainability and environmentally friendly practices**.
 - ✓ Encouraging the adoption of **sustainable fibers, organic dyes, and technologies** that reduce environmental impact.
- **Government and Industry Collaboration:**
 - ✓ Fostering collaboration between the **government and industry players**.
 - ✓ Creating a supportive ecosystem that **facilitates the growth and development of the textile sector**.
- **Focus on Sustainability:**
 - ✓ Continuing the emphasis on **sustainable practices, including water and energy-saving technologies**.
 - ✓ **Implementing waste reduction initiatives** to contribute to a greener and more responsible industry.

PRODUCTION-LINKED INCENTIVE (PLI) SCHEMES

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- **The postponement of the new industrial policy in favor of prioritizing the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme is a significant development, reflecting the government's strategic shift in stimulating the manufacturing sector.**
- **The PLI scheme, considered the de facto industrial policy, has gained prominence as a key driver to address economic challenges and attract investments.**
- **The decision underscores the importance of leveraging existing initiatives to enhance India's manufacturing landscape amid global dynamics and challenges.**

Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI):

- **Introduction to PLI Scheme:**
 - ✓ The Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) is an **initiative by the Government of India designed to attract foreign companies to invest in the country**, thereby fostering employment generation.
 - ✓ Simultaneously, it aims to stimulate domestic production and create micro-jobs.

Significance of PLI Scheme:

- **Incentivizing Local Production:**

- ✓ The PLI scheme provides **incentives to domestic industries**, encouraging them to **increase local production**.
- ✓ This leads to the **development of tailor-made products** catering to **specific target audiences**, contributing to **import reduction**.



- **Incremental Sales Incentives:**
 - ✓ Under the PLI scheme, **the government supports domestic companies** and establishments in establishing or **expanding manufacturing units**.
 - ✓ Incentives are provided **based on incremental sales**, fostering growth in various sectors such as **food processing, textiles, allied equipment for mobile phones, pharma, and medical devices**.
- **Targeted Sectors:**
 - ✓ The scheme focuses on **14 key sectors**, including **mobile manufacturing, medical devices, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, specialty steel, telecom products**, electronic goods, white goods (ACs and LEDs), food products, textiles, solar PV modules, ACC batteries, and drones.
- **Diversification and Cultural Empowerment:**
 - ✓ The **PLI scheme can revive traditional designs and customs**, contributing to cultural diversity and empowering forgotten artistry suppressed by colonial influences.
- **Rewarding Increased Production:**
 - ✓ The fundamental framework of the PLI scheme revolves around rewarding companies for achieving higher production levels.
 - ✓ The scheme **places importance on Research and Development (R&D) investments**, ensuring that industries stay abreast of **global trends, fostering competitiveness in the international market**.
- **Climate Change Adaptation:**
 - ✓ Given the focus on **labour-intensive sectors**, the PLI scheme promotes building systems adaptable to climate change.
 - ✓ It holds the **potential to address environmental concerns** and work towards reversing climate change effects over the years.

WHAT THE SCHEME SEEKS TO ACHIEVE

Make domestic mfg competitive & efficient

Create economies of scale

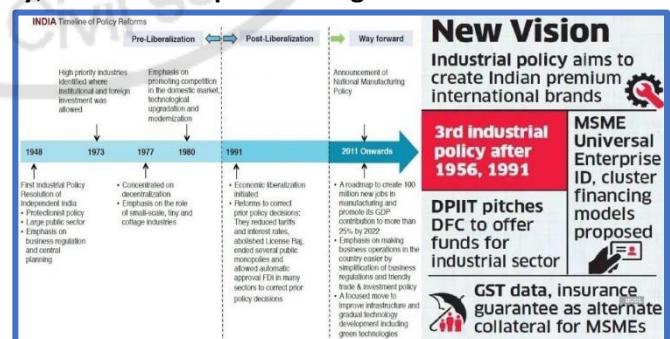
Make India part of global supply chain

Attract investment in core mfg & cutting edge tech

Competitive mfg would in turn lift exports

DRAFT INDUSTRIAL POLICY FEATURES:

- **New Industrial Policy:**
 - ✓ Planned as India's **third-ever industrial policy**, it aimed to **replace the significant 1991 framework**.
 - ✓ Titled 'Industrial Policy 2022—**Make in India for the World**,' the draft proposed key measures like a **development finance institution** and a **technology fund**.
 - ✓ Emphasis on **addressing MSME challenges**, including better access to **corporate bond markets**.
- **Dynamic Economic Strategies:**
 - ✓ Highlights **the dynamic nature of India's economic strategies**, adapting to global manufacturing challenges and opportunities.
 - ✓ **Implies a potential release** of the industrial policy in the future, showcasing flexibility in responding to evolving economic landscapes.



SHIFT IN FOCUS: A STRATEGIC DELAY

- **Delayed Release:**

- ✓ The new industrial policy, initially **expected this year**, is now deferred, **with a focus on leveraging free trade agreements (FTAs) and the PLI scheme to enhance the manufacturing base.**
- ✓ Reflects a **pragmatic approach**, considering ongoing discussions **about the PLI scheme's adequacy amid geopolitical shifts** and logistical challenges.



- **PLI as a Key Driver:**
 - ✓ The PLI scheme is **considered a flagship initiative** to overcome **economic disadvantages**, stimulating manufacturing.
 - ✓ However, concerns persist about its adequacy to entice companies seeking **alternatives to China amid geopolitical shifts and challenges** like **high logistics costs, infrastructure bottlenecks, and insufficient funds for MSMEs.**
- **PLI as Dominant Aspect:**
 - ✓ Analysts view the PLI scheme as **constituting the de facto industrial policy.**
 - ✓ While effective in specific sectors, it is deemed a **partial solution that requires India to enhance its overall attractiveness for investors** seeking alternatives to China.
- **PLI Outlay:**
 - ✓ The NDA government has introduced PLI schemes **across 14 sectors with incentives exceeding Rs 1.90 lakh crore.**
 - ✓ The scheme is **expected to contribute significantly to annual investment spending in key industrial sectors.**

CHALLENGES FACING THE PLI SCHEME:

The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme in India has **shown success in certain sectors, such as electronics and mobile manufacturing, but it also faces challenges and criticisms.**

Here are some of the challenges facing the PLI scheme:



- **Inadequate Incentives:**
 - ✓ Some companies, particularly in the **IT hardware sector**, have **expressed dissatisfaction** with the incentives provided under the PLI scheme.
 - ✓ They argue that the **incentives are not sufficient to make India more attractive than other manufacturing hubs like China and Vietnam.**
 - ✓ There is a **demand for an increase in the corpus of funds** allocated to the PLI scheme to make it more competitive.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:**
 - ✓ **Global supply chain disruptions and chip shortages** have impacted the progress of companies participating in the PLI scheme.
 - ✓ These disruptions have **led to delays in production** and have affected the ability of some firms to meet their targets.
- **Budgetary Constraints:**
 - ✓ The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** has communicated that it requires more **funds (over Rs 22,900 crore) to effectively implement** all the PLI schemes it is running.
 - ✓ However, the available budget is **significantly lower (Rs 2,923 crore).**
 - ✓ The limited budgetary allocation poses a challenge in providing **additional incentives to companies and boosting exports.**
- **Sector-Specific Challenges:**
 - ✓ Different sectors under the PLI scheme face unique challenges.
 - ✓ For instance, the **pharmaceutical sector has requested additional funds** under the PLI scheme for drugs.

- ✓ **The high-efficiency solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell batteries, textile products, and specialty steel sectors** are reported to be facing challenges in picking up as expected.
- **Timely Processing of Claims:**
 - ✓ Stakeholders have raised concerns about the **timely processing of claims under the PLI scheme**.
 - ✓ **Delays in processing can hinder the overall progress** and effectiveness of the scheme.
- **Visa-related Issues:**
 - ✓ Some vendors require **expertise from Chinese professionals**, and delays in visa processing have been reported.
 - ✓ Visa-related issues can **impact the smooth implementation of the PLI scheme**, especially in sectors where **international collaboration is crucial**.
- **Environmental Clearances:**
 - ✓ **Delays in obtaining environmental clearances in certain states** have been identified as a challenge.
 - ✓ Environmental clearance is a **critical aspect**, and delays can affect the timeline of projects under the PLI scheme.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Focus on MSME Sector:**
 - ✓ The MSME sector, accounting for 97.5% of MSME employment, has been overlooked.
 - ✓ Providing incentives to the MSME sector could be more effective in promoting additional output and employment.
- **Job Creation vs. Displacement:**
 - ✓ Policymakers need to consider both job creation and potential job displacement in the large and medium-sized mechanized industries.
 - ✓ Incentives should aim at creating a positive-sum game, benefiting both small and large-scale industries through increased demand.
- **Subsidies for Micro and Small Units:**
 - ✓ Redirecting subsidies toward micro and small units could be more impactful in boosting output and employment.
- **Optimizing PLI Scheme:**
 - ✓ Prioritize the **refinement and optimization of the existing Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme**.
 - ✓ Introduce flexibility in the PLI scheme **to address emerging challenges and cater to sector-specific needs**.
- **Enhancing Global Competitiveness:**
 - ✓ **Geopolitical Strategies:** Develop strategic measures to enhance India's global competitiveness, considering geopolitical shifts.
 - ✓ **Addressing Challenges:** Tackle challenges like **high logistics costs and infrastructural bottlenecks** to make India an attractive alternative to China.
- **Empowering MSMEs:**
 - ✓ **Financial Support:** Prioritize financial **support for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**.
 - ✓ **Market Access:** Facilitate better **market access for MSMEs to encourage** their active participation in the manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
 - ✓ Establish robust **metrics to monitor the progress** and impact of the PLI scheme.
 - ✓ Conduct periodic **evaluations to identify successes, challenges, and areas requiring adjustment**.

FOODS HIGH IN FAT, SUGAR AND SALT (HFSS) TAXES

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The urgent need for a high Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) tax in India has gained prominence due to the escalating health risks associated with the consumption of such foods.*

- The rising prevalence of **obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure** has become a major concern, contributing to a **significant portion of the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) burden** in the country.
- As per the **World Bank report of 2019**, the **global surge in overweight and obese individuals residing in Low- and Middle-Income Countries**, dispels the misconception that this health issue is confined to high-income nations.
- In India, the shift in **dietary habits towards ultra-processed foods**, marked by a **substantial growth rate**, raises alarms about the potential health impact.

DEFINING HIGH FAT, SUGAR, AND SALT (HFSS) FOODS:

HFSS Foods:

- ✓ The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in India is taking crucial steps to address the **triple burden of malnutrition, incorporating undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and excess calorie intake** leading to overweight and obesity.
- ✓ **High Fat, Sugar, and Salt (HFSS) foods** contribute significantly to the latter, especially in children.
- ✓ The working group, under the chairmanship of **Shri T. Longvah, Director In-Charge, National Institute of Nutrition (NIN)**, has outlined recommendations for **defining Junk Foods** and formulated guidelines to regulate their consumption.



Definition:

- ✓ According to the working group, HFSS foods may be defined as **"foods that contain low amounts of proteins, vitamins, phytochemicals, minerals, and dietary fiber but are rich in fat (saturated fatty acids), salt, and sugar and high in energy (calories)."**
- ✓ The **negative impact on health** becomes significant if **these foods are consumed regularly or in high amounts**.

URGENT NEED FOR HIGH HFSS TAX:

Introduction:

- ✓ High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) foods **pose significant health risks** (obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure).
- ✓ **Global concern: 70% of overweight and obese people in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.**
- ✓ **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) burden in India increased from 38% (1990) to 65% (2019).**

India's Dietary Shift:

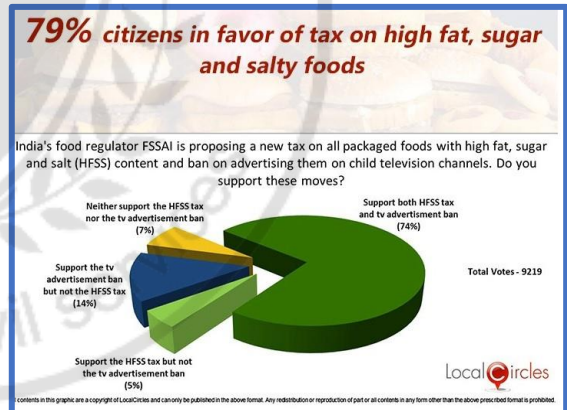
- ✓ **Ultra-processed food sector growth: 13.4% CAGR (2011-2021).**
- ✓ **Alarming surge in HFSS consumption.**
- ✓ **Snacks and soft drink sales tripled, exceeding \$30 billion in 2022.**
- ✓ **Impact on health, productivity, and economic growth.**

Global Trend of Fiscal Measures:

- ✓ **Global trend:** Fiscal measures to **combat obesity.**
- ✓ Taxation as an effective **means to reduce HFSS consumption.**
- ✓ **Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) taxed in 60+ countries.**
- ✓ HFSS food taxation **less common but increasing globally.**

India's Context:

- ✓ **Kerala's 'fat tax' in 2016, later subsumed into Goods and Services Tax (GST).**
- ✓ Economic impact of overweight and obesity in India: **Estimated \$23 billion (2017).**
- ✓ **Urgent interventions** needed to curb rising consumption.

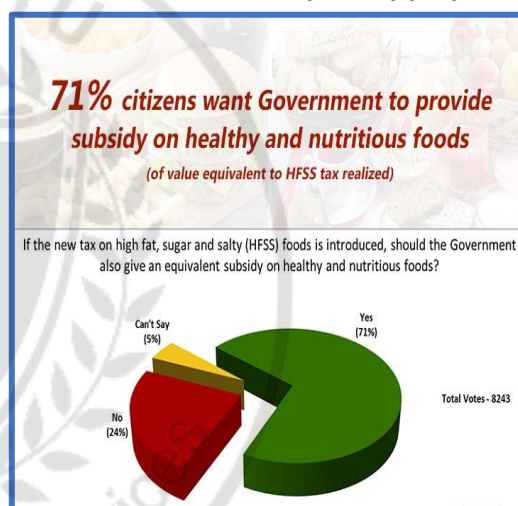


BENEFITS OF HFSS TAX:

- **Health Improvement:**
 - ✓ Taxing HFSS foods can **discourage their consumption**, leading to a potential reduction in the prevalence of **diet-related health issues** such as **obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**.
- **Encouraging Healthier Food Choices:**
 - ✓ A tax on HFSS foods can **incentivize both consumers and food manufacturers** to shift towards healthier food options.
 - ✓ It may promote the production and consumption of foods that are **lower in fat, sugar, and salt, contributing to an overall improvement in dietary habits**.
- **Reduced Healthcare Costs:**
 - ✓ By reducing the consumption of HFSS foods, the government may experience a **decrease in healthcare costs associated with treating diseases** related to poor dietary habits.
 - ✓ This can result in **long-term cost savings for the healthcare system**.
- **Addressing Childhood Obesity:**
 - ✓ Implementing a tax on HFSS foods can be particularly **beneficial in addressing the rising issue of childhood obesity**.
 - ✓ It can **discourage the consumption of unhealthy snacks and beverages among children**, promoting better long-term health outcomes.

KEY CONCERN AND CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF HFSS FOODS TAX:

- **Fiscal Tool, Not Just Revenue Generation:**
 - ✓ HFSS taxation differs from traditional **sin goods like tobacco and alcohol**, as its **primary purpose is not revenue generation**.
 - ✓ Instead, it serves as a **fiscal tool to incentivize the industry to reformulate products** in favour of healthier alternatives.
 - ✓ It also **encourages individuals to reorganize their food consumption patterns** toward a healthier diet.
- **Non-regressive and Fiscally Neutral Design:**
 - ✓ HFSS food taxes, if properly designed, **can be non-regressive and fiscally neutral**.
 - ✓ A study on South Africa's Health Promotion Levy **demonstrated larger relative reductions in purchases among lower socio-economic status households**, making such taxes non-regressive.
- **Differentiated Tax Rates Based on Nutritional Quality:**
 - ✓ Tax rates should be **differentiated based on the nutritional quality of the food**.
 - ✓ For instance, a **Goods and Services Tax (GST) system** can place HFSS foods in the highest rate **structure**, while healthier alternatives have either **zero or minimal tax rates**.
 - ✓ This ensures that the **overall tax burden on a household's food consumption basket remains constant**.
- **Creating a Level-playing Field:**
 - ✓ The proposed tax structure aims to **create a level-playing field between HFSS and healthier alternatives**, making the latter more affordable and accessible.
 - ✓ This approach **aligns with the goal of promoting healthier food choices** in the population.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Niti Aayog Explores Taxation to Combat Obesity (Source: Economics Times)

- **Proposal for Taxation:**
 - ✓ India, **grappling with a surge in obesity**, is considering impactful measures, **including the taxation of foods high in sugar, fat, and salt**.
 - ✓ This initiative is part of the comprehensive review outlined in the **annual report of Niti Aayog for the year 2021-22**.

➤ **Global Trend and Effectiveness:**

- ✓ Taxation of foods with **elevated levels of sugar, fat, and salt aligns with a global trend** where fiscal measures have proven **effective in reducing the consumption** of unhealthy products.
- ✓ This approach aims to deter the **purchase of such items while promoting healthier dietary choices.**

➤ **Front-of-the-Pack Labelling:**

- ✓ Alongside taxation, the report suggests the implementation of **front-of-the-pack labelling.**
- ✓ This involves providing **clear and prominent nutritional information** on packaging to empower consumers to make healthier choices.
- ✓ Such labelling is seen as a **crucial tool for raising awareness.**

➤ **Holistic Strategy:**

- ✓ Niti Aayog's approach involves a holistic review of available evidence, aiming to craft a well-informed strategy.
- ✓ The **goal is to explore interventions** that not only address the immediate concerns of obesity but also contribute to **long-term public health improvement.**



The working group has proposed comprehensive guidelines to regulate the sale of HFSS foods in school canteens and their vicinity: (Report – MoWCD 2015)

➤ **Ban on Sale:**

- ✓ A **complete ban on the sale of all HFSS foods in school canteens.**
- ✓ Private vendors and **street vendors are also prohibited from selling HFSS foods** during school timings (7 A.M to 4.00 P.M) within a **vicinity of 200 meters.**

➤ **Restrictions on Proprietary Foods:**

- ✓ Shops and restaurants selling **proprietary foods within a vicinity of 200 meters** of a school **are not permitted to sell** these foods to school children in uniform.

➤ **Color-Coded Categories for Non-Standardized Proprietary Foods:**

- ✓ Non-standardized proprietary foods in school canteens can be categorized based on a color-coded concept:
- ✓ **Green Category (Green Flag):**
 - Includes healthy options like **vegetables, legumes, fruits, whole grain foods, lean meat, eggs, fish, low-fat milk, soy drinks, and water.** Always on the menu.
- ✓ **Yellow Category (Yellow Flag):**
 - Includes carefully selected items like **baked vegetable-based snacks, ice creams, milk-based ices, dairy desserts, etc.**
- ✓ **Orange Category:**
 - Not recommended on the canteen menu, comprising confectionery items, **energy drinks, carbonated and sweetened beverages, fried foods, chocolates, potato fries, etc.**
 - Should not be sold in school canteens.

➤ **Oil Usage Restrictions:**

- ✓ The **use of hydrogenated oils** is entirely banned in school canteens, and the use of oils high in saturated fats should be limited.
- ✓ **Encouragement of blended oils and those high in monounsaturated fatty acid/polyunsaturated fatty acid oils** like mustard oil, rice bran oil, soya bean oil, sunflower oil, etc.

WAY FORWARD:

➤ **Aligning with Global Practices:**

- ✓ Many countries have successfully **implemented taxes on HFSS foods** as part of their **public health strategies.**

- ✓ Implementing a **similar tax in India aligns with global best practices** and allows the country to learn from the experiences of others.
- **Niti Aayog's Annual Report on Tackling Rising Obesity:**
 - ✓ India is **contemplating crucial measures to address** the growing **obesity crisis**, including the **possibility of taxing foods high in sugar, fat, and salt.**
 - ✓ According to the **annual report of Niti Aayog**, the government think-tank is meticulously **reviewing available evidence to understand effective actions** to combat the escalating rates of obesity in the population.
- **Public Health Imperative:**
 - ✓ HFSS taxation as a public health imperative, **not just an economic or fiscal concern.**
 - ✓ Designed taxes as **deterrents, promoters of healthier choices**, and inducers of product reformulation.
 - ✓ **Combining measures:** Promotion of **nutrition literacy, effective food labeling for a sustainable and equitable food system.**

CORE SECTORS INDUSTRIES

SOURCE: [THE ECONOMIC TIMES](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- ❖ *Output from **India's eight core sectors** expanded at a **six-month low pace of 7.8% in November**, compared to the **robust 12% recorded in October.***
- ❖ *The **Index of Core Industries (ICI)** witnessed a **decline of 3.34% from October levels**, reaching 150.3, marking its lowest point since **March 2023.***

ABOUT CORE SECTOR INDUSTRIES:

- **Overview:**
 - ✓ The Index of Core Industries (ICI) is a **crucial measure that tracks the production volume in eight fundamental sectors** of the Indian economy.
- **Core Industries Included:**
 - ✓ The eight core sectors are **Coal, Natural Gas, Crude Oil, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, and Electricity.**
- **Weightage in the Index:**
 - ✓ Each sector in the index is assigned a different weight, with **Refinery Products having the highest weight**, followed by Steel and Electricity.
 - ✓ Cement carries the lowest weight.
- **Economic Health Indicator:**
 - ✓ The ICI is a **reliable indicator of the health of the broader economy** because these industries are essential for its functioning.
 - ✓ **Slow growth** in these sectors often **indicates a broader economic slowdown.**
- **Interpretation of Data:**
 - ✓ **Examining the growth rates in individual sectors** provides insights into the overall economic performance.
 - ✓ For instance, **Refinery Products, being a heavyweight, significantly influences the index.**
- **Comparison and Trends:**
 - ✓ Comparing data with the previous year's performance helps **gauge the economy's trajectory.** Additionally, a focus on the **trend over the past months can reveal ongoing patterns and potential recovery from economic downturns.**



INDIA'S CORE INDUSTRIES PERFORMANCE - NOVEMBER 2023:

- **Overall Growth:**

- ✓ The **combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) increased by 7.8%** in November 2023 compared to the same month in 2022.

➤ **Cumulative Growth Rates:**

- ✓ Cumulative growth for April to November 2023-24 stands at 8.6%, with a **revision of the final growth rate for August 2023 to 13.4%**.

Sector-wise Performance:

➤ **Cement:**

- ✓ **Declined by 3.6%** in November 2023, with a cumulative **index increase of 10.3%** from April to November 2023-24.

➤ **Coal:**

- ✓ **Marked a 10.9% increase** in November 2023, contributing to a **cumulative index rise of 12.8% during April to November 2023-24.**

➤ **Crude Oil:**

- ✓ **Experienced a 0.4% decline** in November 2023, with a **cumulative index decrease of 0.2%** from April to November 2023-24.

➤ **Electricity:**

- ✓ **Grew by 5.6%** in November 2023, and the cumulative index showed a **7.7% increase during April to November 2023-24.**

➤ **Fertilizers:**

- ✓ **Registered a 3.4% increase** in November 2023, contributing to a cumulative index rise of **6.3% during April to November 2023-24.**

➤ **Natural Gas:**

- ✓ **Witnessed a 7.6% increase** in November 2023, with a **cumulative index rise of 5.4% during April to November 2023-24.**

➤ **Petroleum Refinery Products:**

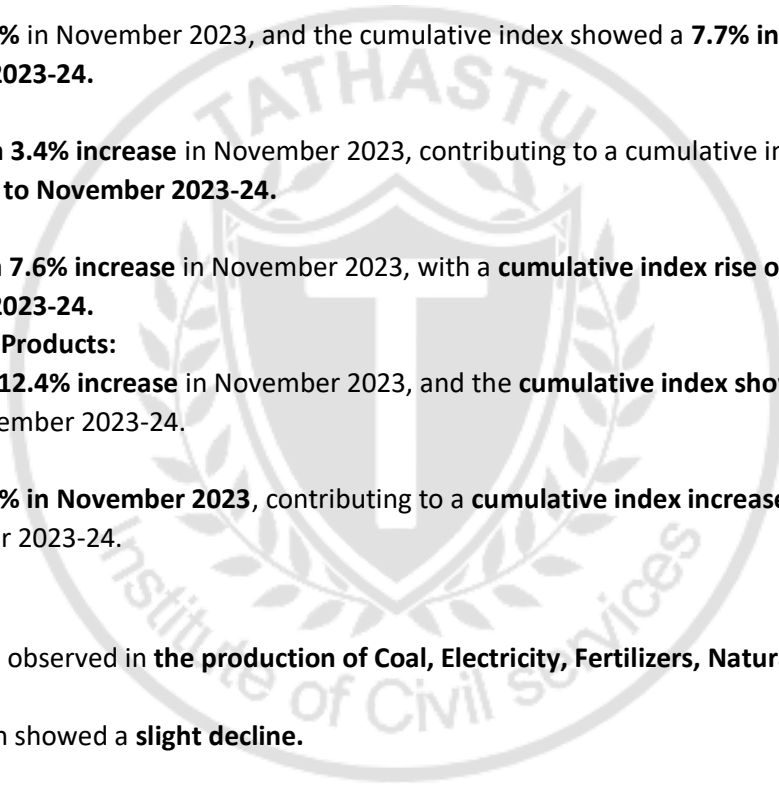
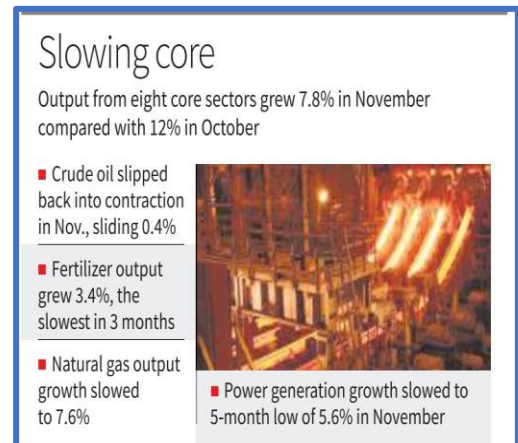
- ✓ **Recorded a 12.4% increase** in November 2023, and the **cumulative index showed a 5.0% rise** during April to November 2023-24.

➤ **Steel:**

- ✓ **Grew by 9.1% in November 2023**, contributing to a **cumulative index increase of 14.2%** during April to November 2023-24.

Growth Trends:

- **Positive growth** was observed in **the production of Coal, Electricity, Fertilizers, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, and Steel.**
- **Crude Oil** production showed a **slight decline.**



Environment & Geography

COP28 CLIMATE SUMMIT

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- **Overview:**
 - ✓ **Governments, business leaders, climate scientists, Indigenous Peoples, journalists, and experts from around 200 nations gather at COP28 in Dubai, occurring in the warmest year on record.**
- **Historic Climate Summit:**
 - ✓ **The COP28 climate summit in Dubai gains significance as it marks the first time in 28 years of climate change negotiations that the climate-health nexus takes center stage.**
- **Global Stocktake Significance:**
 - ✓ **COP28 initiates the Global Stocktake, a crucial assessment of progress in curbing global warming since the 2015 Paris Agreement.**
 - ✓ **The outcomes will guide future actions, policies, and international cooperation.**

2023 UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (COP28) OVERVIEW:

- **Conference Duration:**
 - ✓ The 2023 UN Climate Change Conference is scheduled to take place from **November 30 to December 12, 2023, in Dubai, UAE.**
- **Key Components:**
 - ✓ The conference encompasses several crucial meetings, **including the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28), the fifth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 5), and the 18th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 18).**
 - ✓ Additionally, it includes the **59th meetings of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 59) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 59).**
- **Presidency Designate:**
 - ✓ **Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber**, the Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and UAE Special Envoy for Climate Change, has been **appointed as the President-Designate for COP 28.**
- **Objectives of COP 28:**
 - ✓ The overarching goals of **COP 28 include driving global transformation towards a low-emission and climate-resilient world.**
 - ✓ The conference aims to **foster ambitious climate action and facilitate the effective implementation of climate-related initiatives**, with a focus on providing necessary support.
- **Global Collaboration:**
 - ✓ The conference provides a **platform for global collaboration**, bringing together nations, leaders, and experts to address climate challenges collectively.
- **Midpoint in 2030 Agenda:**
 - ✓ COP 28's significance is heightened as **it aligns with the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, reflecting on progress made toward sustainable development goals, including climate action.

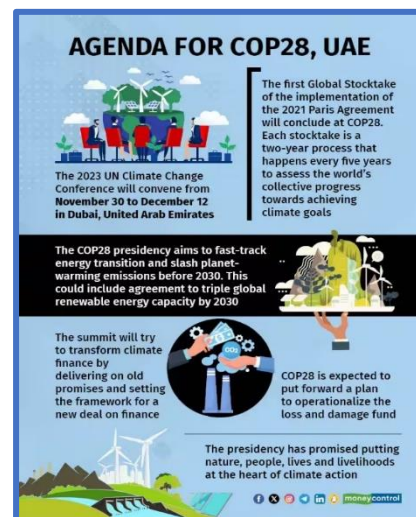


UNSG	UNFCCC Global Climate Action	LGMA	COP28 Presidency & BP	Others
UN Climate Ambition Summit	High Level Champions/ Marrakech Partnership	COP28 Position	2 Dec, Local Action Summit	NDCP Dialogue
Accountability Checklist	• Breakthrough/Adaptation Agenda • Race-To-Zero/Resilience • Thematic Pathways • Solutions Pathways	COP/58/ Intersessional Statements	6 Dec, Multilevel Action, Urbanization and Built Environment/Transport Day	UNH/UNDP/SOU
Regional Climate Weeks	Regional Climate Weeks	Multilevel Action Pavilion	COP28 Presidency Teams on Subnationals, HLC, Youth and Mayor Abigail Binay at COP28 Advisory Committee	NDC Urban Component
Track2		Stocktake4ClimateEmergency		G7 Subnational Roundtable with U7
				Regional Urban Forums
				National/Regional/Global Urban and Subnational Initiatives
SURGe/Urban-Climate Ministerial - UNFCCC Friends of Multilevel Action				

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COP28: INITIAL REPORT

- **Adoption of Agenda and Early Decisions:**

- ✓ **Successful adoption of the agenda**, early decisions on **loss and damage**, and immediate fund capitalization set the stage for collaborative action.
- **Sectoral Commitments to Reduce Emissions:**
 - ✓ Countries pledged **new sectoral commitments**, addressing **methane, non-CO₂ gases, and coal**, aligning with **IPCC Sixth Assessment Report**.
- **Global Stocktake (GST) Progress:**
 - ✓ Call for an **ambitious GST decision beyond COP28**, with leaders contributing to assessing global climate goals in **high-level GST events**.
- **Global Goal for Adaptation:**
 - ✓ Leaders highlighted the need for an impactful Global Goal for Adaptation, **prioritizing adaptation focus alongside mitigation efforts**.
- **Climate Finance Prioritization:**
 - ✓ Emphasis on making climate finance **more available, accessible, and affordable**, recognizing its crucial role in meeting Paris Agreement goals.
- **New Climate Finance Framework:**
 - ✓ COP28 UAE Declaration outlined **10 principles for a Global Climate Finance Framework**, transforming the architecture for an equitable transition.
- **Global Decarbonization Accelerator (GDA):**
 - ✓ Comprehensive **COP28 energy package launch**, including GDA, with **strong commitments** for a just and equitable energy transition.
- **Private Sector Engagement:**
 - ✓ Leaders focused on **unlocking private sector potential**, announcing bold steps and incentives, including the **\$30BN ALTERRA climate fund by the UAE**.
- **Sustainable Agriculture and Climate-Health Declarations:**
 - ✓ **137 countries committed to food systems transformation**, and **125 endorsed the COP28 UAE Declaration on Climate and Health**, with **\$1BN for solutions**.
- **Nature and Biodiversity Protection:**
 - ✓ **Increased political will for climate action on nature and biodiversity**, with landmark investment plans from forest-rich and ocean-rich countries.
- **Business and Philanthropy Engagement:**
 - ✓ **Over 850 businesses and philanthropies announced \$5BN** in new funding to accelerate the climate transition, demonstrating strong private sector support.
- **Continued Collaboration and Momentum:**
 - ✓ Outcomes built on **Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action**, setting the direction for **continued collaboration toward COP28 in Dubai**.
- **Multilateral Unity for 1.5°C:**
 - ✓ COP28 Presidency committed to transparency and inclusivity, building on momentum for a successful outcome in Dubai and **upholding multilateral unity for the 1.5°C goal**.



India's Stance at COP28:

- **COP33 Hosting Offer:**
 - ✓ PM Modi **proposes India to host COP33 in 2028**, urging developed nations to **vacate carbon space before 2050**.
 - ✓ Approval from **UNFCCC signatories** is required for **India's second hosting**, the first being in 2002.
- **Green Credit Initiative:**
 - ✓ Introduces India's "**Green Credit initiative**" as a **non-commercial effort to create a carbon sink**.



- ✓ Aims to **incentivize voluntary environmental actions**, generating credits for plantations on **waste lands**.
- **Reiteration of COP-26 Commitments:**
 - ✓ Reiterates **India's commitments from COP-26**, including **reducing emissions intensity and achieving net-zero by 2070**.
- **Approval of Loss and Damage Fund:**
 - ✓ Welcomes COP-28's approval of the **Loss and Damage Fund with over \$500 million** in financial commitments.
- **Appreciation for UAE's Climate Investment Fund:**
 - ✓ Appreciates the **UAE's \$30 billion Climate Investment Fund**.
- **Call for New Climate Finance Target:**
 - ✓ Calls for finalizing a **new target on climate finance (NCQG)** and emphasizes **developed nations' commitments to the Green Climate Fund (GCF)** and Adaptation Fund.
- **Elimination of Carbon Footprint by 2050:**
 - ✓ Urges developed countries to commit to **carbon footprint elimination by 2050**.

WAY FORWARD: ANTICIPATION OF COP28:

- **Assessment and Reporting:**
 - ✓ Decision to assess progress **every five years, starting in 2023**, to ensure **accountability**.
 - ✓ **Paris Agreement goals:** Limit global warming to **below 2 degrees Celsius**, with efforts to stay **below 1.5 degrees Celsius**.
- **First Global Stocktake (GST) Results:**
 - ✓ UN publishes a **technical report in September 2023** on the **initial GST findings**.
 - ✓ Acknowledgment of global efforts but **emphasis on the need for accelerated implementation across all sectors**.
- **Climate Crisis Response:**
 - ✓ Emphasis on the **urgency to respond to the climate crisis** and the **importance of collective action**.
- **Average Global Temperature Increase:**
 - ✓ Noting the alarming rise in the **average global temperature by almost 1.2 degrees Celsius** since **pre-industrial times**.
- **Accelerating Implementation:**
 - ✓ Expectation for COP28 to **address the need for accelerated implementation of climate goals**.
- **Ambition Increase Across All Fronts:**
 - ✓ Anticipation of discussions focusing on **increasing ambition across various sectors and regions**.
- **Inclusive All-of-Society Approach:**
 - ✓ Emphasis on the importance of an **all-of-society approach**, considering the **diverse range of stakeholders**.
- **Bridge Existing Gaps:**
 - ✓ Look forward to **proposals and initiatives that bridge existing gaps** and drive progress.

PLASTIC FREE WORLD- UNEP

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *The **Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)**, operating under **the United Nations Environment Programme**, recently convened in **Nairobi for its third round of negotiations** aimed at crafting an international **legally binding instrument to combat plastic pollution globally**.*
- *The INC, mandated by UN Environment Assembly Resolution 5/14, seeks to deliver a **global plastics treaty by 2025**.*
- *Unlike the preceding round (INC-2), INC-3 moved beyond procedural debates, **focusing on the substantive contents of the proposed treaty**.*

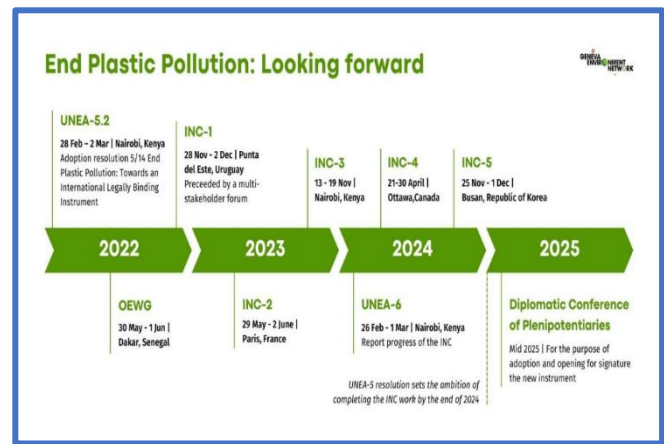
INC AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE GLOBAL PLASTIC TREATY:

➤ Formation and Purpose:

- ✓ UNEA established in 2012 for global environmental governance.
- ✓ INC, led by UN member states, tasked with negotiating a global treaty on plastic pollution.

➤ UNEA Meetings and Resolutions:

- ✓ UNEA meetings every two years to set global environmental priorities.
- ✓ **Plastics discussed since 2014**, focusing on downstream issues.
- ✓ UNEA 5.2 resolution marked a milestone, calling for a **legally binding instrument to "End Plastic Pollution."**



➤ Evolution of the Idea:

- ✓ UNEA-3 (2017) established an expert group on marine litter.
- ✓ **India's call for a global single-use plastic ban at UNEA 4 in 2019.**
- ✓ UNEA 5.2 adopted a historic resolution to address plastic pollution comprehensively.

➤ Establishment of OEWG and INC:

- ✓ UNEA 5.2 resolution called for **OEWG and INC formation.**
- ✓ **OEWG met in 2022**, laying the groundwork for INC meetings.

➤ Fast-Tracked Timeline:

- ✓ INC meetings held four times over two years to finalize the treaty text.
- ✓ **INC-5 in 2025 to decide on ratification**, potentially making it the fastest-developed text for an environmental treaty.

KEY POINTS FROM INC-3 MEETINGS:

➤ Treaty Modifications:

- ✓ INC-3 focused on **developing a global plastics treaty to combat pollution**, following UN Environment Assembly Resolution 5/14.
- ✓ **Negotiations centered around the 'zero draft' text**, with discussions on core obligations and control measures.

➤ Controversial Treaty Elements:

- ✓ Disagreements among member states **included core obligations on primary polymer production, chemicals, plastics, trade, and financial mechanisms.**
- ✓ Divergence on the treaty's objective and scope, with a group advocating for **alignment with sustainable development goals.**

➤ Industry Influence and Production Reduction:

- ✓ **Industry influence** was evident, with **increased lobbyists at INC-3.**
- ✓ **Controversy over reducing primary polymer production** due to implications for the industry.

➤ Financial Mechanism and Trade Restrictions:

- ✓ **Financial mechanisms proposed in the zero draft** faced opposition from like-minded countries.
- ✓ **Disagreements on trade restrictions**, with the bloc contending it infringes on national sovereignty.

➤ Stalling and Setbacks:

- ✓ Stalling in discussions led to **a failure to adopt the mandate for the first draft.**
- ✓ The closed-door meeting on intersessional work resulted in **no consensus, causing a setback before INC-4.**

UNDERSTANDING OF PLASTIC POLLUTION:

➤ Definition of Plastic Pollution:

- ✓ Plastic, a **synthetic organic polymer** derived from **petroleum**, finds wide applications in various fields.
- ✓ **Non-biodegradable**, it persists in the environment for hundreds or even thousands of years.

➤ Causes of Plastic Pollution:

- ✓ Plastic pollution results from the **accumulation of plastic waste in the environment.**
- ✓ Primary plastic wastes include items like **cigarette butts and bottle caps.**

➤ **Types of Plastic Wastes:**

- ✓ Primary plastics, like cigarette butts and bottle caps, contribute to plastic pollution.
- ✓ Secondary plastics form through the **degradation of primary ones over time.**

➤ **Scale of Plastic Production and Waste:**

- ✓ The **UN reports** an annual **global plastic production exceeding 300 million tons.**
- ✓ **India generates 46 million tonnes** of plastic waste **each year**, with **40% remaining uncollected.**



➤ **Usage and Impact of Plastic:**

- ✓ **About 43% of India's plastic waste** is utilized for packaging, mainly single-use plastic.
- ✓ Plastic pollution poses environmental challenges **due to its non-biodegradable nature.**

➤ **Unexpected Presence:**

- ✓ Mariana Trench and Mt. Everest both **host plastic debris despite their remote locations.**
- ✓ Plastics, **comprising 85% of marine waste**, are a pervasive and harmful fraction of marine litter.

➤ **Widespread Marine Litter:**

- ✓ **Marine litter**, escalating **along coastlines, mid-ocean currents**, and remote islands, poses a threat.
- ✓ From polar regions to deep-sea trenches, **plastics harm marine life and ecosystems.**

➤ **Decades of Plastic Infiltration:**

- ✓ **Over 70 years**, plastic, **versatile yet pervasive**, infiltrated every corner of the planet.
- ✓ Unnecessary **single-use plastics contribute to unmanaged waste**, impacting lakes, rivers, and coastal areas.

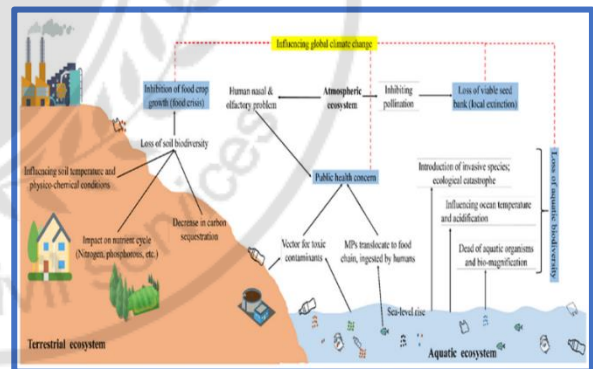
IMPACT OF PLASTIC POLLUTION:

➤ **Environmental Degradation:**

- ✓ Plastics, **non-biodegradable** and persisting for centuries, **cause environmental degradation.**
- ✓ Marine litter and adverse effects of plastic pollution **span from ecosystems to human health.**

➤ **Harm to Marine Life:**

- ✓ Plastics **break down into microplastics**, posing physical and **chemical harm to marine life.**
- ✓ Sea turtles, seabirds, and marine mammals suffer, mistaking plastics for food or getting trapped.



➤ **Human Health Risks:**

- ✓ **Microplastics' pervasiveness** raises concerns about human health risks **through inhalation, ingestion, and absorption.**
- ✓ Chemicals in plastics, like **methyl mercury and flame retardants**, are linked to health issues.

➤ **Inequality in Impact:**

- ✓ **Wealthier countries producing more plastic** disproportionately affect less developed nations.
- ✓ Recycling efforts are hindered by the global plastic **recycling rate being below 10%.**

➤ **Social and Economic Consequences:**

- ✓ Developing countries, **lacking support and funds**, face intensified environmental, health, and social burdens.
- ✓ **Women, children, waste workers, coastal communities**, and Indigenous Peoples suffer more intensely.

➤ **Loss of Marine Ecosystem Services:**

- ✓ Marine plastics pollution reduces **valuable ecosystem services by at least US\$500 billion to US\$2,500 billion** annually.
- ✓ Direct economic losses to coastal industries are significant, impacting fisheries and shipping.
- **Climate Change Connection:**
 - ✓ Plastic production intensifies the climate crisis as it is predominantly derived from fossil fuels.
 - ✓ Greenhouse gas emissions from plastic's lifecycle could **contribute to 19% of the Paris Agreement's total allowable emissions by 2040.**

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AGAINST PLASTIC POLLUTION:

- **"Clean and Green" Campaign (June 2022):**
 - ✓ The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs **launched a nationwide awareness campaign to discourage single-use plastics** and promote environmental improvement.
- **Plastic Waste Management Rules (2022):**
 - ✓ The Union Environment Ministry introduced rules, including the phase-out of some single-use plastics and **an increase in plastic carry bag thickness to combat plastic pollution.**
- **India Plastic Pact:**
 - ✓ Collaboration between corporations, governments, and NGOs under the **India Plastic Pact aims to transform India's linear plastics economy** into a circular one, reducing problematic plastics and creating job opportunities.
- **Targets by 2030:**
 - ✓ The Union Environment Minister introduced initiatives, including a **National Dashboard, Extended Producer Responsibility Portal**, a grievance redress app, and a **monitoring module for Single-Use Plastic (SUP) elimination** and plastic waste management.
- **Innovative Solutions by MSME and Education Sector:**
 - ✓ **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) patented plastic-mixed handmade paper** as part of Project REPLAN, reducing plastic waste.
 - ✓ Thiagarajar College of Engineering secured a patent for **plastone blocks and tiles made from recycled plastics**, offering sustainable alternatives in construction.



WAY FORWARD:

- **Strengthened Waste Management:**
 - ✓ Invest in robust waste management systems **globally to collect, recycle, and reuse plastic effectively.**
- **Circular Economy Practices:**
 - ✓ Promote **sustainable consumption and production** across the plastic value chain, encouraging the use of recycled materials.
- **Consumer Education and Engagement:**
 - ✓ **Launch awareness campaigns to educate consumers** about the environmental impact of plastic pollution and inspire responsible choices.
- **Phasing Out Problematic Plastics:**
 - ✓ Implement **measures to gradually eliminate unnecessary** and problematic **single-use plastics**, encouraging alternatives.
- **Effective Monitoring and Governance:**
 - ✓ Establish rigorous monitoring systems to **track plastic sources, quantities, and environmental fate.**
 - ✓ Strengthen and **enforce governance and regulations** at all levels for effective plastic pollution management.
- **Global Collaboration and Agreements:**
 - ✓ Actively **participate in global agreements** and conventions related to marine pollution, climate change, and sustainable ocean use.

- ✓ Foster international collaboration to address the global nature of plastic pollution and share best practices.

DRAFT CLIMATE DEAL FAILS TO 'PHASE OUT' FOSSIL FUEL

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- **Ongoing Climate Talks in Dubai:**
 - ✓ The subject is under **discussion at the COP-28 climatetalks in Dubai.**
 - ✓ Global attention on **potential agreements and shifts in climate policies.**
- **Anticipation of Fossil Fuel Phase-Out:**
 - ✓ Expectations that negotiators might agree to a **'phaseout' of fossil fuels**, creating anticipation.
- **Changes in the Latest Draft:**
 - ✓ The latest publicly **available draft eliminates the phrase 'phase out.'**
 - ✓ Introduces stronger language **against coal but with potential objections from major consumers.**



COP28 FOSSIL FUEL LANGUAGE DEBATE: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Expectations vs. Edits:**
 - ✓ Anticipated fossil fuel "phase-out" in Dubai's climatetalks.
 - ✓ Recent draft **omits the term but accentuates action against coal.**
- **Coal Emphasis:**
 - ✓ Strong recommendation for **"rapidly phasing down unabated coal."**
 - ✓ Potential objections from **major coal consumers like India, Indonesia, and China.**
- **Fossil Fuel Reduction Targets:**
 - ✓ Call to **"reduce both consumption and production" for net zero by 2050.**
 - ✓ Aligned with climate science to **cap temperature increase below 1.5°C.**
- **Emission Landscape:**
 - ✓ Fossil fuels **contribute 80% of greenhouse gas emissions.**
 - ✓ **Coal constitutes about 40%**, with oil and gas making up the rest.
- **Changes in Global Stock take Text:**
 - ✓ Shift from **explicit phase-out language** to a vague commitment.
 - ✓ Criticism for yielding to fossil fuel industry influence.
- **Call for Transformation:**
 - ✓ Acknowledgment of a pivotal moment at COP, marking change.
 - ✓ Commencement of **the end for the fossil fuel era**, navigating diverse national interests.



IMPACT OF FOSSIL FUEL PHASE OUT:

- **Petrostate Venue Influence:**
 - ✓ Observers note the **impact of hosting in an oil-producing nation.** Significance as the **first COP including "fossil fuel"** in the draft.
- **Compromise and Progression:**
 - ✓ Viewed as **compromise amid opposing nations like Saudi Arabia.** Initial step toward concluding the fossil fuel era.
 - ✓ **May not satisfy the demands of over 100 countries** calling for such action.
- **Lobbying's Global Impact:**
 - ✓ Perception of fossil fuel industry **lobbying influencing policies.** Raises questions about **favouring prolonged fossil fuel use.**
- **Green House Gas Emissions:**

- ✓ **Carbon Dioxide (CO₂):**
 - Burning fossil fuels is the **largest single source of global CO₂ emissions**.
 - CO₂ is **amajor greenhouse gas that contributes** to the warming of the Earth's atmosphere.
- ✓ **Methane (CH₄) and Nitrous Oxide (N₂O):**
 - Fossil fuel extraction, **processing, and combustion also release methane and nitrous oxide**, both potent greenhouse gases with a much higher warming potential than CO₂.
- **Global Warming:**
 - ✓ The accumulation of greenhouse gases in the **atmosphere traps heat**, leading to global warming.
 - ✓ This **warming contributes to climate change**, resulting in **shifts in weather patterns**, more frequent and severe **heatwaves, and rising global temperatures**.
- **Sea Level Rise:**
 - ✓ The warming of the planet causes thermal **expansion of seawater and the melting of glaciers and polar icecaps**.
 - ✓ This results in **rising sea levels, which pose a threat to coastal communities and ecosystems**.
- **Extreme Weather Events:**
 - ✓ **Increased concentrations of greenhouse gases intensify extreme weather events**, including hurricanes, **droughts, floods, and wildfires**.
 - ✓ These events have **devastating impacts on communities, agriculture, and ecosystems**.

REASONS AND CHALLENGES:

- **Concerns and Reality Check:**
 - ✓ Critics express disappointment in regression from explicit phase-out language.
 - ✓ **Challenges in emission reduction** amid yearly increases.
- **Influences:**
 - ✓ The influence of a petrostate hosting the conference, as well as **lobbying from fossil fuel industries**, is cited as a **factor influencing the wording of the text**.
 - ✓ While the draft recognizes the **need for reductions in fossil fuel consumption and production**, the **absence of a clear phase-out commitment** poses a challenge to achieving **substantial progress** in combating climate change.
- **Deadlock in Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) Track:**
 - ✓ **GGA Significance:** Parallel track to GST, seeking adaptation **goals equivalent to the 1.5-degree target**.
 - ✓ **Stalemate:** Deadlocked **negotiations persist**.
 - ✓ **Developing Countries' Demand:** Emphasize a **'global goal' on adaptation similar to other climate targets**.
- **Challenges in GGA Draft:**
 - ✓ **Draft Contents:** Identifies global **adaptation objectives, emphasizing climate-resilient food production** and addressing water scarcity.
 - ✓ **Lack of Provision:** **Absence of financial commitments** raises concerns for developing nations.
 - ✓ **Differentiation**
 - ✓ **Concerns:** Developing countries highlight **insufficient differentiation in responsibilities** between developed and developing nations.



WAY FORWARD:

- Despite criticism, some view the **draft as laying the groundwork for change**, marking the first time the term **"fossil fuel"** is included in the **draft decision**.
- The ongoing negotiations will **need to address concerns raised by various countries and strive to find common ground** to finalize an **agreement that reflects the urgency of addressing climate change**.
- Observers stress the **importance of maintaining high ambitions**, especially in the context of fossil fuel language, **to secure a strong and effective outcome from COP28**.

- ✓ This hypothesis, though requiring testing, **holds undeniable potential** for forecast improvement.
- **Model Resolution and Computational Cost:**
 - ✓ Contrary to expectations, findings propose that **increased model resolution and computational cost may not be crucial** for enhanced forecasts.
 - ✓ Emphasizes the **need to focus on understanding the dynamics of synchronization** for forecast improvements.
- **Reducing Risks Across Scales:**
 - ✓ The study points towards the **potential of mitigating risks at smaller scales**, benefiting agriculture, **water resources, energy, transportation, and health**.
 - ✓ India, with **robust modelling capacity and computational resources**, stands well-positioned to leverage this potential.

IMPACT OF HOTTEST SUMMER OVER ARCTIC

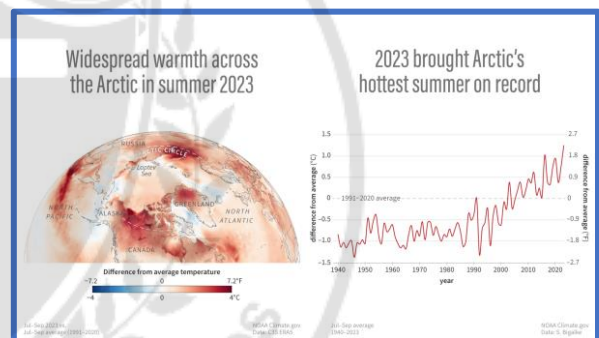
SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- **Summer air temperatures in the Arctic were the highest ever recorded this year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) revealed in its annual report on the region.**
- **It was the sixth-warmest year ever in the Arctic overall, as climate change raised temperatures globally.**
- **Sea ice levels also declined at record rates, with a domino effect impacting fisheries throughout Alaska and northern Canada.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT:

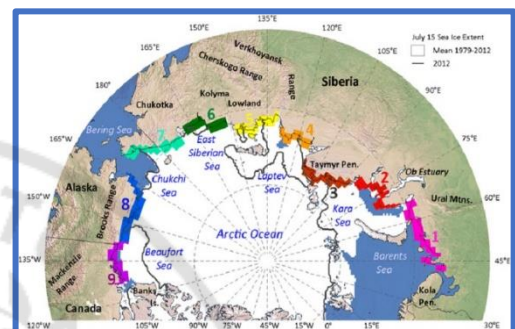
- **Record High Summer Temperatures:**
 - ✓ The report reveals that summer air temperatures in the Arctic reached **the highest levels ever recorded.**
 - ✓ **Average temperatures of 43 degrees**, with some areas **exceeding 7.2 degrees above the 1991-2020 average**, signify a remarkable warming trend.
- **Sixth-Warmest Year Overall:**
 - ✓ The Arctic experienced **its sixth-warmest year**, contributing to global concerns about the acceleration of climate change.
 - ✓ The ranking underscores the **ongoing and escalating impact of climate change** in polar regions.
- **Sea Ice Decline at Record Rates:**
 - ✓ Record rates of **decline in sea ice levels** are a significant concern, **impacting ecosystems and fisheries in Alaska and northern Canada.**
 - ✓ The **domino effect of sea ice loss** highlights the interconnectedness of Arctic environmental changes.
- **Worst Wildfire Season in Canada:**
 - ✓ The report highlights the **historic and devastating wildfire season in Canada**, with wildfires raging from the Arctic to the U.S. border.
 - ✓ Rising temperatures and dry conditions have created a **conductive environment for wildfires**, posing threats to ecosystems and communities.
- **Sea Surface Temperatures and Ecosystem Threats:**
 - ✓ **Above-average sea surface temperatures**, up to **13 degrees above normal levels**, pose risks to ocean ecosystems.
 - ✓ The potential for phytoplankton blooms, as indicated in the report, raises concerns about the overall health of Arctic marine environments.
- **Continued Ice Sheet Decline:**



- ✓ The report emphasizes the continued **decline of ice sheets**, with the **17 lowest events occurring in the last 17 consecutive years**.
- ✓ The shrinking ice sheets, **the sixth-smallest on record in 2023**, highlight the ongoing impact of **warming temperatures on polar ice**.
- **Confirmation of Irreversible Ice Loss:**
 - ✓ The report aligns with a June study suggesting that **summer Arctic Sea ice is irreversibly melting due to consistent warming**.
 - ✓ The prediction of "**practically**" **ice-free Arctic summers** by the middle of the century intensifies concerns about the pace of climate change.
- **Call to Urgent Action:**
 - ✓ NOAA administrator Rick Spinrad emphasizes the report's **overarching message that the time for action is now**.
 - ✓ **Urgent calls to reduce greenhouse gas emissions** underscore the need for immediate global efforts to address climate change.

THE ARCTIC: EARTH'S NORTHERN POLAR REGION

- **Geographical Overview:**
 - ✓ The Arctic stands as a **polar region situated at the Earth's northernmost point**, with the North Pole at its center.



Key characteristics and components include:

- **Geographical Composition:**
 - ✓ Encompassing **the Arctic Ocean, adjacent seas, and territories belonging to Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States**.
 - ✓ Notable countries within the Arctic region contribute to its **unique environmental and geopolitical dynamics**.
- **Arctic Circle Boundary:**
 - ✓ Scientifically defined by the Arctic Circle, marking a **latitude approximately 66.5° north** of the equator.
 - ✓ This demarcation delineates the area considered part of the Arctic by researchers and experts.

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA):

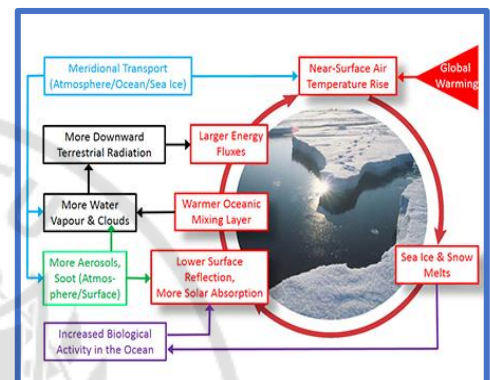
- **Mission and Scope:**
 - ✓ The NOAA, a **scientific agency operating within the United States Department of Commerce**, holds a comprehensive mission and scope:
- **Scientific Focus:**
 - ✓ Primarily focused on the **study and reporting of Earth's ocean, atmosphere, and coastal regions**.
 - ✓ Aims to enhance understanding and **prediction capabilities related to climate, weather, oceanic conditions, and coastal phenomena**.
- **Knowledge Dissemination:**
 - ✓ The agency prioritizes the **dissemination of acquired knowledge to diverse stakeholders**, fostering informed decision-making globally.
 - ✓ Through research and **communication, NOAA contributes to public awareness** and education on environmental matters.
- **Ecosystem Conservation:**
 - ✓ NOAA is dedicated to **conserving and managing coastal and marine ecosystems** and resources.
 - ✓ The agency plays a vital role in promoting sustainable practices and environmental stewardship.
- **Public Safety and Commerce:**



- ✓ **Supporting public safety by providing accurate and timely weather forecasts**, storm warnings, and other critical information.
- ✓ **Enabling sustainable commerce through data-driven insights** into oceanic and atmospheric conditions, benefiting various industries.
- **Exploration and Discovery:**
 - ✓ Embracing a **commitment to exploring the unknown**, NOAA engages in scientific exploration and discovery initiatives.
 - ✓ This **includes ventures into uncharted territories** and advancing knowledge about Earth's diverse environments.
- **Operational Base:**
 - ✓ The National Headquarters of NOAA is situated in **Silver Spring, Maryland**.
 - ✓ From this central location, NOAA coordinates and **executes its multifaceted mission**, contributing **significantly to global scientific endeavours and environmental stewardship**.

CONSEQUENCES OF RISING ARCTIC TEMPERATURES:

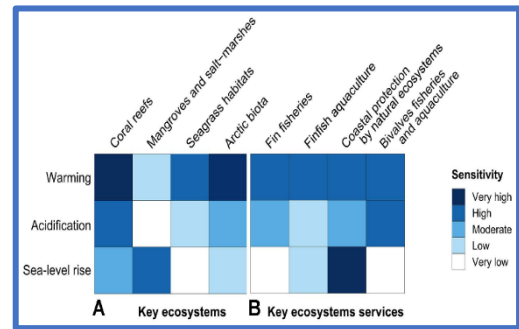
- **Thawing of Subsea Permafrost:**
 - ✓ **Subsea permafrost**, frozen soil beneath the seabed, **contains organic matter**.
 - ✓ **Gradual thawing, accelerated by warmer ocean temperatures**, releases **methane and carbon dioxide**, contributing to global warming and ocean acidification.
 - ✓ Lack of research hinders estimation of **future greenhouse gas release and its impact on global warming**.
- **Food Insecurity:**
 - ✓ Climate change **impacts freshwater bodies and marine ecosystems**, leading to extremely low numbers of Chinook and chum salmon in Western Alaska.
 - ✓ Fishery closures, **conflicts, and reduced adult salmon size** affect Indigenous communities dependent on salmon for food.
 - ✓ Divergent impacts observed as **Chinook and chum salmon decline**, while sockeye salmon increase in number.
- **Raging Wildfires:**
 - ✓ **Canada, with 40% of its land considered Arctic and Northern**, faces severe **wildfires, marking its worst season** with fires burning over 10 million acres in the Northwest Territories.
 - ✓ High temperatures, dried vegetation, and **below-average rainfall create optimal conditions for wildfires**.
 - ✓ Extensive evacuations and **widespread smoke impact air quality**, reaching as far as the southern United States.
- **Severe Flooding:**
 - ✓ Rising temperatures cause the dramatic thinning of the **Mendenhall Glacier in Alaska over 20 years**.
 - ✓ Meltwater leads to annual floods, with a significant disaster in August 2023 as a **glacial lake burst through its ice dam**, causing unprecedented flooding and property damage in Juneau.
- **Greenland Ice Sheet Melting:**
 - ✓ Greenland's ice sheet **experiences melting at its highest point for the fifth time in the 34-year record**.
 - ✓ Despite above-average winter snow accumulation, the **ice sheet loses approximately 350 trillion pounds** of mass between August 2022 and September 2023.
 - ✓ Greenland's ice sheet melting stands as the **second-largest contributor to sea-level rise**, emphasizing its **significant impact on global climate dynamics**.



ADDRESSING CONSEQUENCES OF RISING ARCTIC TEMPERATURES:

- **International Collaboration:**
 - ✓ Strengthen **international cooperation to address climate change**, acknowledging the global impact of Arctic warming.

- ✓ Formulate and **implement agreements for sustainable practices**, emissions reduction, and protection of Arctic ecosystems.
- **Scientific Research and Monitoring:**
 - ✓ **Invest in comprehensive scientific research** to understand and monitor the **dynamics of subsea permafrost thawing, greenhouse gas release**, and their implications.
 - ✓ Support ongoing studies on Arctic ecosystems, **fisheries, and glaciers to inform adaptive strategies.**
- **Climate-Resilient Fisheries Management:**
 - ✓ Develop adaptive fisheries **management strategies to address the impact of temperature changes** on fish populations.
 - ✓ Collaborate with Indigenous communities to integrate traditional knowledge into fisheries management for sustainable practices.
- **Wildfire Prevention and Management:**
 - ✓ Implement proactive **measures for wildfire prevention, including early detection systems** and community awareness.
 - ✓ Establish efficient wildfire management plans, resource allocation, and **international cooperation for firefighting efforts.**
- **Glacial Monitoring and Hazard Mitigation:**
 - ✓ Intensify monitoring of glaciers to predict and **mitigate glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs).**
 - ✓ Implement measures for **hazard mitigation, such as constructing dams or early warning systems**, to protect communities from severe flooding events.
- **Greenland Ice Sheet Conservation:**
 - ✓ Support initiatives to **conserve the Greenland ice sheet**, considering its significant contribution to sea-level rise.
 - ✓ **Advocate for global efforts to reduce carbon emissions** and limit the factors contributing to ice sheet melting.
- **Adaptation Strategies for Indigenous Communities:**
 - ✓ Develop community-specific adaptation strategies for **Indigenous populations reliant on Arctic ecosystems.**
 - ✓ Ensure inclusivity in decision-making processes, **incorporating Indigenous knowledge** and addressing the unique challenges faced by these communities.
- **Global Commitment to Emission Reduction:**
 - ✓ Advocate for and adhere to global commitments to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions (i.e. ongoing COP28).**
 - ✓ Encourage the adoption of renewable energy sources and **sustainable practices on a global scale.**
- **Policy Interventions:**
 - ✓ Implement and strengthen policies that **prioritize climate resilience**, sustainable development, and conservation efforts in Arctic regions.
 - ✓ Advocate for policies that **address the root causes of climate change** and **promote environmental sustainability.**



HOW AN AI TOOL CAN MAKE WEATHER FORECASTS MORE ACCURATE

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

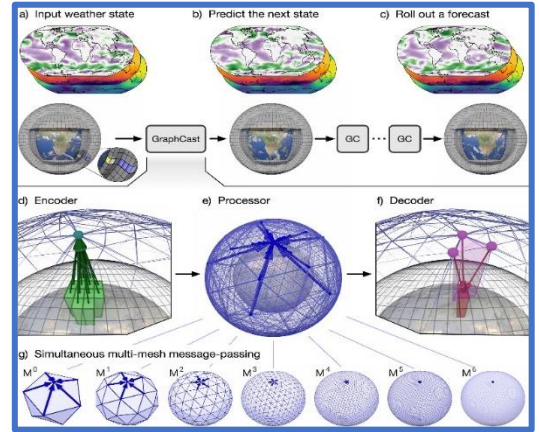
WHY IN NEWS?

- **The introduction of Watsonx.ai was announced at COP28**, a significant **global platform addressing climate change.**
- **Highlighting the collaboration between IBM and NASA**, the tool **aims to contribute to climate change mitigation through advanced AI.**

- *Watsonx.ai* represents an innovative **approach to weather forecasting**, utilizing AI to **interpret satellite imagery** and predict environmental changes.
- The model's ability to enhance mapping accuracy and reduce data requirements is a **notable advancement in the field of climate science**.

AI AND WEATHER FORECASTING:

- **Understanding Artificial Intelligence (AI):**
 - ✓ AI, or artificial intelligence, is the field of creating intelligent systems **capable of tasks that typically require human-like intelligence**.
 - ✓ It encompasses various approaches, with **machine learning being a significant subset relevant to weather forecasting**.
- **AI and Weather Forecasting:**
 - ✓ **Improvements in Weather Prediction:**
 - AI, particularly machine learning, has significantly contributed to **improving weather prediction accuracy over the years**.
 - Today's **six-day forecasts are as accurate as five-day forecasts a decade ago**.
- **Role of Technology:**
 - ✓ **Advances in atmosphere and ocean technology**, coupled with **high-computing power**, have played a crucial role in enhancing weather models.
 - ✓ These models rely on massive computing simulations interpreting extensive climate data sets.



Revolutionizing Weather Prediction with AI:

- **Record Number of Extreme Weather Events:**
 - ✓ This year **witnessed a surge in unpredictable extreme weather** events exacerbated by climate change, emphasizing the need for **faster and more accurate weather predictions** to enhance disaster preparedness.
- **Introduction of Watsonx.ai by NASA and IBM:**
 - ✓ **COP28 Announcement:**
 - The collaboration between NASA and IBM on **Watsonx.ai** was announced at **COP28**, emphasizing its importance in climate change efforts.
 - ✓ **AI for Earth Monitoring:**
 - Watsonx.ai, an AI tool, is designed to monitor **Earth from space**, utilizing **NASA's data trove and IBM's AI technology**.
 - It aims to **measure environmental changes and make predictions** about future events.
- **GraphCast AI Model by Google DeepMind:**
 - ✓ Google **DeepMind** introduces **GraphCast**, an AI model capable of predicting weather conditions up to 10 days in advance.
 - ✓ In a groundbreaking study published in *Science*, **GraphCast outperformed the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)** model in **over 90% of more than 1,300 test areas**.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS AI FOR WEATHER FORECASTING?

AI has played a crucial role in **advancing weather forecasting by addressing key challenges** related to data interpretation and analysis. Here are **some ways in which AI**, specifically models like *watsonx.ai* developed by NASA and IBM, has contributed to **improving weather predictions**:

- **Data Interpretation and Analysis:**
 - ✓ Climate data sets are massive and time-consuming to analyze.
 - ✓ AI, particularly **deep-learning models**, helps in interpreting and analyzing these **extensive datasets more efficiently**.
- **AI Emulators:**

- ✓ The European Centre for **Medium-Range Weather Forecasting** has implemented deep-learning models known as AI emulators.
- ✓ These emulators **generate forecasts based on historical weather patterns**, allowing for quicker predictions by inferring the laws of physics from the available data.

➤ **Increased Speed and Efficiency:**

- ✓ **Quick Forecast Generation:** AI models like **watsonx.ai** can generate forecasts in a **matter of minutes**, significantly **reducing the time compared to traditional systems** that took hours.
- ✓ This **speed is crucial for providing timely** and accurate weather predictions.



➤ **Improved Accuracy in Mapping and Prediction:**

✓ **Visual Sequence Comprehension:**

- Models are trained to **comprehend visual sequences over time**, enabling them to understand how **different weather patterns and events unfold**.
- This results in improved accuracy in mapping flood and burn scars, among other factors.

➤ **Beta Test Results:**

- ✓ In beta tests, models like watsonx.ai have **demonstrated a 15% improvement in mapping flood** and burn scars over the continental United States, using less labeled data compared to traditional techniques.

➤ **User-Friendly Interface:**

✓ **Simple Operation:**

- Models are designed to be user-friendly, allowing users to select a location and a date.
- The AI model then **highlights changes in relevant factors such as floodwater levels and reforestation efforts**.
- This simplicity makes the technology more accessible to a broader audience.

➤ **Open Source Collaboration:**

✓ **Sharing Knowledge:**

- NASA and IBM have taken a **collaborative approach by open-sourcing** the watsonx.ai model, making it available to the global community.
- This open approach **aims to encourage collaboration and the widespread use of AI in weather forecasting**.

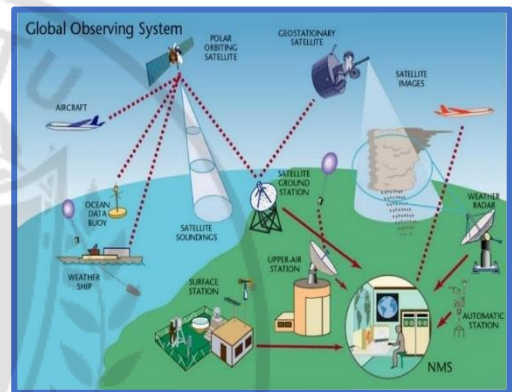
TRADITIONAL WEATHER FORECASTING VS. AI:

Aspect	Traditional Weather Forecasting	AI in Weather Forecasting
Model Basis	✓ Physical models with millions of equations	✓ Statistical models identifying patterns in historical data
Approach	✓ Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP)	✓ AI methods leveraging various data sources and patterns
Foundation	✓ Laws of physics and equations	✓ Data-driven, pattern recognition
Data Consideration	✓ Limited metrics (temperature, pressure, etc.)	✓ Wide range of metrics (temperature, humidity, wind speed, etc.)
Data Sources	✓ Satellites, radar, weather stations	✓ Diverse data sources, including satellites and historical records
Handling Missing Data	✓ Limited handling, may impact accuracy	✓ Resilient to uncertainties, robust handling of missing data

Computational Power	✓ Supercomputers used for NWP modeling	✓ Relatively less dependence on supercomputing resources
Accuracy Improvement	✓ Limited by model accuracy and data quality	✓ Improved accuracy through diverse data and pattern recognition
Incorporation of Uncertainty	✓ Limited resilience to uncertainties	✓ Designed to handle uncertainties and variations
Flexibility	✓ May struggle with complex, dynamic patterns	✓ Adaptable to complex and dynamic weather patterns
Collaborative Approach	✓ Traditional methods used as a foundation	✓ Collaboration between traditional and AI-based methods

CHALLENGES OF WEATHER FORECASTING WITH AI:

- **Limited Training Data:**
 - ✓ AI in weather forecasting faces challenges due to the **limited availability of historical data**, particularly for **extreme weather events**.
 - ✓ This scarcity can **hinder the ability to train accurate models**, and biased training on a limited or skewed dataset may lead to **unreliable predictions or unfair outcomes**.
- **Complex Data:**
 - ✓ **Weather data is intricate**, featuring multiple predictor variables that **interact in complex ways**.
 - ✓ Identifying the **most critical variables for modeling and forecasting** becomes a challenge, given the intricate nature of these interactions.
- **Uncertainty:**
 - ✓ **The inherent complexity of weather systems**, coupled with limited data availability and the potential for **imprecise measurements**, introduces a level of uncertainty in weather forecasting.
 - ✓ This uncertainty poses **difficulties in building accurate AI models**, and predicting failure becomes challenging without the clear interpretability seen in classical models.
- **Real-time Data:**
 - ✓ **Rapidly changing weather conditions demand real-time data** for accurate forecasting with AI models.
 - ✓ **Establishing a sophisticated data collection system capable of capturing and processing data in real-time** is essential to meet this requirement.
- **Interpretability:**
 - ✓ AI models **utilized in weather forecasting often exhibit complexity and lack interpretability**.
 - ✓ Understanding the rationale behind specific forecasts becomes challenging, **potentially leading to a lack of trust in the AI models among meteorologists and end-users**.
- **Data Quality:**
 - ✓ The accuracy of AI models relies **heavily on the quality and quantity of input data**.
 - ✓ **Poor-quality data, including errors**, can result in inaccurate predictions.
 - ✓ However, ensuring the accuracy, completeness, and **up-to-date nature of the data poses a significant challenge** in the context of AI-based weather forecasting.



The Way Forward: AI in Weather Forecasting and Climate Change

- **Improved Weather Predictions:**
 - ✓ AI tools like Watsonx.ai enhance accuracy in **forecasting hurricanes, droughts, wildfires, and urban heat patterns** by analyzing NASA's vast data.
- **Data Accessibility:**

- ✓ AI simplifies data interpretation, **overcoming challenges posed by the increasing volume of climate data.**
- **Open-Source Collaboration:**
 - ✓ Making AI models **open-source (like Watsonx.ai on Hugging Space)** fosters global collaboration for better understanding Earth's dynamics.
- **User-Friendly Applications:**
 - ✓ User-friendly interfaces, as seen in Watsonx.ai, make **AI insights accessible to various stakeholders by allowing them to easily select locations and dates.**
- **Climate Change Mitigation Beyond Forecasting:**
 - ✓ AI is **considered essential in fighting climate change**, with applications in **transportation, agriculture, and other sectors optimizing resource usage and reducing emissions.**
- **Community Empowerment:**
 - ✓ Open-source AI empowers communities **for disaster preparedness, infrastructure development, and personal decision-making, regardless of size.**
- **Continuous Research and Development:**
 - ✓ Ongoing research in AI for climate applications is crucial for **refining models, exploring new solutions, and addressing emerging challenges.**



WHY TAMIL NADU EXPERIENCED HEAVY RAINFALL IN DECEMBER MONTHS?

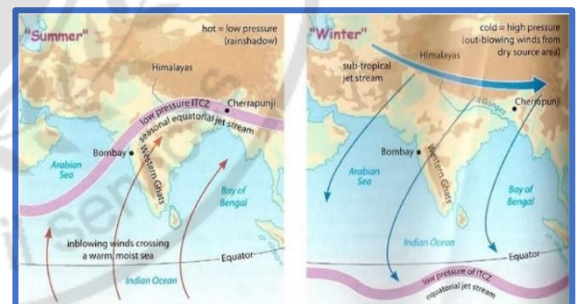
SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- *Tamil Nadu witnessed **unprecedented rainfall causing severe flooding and destruction, particularly in Kalyanapattinum, Thoothukudi district.***

MONSOON DYNAMICS IN INDIA:

- **Southwest Monsoon:**
 - ✓ **Duration:** Early June to mid-September.
 - ✓ **Wind Direction:** Southwest monsoons prevail due to extreme **South-West trade winds** blowing to the northern hemisphere.
 - ✓ **Trigger:** Central India becomes a **low-pressure region during summer**, and the Arabian Sea turns into a high-pressure region.
 - ✓ **Wind Movement:** Winds move from the **Arabian Sea to land**, carrying **moisture as South-West monsoon clouds.**
- **Impact on Tamil Nadu:**
 - ✓ **Hindered by the Western Ghats**, leading to rainfall in the **Western Ghats.**
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu, in the **rain shadow area**, receives **minimal rainfall.**
- **Reasons for Winter Rainfall in Tamil Nadu:**
 - ✓ **North-East Trade Winds:** Reversal of South West Monsoon winds leads to **North-East Trade Winds.**
 - ✓ **Weakening Heat Flow in North-west India:** As the **Sun moves south of the equator post-equinox**, North-west India cools rapidly, forming **high-pressure regions.**
 - ✓ **Wind Movement:** High-pressure regions over the **North Bay of Bengal and northern India** push winds southward, creating a **U-shaped low-pressure trough** over India's southern coast, including **Tamil Nadu.**
 - ✓ **Formation of North-East Monsoon:** Winds from the North Bay of Bengal's high-pressure region are drawn toward the **low-pressure trough**, initiating the **North-East monsoon.**



- ✓ **Monsoon Retreat:** Different wind direction and positioning of low and high-pressure zones compared to the southwest monsoon season.
- ✓ **Impact on Tamil Nadu:** Tamil Nadu experiences monsoons during winter due to North-East trade winds.

RECENT SCENARIO IN TAMIL NADU:

Normalcy in December:

- **Northeast Monsoon:**
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu receives 48% of its annual rainfall (443.3mm) during October to December, crucial for rabi cultivation.
 - ✓ Heavy rainfall during these months is typical.
- **Rainfall Records:**
 - ✓ From October 1, Tamil Nadu received 450mm of rainfall, with 14 out of 38 districts facing deficient rainfall.

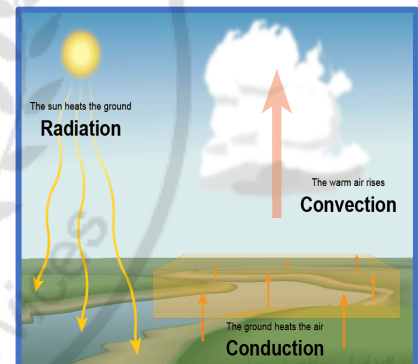


Exceptional Rainfall Events:

- **Southern Tamil Nadu (Dec 17-19):**
 - ✓ IMD reported 'exceptionally' heavy rainfall, with districts receiving 100% or more surplus rain during Dec 17–19.
- **Unprecedented Figures:**
 - ✓ Kalyanapattinam recorded 950mm in 24 hours on Dec 18, exceeding annual rainfall in Lucknow and Ambala.
 - ✓ Two-day total rainfall at 1160mm, surpassing annual figures of Chandigarh and Bengaluru.
- **Kanyakumari District:**
 - ✓ Annual rainfall is 760mm; recorded 1050.7mm during Oct 1 – Dec 20.

FACTORS BEHIND RECORD RAINFALL IN SOUTHERN TAMIL NADU:

- **Vigorous Northeast Monsoon:**
 - ✓ **Situation:** The northeast monsoon was robust over Tamil Nadu throughout the week.
 - ✓ **Effect:** Steady rainbands, particularly over south Tamil Nadu and neighbouring Kerala.
- **Development of Cyclonic Circulation:**
 - ✓ Southwest Bay of Bengal, off the western Sri Lankan coast.
 - ✓ Westwards towards southern Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ Enhanced northeast monsoon winds, contributing to heavy rainfall.
 - ✓ Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, and Kanyakumari districts in Tamil Nadu and Idukki district in Kerala.
- **Persistence of the System:**
 - ✓ Continuous influence over the southern Tamil Nadu region.
 - ✓ Heavy cloud convection, leading to exceptionally heavy rainfall exceeding 200mm in 24 hours.



IMD'S CURRENT FORECAST:

- **Cyclonic Circulation Location:**
 - ✓ Over southeast Arabian Sea, away from the Indian land mass.
- **Forecast:**
 - ✓ No significant rainfall expected over Tamil Nadu.
- **IMD Advisory:**
 - ✓ Anticipates light to moderate intensity rainfall (up to 64mm in 24 hours) in some southern Tamil Nadu areas until Thursday.
- **Future Expectation:**
 - ✓ Reduction in overall rainfall activity after Thursday.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#), [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- **Overview:**
 - ✓ **Chennai-based T M N Deepak, a disability political activist, leads the December 3 Movement, a disability rights association in Tamil Nadu.**
 - ✓ **The movement, named after the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) on December 3, emphasizes substantive recognition and rights for the disability community.**
- **Global Disability Scenario:**
 - ✓ **Approximately 1.3 billion people globally live with disabilities, with 80% residing in developing countries, and 70% in rural areas.**
 - ✓ **Current systems often exclude persons with disabilities, leading to higher instances of poverty, limited education access, and social discrimination.**

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (IDPD):

- **International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD):**
 - ✓ Observed annually on December 3, IDPD aims to raise awareness and garner support for the rights and well-being of people with disabilities worldwide.
- **Theme:**
 - ✓ Theme of IDPD 2023 - "**United in Action to Rescue and Achieve the SDGs**"
 - ✓ The **17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda** explicitly mention 'disability' and 'persons with disabilities' **11 times**, according to the UN.
 - ✓ The theme **underscores the collective effort** needed to address challenges faced by persons with disabilities and **to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
 - ✓ Emphasizes collaboration "**for, with, and by**" persons with disabilities, promoting **unity in action for inclusive development**.



Objectives of IDPD Celebration:

- **Foster an Inclusive and Accessible Society:**
 - ✓ Encourage the creation of an **inclusive and accessible society** where individuals with disabilities can **actively participate in all aspects of life**.
 - ✓ Advocate for **breaking down barriers that hinder full participation**, ensuring **everyone can live with dignity and equality**.
- **Encourage Efforts to Break Down Barriers:**
 - ✓ **Motivate individuals and communities** to actively work towards **dismantling barriers that hinder the integration of persons with disabilities into society**.
 - ✓ **Promote a collective commitment** to creating an environment where everyone, regardless of ability, can thrive.
- **Raise Awareness of Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities:**
 - ✓ Use events, discussions, and **initiatives to increase awareness of the unique challenges** faced by persons with disabilities.
 - ✓ Highlight the importance of respecting the **rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities** and fostering a supportive environment.

DISABILITY IN INDIA:

- **UN CRPD Definition:**

- ✓ Persons with disabilities are **individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments.**
- ✓ Interaction with various barriers may impede their **full and effective participation in society** on an equal basis.

➤ **Persons with Disability Act, 1995:**

- ✓ Despite being **built on equal opportunity and rights**, the Act adopts the **medical model for defining disability.**
- ✓ "Person with disability" is defined as **someone with not less than forty percent disability certified by a medical authority.**
- ✓ The Act identifies disabilities, including **blindness, low vision, leprosy-cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental retardation, and mental illness.**

➤ **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:**

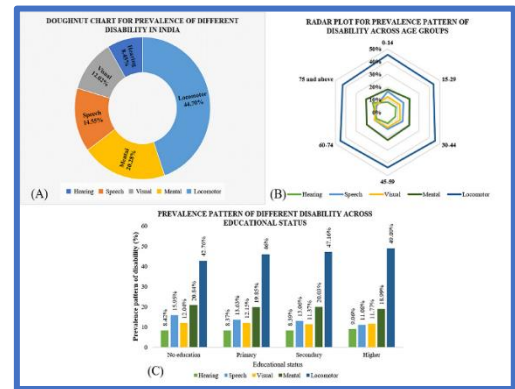
- ✓ Adopts the UN CRPD definition.
- ✓ Introduces the **term "Person with Benchmark Disability"** as someone **with not less than 40% of a specified disability.**
- ✓ **Expands disability types from 7 (1995 Act) to 21**, with provisions for the **Union Government to include more.**

➤ **Statistics on Disabilities in India:**

- ✓ **Highlights India's 2.68 crore people with disabilities (as per Census 2011)**, constituting about 2.2% of the population.
- ✓ Refers to the National Statistics Office report on disability released in 2019.

➤ **Corporate Inclusivity in India:**

- ✓ Growing awareness among companies and employers about the importance of inclusivity.
- ✓ A notable increase in **permanent employment of people with disabilities** in leading Indian companies (**10% rise from FY 2021 to FY 2022**).



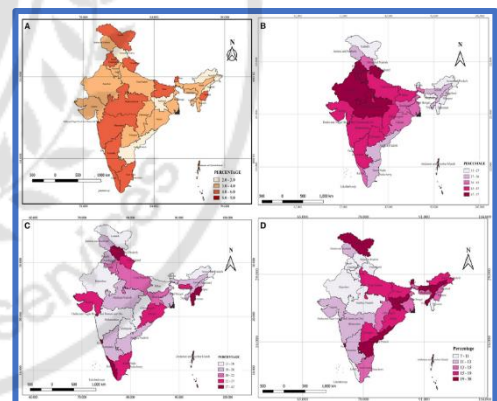
Demographics of Disabled Persons in India (2011 Census)

Population and Disability Breakdown	
Total Population	121.08 Cr
Disabled Persons	2.68 Cr (Males: 1.5 Cr, Females: 1.18 Cr)
Gender Distribution	
Males	56% (1.5 Cr)
Females	44% (1.18 Cr)
Rural-Urban Distribution	
Rural	69% (1.86 Cr)
Urban	31% (0.81 Cr)
Decadal Changes (2001-2011)	
Increase in Disabled Population	22.4%
Disabled Percentage (to total population)	2.13% (2001) to 2.21% (2011)
Types of Disabilities	
Movement Disability	20%
Seeing Disability	19%
Hearing Disability	19%
Multiple Disabilities	8%
Age Group Insights	
Highest Disabled Population (Age Group)	10-19 years (46.2 lakhs)
Elderly Disabled (60+ years)	21% of total disabled
Children (0-6 years)	
Disabled Children Percentage	1.24% of total children
Gender Disparity	Higher proportion of disabled males in all age groups

Education Attendance	
Disabled Children (5-19 years) in Education	61% attend educational institutions
Urban School Attendance Rate	65%
Households and Literacy	
Households with Disabled Persons	8.3% of total households
Literacy Rate Among Disabled	55%
Gender and Education	
Male Disabled Literacy	62%
Female Disabled Literacy	45%
Urban Disabled Literacy Rate	67%

CHALLENGES FACED BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWD) IN INDIA:

- **Mental Disability Assessment Scale:**
 - ✓ The need for an **accurate, easily administered, and time-efficient mental disability** assessment scale.
 - ✓ The **adaptation of WHO Disability Assessment Schedule (WHO-DAS 2.0)** to Indian context resulted in the **Indian Disability Evaluation and Assessment Scale (IDEAS)**.
 - ✓ IDEAS, while practical, has shortcomings such as lack of comprehensiveness and coverage for all mental disorders.
- **Psychiatric Disability Certification:**
 - ✓ **Controversies arise over certifying disabilities** for certain mental disorders like substance use disorders.
 - ✓ **The RPWD Act, 2016**, allows certification for **all mental illnesses**, focusing on the impact of disability rather than specific diagnoses.
- **Temporary vs. Permanent Disability Certification:**
 - ✓ Psychiatric illnesses being **episodic poses challenges** in determining whether **to issue temporary or permanent disability certificates**.
 - ✓ The difficulty in **predicting the extent of improvement in mental health** conditions contributes to certification challenges.
- **Quantification of Disability:**
 - ✓ Guidelines for **assessing the extent of specified disability** have been established.
 - ✓ The **Indian Disability Evaluation and Assessment Scale (IDEAS)** offers a range-based disability score, but administrators often demand specific percentages.
- **Certification of Multiple Disabilities:**
 - ✓ Certification complexities arise **when an individual has both mental illness and intellectual disability (mental retardation)**.
- **Certification of Autism:**
 - ✓ Autism assessment is yet to be **officially notified under the RPWD Act, 2016**.
 - ✓ Specific professionals are **named for certification, limiting accessibility and choice**.
- **Reservation in Higher Education and Employment:**
 - ✓ The RPWD Act, 2016, **mandates 1% reservation for persons with benchmark disabilities**, including mental illnesses.
 - ✓ **Stereotypes and doubts about the professional competence of persons with mental illnesses** persist, impacting their job prospects.
 - ✓ The need to **identify suitable jobs for persons with mental illnesses**.
- **Synchronization of Legislation:**
 - ✓ **The RPWD Act, 2016, and Mental Healthcare Act (MHCA) 2017** both address mental health concerns, leading to resource duplication.
 - ✓ Synchronizing both acts would **enhance resource efficiency and improve implementation**.
- **Challenges in Rural Areas:**



- ✓ Rural areas face unique challenges, with **limited access to education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities**.
- ✓ Developmental schemes **often overlook rural populations**, and **stereotypes perpetuate** barriers to their inclusion.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWD) IN INDIA:

- **Government Initiatives in India:**
 - ✓ India has various **schemes and a Unique ID for Persons with Disabilities (UDID)** card under the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016)**.
 - ✓ Awareness and capacity-building initiatives, especially in rural areas, are crucial for the effective implementation of government benefits.
- **SPARK Project: A Model for Inclusion:**
 - ✓ The **SPARK project, by ILO and IFAD** in collaboration with the **Women's Development Corporation in Maharashtra**, focuses on **Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation**.
 - ✓ **Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs)** are identified and trained from the villages, engaging with the community **to raise awareness and identify women with disabilities for economic development**.
- **Other Initiatives and welfare schemes:**

<i>Scheme</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Key Features</i>
<i>Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)</i>	✓ Funds for NGOs' disability projects.	✓ Supports special schools, vocational training , and rehabilitation.
<i>Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)</i>	✓ Distribute aids/appliances to persons with disabilities.	✓ Enhances the quality of life through essential aids/appliances .
<i>National Institutions (NIs)</i>	✓ Supports seven autonomous National Institutes .	✓ Provides rehabilitation services for various disabilities .
<i>National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC)</i>	✓ Concessional credit for self-employment .	✓ Empowers economic self-sufficiency for persons with disabilities.
<i>Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (SIPDA)</i>	✓ Assists in implementing the Disabilities Act .	✓ Focuses on creating a barrier-free environment and equal opportunities.
<i>Scheme of Incentives to Employees in the Private Sector for Providing Employment to Persons with Disabilities</i>	✓ Reimburses employers' EPF/ESI contributions.	✓ Encourages private sector employment for persons with disabilities.
<i>DISHA (Early Intervention and School Readiness Scheme)</i>	✓ Early intervention and school readiness for children (0-10 years).	✓ Establishes Disha Centers for therapies and family support.
<i>VIKAAS (Day Care)</i>	✓ Day care for interpersonal/vocational skills .	✓ Provides day-care facilities for at least 6 hours , supporting family members.
<i>SAMARTH (Respite Care)</i>	✓ Provides respite home for crisis situations.	✓ Offers group home facilities and respite for family members.

GHARAUNDA (Group Home for Adults)	✓ Assured home and care for life.	✓ Provides vocational activities and assistance for further training.
NIRAMAYA (Health Insurance Scheme)	✓ Affordable health insurance.	✓ Health coverage for various medical needs, including therapies and surgeries.
SAHYOGI (Caregiver Training Scheme)	✓ Sets up Caregiver Cells for training.	✓ Provides caregiver training through primary and advanced courses.
GYAN PRABHA (Educational Support)	✓ Encourages pursuit of educational/vocational courses.	✓ Financial support per course for fees, transportation, and books.
PRERNA (Marketing Assistance)	✓ Aids in marketing products/services.	✓ Funds for event participation, incentives based on sales turnover.
SAMBHAV (Aids and Assisted Devices)	✓ Sets up resource centres for assistive devices.	✓ Provides information and easy access to aids and devices.
BADHTE KADAM (Awareness and Community Interaction)	✓ Supports ROs in awareness activities.	✓ National Trust sponsors events for community awareness.

WAY FORWARD:

- **For vs. By Approach in Disability Inclusion:**
 - ✓ The distinction between "for" and "by" is **crucial in disability inclusion**.
 - ✓ Inclusion efforts should **involve persons with disabilities actively, ensuring their participation** in the process **rather than actions** done solely for them.
- **Economic Impact and Inclusion:**
 - ✓ Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the **economy can boost global GDP by 3% to 7%**, according to the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**.
 - ✓ The **economic benefits underscore** the importance of **recognizing and addressing barriers** to inclusion.
- **Private Sector Role:**
 - ✓ The private sector **plays a key role in promoting employment** for persons with disabilities.
 - ✓ **Engaging employers' federations and trade unions** is essential for **building confidence** in hiring and retaining workers with disabilities.
- **Link to Social Justice and Sustainable Development Goals:**
 - ✓ **Achieving social justice** requires the **inclusion of persons with disabilities** in all aspects of development.
 - ✓ There is a **bi-directional link between poverty, nutrition, hunger, and disability**, necessitating inclusive opportunities and employment in rural areas.
- **Call for Global Commitment:**
 - ✓ Given **historical marginalization and challenges in meeting Sustainable Development Goals**, a fundamental shift in **commitment, solidarity, financing, and action is imperative**.
 - ✓ **Prioritizing the voices and needs of persons with disabilities** is crucial for a more inclusive global development agenda.

ACCIDENTAL DEATHS & SUICIDES IN INDIA REPORT 2022: NCRB

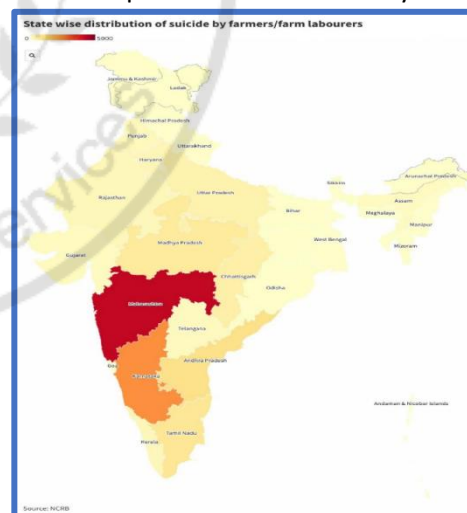
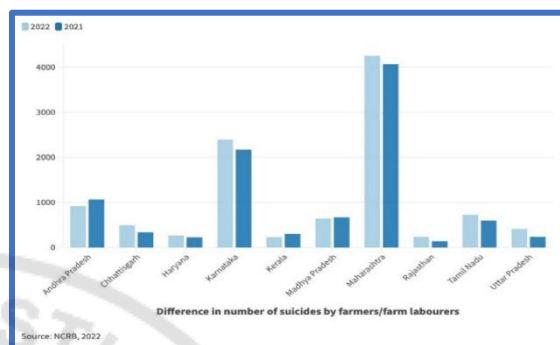
SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#), [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- The release of the **National Crime Record Bureau's (NCRB) Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI) 2022 report** has brought to light the concerning issue of suicides in India, with over 1.7 lakh reported cases in the year 2022.
- The report highlights that nearly **one-third of these suicides were among daily wage earners, agricultural laborers, and farmers.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT:

- **Crimes Against Marginalized Communities:**
 - ✓ The Crime in India report highlighted an **overall increase in crimes and atrocities** committed against **Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)**.
 - ✓ States like **Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana** reported a rise in such cases in 2022 compared to the previous year.
- **Regional Scenario:**
 - ✓ Mizoram, which reported **no cases of atrocities against SCs or STs in 2021**, saw an **unfortunate increase with five cases against SCs and 29 cases against STs in 2022.**
 - ✓ **Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan** continued to be among the **top five states** with the highest incidents of crimes against SCs and STs.
- **Uptick in UAPA Cases:**
 - ✓ The report revealed a **marginal increase in cases of offenses against the State**, indicating a **25% rise in registrations under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).**
 - ✓ Instances under the sedition section of the Indian Penal Code also experienced a noteworthy increase.
- **Regional Suicide Statistics:**
 - ✓ Maharashtra reported the **highest number of suicides in 2022, with 22,746 cases**, followed by **Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Telangana.**
 - ✓ The suicide data brings attention to the **mental health challenges** prevalent in these states.
- **Occupational Demographics in Suicides:**
 - ✓ **Daily wage earners, agricultural workers, and farmers** accounted for a significant portion of suicides in 2022.
 - ✓ The ADSI data highlighted that **9.6% of suicides were by self-employed or salaried professionals**, while **unemployed persons comprised 9.2% of reported suicides.**
 - ✓ **Students constituted over 12,000 suicides**, underscoring **mental health concerns** among the younger population.
- **Variability in Farmer Suicides Across States:**
 - ✓ Some states and **Union Territories, including West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Chandigarh, Delhi, Lakshadweep, and Puducherry**, reported **zero suicides** among farmers and agricultural laborers.
- **Homemakers and Women Suicides:**



- ✓ Among the approximately **48,000 women who died by suicide in 2022**, over **52% were homemakers**, constituting around **14% of the total suicides** reported.
- ✓ **Students and daily wage earners** were also notable categories among women suicides.
- ✓ The report highlighted **28 reported suicides among trans-persons in 2022**.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU (NCRB):

- **Establishment:**
 - ✓ NCRB, headquartered in **New Delhi**, was **established in 1986**.
 - ✓ It **operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs** and serves as a **central repository of information on crime and criminals**.
- **Origins:**
 - ✓ The creation of NCRB was based on **recommendations from the National Police Commission (1977-1981)** and the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Task Force in 1985**.
- **Functions:**
 - ✓ **Crime Data Repository:** NCRB serves as a repository of **crime-related information** to aid investigators in linking crimes to perpetrators.
 - ✓ **National Database of Sexual Offenders (NDSO):** NCRB maintains the **NDSO** and regularly shares it with **States/Union Territories**.
 - ✓ **Online Cyber-Crime Reporting Portal:** Designated as the **Central Nodal Agency**, NCRB manages the **technical and operational aspects of this portal**.
 - ✓ Citizens can use it to **report cyber-crimes**, including **child pornography, rape, and gang rape**.
 - ✓ **Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS):** NCRB is **responsible for implementing ICJS**, a national platform **that integrates IT systems for various components of the criminal justice system**, including police, forensic labs, courts, public prosecutors, and prisons.
- **Publications:**
 - ✓ NCRB publishes several major reports, providing comprehensive insights into various aspects of **crime and law enforcement in India**.
 - ✓ Major publications include "**Crimes in India**," "**Accidental Deaths and Suicides**," "**Prison Statistics**," and reports on "**Missing Women and Children in India**."
- **ICJS Integration:**
 - ✓ ICJS is a **national platform aimed at integrating IT systems** across the criminal justice system's pillars, fostering efficiency and coordination.
 - ✓ It **integrates Crime and Criminal Tracking and Network Systems for police, e-Forensics for forensic labs, e-Courts for courts, e-Prosecution for public prosecutors, and e-Prisons for prisons**.

COMMON CAUSES OF SUICIDE IN INDIA:

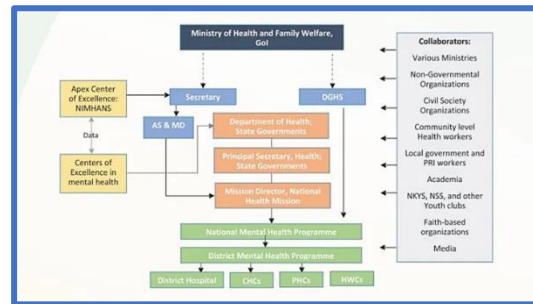
- **Common Causes of Suicides:**
 - ✓ The most prevalent **causes of suicides in 2022** were identified as "**family problems**" and "**illness**," collectively accounting for nearly **half of all reported suicides**.
 - ✓ Additionally, factors such as "**drug abuse**," "**alcohol addiction**," and "**marriage-related issues**" were cited.
- **Gender Disparities in Marriage-Related Suicides:**
 - ✓ A significant observation was the **disproportionate number of women** associated with suicides attributed to "**marriage-related issues**," specifically highlighting "**dowry-related**" causes.
- **Rainfall Deficit and Farmer Suicides:**
 - ✓ A study published in May 2023 found a **consistent association between farmer suicides** and years with a **rainfall deficit**.
 - ✓ **Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh**, reporting significant portions of land as **drought-prone**, also witnessed high rates of farmer suicides.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION IN INDIA:

- **National Suicide Prevention Strategy:**
 - ✓ Ministry of Health's initiative for **mental health and suicide prevention**.
 - ✓ **Goal:** Reduce suicide **mortality by 10% by 2023**.

➤ **Objectives:**

- ✓ Establish effective **suicide surveillance in 3 years.**
- ✓ Implement psychiatric **outpatient departments in 5 years.**
- ✓ Integrate mental **well-being curriculum in 8 years.**
- ✓ Strengthen surveillance and generate evidence for program improvement.



➤ **Stakeholders:**

- ✓ National & state-level authorities, districts, **NIMHANS-Bangalore**, and strategic collaborators.
- ✓ Reinforce leadership and partnerships.
- ✓ Enhance health services capacity.
- ✓ Develop community resilience and reduce stigma.

➤ **Ongoing Initiatives:**

- ✓ **National Mental Health Policy** prioritizes mental health.
- ✓ **Mental Healthcare Act 2017** decriminalized attempted suicide.
- ✓ Several national programmes such as the **National Mental Health Program, National Palliative Care Program, Ayushman Bharat and Nasha Mukti Abhiyaan Task Force** are also in place.

ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

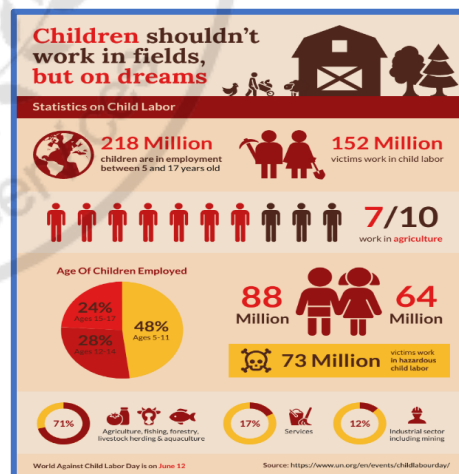
WHY IN NEWS?

- A **parliamentary panel**, chaired by **BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab**, has recommended **increasing fines up to four times, canceling licenses, and attaching property in cases where industries employ child laborers.**
- The report highlights the **need for a uniform definition of 'child' under various laws and suggests that the implementation of a policy to eliminate child labor is far from achieving its goal by 2025.**

WHAT IS CHILD LABOUR?

➤ **Understanding Child Labour:**

- ✓ Child labour encompasses work that jeopardizes the well-being and development of children, **hindering their physical, mental, social, or moral growth.**
- ✓ It is crucial to distinguish positive activities from child labour:
 - **Positive Engagement:** Children assisting in **family tasks, managing household responsibilities, supporting family businesses, or earning pocket money** without compromising health, education, or personal development are considered positive contributions.
 - **Negative Characteristics of Child Labour:** Child labour is identified by its detrimental impact, **involving work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally harmful to children.**
- ✓ It interferes with schooling by either preventing attendance, **forcing premature departure, or compelling children to juggle** excessively long and heavy work alongside education.



➤ **Extreme Forms of Child Labour:**

- ✓ Child labour extends to severe conditions such as **enslavement, separation from families, exposure to hazards, illnesses, and abandonment**, often occurring at a very young age.

➤ **Deprivation and Harm:**

- ✓ Child labour is a situation that **deprives children of their childhood, potential, and dignity.**

- ✓ It poses threats to both physical and mental development, hindering their overall well-being.

Defining and Regulating Child Labour:

➤ **Minimum Age Standards:**

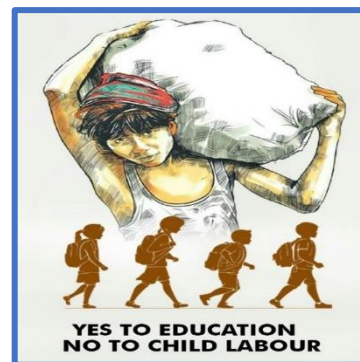
- ✓ The International Labour Organization (ILO) has been at the forefront of establishing **minimum age standards for employment as a benchmark for defining and regulating child labour.**

➤ **Historical ILO Initiatives:**

- ✓ **Since 1919**, the ILO has adopted various international conventions **addressing child labour, setting standards for minimum age across sectors such as industry, agriculture, maritime work, and more.**

➤ **Evolution of Definitions:**

- ✓ The definition of child labour depends on factors like the **child's age, types of work performed, working conditions, and individual countries' objectives.**
- ✓ Variations exist among countries and sectors.



CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA: MAGNITUDE AND CHALLENGES

➤ **Inclusive Criteria:**

- ✓ Children involved in **work unsuitable for their developmental capacities**, posing risks to health, education, and **moral growth, with an age below 14 years.**
- ✓ Encompasses economic activities, **whether part-time or full-time**, practiced by children.
- ✓ Jeopardizes childhood, **impairs physical and mental development.**

➤ **Deprivation of Childhood and Harmful Practices:**

- ✓ Child labour **deprives children of their childhood** and is detrimental to their physical and mental well-being.
- ✓ Encompasses **socially, morally, mentally, and physically dangerous** activities.
- ✓ Hinders normal development, **poses threats to social, psychological, and educational** aspects.

➤ **Hazardous Activities and the Vulnerable:**

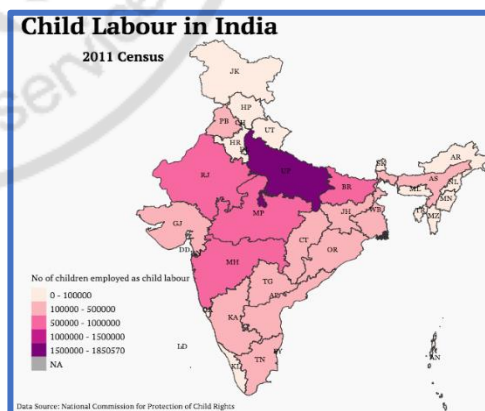
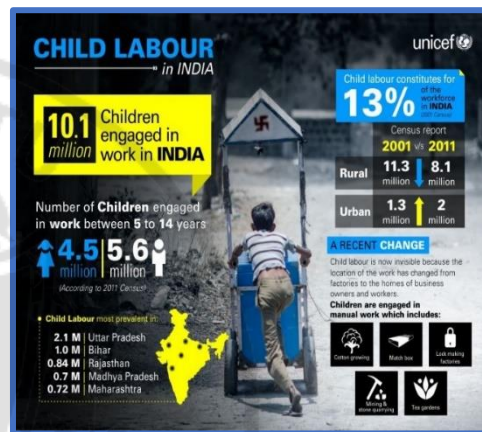
- ✓ Child labourers include those **either too young to work or engaged in hazardous activities**, potentially harmful to their development.
- ✓ Targets work **with risks to physical, social, psychological,** or educational well-being.
- ✓ Identifies a specific group of working children facing heightened vulnerabilities.

➤ **Declining Trends:**

- ✓ India has witnessed a significant **decline in child labour over the last two decades**, with a notable reduction in workforce participation rates.

➤ **Magnitude in Numbers:**

- ✓ Despite progress, **India still faces challenges**, with **millions of children engaged in various forms of labour.**
- ✓ **Uttar Pradesh holds a substantial share**, requiring focused attention.



Child Labour Statistics: Census 2011

Year	Percentage of Working Children (5-14)	Total Working Children (5-14, in millions)
2001	5.9 (Rural), 2.1 (Urban), 5.0 (Total)	11.4 (Rural), 1.3 (Urban), 12.7 (Total)
2011	4.3 (Rural), 2.9 (Urban), 3.9 (Total)	8.1 (Rural), 2.0 (Urban), 10.1 (Total)

Distribution of Working Children by Type of Work in 2011

Area of Work	Percentage	Numbers (in millions)
Cultivators	26.0	2.63
Agricultural Labourers	32.9	3.33
Household Industry Workers	5.2	0.52
Other Workers	35.8	3.62

Major Sectors for Working Children in India (%): 2001 vs. 2011

Sectors	2001 (%)	2011 (%)
Cultivators	33.8	26.0
Agricultural Labourers	39.9	31.5
HHI Workers	4.9	6.4
Other Workers	22.0	36.1

CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR:

➤ Poverty:

- ✓ **Approximately 30 million people** in India live in **extreme poverty**.
- ✓ The intricate relationship between child labour and poverty highlights the **dire economic conditions in the country**.
- ✓ Extreme poverty forces parents to **view children as potential income sources**, hindering investment in their education and development.

➤ Child Labour as a Cheap Commodity:

- ✓ The shift toward industrialization fostered a **preference for child labour due to its cost-effectiveness**.
- ✓ Employers opt for child labour **not for competence** but for **affordability**.
- ✓ Children's inability to organize and unionize makes them convenient, **inexpensive, and easy to control for employers**.

➤ Large Family Size:

- ✓ **Larger families with low incomes struggle** to provide adequate education, health care, and developmental opportunities.
- ✓ Limited resources in large families may lead to a **lack of emphasis on education, contributing to child labour**.
- ✓ Smaller, well-planned families tend to **ensure better development opportunities** for their children.

➤ Compulsory Education Challenges:

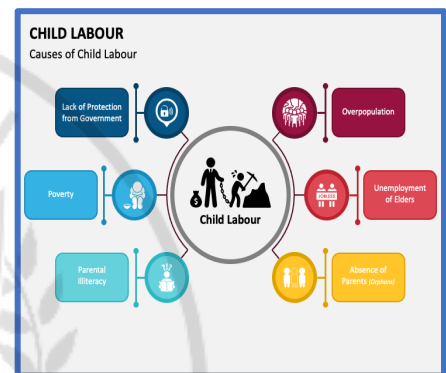
- ✓ Education is a **crucial factor in human resource development**, yet limited access and affordability hinder widespread enrollment.
- ✓ Challenges such as **insufficient schools, clashes between school time and agricultural duties**, and financial constraints contribute to child labour.
- ✓ In rural areas, a **significant number of children remain unenrolled**, and the cost of education acts as a deterrent.

➤ Backwardness and Economic Stagnation:

- ✓ The majority of child labour is concentrated in underdeveloped regions, **emphasizing the socio-economic aspect**.
- ✓ **Illiteracy, ignorance, low wages, unemployment, and societal prejudices** collectively contribute to the persistence of child labour.

➤ Compounding Factors:

- ✓ Deep-rooted traditional beliefs, lack of **schools, parental reluctance, urbanization, and industrialization** contribute to the prevalence of child labour.



- ✓ Professor Gangrade emphasizes the **multifaceted nature of child labour**, citing factors like traditional attitudes, parental reluctance, and broader societal shifts.

RECENT CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILD LABOUR ELIMINATION:

The issue of child labour and its elimination has come to the **forefront due to a recent report from the 52nd Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles, and Skill Development.**



The key reasons why this topic is in the news include:

- **Ambiguity in Definitions:**
 - ✓ The report highlights the ambiguity in **defining a 'child' under various legislations**, leading to confusion and challenges in implementing effective policies.
- **Implementation Challenges:**
 - ✓ Despite commitments to international conventions and **Sustainable Development Goal 8.7**, the report acknowledges the substantial distance remaining in **achieving the goal of eliminating child labour by 2025.**
- **Discrepancies in Acts:**
 - ✓ Variations in age definitions across different Acts, such as **CALPRA, Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, Minimum Wages Act, and Juvenile Justice Act**, have been noted, raising concerns about consistency.
- **Policy Recommendations:**
 - ✓ The report suggests crucial recommendations, including the **exclusion of hazardous occupations from the positive list, guidelines for fine utilization**, and the creation of district-level funds for child labourers' rehabilitation.
- **Legal Amendments for Zero Tolerance:**
 - ✓ Advocacy for legal amendments to **ensure zero tolerance on child labour**, incorporating stricter punishments and fixing accountability not only on employers but also on principal employers and traffickers.
- **Enhanced DPS Functions:**
 - ✓ Emphasis on **implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** to clarify the functions of District Project Societies (DPS) in handling rescued children, ensuring accountability and efficient reporting.
- **National Level Child Tracking Mechanism:**
 - ✓ The proposal for a **National Level Child Tracking Mechanism** aims to enhance coordination among states and the Centre, utilizing digital reporting for effective prevention, tracing, tracking, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration.
- **Police Accountability and Reporting:**
 - ✓ Recommendations include **provisions for holding authorities accountable for not reporting instances of child labour** and collaborating with other ministries to establish child-friendly police stations and courts.

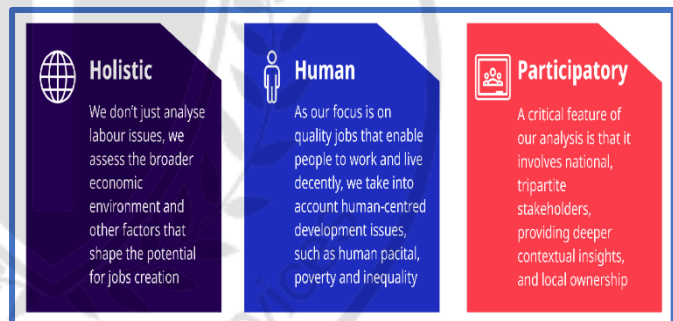
GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO ERADICATE CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA:

- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986):**
 - ✓ **Prohibits engagement of children** in certain employments.
 - ✓ Regulates conditions of work for children in specified employments.
- **National Policy on Child Labour (1987):**
 - ✓ Focuses on the **rehabilitation of children working** in hazardous occupations.
 - ✓ Emphasizes rehabilitation alongside preventive measures.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (2000) and Amendment (2006):**
 - ✓ Includes working children in the **category of children in need of care and protection.**
 - ✓ **Sections 23 and 26 address** cruelty to juveniles and exploitation of juvenile employees.
- **Pencil Platform:**
 - ✓ **Dedicated platform (pencil.gov.in)** for effective enforcement of child labour laws.
 - ✓ Aims to end **child labour through comprehensive measures** and enforcement.

- **Right to Education Act (2009):**
 - ✓ Mandates that **all children aged 6 to 14 years are in school and receive free education.**
 - ✓ Recognizes education as a **fundamental right**, offering a strategic opportunity to combat child labour.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act (2016):**
 - ✓ **Completely prohibits the employment of children below 14 years.**
 - ✓ **Prohibits adolescents (14-18 years) from engaging in hazardous occupations** and processes.
 - ✓ Regulates working conditions for adolescents where not prohibited.
- **Ratification of International Labour Organization Conventions (2017):**
 - ✓ India ratified **two core conventions of the ILO on child labour.**
 - ✓ Demonstrates commitment to **global efforts against child labour.**
- **Amendments to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act:**
 - ✓ Prescribes severe punishment for **retaining bonded labour.**
 - ✓ Stipulates rigorous imprisonment for those forcing children into specific degrading activities.
- **Draft National Policy for Domestic Workers:**
 - ✓ Aims to ensure a minimum salary of **Rs. 9,000 for household helpers.**
 - ✓ Seeks to establish fair labour practices for **domestic workers.**
- **Police Measures:**
 - ✓ Every police station in the country has a dedicated cell for **juvenile, women, and child protection.**
 - ✓ Enhances focus on issues related to child rights and protection.
- **NGO Initiatives:**
 - ✓ Various NGOs, including **Bachpan Bachao Andolan, CARE India, Child Rights and You, Global March Against Child Labour, RIDE India, and Childline**, actively work towards eradicating child labour in India.
 - ✓ Highlights the collaborative effort involving **government and non-governmental organizations.**

WAY FORWARD: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOUR (SOURCE ILO)

- **Integrated and Rights-Based Approach:**
 - ✓ Recognizes the **need for an integrated and rights-based approach** to address child labour.
 - ✓ Acknowledges the **importance of policy responses in key areas:** education, social protection, labour markets, and legal standards.
- **Four Pillars of Policy Response:**
 - ✓ **Education:** **Universal quality education as a fundamental right to break intergenerational cycles of poverty and child labour.**
 - ✓ **Social Protection:** Prevents households from **resorting to child labour as a negative coping strategy amidst poverty.**
 - ✓ **Labour Markets:** Well-designed policies focusing on **rural and informal economies to curb demand for child labour.**
 - ✓ **Legal Standards and Regulation:** International and national **laws formalize the state's duty to protect children.**
- **Root Cause Eradication:**
 - ✓ Focuses on **systemic change and root cause eradication** through coherent development policies.
- **Limits of Enforcement:**
 - ✓ Acknowledges enforcement limits, **especially in cases of unpaid family work.**
 - ✓ Caution against victimizing families already **suffering from poverty and inequality.**
- **Social Dialogue and Rights:**
 - ✓ Effective policy responses require **social dialogue and recognition of human rights.**
 - ✓ Freedom of association and collective bargaining empower affected communities.
- **Partnerships and Cooperation:**



- ✓ Highlights the role of partnerships like **Alliance 8.7 for global collaboration**.
- ✓ Emphasizes the need for international development cooperation due to resource challenges.
- **Resource Challenges:**
 - ✓ Recognizes the **financial constraints of governments**.
 - ✓ Stresses the importance of **international support from UN agencies, NGOs, and others**.

SANITATION IN INDIA

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- India, grappling with **sanitation challenges**, underscores the **critical importance of effective sanitation systems**. The discussion delves into the intricacies of rural and urban sanitation, highlighting various systems like **twin pits, septic tanks, and sewer networks**.
- The emphasis on **faecal sludge management (FSM)** through **Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs)** and **Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)** becomes pertinent.
- As sanitation remains a crucial aspect of **public health and environmental conservation**, the need for well-designed, universally accessible sanitation services is underscored.
- The ongoing efforts to address challenges and **enhance sanitation practices** contribute to the **broader conversation on sustainable water management and health in India**.

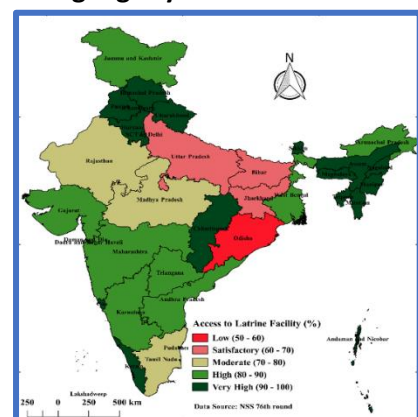
SANITATION IN INDIA:

- **Introduction:**
 - ✓ Sanitation, encompassing the **safe disposal of human waste** and the **maintenance of hygienic conditions**, is a critical aspect of **public health and environmental well-being**.
 - ✓ **At the recent G20 summit**, global leaders reaffirmed their **commitment to addressing climate change**, recognizing its **impact on vulnerable nations like India**.
 - ✓ India's extensive coastline makes it **highly susceptible to rising sea levels, floods, and droughts**, affecting **marginalized communities in coastal areas**.
 - ✓ Extreme climate events **damage toilets, water supplies, and sewage infrastructure**, affecting water quality and causing **sewage spillage**.
 - ✓ Adverse health effects, especially in **slum settlements**, are a consequence.



Background of Sanitation in India:

- **Rural Sanitation Programs:**
 - ✓ **Initiated in 1954**, with a focus on **improving rural life and providing dignity to women**.
 - ✓ The 1981 Census revealed **only 1% rural sanitation coverage**.
 - ✓ The **Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC)** from 1999 emphasized a demand-driven approach.
- **Nirmal Gram Puraskars and NBA:**
 - ✓ Nirmal Gram Puraskars recognized **achievements in rural sanitation**.
 - ✓ The **Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA)** succeeded TSC in 2012, aiming for comprehensive rural sanitation.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission:**
 - ✓ **Launched in 2014** to achieve **universal sanitation coverage by 2019**.
 - ✓ **Two sub-missions:** Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).



- ✓ Focus on **Solid and Liquid Waste Management** and making Gram Panchayats Open Defecation Free.

OBJECTIVES & IMPORTANCE OF SANITATION:

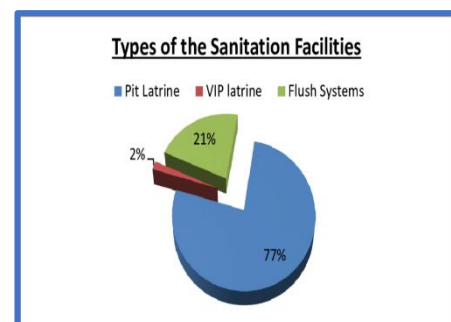
- **Sanitation Coverage Acceleration:**
 - ✓ Accelerate sanitation coverage to achieve **Swachh Bharat by October 2, 2019**.
- **Community Motivation:**
 - ✓ **Motivate communities and Panchayati Raj Institutions** for sustainable sanitation practices through awareness and education.
- **Technology Adoption:**
 - ✓ **Encourage cost-effective and eco-friendly sanitation technologies.**
- **Community-Managed Systems:**
 - ✓ Develop community-managed sanitation systems, **focusing on scientific Solid & Liquid Waste Management.**
- **Gender and Social Inclusion:**
 - ✓ **Create a positive impact on gender and promote social inclusion** through improved sanitation, especially in marginalized communities.
- **Health Impact:**
 - ✓ Poor sanitation is a **primary cause of deadly diseases**, especially **among children under five**.
 - ✓ Contamination of water sources **leads to various diseases like diarrhea, cholera, trachoma, and malaria.**
 - ✓ **Exposure to human waste** can contain millions of **viruses, bacteria, and parasites.**
- **Environmental Impact:**
 - ✓ **Inadequate sanitation and waste management** directly impact the environment.
 - ✓ Untreated sewage affects **coastal and marine ecosystems**, contaminates soil and air, posing health risks.
- **Economic Impact:**
 - ✓ Absence of toilets and poor sanitation costs **India 6.4% of its GDP (2006).**
 - ✓ Economic impact includes health, education, access time, and tourism, **estimated at USD 38.5 billion annually.**



TYPES OF SANITATION SYSTEMS:

On-site Sanitation Systems (OSS):

- **Rural and Spacious Urban Areas:**
 - ✓ **Twin Pits or Septic Tanks:**
 - **Collection and storage structures connected below ground to toilets.**
 - Other OSS types include **bio-digester toilets, bio-tanks, and urine diversion dry toilets.**
 - Passive treatment of used **water with disposal into the surrounding soil.**
- **Twin Pits:**
 - ✓ Two pits separated by **at least one meter.**
 - ✓ Porous walls facilitate liquid percolation into **the ground while solids degrade** at the pit bottom.
 - ✓ **Operational cycle** involves alternating pit use.
 - ✓ After one pit reaches capacity, it remains unused for two years until contents are dry, pathogen-free, and safe for reuse.
- **Septic Tanks:**
 - ✓ Watertight tanks where **solids settle at the bottom**, and **scum (oil and grease) floats to the top.**
 - ✓ Clear liquid disposal into the surrounding soil through pits or longer, shallower trenches.



- ✓ Periodic removal of **accumulated faecal sludge and scum using trucks with vacuum pumps.**
- **Sewer Systems:**
 - ✓ **Densely Populated Urban Areas:**
 - ✓ **Underground network of pipes (sewers) collect and convey used water to treatment facilities.**
 - ✓ Pipes transport water from toilets, bathrooms, and kitchens to treatment facilities through gravity or pumps.
 - ✓ Sewers equipped with **machine-holes for maintenance and blockage removal.**
- **Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs):**
 - ✓ Treatment of sewage from sewers.
 - ✓ Various processes involve **physical, biological, and chemical methods** to remove pollutants.
 - ✓ Effluent treatment facilitates **safe disposal or reuse of treated water.**

CHALLENGES OF SANITATION IN INDIA: [Source: DTE]

- **Claimed Success vs. Hard Data:**
 - ✓ Despite the government's **claim of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status**, hard data from NFHS-5 suggests **ongoing challenges.**
 - ✓ One in five households still practices **open defecation, and 19.4% of the population lacks toilet access.**
- **Caste and Socio-economic Exclusion:**
 - ✓ Exclusion of **caste and socio-economic factors in policy design** contributes to the gap between government claims and ground reality.
 - ✓ Caste-based discrimination, especially against **Dalits, results in 28.8% of rural Dalits lacking toilet access.**
- **Resource Diversion and Impact on Marginalized Communities:**
 - ✓ Haste in achieving ODF status diverts resources, **impacting marginalized communities disproportionately.**
 - ✓ Coercive tactics, including **withholding benefits, fines, and threats**, are used on lower castes to attain ODF status.
- **Villager's Role and Financial Burden:**
 - ✓ **Villagers bear a financial burden**, constructing **toilets with their savings**, awaiting government subsidies.
 - ✓ **Failure to build latrines results in berating**, linking the development narrative to individual contributions.
- **Access to Waste Treatment Facilities:**
 - ✓ **Limited access to waste treatment** facilities poses a significant challenge.
 - ✓ **Manual scavenging is required for pit latrines and septic tanks** due to the **absence of water and centralized sewage.**
- **Inadequate Waste Treatment Infrastructure:**
 - ✓ **Lower castes, coerced into latrine construction, face challenges** without proper waste treatment infrastructure.
 - ✓ **Lack of sewer connections leads to manual scavenging**, risking dignity and health, especially for Dalits.
- **Need for Inclusive Policy Design:**
 - ✓ The **singular focus on toilet construction neglects caste and socio-economic determinants.**
 - ✓ Inclusion of these factors in policy design and implementation is crucial to address the root causes of open defecation.
- **Continued Manual Scavenging Risk:**
 - ✓ In the **absence of proper waste treatment**, manual scavenging persists, **posing health risks** and perpetuating social inequalities.
 - ✓ **Proper waste treatment infrastructure** is essential to eliminate manual scavenging practices.
- **Divergence from Sustainable Development Goals:**

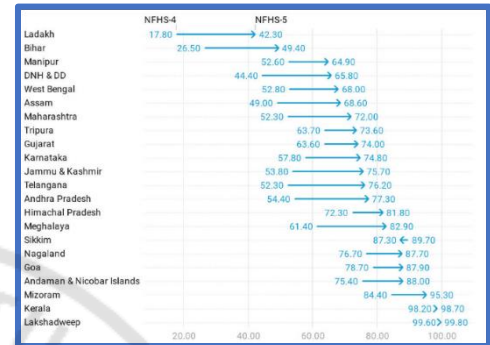


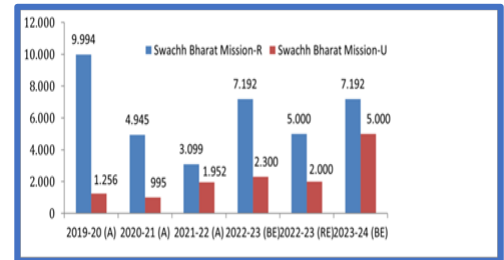
Figure 1: Percentage of Population Living in Households that Use Improved Sanitation

- ✓ The challenges **highlight a gap in meeting Sustainable Development Goal 6.2**, emphasizing equitable access to sanitation.
- ✓ Addressing these challenges is essential for **achieving holistic and sustainable sanitation outcomes**.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS [Source: PIB]

➤ Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G):

- ✓ Achieved a major milestone with **50% of villages declaring ODF Plus status**.
- ✓ **ODF Plus includes sustained ODF status along with solid or liquid waste management systems**.
- ✓ **Over 2.96 lakh villages declared ODF Plus**, contributing to SBM-G Phase II goals by 2024-25.
- ✓ Top-performing states include **Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra Nagar Havelli & Daman Diu, and Lakshadweep**.

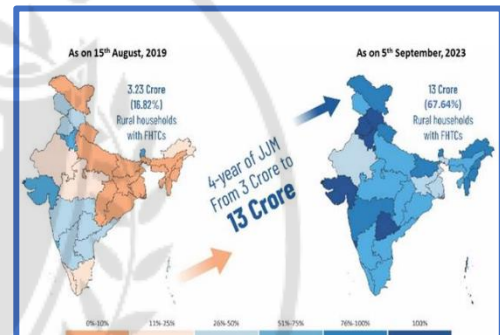


➤ Components of SBM-G Phase II:

- ✓ Focus on sustaining ODF status, solid and liquid waste management, **plastic waste management, faecal sludge management, GOBARdhan**, and information education and communication /behavior change.
- ✓ SBM-G instrumental in **improving health, well-being**, and cleanliness across the country.
- ✓ SBM-G serves as a **shining example of successful sanitation and hygiene improvement** when there is concerted effort at various levels.
- ✓ Acknowledges and applauds the **contribution of villages, Gram Panchayats, Districts, and States/UTs** in achieving this significant milestone.

➤ Financial Allocations:

- ✓ **Between 2014-15 and 2021-22**, the Central Government allocated **INR 83,938 crore to SBM-G**.
- ✓ **Allocation for 2023-24 is Rs. 52,137 Crore**.
- ✓ **Additional funds from the 15th Finance Commission** are also allocated for sanitation.



➤ SBM-G Impact Areas:

- ✓ **Plastic Waste Management: 831 units and 1,19,449 waste collection & segregation sheds** set up.
- ✓ **Bio-Gas/CBG Plants: 683 functional plants established across 206 districts**.
- ✓ **Community Compost Pits: 3,47,094 constructed for bio-degradable waste management**.
- ✓ **Soak Pits for Grey Water: Approximately 22 lakh soak pits constructed to manage grey water**.
- ✓ **Faecal Sludge Management: 591 functional Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs)** are in operation.

➤ GOBARdhan Scheme:

- ✓ A **'waste to wealth' initiative** focusing on biodegradable waste recovery and **creating clean & green villages**.
- ✓ **683 Functional Bio-Gas/CBG Plants set up**, converting waste into bio-gas and bio-slurry.
- ✓ GOBARdhan aligns with the **circular economy and Mission LiFE initiatives** of the Government of India.



➤ Sujalam Campaign:

- ✓ Undertaken for **Grey Water Management**, addressing **wastewater from household chores**.
- ✓ **Approximately 2.2 million soak pits (community & household pits)** constructed for effective grey water treatment.
- ✓ **Sujalam 3.0 launched** for holistic and convergent Greywater Management.

➤ Sanitation Impact on Economy and Environment:

- ✓ Reduction in GHG emissions, **forex savings from crude oil reduction**, employment opportunities, and economic savings from improved sanitation and health conditions.
- **Other Government Initiatives:**
 - ✓ **Swachhata Pakhwada, Namami Gange, and the GOBARdhan scheme contribute to broader cleanliness and waste management goals in India.**

WAY FORWARD:

*In 2019, India celebrated **the achievement of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status**, but recent data from the **National Family and Health Survey (NFHS-5) challenges these claims**. Open defecation persists in **one in five households**, revealing a gap between official narratives and ground realities. To move forward and truly improve sanitation outcomes, a comprehensive and inclusive approach is essential:*

- **Inclusive Sanitation Coverage:**
 - ✓ Recognize and prioritize marginalized populations, **including female-headed households**, landless people, **migrant laborers, and disabled individuals**, who still lack access to toilets.
 - ✓ Ensure that existing toilets are accessible and meet the specific needs of diverse communities.
- **Data Disaggregation and Innovation:**
 - ✓ **Collect disaggregated sanitation coverage data**, especially in **public facilities**, to identify and address gaps among disadvantaged sections.
 - ✓ Innovate data collection methods to cover missed populations and **accurately assess progress**.
- **Beyond Toilet Construction:**
 - ✓ Learn from past sanitation programs like the Central Rural Sanitation Programme and Total Sanitation Campaign, emphasizing that toilet construction alone does not guarantee usage.
 - ✓ **Focus on holistic behaviour change toward toilet use** through effective communication campaigns.
- **Political Leadership and Monitoring:**
 - ✓ Capitalize on **political support to drive sanitation initiatives**.
 - ✓ Strengthen monitoring mechanisms, **learn from past failures, and ensure effective measurement of success**.
- **Behavioral Change through Education:**
 - ✓ Emphasize the adverse health outcomes **resulting from unsafe sanitation practices**.
 - ✓ **Utilize educational institutions, child-care centers, and hospitals** to promote behavioral changes in sanitation practices.
- **Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness:**
 - ✓ **Screen and promote culturally relevant media**, such as movies like "Toilet: Ek Prem Katha," to raise awareness about the necessity of toilets.
 - ✓ **Engage school teachers and local leaders** as catalysts in spreading awareness and encouraging behavioral changes.
- **Continued Government Focus:**
 - ✓ Sustain the momentum of the **Swachh Bharat Mission (G) Phase II (2020-2025)** by transforming **villages from ODF to ODF Plus**.
 - ✓ Ensure **effective management of liquid and solid waste** to improve overall cleanliness in rural areas.
- **Independent Monitoring and Evaluation:**
 - ✓ Implement an independent, credible, and **robust monitoring tool to accurately measure sanitation progress**.
 - ✓ Address reasons for **non-usage of toilets and continually refine strategies** to meet sanitation goals and ensure well-being.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

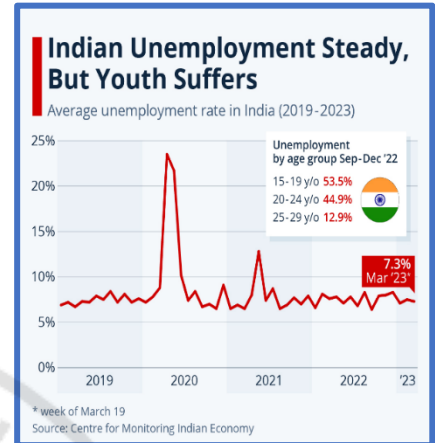
- *The **issue of youth unemployment in India** has garnered renewed attention, **sparked by recent events like the breach in Parliament**.*

- Despite official data indicating an **overall decline in unemployment rates, concerns persist, particularly regarding highly educated youth.**
- The disparity in **unemployment trends among graduates, especially young job-seekers, highlights a persistent challenge in the Indian labour market.**
- As the **country grapples with the complex dynamics of education, skill development, and job creation, the spotlight on rising youth unemployment underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to address this long-standing issue.**

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA:

➤ Overview:

- ✓ In **1932, M Visvesvaraya highlighted the issue of unemployment among the educated in India.**
- ✓ Recent events, such as the **Parliament breach**, have reignited concerns about youth unemployment.
- ✓ **The youth unemployment rate refers to those in the workforce who are aged 15 to 24 years and without a job, but actively seeking one. Generally, youth unemployment rates are higher than the adult unemployment rates, and India is no exception: youth unemployment in India is significantly higher than the national unemployment rate.**
- ✓ Despite official data indicating a decline in the **overall unemployment rate from 6.1% in 2017-18 to 3.2% in 2022-23**, significant challenges persist.



➤ Demographic Dividend:

- ✓ India is home to more than **600 million people aged between 18 and 35, with 65% under the age of 35.**
- ✓ India's demographic dividend is **expected to persist at least until 2055–56 and will peak around 2041**, when the **share of the working-age population — 20–59 years — is expected to hit 59%.**

➤ Economic Opportunity:

- ✓ The demographic dividend presents a **significant economic opportunity**, especially for **accelerating growth in the manufacturing sector**. With the **launch of NEP 2020**, the focus has been to **shift the mindset of the youth from being jobseekers to job creators.**
- ✓ Automation and groundbreaking advancements in technology are fundamentally changing the nature of work in more ways than one can think.
- ✓ Trends such as **demographic transitions and technological changes such as Industry 4.0, Web 3.0, extended reality technology and AI** are bringing immense possibilities that will forever change lives.

➤ Global Youth Unemployment Scenario:

- ✓ From **2000 until 2019**, youth unemployment fluctuated **between 13 and 15.5 percent**, before it **rose above 18 percent in 2020** during the **Covid-19 pandemic.**
- ✓ The world region with the **highest youth unemployment rate has been the Arab World** for the past two decades, while **East Asia and the Pacific has generally had the lowest rate.**
- ✓ Apart from the **sharp rise in 2020**, the most **notable increase came in 2009 as a result of the Great Recession**; while this increase can be observed on a global scale, its impact on youth unemployment was more severely felt in more **advanced economies in Europe and North America.**

➤ Indian Context:

- ✓ In **2022**, the estimated youth unemployment rate in **India was at 23.22 percent.**
- ✓ According to the source, the data are **ILO estimates**. For the past decade, India's youth unemployment rate **has been hovering around the 22 percent mark.**

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS): [source: PIB]

➤ Introduction to PLFS:

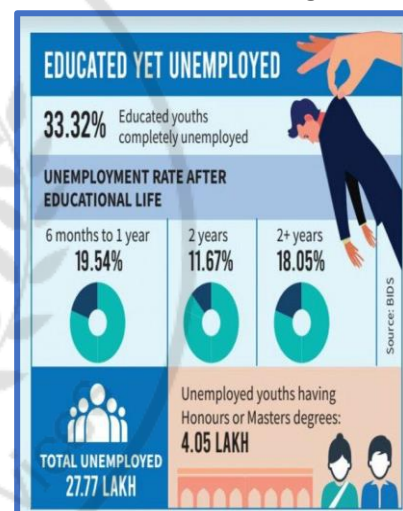
- ✓ Launched by the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in April 2017.**
- ✓ Aims to provide frequent labor force data, **emphasizing key employment and unemployment indicators.**

➤ Objectives of PLFS:

- ✓ Estimate employment and unemployment indicators in a **short three-month interval for urban areas in the 'Current Weekly Status.'**
- ✓ Provide annual estimates for **both rural and urban** areas in both 'Usual Status' (ps+ss) and CWS.
- **Key Highlights of Annual Reports and Survey Periods:**
 - ✓ Five annual reports released for survey periods: **July 2017-June 2018 to July 2021-June 2022.**
 - ✓ Sixth Annual Report covers **data collected during July 2022-June 2023.**
- **Age Specific Labour Force Participation Rate:**
 - ✓ **Increasing** Trend in Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for **persons of age 15 years and above.**
 - ✓ In rural areas, **LFPR increased from 50.7% in 2017-18 to 60.8% in 2022-23** while for **urban areas it increased from 47.6% to 50.4%.**
 - ✓ LFPR for **male in India increased from 75.8% in 2017-18 to 78.5% in 2022-23** and corresponding increase in LFPR for female was from 23.3% to 37.0%.
- **Age Specific Worker Population Ratio (ASWFPR):**
 - ✓ Increasing Trend in **Worker Population Ratio (WPR)** for **persons of age 15 years and above.**
 - ✓ In rural areas, **WPR increased from 48.1% in 2017-18 to 59.4% in 2022-23** while for **urban areas it increased from 43.9% to 47.7%.**
 - ✓ WPR for **male in India increased from 71.2% in 2017-18 to 76.0% in 2022-23** and corresponding increase in WPR for female was from 22.0% to 35.9%.

UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES PERSIST AMONG EDUCATED YOUTH IN INDIA:

- **High Graduate Unemployment:**
 - ✓ The **State of Working India 2023 report** by Azim Premji University reveals persistently high **unemployment rates among educated youth**, particularly graduates **under 25, reaching a significant 42.3%.**
- **Education Disparities:**
 - ✓ The report highlights a **doubling of the unemployment rate for graduates under 25 compared to youth with only higher secondary education in the same age group**, raising concerns about education-to-employment transitions.
- **Job Nature Concerns:**
 - ✓ While graduates eventually find jobs, the report questions the **nature of these jobs**, emphasizing the **importance of matching skills and aspirations with employment opportunities.**
- **Changing Work Dynamics:**
 - ✓ The **document underscores shift in India's work landscape**, with an **increase in salaried workers** and a decrease in casual labor.
 - ✓ However, concerns arise **regarding the contribution of manufacturing jobs** to the economy.
- **Widening Gender Employment Gap:**
 - ✓ **Gender norms** continue to influence **women's employment decisions**, with a **U-shaped relationship between a husband's income** and the likelihood of the wife working.
 - ✓ **Distress-led self-employment** among women has risen post-COVID.
- **Impact of Economic Distress:**
 - ✓ **The rise in self-employment is linked to economic distress**, with a **drop in real earnings.**
 - ✓ The report analyzes the **changing dynamics of female employment rates** and the overall impact on self-employment.
- **Job Creation Challenges:**
 - ✓ While between 2004 and 2019, there was a **surge in annual creation of salaried jobs**, the report notes a **decline in job creation in regular wages due to the economic slowdown** and the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Intergenerational and Caste Dynamics:**



- ✓ Gender norms are influenced by intergenerational factors, with the **presence of employed mothers-in-law positively impacting daughters-in-law's employment.**
- ✓ The report also points out the **under-representation of SC and ST owners in businesses**, particularly in firms with more than 20 workers.
- **Gender Wage Disparities:**
 - ✓ Analysis indicates **gender wage disparities among SC and ST women workers** compared to those from the general category in salaried work.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT:

<i>Scheme/Program Name</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Incentivize employers for creating new employment, provide social security benefits, and restore loss of employment during the Covid-19 pandemic.
<i>Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Incentivize employers for the creation of new employment opportunities. ✓ Beneficiaries registered until March 31, 2019, continue to receive benefits for three years from the date of registration.
<i>National Career Service (NCS) Project</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Transform the National Employment Service to provide career-related services like job matching, career counseling, vocational guidance, information on skill development courses, apprenticeship, internships, etc.
<i>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work.
<i>Aajeevika - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create efficient institutional platforms for rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.
<i>Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushlya Yojana (DDU-GKY)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide placement-linked skill development for rural poor youth in the age group of 15-35 years under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission.
<i>Rural Self Employment and Training Institutes (RSETIs)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Impart training and skill upgrading to rural youth geared towards entrepreneurship development. ✓ Managed by banks with cooperation from the Government of India and State Governments.
<i>PM- SVANidhi Scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide collateral-free working capital loans to street vendors in urban areas to resume businesses affected by the Covid-19 lockdown.
<i>Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduce poverty and vulnerability of urban poor households by enabling access to gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities.
<i>Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Generate self-employment opportunities by establishing micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector, aiding traditional artisans and unemployed youth.

Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)	✓ Provide loans up to 10 lakh to non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises through three products: 'Shishu,' 'Kishore,' and 'Tarun.'
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)	✓ Enable Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training for better livelihoods.
Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme	✓ Create national manufacturing champions, generate jobs, and boost production in 14 key sectors over the next 5 years.
PM GatiShakti - National Master Plan for Multi-Modal Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide multimodal connectivity infrastructure to various economic zones for economic growth and sustainable development. ✓ Driven by 7 engines: Railways, Roads, Ports, Waterways, Airports, Mass Transport, and Logistics Infrastructure.

WAY FORWARD FOR EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN INDIA:

- **Comprehensive National Employment Policy:**
 - ✓ **Urgent need for a comprehensive National Employment Policy** similar to the National Education Policy.
 - ✓ A policy document to provide **guiding principles, action agenda, and resource allocation.**
- **Reform of Factor Markets:**
 - ✓ **Land and labour markets** are largely unreformed in India.
 - ✓ **Reforms in land and labour markets to increase land supply** and enhance labor flexibility for increased hiring.
- **Devolution of Power to Local Bodies:**
 - ✓ **Empower states, cities, and local bodies** for effective job creation initiatives.
 - ✓ Action at the **local level crucial for improving labour** market information, skill-building, and implementing market-friendly reforms.
- **Agile Education and Skilling Ecosystem:**
 - ✓ Emphasize the creation of responsive skilling and educational institutions.
 - ✓ Institutions capable of aligning with **skill-demand trends for quick translation into relevant courses and certifications.**
- **Universal Income Support Systems:**
 - ✓ **Replace the current physical subsidy system** with cash-based universal or targeted income support systems.
 - ✓ Extend **direct benefits transfer to various subsidies**, creating new markets and enhancing labour mobility.
- **Focus on High Employment Elasticity Sectors:**
 - ✓ Prioritize support for sectors with high employment elasticity.
 - ✓ Examples include construction, **real estate, logistics, transport, apparel, leather products, furniture, education, healthcare, and app-based services.**
- **Scale Up Apprenticeship and Fixed Period Job Contracts:**
 - ✓ Significantly increase apprenticeship opportunities.
 - ✓ **Legislate in favour of fixed-term job contracts** with portable social security benefits to reduce bias towards capital-intensive investments.
- **Legislative Support for Job Creation:**
 - ✓ Enable employers to **offer fixed-term contracts with supportive legislation.**
 - ✓ Formalize employment contracts, **creating millions of jobs and reducing the bias towards capital-intensive investments.**

TUBERCULOSIS IN INDIA

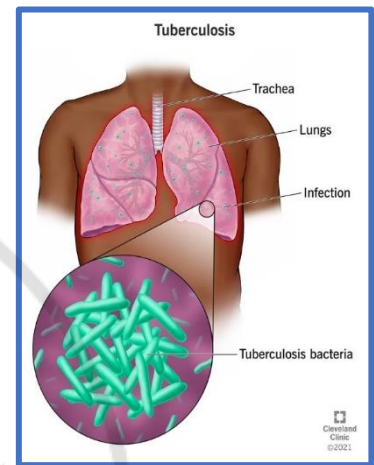
SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- **India's battle against tuberculosis (TB) has gained significant attention due to recent advancements in TB treatment approaches.**
- **The country, which bears 27% of the global TB burden, has been actively addressing challenges in TB care and treatment.**
- **Studies conducted in India and globally have explored new drug regimens for TB treatment.**
- **Promising results suggest the possibility of reducing the treatment duration from six to four months, a groundbreaking development.**

UNDERSTANDING TUBERCULOSIS (TB):

- **Tuberculosis (TB):**
 - ✓ **Infectious disease affecting the lungs** or other organs caused by the **bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis**.
 - ✓ It can be **latent (inactive) or active**, leading to TB disease.
- **Stages of TB:**
 - ✓ **Primary Infection:** Initial exposure to the bacterium.
 - ✓ **Latent TB Infection (LTBI):** Bacterium is dormant; no symptoms.
 - ✓ **Active TB Disease:** Bacterium becomes active, causing symptoms and being contagious.
- **Types of TB:**
 - ✓ **Pulmonary TB:** Affects the lungs (most common).
 - ✓ **Extrapulmonary TB:** Affects organs other than the lungs.
 - ✓ **Systemic Miliary TB:** Spreads throughout the body, impacting various organs.
- **Transmission and Spread:**
 - ✓ Spread through the air **when a person with active TB coughs, sneezes, talks, or laughs**.
 - ✓ Contagious only in the active stage; **latent TB is not contagious**.
 - ✓ **Most infections result in latent TB**, with the bacterium becoming active if the immune system weakens.
- **Signs and Symptoms:**
 - ✓ **Inactive TB:** No symptoms, positive skin or blood test.
 - ✓ **Active TB:** Cough (lasting > two weeks), chest pain, coughing up blood, fatigue, weight loss, chills, fever, night sweats.
- **Diagnosis and Tests:**
 - ✓ Screening tests include **Mantoux tuberculin skin test (TST)** and **interferon gamma release assay (IGRA)**.
 - ✓ **Additional tests for active infection:** sputum and lung fluid analysis, chest X-ray, CT scans.



TB IN INDIA: KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM GLOBAL TB REPORT 2023

- **India's TB Burden:**
 - ✓ **India accounts for 27% of global TB cases**, maintaining the highest incidence worldwide.
 - ✓ Despite positive strides, the goal of **TB elimination by 2025 faces challenges**.
- **Mortality Data Revision:**
 - ✓ **Sudden drop in TB mortality noted in 2023 report** due to revised data source (Sample Registration System).
 - ✓ India's TB mortality **reduced from 4.94 lakhs (2021) to 3.31 lakhs (2022)**.
 - ✓ **Global mortality contribution by India decreased from 36% to 26% in 2022**.
- **Reporting Trends:**
 - ✓ **Increase in reporting of TB cases in India**, surpassing pre-pandemic levels with **24.2 lakh cases in 2022**.

- ✓ Positive trend despite the global decline in TB reporting during the pandemic.

➤ **TB Incidence in India:**

- ✓ **Nearly 28.2 lakh** people contracted TB in India in **2022**, translating to **one new case every 11 seconds**.
- ✓ India's contribution to the **global burden slightly reduced from 28% to 27%**.

➤ **National TB Prevalence Survey:**

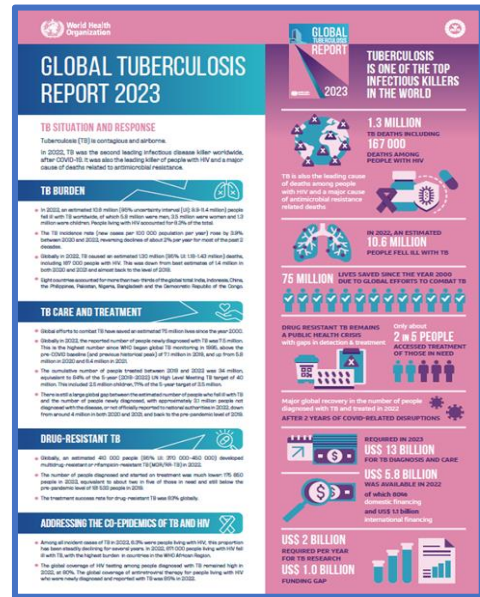
- ✓ India was the **only country to complete a National TB prevalence survey since 2019**, contributing to estimates.

➤ **TB Treatment Coverage:**

- ✓ India achieved a **19% increase in TB treatment coverage**, surpassing 80%.
- ✓ **One of the four high-burden countries with over 80% treatment coverage.**

➤ **Target for TB Elimination:**

- ✓ **India's target: Eliminate TB by 2025**, with a goal of no more than **44 new cases per lakh population**.
- ✓ Challenges in achieving the target as the 2023 report indicates **199 cases per lakh population**.



CURRENT CHALLENGES IN TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL IN INDIA:

➤ **High Mortality Rate:**

- ✓ **Two deaths** occur **every three minutes** from TB in India.
- ✓ Challenges include **poor primary health-care infrastructure**, unregulated private healthcare, and spreading HIV infection.

➤ **Misconceptions and Transmission Sources:**

- ✓ **Misconception persists that TB is a disease of the poor**, mainly in slums.
- ✓ Affluent individuals are **at risk due to asymptomatic carriers**, emphasizing the need for awareness.
- ✓ Unpasteurized milk or dairy products from raw milk can be a potential source of TB transmission.

➤ **Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and Extensively Drug-Resistant TB (XDR-TB):**

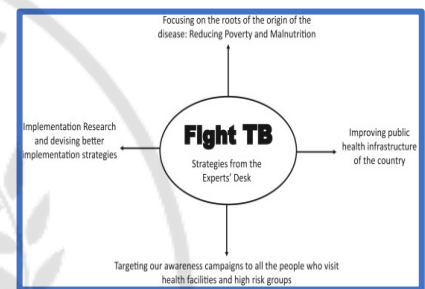
- ✓ **MDR-TB strains resistant to Isoniazid and Rifampicin**; XDR-TB resistant to additional drugs.
- ✓ Both forms pose a significant **threat to anti-TB programs**, requiring longer and more expensive treatment.

➤ **Impact of Drug Resistance:**

- ✓ Drug resistance, **especially MDR-TB and XDR-TB**, is a disaster for patients and others.
- ✓ Contributing factors include inadequate treatment, **substandard drugs**, and **patient non-adherence**.

➤ **Treatment Protocols and Collaboration:**

- ✓ Current treatment protocols recommend a **standardized regimen for MDR-TB**.
- ✓ Surgery considered for **extensive cases resistant to most drugs**.
- ✓ **Collaboration between NTCP, NRHM, private sector**, and IMA is ongoing to enhance TB care.



GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO ELIMINATE TUBERCULOSIS IN INDIA: [Source: PIB]

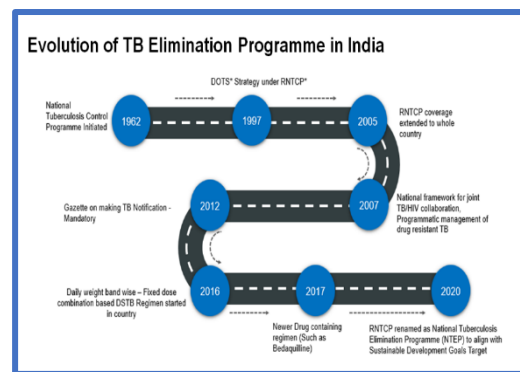
➤ **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP):**

- ✓ Formerly known as RNTCP, aims to **strategically reduce TB burden in India by 2025**.
- ✓ Renamed in 2020, it aligns with **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision** articulated in 2018.
- ✓ Responsible for implementing **five-year National Strategic Plans for TB elimination**.

➤ **National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination:**

- ✓ Launched to **achieve the goal of ending TB by 2025**.
- ✓ Focus on detecting all TB patients, **especially from private providers and high-risk populations**.

- ✓ **Universal Drug Susceptibility Testing (UDST)** implemented to check drug resistance.
- **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMBA):**
 - ✓ Launched to mobilize citizens for collective efforts toward TB elimination.
 - ✓ **Ni-kshay Mitra initiative provides additional support** to those on TB treatment.
 - ✓ Aims to leverage CSR opportunities through the **Ni-kshay 2.0 portal**.
- **Progress and Achievements:**
 - ✓ TB patient registration **improved by 56% from 2014 to 2022**.
 - ✓ **Highest-ever private sector** TB cases registered in 2022.
 - ✓ Significant disbursement via **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** to support TB patients.
 - ✓ **Over 9.5 lakh** consented TB patients adopted by Ni-kshay Mitra.
 - ✓ **Reduction of 20%** in estimates of **Drug Resistant TB** from 2015 to 2021.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure and Global Recognition:**
 - ✓ Rapid scaling up of **Molecular Diagnostic Machines**.
 - ✓ **Over 1.5 lakh Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres** providing decentralized TB care.
 - ✓ Incidence of TB in India reduced by **18% from 2015 to 2021**, outperforming the global average.



WAY FORWARD:

- **Shorter Treatment Regimens:**
 - ✓ **Adopt innovative approaches**, such as **four-month drug regimens**, for more effective TB treatment, especially in children.
 - ✓ Integrate recent global studies, like the **SHINE trial**, into national guidelines to reduce the treatment duration.
- **Integration of New Approaches:**
 - ✓ Collaborate with global and local researchers to identify safe, effective, and implementable drug combinations for TB treatment.
 - ✓ **Align national guidelines with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations**, embracing advancements in TB care.
- **Political Commitment and Innovation:**
 - ✓ Leverage India's growing political commitment to prioritize TB eradication efforts.
 - ✓ Encourage policymakers to adopt innovative approaches, including **efficient drug combinations**, to enhance treatment outcomes.
- **Cost Considerations:**
 - ✓ **Mitigate costs through negotiations between stakeholders and drug manufacturers**, drawing lessons from successful global experiences.
 - ✓ **Lower drug prices to facilitate the widespread adoption of newer, shorter-duration**, and less toxic drug combinations.
- **Active Screening and Case Detection:**
 - ✓ **Implement active screening and case detection strategies** to promptly identify and treat TB cases.
 - ✓ **Emphasize the urgency of early intervention and treatment**, aligning with the vision of being TB-free ahead of global targets.

POPULATION CENSUS OF INDIA: SIGNIFICANCE & CHALLENGES

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- The deadline to **freeze administrative boundaries for Census activities** has been **extended until June 30, 2024**.

- The Census, **originally scheduled for 2020**, will be further delayed until at **least October 2024** due to the **time needed for enumerator list preparation after boundary setting**.
- The **Additional Registrar-General of India** issued a notification stating the extension, **marking the ninth such extension of the deadline**.
- With the extension, the **Census won't precede the 2024 elections** expected in April and May, **impacting the schedule of the decennial exercise**.

POPULATION CENSUS IN INDIA:

➤ Purpose and Scope:

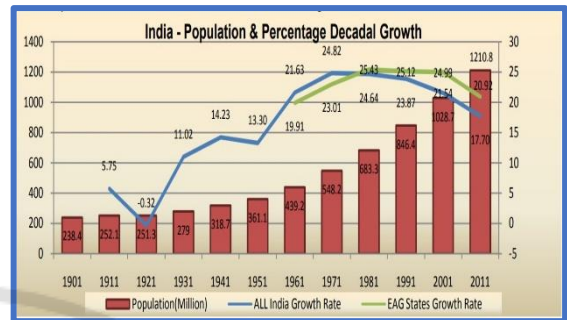
- ✓ A population census **involves the systematic collection, analysis, and dissemination of demographic, social, cultural, and economic data** for all individuals in a country.
- ✓ This comprehensive effort occurs at **regular intervals, typically every ten years**.

➤ Administrative Significance:

- ✓ In a diverse country like India, conducting a population census is **considered the largest administrative exercise** during peacetime due to the vast geographical and demographic variations.

➤ Information Richness:

- ✓ The census **provides a wealth of information**, including **details about households, available amenities, and various socio-economic and cultural attributes**.
- ✓ This data serves as a **crucial resource for planners, researchers, administrators, and other users**.



➤ Decadal Tradition in India:

- ✓ India has a proud tradition of conducting a **census every ten years**, making it one of the few countries **globally with such regularity**.
- ✓ This tradition dates back to ancient times, as evident in literature like the '**Rig Veda**' and **historical practices during the Mughal era**.

➤ Historical Context:

- ✓ The roots of census-taking can be traced to ancient civilizations, **including ancient Rome, where it was employed for taxation purposes**.
- ✓ **In India, Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' emphasized census-taking as a state policy**, reflecting in-depth data collection even during the Mughal reign.
- ✓ India has a rich history of conducting regular **decennial Population Censuses since 1872**.
- ✓ **The last Census was in 2011**, marking the **15th in the continuous series since 1872** and the **7th since independence**.
- ✓ The **upcoming Census will be the 16th in the series** and the **8th since independence**.

➤ Post-Independence Era:

- ✓ The **history of the Indian Census is divided into two significant periods: the Pre-Independence era and the Post-Independence era**.
- ✓ The census continues to be a **challenging yet fascinating endeavour**, providing insights into the evolving **socio-economic landscape of the nation**.

IMPORTANCE OF CENSUS: (RSTV)

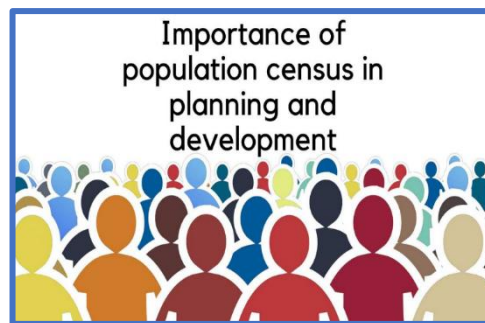
➤ Comprehensive Data Source:

- ✓ Census serves as a **vital data collection exercise**, providing insights into the demographic landscape of a nation.
- ✓ Essential for various surveys in **health, education, and agriculture**, among others.

➤ Decision-Making:

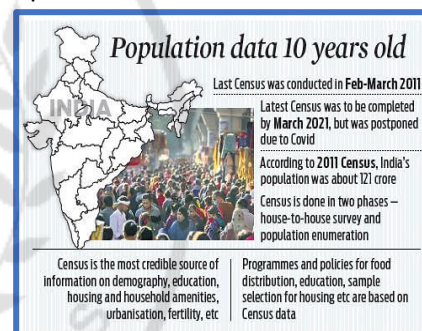
- ✓ Crucial for **evidence-based decision-making in a country**.
- ✓ Data collected aids **administration, governance, and policy-making**, impacting various programs and initiatives.

- **Policy-Making:**
 - ✓ Plays a key role in the journey "from a dwelling unit to the delivery unit."
 - ✓ Enhances coherence in **policy-making and scientific planning, optimizing resource allocation.**
- **Scholarly and Research Use:**
 - ✓ A valuable source for **scholars and researchers in diverse fields** such as demography, economics, and anthropology.
 - ✓ Data accessibility empowers grassroots administrative authorities for local developmental tasks.
- **Effective Targeting:**
 - ✓ **Facilitates effective targeting and improved delivery of government programs**, especially to marginalized sections of society.
- **Demarcation for Representation:**
 - ✓ **Used for the demarcation of constituencies** and the **allocation of representation in Parliament**, State Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies.
- **Grant Allocation:**
 - ✓ **Finance Commission relies on Census data** for providing grants to states, basing allocations on population figures.



RECENT CHALLENGES OF CENSUS IN INDIA:

- **Unprecedented Delay:**
 - ✓ The **2021 census in India** faces an **unprecedented delay**, disrupting the usual decennial schedule.
 - ✓ **The exercise, originally set for 2021, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and remains uncertain with this ninth extension**, causing concerns among experts.
- **Impact on Welfare Schemes:**
 - ✓ The delay affects the **public distribution system (PDS)**, leading to **exclusion of more than 100 million people from food welfare programs.**
 - ✓ Dependence on outdated **population figures from the 2011 census** hampers accurate eligibility assessments.
- **Controversies and Criticisms:**
 - ✓ Controversies surround the **proposed National Population Register (NPR) linked to the census**, raising concerns about potential exclusion of "**doubtful citizens.**"
 - ✓ Calls for a caste census add to the complexity, with **anticipated political and social ramifications.**
- **Data Quality Issues:**
 - ✓ The federal government faces **scrutiny over data quality and delays in releasing survey results.**
 - ✓ Previous instances, such as the withholding of a key survey result in 2019, raised questions about **transparency and independence** of statistical institutions.
- **Alternative Measures Insufficient:**
 - ✓ While some states conduct their own surveys, **these are considered stopgap measures and cannot replace the comprehensive national census.**
 - ✓ A credible national survey like the **census is indispensable for accurate and complete enumeration.**
- **International Repercussions:**
 - ✓ India's reputation, historically known for **aiding other countries in setting up censuses**, may suffer **internationally due to declining data integrity.**
 - ✓ Delay and potential data issues may impact the credibility of Indian statistics on a global scale.
- **Data Availability and Reports:**
 - ✓ The absence of **fresh Census data since 2011 impacts policy formulation**, while key reports from the Registrar-General of India (RGI) and the Census Commissioner on **vital statistics, births, deaths, and causes of deaths for 2021-2023 remain unreleased.**
- **Existing Data Gap:**



- ✓ The **absence of a recent census contributes to a widening data gap, affecting studies like the National Sample Survey and National Family Health Survey** that rely on census data for sampling.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Accelerate Census Preparations:**
 - ✓ The **government should expedite preparations for the Census**, including the training and deployment of enumerators.
 - ✓ **Adequate resources and technology should be allocated** to ensure a swift and accurate data collection process.
- **Communication on Delimitation:**
 - ✓ The government **needs to provide a clear timeline for the post-election Census** and delimitation processes.
 - ✓ **Transparent communication will mitigate uncertainty and facilitate planning** for political and administrative entities.
- **Utilize Technology:**
 - ✓ Embrace technology for efficient data collection and processing during the Census.
 - ✓ This includes leveraging digital tools for enumerator training, survey administration, and data analysis, which can expedite the overall process.
- **Interim Data Solutions:**
 - ✓ While **awaiting the completion of the Census**, the government should explore **interim solutions to bridge the data gap**.
 - ✓ This **may involve utilizing advanced statistical models**, conducting **targeted surveys**, or **integrating data** from other reliable sources to inform policy decisions.
- **Release Pending Reports:**
 - ✓ The government should **prioritize the release of pending vital statistics and reports on births, deaths, and causes of deaths**.
 - ✓ Timely access to this information is **crucial for evidence-based policy formulation**, especially in areas such as **healthcare, family planning, and public health**.

GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS)

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

The **Global Positioning System (GPS)** has garnered recent attention due to its **continued impact on various aspects of daily life and global operations**. Several factors contribute to its **current relevance**:

- **Ongoing Technological Advancements:**
 - ✓ Continuous updates and **advancements in GPS technology** make it a subject of interest.
 - ✓ **Innovations in satellite constellations**, signal accuracy, and new applications contribute to its evolving role.
- **Pervasive Global Use:**
 - ✓ The increasing global reliance on **GPS for navigation**, ranging from personal devices to critical infrastructure, keeps it in the news.
 - ✓ Sectors like **agriculture, logistics, and telecommunications** rely heavily on GPS for efficient functioning.
- **Geopolitical Significance:**
 - ✓ GPS has **geopolitical implications**, especially as various countries, **including the U.S., Russia, China, and the European Union**, develop and enhance their own satellite navigation systems.
 - ✓ Collaborations and competitions in **space-based navigation technologies** contribute to its news coverage.
- **Integration with Everyday Life:**
 - ✓ **The integration of GPS into everyday technologies**, such as smartphones, cars, and wearables, ensures its consistent presence in news discussions.
 - ✓ Its impact on **urban planning, disaster risk estimation, and scientific studies** remains a noteworthy topic.



UNDERSTANDING GPS: KEY COMPONENTS AND FUNCTIONS

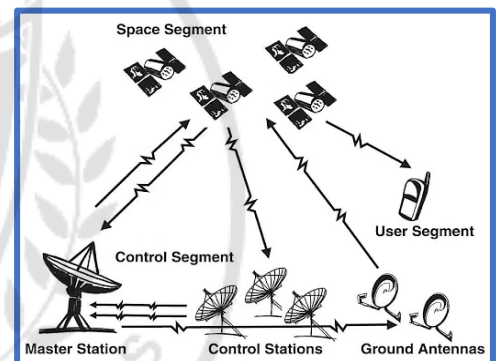
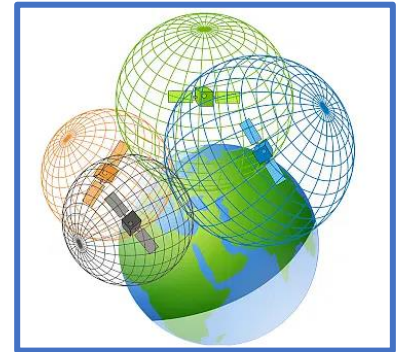
- **GPS Origin and Development:**
 - ✓ Initiated by the **U.S. Department of Defense in 1973**, the Global Positioning System (GPS) aimed to **provide precise location information**.
 - ✓ Launched its **first satellite in 1978**, marking the beginning of a revolutionary navigation system.
- **Satellite Constellation:**
 - ✓ The modern **GPS constellation comprises 24 satellites** orbiting the Earth in six orbits.
 - ✓ **Each satellite completes two orbits daily**, ensuring continuous global coverage.
 - ✓ Positioned **approximately 20,200 km above the Earth**, with four satellites in each orbit at all times.
- **Standard Positioning Service (SPS):**
 - ✓ The **SPS performance standard, last updated in April 2020**, guides application developers and users globally.
 - ✓ Ensures users **understand what to expect from the GPS system** in terms of accuracy and reliability.
- **User Segment and Applications:**
 - ✓ Encompasses various sectors and applications:



- ✓ **Agriculture, construction, surveying, logistics, telecommunications, power transmission**, search and rescue, air travel, meteorology, seismology, and military operations.
- ✓ In 2021, an **estimated 6.5 billion Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)** devices were in use worldwide, projected to reach **10 billion by 2031**.
- **Global Impact and Future Trends:**
 - ✓ GPS has become **integral to daily life**, influencing navigation, communication, and various industries globally.
 - ✓ Ongoing advancements and increasing device installations indicate a growing reliance on **GPS technology**.

HOW GPS FUNCTIONS: DECODING THE SATELLITE SIGNALS

- **Satellite Signal Broadcast:**
 - ✓ GPS satellites **continuously emit radio signals containing crucial information**: orbital location, operational status, and emission time.
 - ✓ Signals are **transmitted at L1 (1,575.42 MHz) and L2 (1,227.6 MHz) frequencies** at a rate of **50 bits per second**.
- **Signal Encoding and Transmission:**
 - ✓ Encoded using **code-division multiple access**, allowing multiple signals in the same channel.
 - ✓ **Two encoding types**: coarse/acquisition mode (for civilian use, providing basic data) and precise mode (encrypted for military applications).
- **Electromagnetic Signal Reception:**
 - ✓ GPS receivers in devices such as **smartphones capture the electromagnetic signals broadcast by satellites**.
- **Distance Calculation:**
 - ✓ The GPS receiver calculates its **precise distance from the satellite based on the speed of light**.
 - ✓ Distance equals the **speed of light multiplied by the signal's travel time**.
- **Triangulation for Location:**
 - ✓ Triangulation involves **using signals from at least four satellites**.
 - ✓ The receiver determines its **location in four dimensions** (three spatial dimensions and one time dimension relative to the satellite clock).
 - ✓ Achieves accurate location triangulation on the Earth's surface.
- **Adjustments for Accuracy:**
 - ✓ Corrections are applied to **ensure error-free measurements**.
 - ✓ Due to **weaker gravitational potential**, satellite onboard clocks **run 38 microseconds faster than ground clocks**, a correction dictated by the general theory of relativity.
 - ✓ The special theory of relativity necessitates adjustments for the **relative velocities of the satellite and receiver**.



INDIA'S OWN REGIONAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEM: NAVIC

- **Evolution of NavIC:**
 - ✓ NavIC, India's **indigenous alternative to GPS**, initiated in **2006** and became operational in **2018**.
 - ✓ Comprises **eight satellites**, covering India **entirely and extending up to 1,500 km** beyond its borders.
- **Performance Parity with GPS:**
 - ✓ Asserted performance **equivalence of NavIC** with other **global positioning systems**.
 - ✓ Current applications include **public vehicle tracking, emergency alerts for deep-sea fishermen, and natural disaster data tracking**.
- **Government Push for Smartphone Integration:**

- ✓ Government **encouragement for smartphone compatibility** with NavIC alongside GPS.
- ✓ Reported concerns from **major tech companies like Samsung, Xiaomi, and Apple** regarding potential cost escalations and disruptions due to necessary hardware changes.

➤ **Advantages of NavIC:**

- ✓ **Reduction of reliance on foreign-controlled** positioning systems susceptible to civilian suspension during crises.
- ✓ **Enhanced accuracy** attributed to NavIC being a **domestic system**.
- ✓ Future improvements, **including ground stations in Japan and France**, expected to **surpass GPS accuracy**, particularly in challenging terrains like **dense forests and valleys**.

➤ **Global Navigation Landscape:**

- ✓ Overview of major navigation systems, including **GPS, Galileo, GLONASS, Beidou, and QZSS**.
- ✓ Emphasis on **the strategic positioning of NavIC** to ensure superior **signal availability in diverse geographical regions** compared to GPS.



INDIA'S NAVIC & THE GLOBAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEMS (GNSS):

➤ **International Collaboration:**

- ✓ GNSS cooperation involves countries like the **U.S., Australia, China, EU (Galileo), India (NavIC), Japan, South Korea, Russia (GLONASS), and the U.K.**
- ✓ Regular meetings ensure **technology compatibility**, facilitated by the **International Committee on GNSS under the UN**.

➤ **India's Navigation Initiatives:**

- ✓ **India developed NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)** as a regional GNSS alternative.

- ✓ NavIC's seven satellites use **rubidium atomic clocks**, **operate in L5, S, and L1 bands**, with messaging capabilities.

➤ **Ground Control and Facilities:**

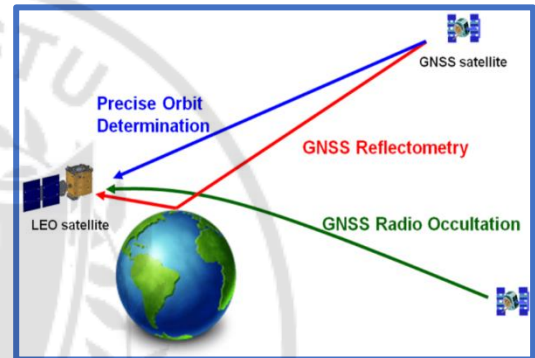
- ✓ **NavIC's master control facilities in Hassan and Bhopal** ensure accurate navigation.
- ✓ **GAGAN system, jointly developed by ISRO and AAI**, focuses on civil aviation safety in Indian airspace.

➤ **Frequency Enhancement for NavIC:**

- ✓ ISRO's decision to **introduce L1 frequency** enhances NavIC's **civilian applications**.
- ✓ **L1 band's compatibility** promotes **integration** into a wide range of devices, increasing civilian use.

➤ **India's GNSS Independence Vision:**

- ✓ India aims for **GNSS independence** to reduce reliance on **foreign-controlled systems**.
- ✓ **NavIC's accuracy and performance advantages**, especially in **challenging terrains**, reinforce its **strategic importance**.



APPLICATIONS OF GPS: KEY POINTS

➤ **Agriculture:**

- ✓ **Precision farming** utilizing GPS and GIS.
- ✓ **Field mapping, soil sampling, tractor guidance**.
- ✓ Enhances productivity and resource conservation.

➤ **Aviation:**

- ✓ Enables **three-dimensional position determination**.
- ✓ Area navigation for user-preferred routes.
- ✓ **Efficient air routes, improved airport approaches**, and reduced delays.

➤ **Environment:**

- ✓ Supports comprehensive environmental analysis.
- ✓ Efficiently recognizes environmental patterns and trends.
- ✓ Assists in **tracking disasters, monitoring seismic activities**, and preserving endangered species.

➤ **Marine:**

- ✓ Provides **fast and accurate navigation for mariners**.
- ✓ Improves efficiency in traffic routing and port operations.
- ✓ Enhances safety and security for vessels.

➤ **Public Safety & Disaster Relief:**

- ✓ **Critical in disaster management and rescue operations.**
- ✓ Facilitates precise location awareness for landmarks and emergency resources.
- ✓ Proven importance in **real-time situations like Tsunami, etc.**



➤ **Surveying:**

- ✓ Widely used for mapping telephone lines, **fire hydrants, and server lines.**
- ✓ Enables fast and **efficient surveying with GPS technology.**

➤ **Mobile Phones:**

- ✓ Efficient feature in **smartphones for navigation** and various applications.
- ✓ Improves service provider **efficiency and signal strength feedback.**

➤ **Robotics:**

- ✓ **Aids robots** in navigation and task performance.

➤ **Military Purpose:**

- ✓ Initially developed for military use.
- ✓ **Used in tracking targets, guiding missiles, and projectiles.**

➤ **Miscellaneous:**

- ✓ Emergency **positional information for individuals** with mobile devices.
- ✓ Enhances **flood prediction, storm tracking, and earthquake anticipation.**
- ✓ **Supports forest fire containment using GPS** combined with infrared scanners.

CHALLENGES OF GPS-BASED TOLLING IMPLEMENTATION:

➤ **Logistical Challenges:**

- ✓ **Installation of GPS devices and software on existing vehicles.**
- ✓ Building complex frameworks to **prevent inaccuracies.**

➤ **Implementation Requirements:**

- ✓ Need for **GPS-based devices (On-Board Unit - OBU)**, applications, and power sources.
- ✓ Modern vehicles with **built-in GPS vs. older vehicles requiring OBU installation.**

➤ **Cost Implications:**

- ✓ Additional expenditure for users, especially for older vehicles.
- ✓ **Costs associated with GPS devices, cellular connectivity, and software.**

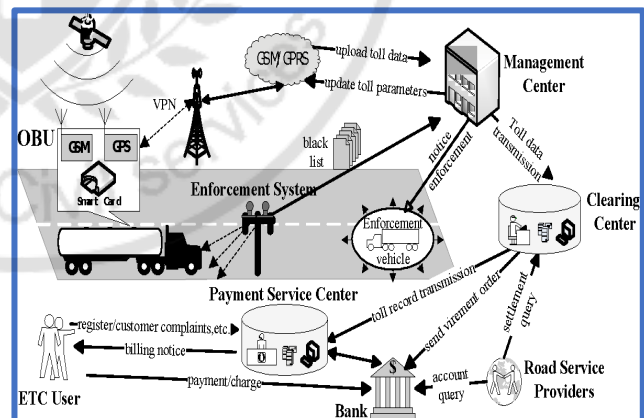
➤ **Accuracy Concerns:**

- ✓ Potential miscalculation of **toll due to GPS accuracy issues.**
- ✓ Requirement for **highly accurate mapping and geo-fencing.**

➤ **GPS Accuracy and Geo-Fencing:**

- ✓ GPS operators' **guaranteed accuracy of 15 meters** may not be sufficient.
- ✓ Potential challenges in distinguishing between service roads and highways.

➤ **Role of NavIC Satellites:**



- ✓ ISRO's NavIC satellites may enhance accuracy.
- ✓ Increased number of satellites for improved **time-to-fix accuracy**.
- **Data Privacy Concerns:**
 - ✓ Privacy concerns related to **tracking users and vehicles**.
 - ✓ Critical need for clear policies around data governance and anonymization.
- **Consent Management:**
 - ✓ Importance of managing user consent processes.
 - ✓ **Automation of consent processes** to ensure user security.
- **Legal Considerations:**
 - ✓ Adoption of **suitable measures and modalities for data requests**.
 - ✓ Certification process **for GPS devices to meet requirements**.
- **Global Precedents:**
 - ✓ Reference to **GPS-based tolling implemented in countries like Germany and Singapore**.
 - ✓ Consideration of global experiences in the implementation process.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Implementation Framework:**
 - ✓ **Develop a clear and user-friendly implementation** framework to ease the transition.
 - ✓ Address the **need for standardization and guidelines** for a seamless rollout.
- **Affordability and Accessibility:**
 - ✓ Explore subsidies or incentives to **make GPS devices** more affordable for users.
 - ✓ **Encourage partnerships with private entities** for cost-effective solutions.
- **Technological Solutions:**
 - ✓ **Leverage advancements** such as ISRO's NavIC satellites to enhance GPS accuracy.
 - ✓ Invest in research and development for improved GPS technologies.
- **Data Privacy Measures:**
 - ✓ **Establish robust data governance policies** ensuring anonymization and user consent.
 - ✓ **Automate consent processes** and prioritize user security in data handling.
- **Certification and Regulation:**
 - ✓ Implement a **certification process for GPS devices**, ensuring compliance with standards.
 - ✓ Facilitate domestic manufacturing, **promoting a robust and diverse market for GPS trackers**.

MINING FOR CRITICAL MINERALS

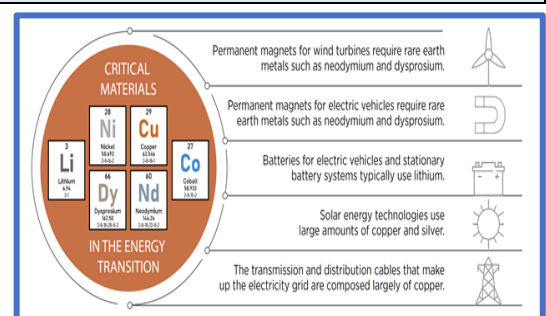
SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- To boost the **exploration and extraction of critical and strategic minerals**, the government launched auctions for 20 blocks of such **minerals including 5.9-million-tonne lithium reserves** discovered in Reasi district of Jammu & Kashmir.
- This **will first ever auction of critical and strategic minerals** by the mines ministry after the government amended mining laws during the monsoon session of Parliament **to allow the private sector to explore and mines these important minerals**.

UNDERSTANDING CRITICAL MINERALS:

- **Definition of Critical Material:**
 - ✓ Critical materials are the resources needed to produce numerous key technologies for **the energy transition, including wind turbines, solar panels, batteries for EVs and electrolyzers**.
 - ✓ Deep decarbonisation of energy systems requires significant amounts of critical minerals including



e.g. **lithium, nickel, cobalt, copper and rare earth elements (REEs)** for renewable energy installations and storage solutions.

✓ It is crucial to ensure their **availability and affordability for a successful transition.**

➤ **Final Critical Materials List (DOE):**

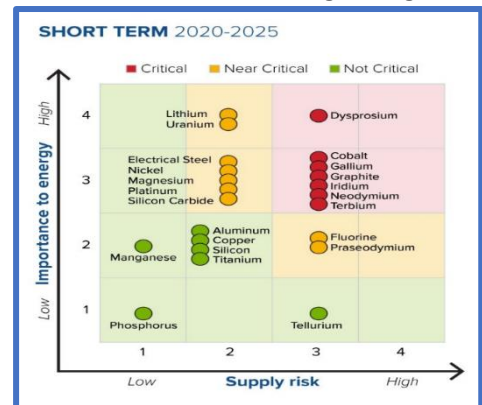
✓ The **US Department of Energy (DOE)** has issued the final Critical Materials List, categorizing materials into critical materials for energy and critical minerals.

✓ The list **includes aluminum, cobalt, copper, dysprosium, electrical steel, fluorine, gallium, iridium, lithium, magnesium, natural graphite, neodymium, nickel, platinum, praseodymium, silicon, silicon carbide, and terbium.**

➤ **Importance in Energy Technologies:**

✓ Critical materials play an indispensable role in various energy technologies, **including production, transmission, storage, and conservation.**

✓ The designation as "critical" emphasizes their **significance for energy security and technological advancement.**



IMPORTANCE OF FIRST-EVER AUCTION OF CRITICAL MINERALS:

➤ **Landmark Mining Law Amendment:**

✓ The auction marks a historic event following the amendment of mining laws during the monsoon session of Parliament, allowing the **private sector to explore and mines critical minerals.**

➤ **Strategic Minerals Auctioned:**

✓ This is the first-ever auction of **strategic minerals by the Ministry of Mines**, emphasizing the **strategic importance** of these minerals for **India's economic development and national security.**

➤ **Policy to Support Energy Transition:**

✓ It is part of the government's **efforts to secure a critical-mineral supply chain** for India's energy transition and the **net-zero-by-2070 target.**

➤ **Mineral Blocks Across States and UT:**

✓ The mines ministry is **offering 20 blocks of critical minerals** across seven states and the union territory of **Jammu & Kashmir**, promoting **geographical diversity in mineral extraction.**

➤ **Diverse Range of Critical Minerals:**

✓ The auction covers **minerals like lithium, titanium, bauxite, nickel, copper, graphite, manganese, molybdenum, and rare earth elements**, crucial for emerging technologies and the energy sector.

➤ **Composite and Mining Leases Offered:**

✓ While most blocks are offered on a **composite license for exploration and commercial extraction**, four have been **exclusively earmarked for mining leases**, allowing immediate mining operations.

➤ **Supply Chain Security and Economic Development:**

✓ The auction is crucial for **India's economic development and national security**, addressing **supply-chain vulnerabilities** and reducing dependency on imports for critical minerals.

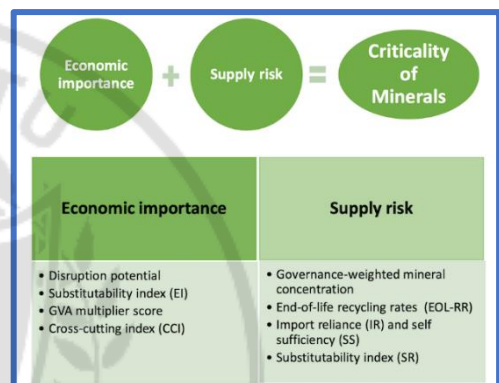
➤ **Global Economic Trends:**

✓ Aligns with future **global economic trends**, where technologies dependent on critical minerals like lithium, graphite, and rare earth elements will play a pivotal role.

➤ **Renewable Energy and Electric Vehicles Demand:**

✓ **Supports India's commitment to achieving 50% of cumulative electric power from non-fossil sources by 2030**, driving demand for critical minerals in renewable energy projects and electric vehicles.

➤ **Revenue Generation for State Governments:**

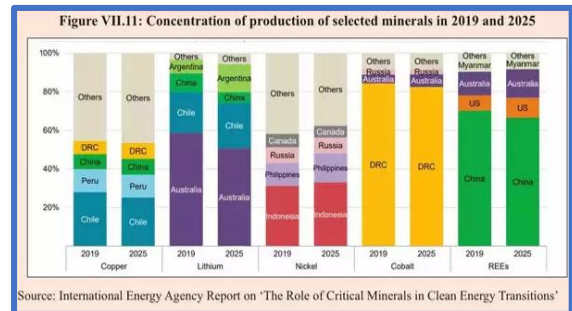


- ✓ The revenue generated from these auctions will accrue to state governments, contributing to local economies and encouraging resource development.

ESTIMATED RESERVES OF KEY CRITICAL MINERALS IN INDIA:

Lithium Reserves:

- ✓ Two blocks with lithium reserves are up for auction in **Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)** and **Chhattisgarh**, offered under **Composite Licence (CL)**.
- ✓ **J&K block:** Inferred reserve of **5.9 million tonnes of bauxite** with over 3,400 tonnes of lithium metal content and 70,000 tonnes of titanium metal content
- ✓ **Chhattisgarh block:** Contains lithium and **Rare Earth Elements (REEs)**, but **total reserves estimation pending drilling**.



Nickel Ore Reserves:

- ✓ Nickel ore reserves identified in three blocks – Bihar, Gujarat, and Odisha.
- ✓ **Odisha block:** Being auctioned for **Mining Licence (ML)**, inferred value of **2.05 million tonnes of nickel ore**, translating to **3,908 tonnes of nickel metal content**.
- ✓ **Copper deposits:** Only in the Odisha block, amounting to **6.09 million tonnes of copper ore** and **28,884 tonnes of copper metal content**.

Current Imports of Critical Minerals:

- ✓ In FY23, India imported **2,145 tonnes of lithium carbonate** and lithium oxide, costing Rs 732 crore.
- ✓ **Lithium carbonate** contains up to **19% lithium**, and lithium oxide (usually converted to lithium hydroxide) contains **29% lithium**.
- ✓ **32,000 tonnes of unwrought nickel** imported at a cost of **Rs 6,549 crore**.
- ✓ **1.2 million tonnes of copper ore** imported at a cost of **Rs 27,374 crore** in 2022-23.
- ✓ India is entirely reliant on imports for lithium and nickel (**100% dependence**), while for copper, the dependence is **93%**.



Import Cost and Dependency:

- ✓ The total cost of lithium and nickel imports in FY23 was **Rs 732 crore** and **Rs 6,549 crore**, respectively.
- ✓ India's reliance on imports for lithium and nickel is highlighted as **100%**, with a **93% dependency on copper imports**.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CRITICAL MINERALS:

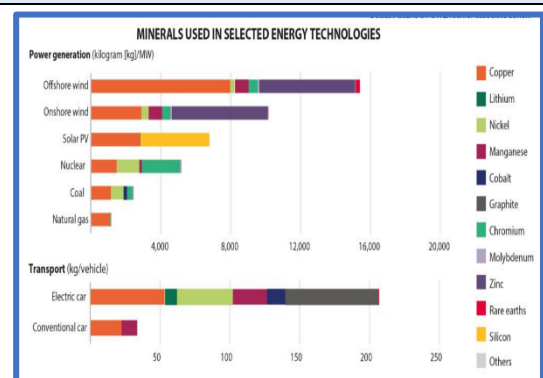
Significance:

- ✓ Critical minerals, including **copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth elements**, play a vital role in **powering clean energy technologies** such as **solar PV plants, wind farms, and electric vehicles (EVs)**.

Significance of Domestic Reserves:

- ✓ The **auctioning of blocks with critical mineral reserves** is a significant step toward reducing **import dependence** and achieving **self-sufficiency**.
- ✓ Domestic production will be **crucial in meeting the demand for these critical minerals**, especially in the context of **India's ambitious plans for clean energy technologies and electric vehicles**.

Growing Demand with Clean Energy Transition:



- ✓ The demand for critical minerals is **rising rapidly as countries transition to clean energy**.
- ✓ **Solar PV plants, wind farms, and EVs require significantly more mineral inputs** compared to traditional fossil fuel-based technologies.

➤ **Mineral Inputs in Clean Energy Technologies:**

- ✓ A **typical electric car requires six times the mineral inputs of a conventional car**, while an offshore **wind plant needs 13 times more mineral resources** than a similarly sized gas-fired plant.

➤ **Increase in Mineral Requirements:**

- ✓ Since 2010, the **average amount of mineral resources needed for new power generation capacity has increased by 50%**, driven by the growing share of renewables in new investments.

➤ **Diverse Mineral Requirements by Technology:**

- ✓ Different clean energy technologies have **varying mineral requirements**.
- ✓ **Lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese, and graphite are crucial for battery performance**, while rare earth elements are essential for wind turbines and EV motors.

➤ **Role in Electricity Networks:**

- ✓ **Aluminum and copper are fundamental to electricity networks**, serving as key components in various electricity-related technologies.

➤ **Resilience and Security Concerns:**

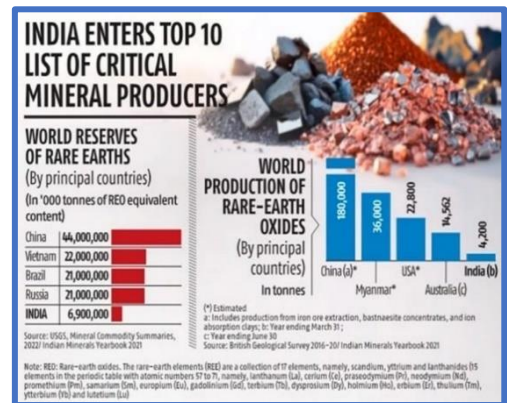
- ✓ As clean energy transitions progress, policymakers **need to consider potential vulnerabilities related to critical minerals**, including concerns about price volatility, security of supply, and geopolitical factors.

➤ **IEA's Attention to Critical Minerals:**

- ✓ The **International Energy Agency (IEA)** is actively addressing the **critical minerals issue**.
- ✓ The IEA published its **Critical Minerals Market Review in July 2023** and hosted an international **summit on critical minerals and their role in clean energy transitions**.

➤ **Integration into Energy Models:**

- ✓ Critical minerals have **been fully integrated into the IEA's Global Energy and Climate Model**, ensuring regular updates of **demand and supply projections** based on the latest policy and technology trends.



CHALLENGES FOR CRITICAL MINERALS IN INDIA:

➤ **Import Reduction Challenge:**

- ✓ India aims to reduce the import of critical minerals to achieve self-sufficiency, driven by economic and climate change considerations.
- ✓ However, the challenge lies in swiftly building a robust supply chain through domestic production or strategic global trade partnerships.

➤ **Global Demand and Geopolitical Issues:**

- ✓ The global demand for critical minerals has surged due to investments in clean technologies. Geopolitical complexities add to the challenges, making it a complex scenario for India.

➤ **Prime Minister's Warning:**

- ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned about the emergence of a new model of colonialism if countries with significant reserves of critical minerals do not view them as a global responsibility to be shared.

➤ **Affordability and Supply Chain Challenges:**

- ✓ Overcoming supply side challenges and price volatility of critical minerals is crucial for making clean energy technologies, such as Electric Vehicles (EVs), affordable for the public. EV batteries, constituting 45% of manufacturing costs, highlight the importance of addressing supply chain challenges.

➤ **Government Policy Initiatives:**

- ✓ The Indian government has introduced a critical mineral policy to provide support, coordinate with other ministries, and frame incentive schemes for creating a complete value chain of critical minerals in the country.
- ✓ Collaboration with international agencies for strategic acquisition of foreign assets on critical minerals is also considered.

WAY FORWARD:

- **National Institute of Centre of Excellence:**
 - ✓ The policy advocates the **establishment of the National Institute of Centre of Excellence on critical minerals to identify efficient ways of discovering** next-generation deposits and deepening local exploration.
- **Time Frame for Domestic production:**
 - ✓ Analysts note that while **India is investing in domestic exploration**, it will take years before **commercial production** begins for minerals like lithium.
 - ✓ The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** is **undertaking exploration projects, including inferred level exploration in Jammu & Kashmir for lithium.**
- **Global Consortium and Bilateral Relationships:**
 - ✓ To secure the supply chain, experts suggest **India should join global consortia on critical minerals.**
 - ✓ **India recently joined the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP)** led by the United States.
 - ✓ Strengthening bilateral relationships with countries holding **significant critical mineral reserves can facilitate offshore supply.**
- **Soft Power and Trade Relations:**
 - ✓ **Leveraging India's soft power and trade relations**, particularly with **global south countries** holding **critical mineral reserves**, can contribute to **building robust supply chains.**
 - ✓ Emphasizing **processing and refining industries**, similar to the **South Korean model**, is deemed **essential for lowering manufacturing costs.**

CAN CHATGPT, THE CHATBOT DEVELOPED BY OPENAI, REPLACE HUMAN THERAPISTS?

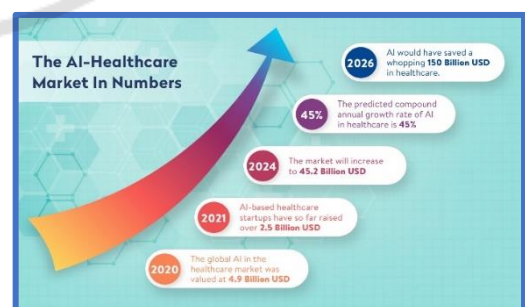
SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- A European Commissioner, Lilian Weng, **faced backlash for comparing her ChatGPT conversation to therapy on social media.**
- Controversy **erupted due to her lack of therapy experience and the perceived promotion of ChatGPT for therapeutic use.**

EVOLUTION OF AI IN MENTAL HEALTH:

- **Overview:**
 - ✓ **AI-based therapeutic interventions date back to 1990**, initially **employing scripted** procedures.
 - ✓ Modern **apps like Woebot Health and Wysa** use advanced AI algorithms, **boasting over a million downloads** for mental health conversations.
- **ChatGPT's Advanced Capabilities:**
 - ✓ New programs like **ChatGPT excel in understanding human queries** and **providing realistic responses**, surpassing previous AI models.
 - ✓ Trained on **vast internet text data**, **large language model (LLM) chatbots**, including ChatGPT, engage users with different personas and draw conclusions from interactions.
- **Potential as Human Providers' Assistants:**
 - ✓ **LLM chatbots**, acting as **assistants for human providers**, could **enhance mental health services**, especially for marginalized and severely ill individuals.



- ✓ **Addressing the shortage of mental health professionals**, these chatbots could streamline paperwork, allowing therapists more time for direct patient care.

➤ **Efficiency and Workforce Enlargement:**

- ✓ ChatGPT and similar programs could **increase the mental health workforce efficiency** by handling documentation and reporting tasks.
- ✓ Offloading administrative burdens to machines might **enlarge the mental health workforce by approximately 40%**, addressing the shortage of professionals.

➤ **Complexities of AI as Therapists:**

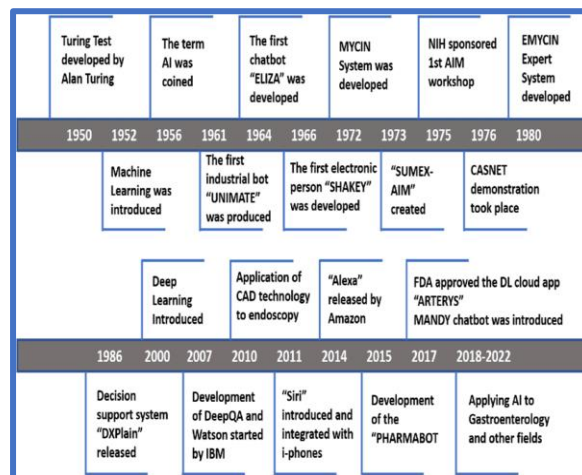
- ✓ While ChatGPT proves effective as an assistant, using it as a **standalone therapist raises complexities**.
- ✓ Tim Althoff, a computer scientist, emphasizes that **therapy involves more than inputting information into ChatGPT**, highlighting the nuances of human interaction.

➤ **Applications in Supporting Peer Groups:**

- ✓ Empathetic chatbots find utility in **peer support groups**, as demonstrated in **studies involving apps like TalkLife and Koko**.
- ✓ Users preferred empathetic chatbot-assisted messages, indicating the **potential role of AI in enhancing peer support experiences**.

➤ **Trust Dynamics and Human Preference:**

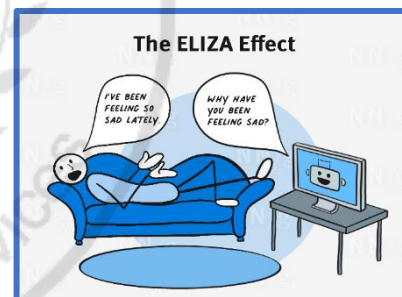
- ✓ **Users develop trust with mental health chatbots quickly**, sometimes within days, compared to weeks with human therapists.
- ✓ Experimentation reveals that **users may prefer the messiness of human interactions over bot-generated responses**, indicating the importance of human involvement.



What is the ELIZA Effect?

➤ **Understanding the ELIZA Effect:**

- ✓ The ELIZA Effect refers to the phenomenon wherein **individuals attribute human-like emotions or capabilities to computer programs** based on their responses to user input.
- ✓ **Named after a 1960s computer program** created by MIT professor **Joseph Weizenbaum**, ELIZA, despite its basic functionality, led users to **perceive a meaningful interaction resembling human conversation**.



➤ **ELIZA Effect in ChatGPT:**

- ✓ When users engage with ChatGPT, they **may experience the ELIZA Effect**, believing that the AI model possesses a **level of understanding and emotional resonance akin to human conversation**.
- ✓ This effect occurs as **users interpret the AI's responses** as more sophisticated and emotionally nuanced than its actual capabilities.

➤ **Distinction from OpenAI:**

✓ **OpenAI's Role:**

- OpenAI is an AI research lab that develops advanced language models, **such as GPT-3**.
- These models, including ChatGPT, **are powerful tools for generating human-like text based on input**.
- However, they **lack true understanding, emotions, or consciousness**.

➤ **Difference in Perception:**

- ✓ While the ELIZA Effect may lead users to perceive ChatGPT as **emotionally intelligent**, it is **crucial to recognize that OpenAI's models** operate based on patterns and data, without genuine emotional comprehension.

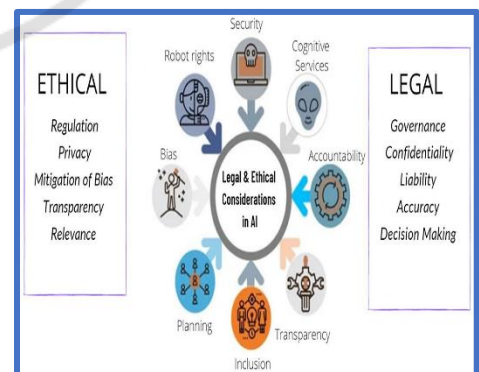
- ✓ OpenAI focuses on advancing AI **capabilities but emphasizes the distinction between AI-generated responses** and true human understanding.
- **OpenAI's Transparency:**
 - ✓ OpenAI **promotes transparency** about the nature of its models, **encouraging users to understand that AI**, including ChatGPT, generates responses by predicting the most likely next word or phrase based on vast datasets.
 - ✓ It aims to avoid **creating a misconception of true emotional understanding in the AI.**

AI CHATBOTS VS. HUMAN THERAPISTS:

Aspect	Human Therapists	AI Chatbots
Tradition of Therapy	✓ Rooted in a longstanding tradition of human-centric interaction.	✓ Emerges as a novel addition , challenging traditional therapeutic norms.
Critical Relationship Factors	✓ Emphasizes trust, warmth, empathy, and free communication.	✓ Faces the challenge of authentically replicating these critical factors.
Role of Therapeutic Relationship	✓ Pivotal for treatment success.	✓ Question marks over AI's ability to fully replace this human connection.
Ethical Considerations	✓ Potential concerns about losing unique qualities of human therapists.	✓ Raises ethical questions regarding the depth and nature of human connection.
Emotional Element in Therapy	✓ Human therapists navigate complex emotions with nuanced understanding.	✓ Challenges in authentically replicating the emotional intelligence of humans.
Role of Empathy	✓ Human therapists provide a depth of empathy , sharing emotions.	✓ AI may find it challenging to genuinely embody and express empathy.
Concerns about Loss of Humanity	✓ Some view the potential replacement of human connection as "a little sad."	✓ Raises concerns about the potential loss of a fundamentally human aspect.
Balancing Technological Advancements	✓ Acknowledges the need to leverage technology without compromising human qualities.	✓ Offers innovative solutions but requires a delicate balance to preserve human aspects.
Unique Value of Human Therapists	✓ Recognition of irreplaceable value in bringing nuanced, impactful therapy.	✓ While valuable, AI is seen as a tool, emphasizing human therapists' distinctive role.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING AI IN THERAPY:

- **Trust and Accuracy Concerns:**
 - ✓ The theory of automation bias raises concerns that **users might overly trust advice from AI**, even if it is incorrect or nonsensical.
 - ✓ This blind trust in AI-generated **responses poses a potential risk**, especially in the context of mental health where **accuracy and reliability are paramount.**
- **Limitations in Advice Quality:**
 - ✓ Chatbots, including ChatGPT, still have **limitations in the quality of advice they can provide.**
 - ✓ They may **overlook crucial information** that a **human therapist would identify as indicative of a problem.**
 - ✓ For instance, an AI might **not appropriately respond to a severely underweight person seeking guidance on weight loss.**
- **Biases and Cultural Sensitivity:**



- ✓ There are concerns that AI programs, **trained on literature primarily from wealthy, western countries**, may exhibit biases.
- ✓ This could **lead to misunderstandings or oversights in addressing cultural differences** in the expression of mental illness.
- ✓ The risk is that AI might draw incorrect conclusions **based on how a user communicates in their second language**.
- **Potential Harmful Suggestions:**
 - ✓ A significant concern is the possibility of AI chatbots, including those **not based on generative AI like Tessa**, suggesting harmful actions such as **discontinuing treatment or advocating self-harm**.
 - ✓ Instances like the **National Eating Disorders Association's use** of a chatbot that allegedly provided **triggering weight-loss tips** underscore the potential risks involved.
- **Regulatory and Ethical Challenges:**
 - ✓ The lack of **clear regulations poses challenges** for the integration of AI in clinical settings.
 - ✓ The industry is in a **state of uncertainty**, awaiting government regulations to ensure ethical and **safe use of AI programs like ChatGPT**.
- **Confidentiality and User Data Concerns:**
 - ✓ There is limited public awareness about how **tech companies collect and use user information** fed into chatbots.
 - ✓ The potential for **confidentiality violations raises concerns** about the **privacy and security** of user data, especially in the sensitive context of mental health.
- **For-Profit Prioritization and Accessibility:**
 - ✓ The worry exists that **for-profit chatbots may cater primarily to the "worried well,"** those who can afford therapy and app subscriptions.
 - ✓ This **raises questions about equitable access to mental health support**, potentially leaving isolated individuals at greater risk without access to necessary resources.
- **Regulation and Industry Evolution:**
 - ✓ The industry is grappling with the need for clear regulations **to ensure the reliability, accuracy, and safety of AI chatbots**.
- **Empowering Users with Tools:**
 - ✓ The focus is on empowering a **diverse group of individuals with AI tools**, acknowledging that some therapy, even through innovative means, is better than none, given the challenges in **meeting the demand for high-quality care**.

AI CHATBOTS AS SUPPLEMENTS, NOT REPLACEMENTS:

- **Supplement, Not Substitute:**
 - ✓ AI-powered mental health applications position themselves **as supplements to human therapy services**.
 - ✓ Consensus exists that AI chatbots **should not replace traditional therapy** but should complement the work of mental health care professionals.
- **Promising Tool in Mental Health:**
 - ✓ AI chatbots **offer benefits such as immediate responses**, accessibility, and affordability.
 - ✓ They **present a promising tool for mental health support**.
- **Human Touch and Understanding:**
 - ✓ Despite their advantages, **AI chatbots lack the human touch** and understanding inherent in interactions with a human therapist.
 - ✓ **Emotional intelligence and the nuanced approach** of human therapists are essential components.
- **Use as a Complement:**
 - ✓ It is emphasized that **AI chatbots should not be viewed as replacements** for human therapists.
 - ✓ Instead, they **should be considered as complementary tools**, enhancing the overall mental health care experience.
- **Balance of Accessibility and Humanity:**
 - ✓ AI chatbots **strike a balance by providing accessible and immediate support** while recognizing the **irreplaceable value of human interaction** in therapy.

- **Affordability and Accessibility:**
 - ✓ One of the strengths of AI chatbots is their **affordability and accessibility**, making mental health support more widely available.
- **Integration into Mental Health Services:**
 - ✓ The **consensus encourages the integration of AI chatbots** into mental health services to augment and **extend the reach of human therapists**.
- **Recognition of Limitations:**
 - ✓ While **acknowledging the benefits**, the recognition of **AI chatbots' limitations** underscores the importance of **maintaining the human-centric aspect** in mental health care.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Embracing a Collaborative Future:**
 - ✓ Acknowledges the **value of AI chatbots in healthcare**, enhancing **efficiency and supporting healthcare professionals**.
 - ✓ Advocates for a symbiotic relationship between **AI chatbots and medical professionals**.
- **Benefits of Collaboration:**
 - ✓ Points out the **potential benefits of AI chatbots**, especially in areas with **limited healthcare access**, providing education and disease management support.
 - ✓ Rejects the notion of complete replacement, **favoring a collaborative approach** that leverages the **strengths of both AI and human professionals**.
- **Integrated Healthcare Approach:**
 - ✓ Envisions an integrated approach to healthcare where **AI chatbots and medical professionals play complementary roles**.
 - ✓ Emphasizes the combination of **digital efficiency and human empathy** for an optimized patient experience.
- **Journey into the Future:**
 - ✓ Highlights **the need to focus on collaboration** rather than replacement as the **narrative for the future of medicine**.
 - ✓ Stresses the goal of leveraging AI and human expertise to enhance patient outcomes.
- **Limitations of Complete Replacement:**
 - ✓ **Recognizes the potential advancements in AI and machine learning** but cautions against the remote possibility of entirely replacing medical professionals.
 - ✓ Foresees the **integration of AI chatbots and medical professionals** into a collaborative healthcare approach.
- **Factors Influencing the Collaborative Future:**
 - ✓ **Identifies key factors** influencing the evolution of a **collaborative future, including technological advancements**, patient and provider acceptance, ethical considerations, and regulatory frameworks.
 - ✓ Acknowledges the dependency on these factors for the realization of a collaborative healthcare model.
- **Priority on Patient Outcomes:**
 - ✓ Reiterates the paramount goal **of improving patient outcomes and the quality of care** in the digital age.
 - ✓ Affirms that while **AI chatbots are valuable supplements**, they **should not be viewed as complete substitutes** for the **irreplaceable role of medical professionals**.

EU AI ACT: FIRST REGULATION ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

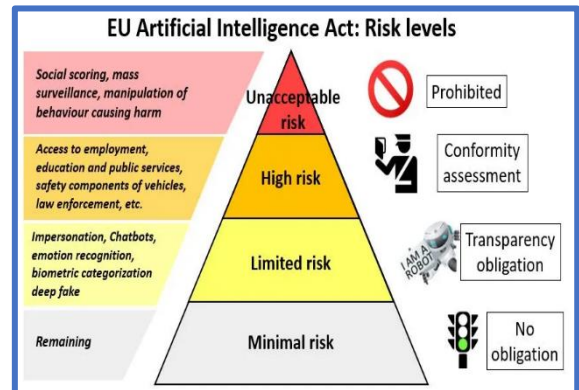
- *The European Union's (EU) AI Act is a substantial legislative move to regulate artificial intelligence technologies within the EU.*
- The use of artificial intelligence in the EU will be **regulated by the AI Act, the world's first comprehensive AI law**.

- **Balancing innovation and ethical AI development**, the act aims to create a regulatory framework, **mitigate AI-related risks**, and offer clear guidelines for **developers, users, and regulators**.

WHAT IS THE EU'S ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ACT?

➤ Overview:

- ✓ The EU's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act is a **legislative initiative designed to enhance Europe's standing as a global hub for AI excellence**.
- ✓ It focuses on **ensuring that AI technologies developed and deployed in Europe align** with the region's values and regulations, emphasizing ethical considerations.
- ✓ The Act **aims to unleash the potential of AI for industrial use while upholding fundamental rights**.



Key Elements of the AI Act:

➤ Objective:

- ✓ The **primary goals** of the AI Act are *to strengthen Europe's global position in AI*, ensure adherence to European values and regulations, and leverage AI's potential for industrial applications.

➤ Risk Classification System:

- ✓ A central feature of the AI Act is a **risk classification system** that **assesses the potential risks** posed by AI technologies to **health, safety, and fundamental rights**.
- ✓ The framework categorizes AI systems into four risk tiers: **unacceptable, high, limited, and minimal**.

➤ Risk-Based Framework:

- ✓ AI systems are **subject to varying requirements** based on their risk level.
- ✓ Those with **limited and minimal risk**, such as spam filters or **video games**, **face fewer obligations, primarily transparency-related**.
- ✓ Conversely, systems categorized as posing an **unacceptable risk**, including government **social scoring and real-time biometric identification** in public spaces, are generally prohibited with minimal exceptions.

➤ Transparency Obligations:

- ✓ AI systems with **limited and minimal risk are allowed for use with relatively fewer requirements**, primarily centered around transparency.
- ✓ Users must be informed about the **capabilities and limitations of these AI systems**.

➤ Prohibitions on Unacceptable Risk:

- ✓ Systems categorized as **posing an unacceptable risk**, such as those involved in government social scoring or **real-time biometric identification**, are generally prohibited.
- ✓ The Act emphasizes **stringent measures to prevent the deployment of AI technologies** that could pose severe risks to individuals.

GLOBAL POTENTIAL & THE CHALLENGES OF THE AI ACT:

➤ Challenges in Defining and Categorizing AI Applications:

- ✓ Critics argue that defining and categorizing AI applications accurately may be challenging due to the evolving nature of AI technologies, leading to potential uncertainties in regulatory implementation.

➤ Concerns about Competitiveness:

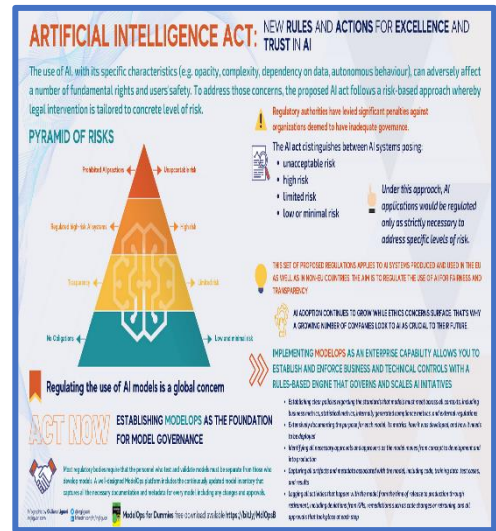
- ✓ Stringent regulations may be viewed as a potential hindrance to the competitiveness of European businesses in the global AI market, potentially stifling innovation and driving AI development outside the EU.

➤ Burden on Smaller Businesses:

- ✓ Compliance with the **EU AI Act may impose a significant burden on smaller businesses** and startups, affecting their ability to compete with larger counterparts.

Potential Global Implications:

- **Global Impact on AI Development:**
 - ✓ The EU AI Act is **expected to have a global impact**, influencing the development and deployment of **AI technologies beyond the EU's borders**.
 - ✓ Its regulatory framework may **set a precedent for other regions**.
- **Establishing Global Norms:**
 - ✓ **Prioritizing ethical considerations** and fundamental rights, the **EU AI Act contributes to establishing global norms for AI development**, encouraging collaboration and consistent standards across borders.

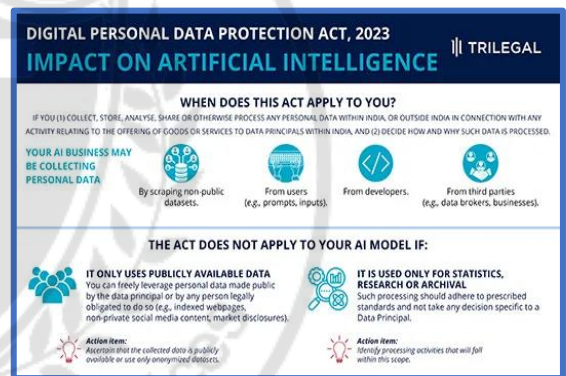


Administrative Aspects:

- **Enforcement and Reporting:**
 - ✓ Individuals have the **right to report non-compliance**, and market surveillance authorities in EU member states will enforce the AI Act.
 - ✓ **Specific fines, with limits for SMEs and startups**, are outlined based on the **nature of violations**.
- **EU AI Act Penalties:**
 - ✓ **Fines for non-compliance could range from \$8 million to almost \$38 million**, depending on the violation and company size.
 - ✓ The EU will establish a **centralized 'AI office' and 'AI Board'** to oversee enforcement.

LEGAL PROVISIONS GOVERNING AI IN INDIA:

- **Current Regulatory Landscape:**
 - ✓ As of now, **India lacks specific regulations** dedicated to AI.
 - ✓ The government has expressed concerns **about the absence of such laws**.
 - ✓ **IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw mentioned the challenges posed by moral and ethical issues** related to AI growth in India.



Relevant Provisions:

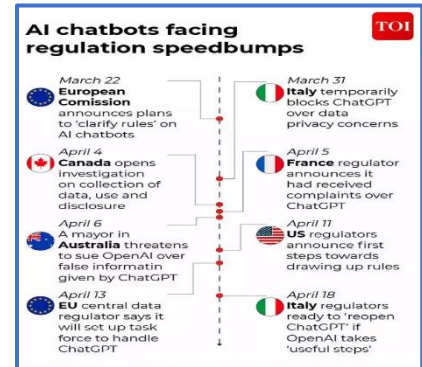
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:**
 - ✓ **While not explicitly mentioning AI**, the IT Act addresses **electronic transactions and digital governance**.
 - ✓ **Sections 43A and 73A are relevant**, dealing with compensation for data privacy breaches and penalties for unauthorized access, respectively.
- **Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019:**
 - ✓ Under consideration, this **bill focuses on comprehensive data protection**.
 - ✓ **It includes provisions related to AI**, emphasizing explicit consent for processing personal data through AI algorithms impacting individual rights.
- **Indian Copyright Act, 1957:**
 - ✓ This act protects original works but **raises questions about AI-generated content**.
 - ✓ In the case of **Gramophone Company of India Ltd. v. Super Cassettes Industries Ltd. (2011)**, the Delhi High Court ruled that AI-generated music lacks human creativity and is ineligible for copyright protection.
- **National e-Governance Plan:**
 - ✓ Aiming to **digitally empower society**, this plan incorporates AI **to enhance the efficiency of e-governance, automate processes**, and improve decision-making in various government departments.

- **AIRAWAT (AI Research, Analytics, and Knowledge Assimilation Platform):**
 - ✓ **Launched by Niti Ayog, AIRAWAT addresses** the requirements of AI in India, emphasizing research and knowledge assimilation in the AI domain.

WAY FORWARD FOR AI REGULATIONS:

- **Global Collaboration:**

- ✓ The EU's AI Act sets the stage for **global collaboration** on AI regulations.
- ✓ Countries worldwide should consider **aligning their AI frameworks to create consistent standards.**
- ✓ Collaboration fosters a unified approach, **addressing global challenges and ensuring ethical AI development.**
- ✓ International cooperation can contribute to a **harmonized regulatory environment.**



- **Balancing Regulation and Innovation:**

- ✓ To foster a conducive environment for AI development, it is crucial to **strike the right balance between regulation and innovation.**
- ✓ While **regulatory measures are essential for responsible AI use**, overly restrictive regulations may stifle innovation.
- ✓ Policymakers globally should focus on **frameworks that encourage innovation while upholding ethical standards.**

- **Ethical Considerations and Fundamental Rights:**

- ✓ The EU's emphasis on **ethical considerations and fundamental rights should guide the development of AI regulations globally.**
- ✓ Prioritizing values such as **transparency, accountability, and protection of individual rights** ensures that AI benefits society without compromising ethical standards.

- **India's Adoption of AI Regulations:**

- ✓ **India should draw insights from the EU's AI Act** while tailoring regulations to its specific context.
- ✓ Given the increasing **use of AI in India**, the government should **actively consider the formulation of comprehensive AI regulations.**
- ✓ This includes **addressing moral and ethical concerns**, protecting fundamental rights, and promoting responsible AI deployment.

- **Establishing Regulatory Bodies:**

- ✓ Countries, including India, can consider **establishing dedicated AI regulatory bodies.**
- ✓ These bodies can **oversee compliance, conduct independent assessments**, and ensure the enforcement of AI regulations.
- ✓ Clear structures for oversight contribute to the **credibility and effectiveness of the regulatory framework.**

- **Encouraging AI Research and Development:**

- ✓ **Regulations should not act as barriers** but as enablers for AI research and development.
- ✓ **Governments should incentivize research initiatives**, encourage collaboration between academia and industry, and support startups in the AI sector.
- ✓ This approach fosters innovation while ensuring adherence to regulatory standards.

- **Capacity Building and Training:**

- ✓ **To ensure effective implementation of AI regulations**, capacity building and training programs are essential.
- ✓ This includes training regulatory **authorities, businesses, and individuals on AI ethics**, compliance, and the responsible use of AI technologies.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- ✓ **A robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be established** to assess the impact of AI regulations.
- ✓ This includes evaluating **the effectiveness of measures, identifying areas for improvement**, and ensuring that regulations align with evolving technological landscapes.

TELECOM BILL 2023

SOURCE: [INDIAN EXPRESS](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- **Telecommunications Bill, 2023** was introduced in the **Lok Sabha** by **Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnav** on **December 18, 2023**.
- The Bill proposes **the first comprehensive rewrite of telecommunications law in 138 years**.
- Aims to **consolidate various aspects of telecom regulation into a single statute, replacing the Telegraph Act, 1885**.

ABOUT THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS BILL, 2023:

Introduction and Repeal:

The bill introduced in Lok Sabha on **December 18, 2023**.

Seeks to regulate telecommunication, repealing the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, and Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950**.

Authorisation for Telecom Activities:

Requires prior authorisation from the central government for telecommunication services, network operations, or radio equipment possession.

Existing licences remain valid, and new authorisations are subject to **renewal every five years**.

Spectrum Assignment:

Spectrum to be assigned by auction, with administrative allocation for specified purposes.

Allows re-purposing or re-assigning frequency ranges and permits spectrum sharing, trading, leasing, and surrender.

Interception and Search Powers:

Grants power to intercept, monitor, or block messages on grounds of public safety, emergency, or specified interests.

Allows suspension of telecom services and temporary government possession of infrastructure in emergencies.

Standards Specification:

Central government empowered to **set standards for telecom equipment**, infrastructure, networks, and services.

Right of Way:

Facility providers can seek a right of way for **telecom infrastructure on public or private property**. Right of way **must be non-discriminatory** and **non-exclusive** to the extent possible.

User Protection Measures:

Central government may **implement measures to protect users**, including consent mechanisms, Do Not Disturb registers, and **grievance redressal**.

TRAI Appointments:

Amends TRAI Act to allow individuals with 30 years of professional experience as chairpersons and 25 years as members.

Digital Bharat Nidhi:

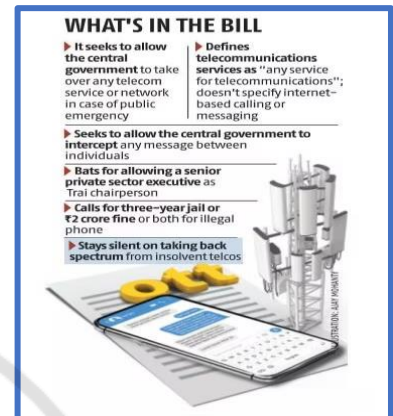
Retains the Universal Service Obligation Fund as Digital Bharat Nidhi, supporting telecom services in underserved areas and allowing its use for research and development.

offences and Penalties:

Specifies criminal and civil offences with penalties, including imprisonment and fines. Offences include **providing telecom services without authorisation** and breaching terms and conditions.

Adjudication Process:

Establishes an adjudicating officer for civil offences, appealable to the Designated



Appeals Committee.

Further **appeals against Committee decisions** can be made to TDSAT.

CHALLENGES & KEY PROVISION UNDER THE BILL:

Spectrum Allocation for Satellite Broadband:

Satellite broadband spectrum to be **allocated by the government instead of auctioning.**

Aims to expedite the launch of services by entities like **OneWeb, Jio Satellite Communications, Starlink, and Project Kuiper.**

Biometric Authentication for New Telecom Users:

Mandatory biometric verification for new telecom users to prevent **SIM-based fraud.**

Data privacy rules under the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**, will apply.

Powers During War and Emergencies:

Empowers the government to take over telecom networks during war or public emergencies.

Messaging Apps and Telecom Regulator Powers:

Messaging apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Signal remain outside the bill's purview.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) powers are not diluted.

Administrative Allocation of Spectrum:

Administrative allocation for **satcom services, TV broadcast, DTH, etc.**, for specified purposes. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) to decide spectrum **pricing and allocation methodology.**

Internet Shutdowns and Encryption Standards:

Clause 20(2) raises concerns about internet shutdowns and interception powers.

Government **empowered to regulate encryption standards** for internet communications.

Trusted Sources and National Security:

Prohibits the use of telecom gear from untrusted sources in the interest of national security.

Penalties for vandalism to critical telecom infrastructure.

Dispute Resolution and Grievance Redressal:

Establishes a **two-stage dispute resolution mechanism.**

Mandatory grievance redressal mechanism for each service provider.

Digital Bharat Nidhi and USOF:

Proposes renaming the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to Digital Bharat Nidhi.

Telcos contribute 5% of annual revenues to USOF for connecting unconnected areas.

Opposition and Privacy Concerns:

Some opposition citing **violation of privacy, referring to the 2017 Supreme Court ruling.**

Assurance that interception rules remain unchanged from the previous law.



KEY PROVISION UNDER THE BILL FOR NATIONAL SECURITY:

Government's Emergency Powers:

The bill grants the Central Government, State Government, or authorized officers **the authority to act in the occurrence of a public emergency** or in the interest of public safety.

Temporary Possession of Telecom Services:

In situations of public emergency, the government can take **temporary possession** of any telecommunication service or network from an authorized entity.

Priority Routing for Emergency Messages:

To **ensure an effective response** during emergencies, the government is empowered to establish mechanisms for routing messages of authorized users on a priority basis.

Grounds for Intervention:

The **intervention is justified on grounds such as the sovereignty and integrity of India, defense and security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, or preventing the commission of any offense.**

Interception, Detention, and Disclosure:



In the interest of national security, the government can direct that messages transmitted or received by any telecommunication service or **network shall not be transmitted, intercepted, detained, or disclosed**, with the disclosure being in an intelligible format to the specified officer.

Protection of Press Messages:

Press messages **intended for publication in India** by correspondents accredited to the Central Government or a State Government are safeguarded, and **interception or detention is prohibited unless transmission** is specifically prohibited under relevant rules.

Government's Authority to Transmit Messages:

In the public interest, the Central Government **holds the authority to direct any authorized entity to transmit specific messages** through telecommunication services or networks, specifying the manner of transmission.

Safeguards for Privacy and Public Interest:

The bill establishes a **delicate balance between privacy concerns and public interest** by outlining specific conditions and justifications for government intervention in the functioning of telecommunication services.

Press Freedom Assurance:

Acknowledging the importance of press freedom, the bill explicitly protects press messages from **unwarranted interception or detention**, reinforcing the democratic values of information dissemination.

Centralized Decision-Making for Emergency Measures:

The bill vests decision-making powers in the Central Government, ensuring a centralized and coordinated approach in implementing emergency measures for national security.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN TELECOM SECTORS:

<i>Initiatives in Telecom Sector</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
<i>Setting up 100 labs for 5G applications</i>	Tap employment potential and business opportunities, develop applications in engineering institutions focusing on areas like smart classrooms, precision farming, intelligent transport systems, and healthcare .
<i>Allocating ₹1.23-lakh crore for postal and telecom projects</i>	Support telecom sector growth, allocate funds for postal and telecom projects, including capital infusion in State-run BSNL .
<i>Allocating ₹2,158 crore for optical fibre cable network for Defence Services</i>	Strengthening defence communication infrastructure through optical fibre cable network investment.
<i>Allocating ₹715.8 crore for telecom projects in the North-East</i>	Improve telecom infrastructure and connectivity in the North-East region.
<i>Introducing KYC reforms and Aadhaar-based e-KYC</i>	Simplify onboarding of customers , introduce consumer-friendly methods for obtaining new mobile connections, and enhance user experience.
<i>Implementing Spectrum Reforms</i>	Facilitate efficient use of spectrum, encourage spectrum sharing without additional financial burden, increase the validity period of spectrum acquisition , and conduct regular spectrum auctions.
<i>Financial reforms to address sector stress</i>	Address financial stress in the telecom sector by removing non-telecom revenue from AGR definition , rationalizing interest payments, providing a moratorium on AGR dues

	and spectrum auction instalments, and reducing the requirement of bank guarantees.
<i>Ease of Doing Business Reforms</i>	Simplify approvals, ease procurement, and encourage investments by introducing reforms such as simplified tower approval processes, procurement of wireless equipment based on self-declaration, and streamlining procedures through the Saral Sanchar Portal .
<i>PM-WANI (Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface)</i>	Accelerate broadband internet services by providing public Wi-Fi through Public Data Offices (PDOs) spread across the country.
<i>BharatNet Project</i>	Extend the scope of the BharatNet Project to make service-ready Gram Panchayats, aiming to enhance broadband connectivity in rural areas.
<i>India's Data Consumption</i>	Acknowledge India's high data consumption , emphasizing the need for robust telecom infrastructure to meet the demands of approximately 5 hours of daily time spent on smartphones.
<i>Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for telecom and networking products</i>	Encourage domestic manufacturing by introducing PLI schemes , fostering self-reliance and boosting the production of telecom and networking products.

WAY FORWARD:

Implementation and Rollout:

The **government should focus on the effective and timely implementation of the provisions** outlined in the Telecom Bill.

Regulatory bodies such as the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** should work closely with industry stakeholders to **ensure a smooth transition** to the new regulatory framework.



Technology Adoption and Innovation:

Encourage telecom operators to adopt new technologies and innovations in line with global standards. Promote research and development in the telecom sector to foster innovation, **especially in areas such as 5G, satellite communication, and digital services.**

Cybersecurity Measures:

Strengthen cybersecurity measures to safeguard telecom infrastructure and protect user data. Collaborate with cybersecurity experts and organizations to develop and implement best practices for the telecom sector.

Consumer Grievance Redressal:

Ensure the effective functioning of the grievance redressal mechanisms outlined in the Telecom Bill. **Establish user-friendly platforms** for consumers to raise complaints and seek resolutions.

Infrastructure Development:

Continue investing in the development of telecom infrastructure, including **broadband networks and satellite communication**, to enhance connectivity across urban and rural areas.

Adaptability to Future Technologies:

Anticipate and prepare for future technologies, such as advancements in **artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), and machine learning**, and their implications on the telecom sector.

Policy Stability:

Maintain stability in telecom policies to provide a conducive environment for investment and growth. **Minimize frequent changes** in regulations to offer predictability to industry players.

RANSOMWARE ATTACKS ON INDIAN IT FIRMS

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

On December 20, HCL Technologies reported a ransomware incident within a confined cloud environment. The attack had no observable impact on the broader HCL Tech network, but it influenced stock market perceptions, leading to a decline in share prices.

UNDERSTANDING RANSOMWARE:

About Ransomware:

Ransomware is a malware designed to deny a user or organization access to files on their computer.

By encrypting these files and demanding a ransom payment for the decryption key, cyberattackers place organizations in a position where paying the ransom is the easiest and cheapest way to regain access to their files.

Some variants have added additional functionality – such as data theft – to provide further incentive for ransomware victims to pay the ransom.

Ransomware Attack Explained:

A ransomware attack involves locking and encrypting crucial data, compelling victims to make a payment to regain access.

Exploiting vulnerabilities in human, system, network, and software aspects, these attacks target various devices.

Examples of Ransomware Attacks:

WannaCry: Exploited Windows SMB protocol vulnerability, affecting 230,000 computers in 150 countries in 2017.

Cerber: Operates as ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS), encrypting files and displaying ransom notes on desktops.

Locky: Encrypts 160 file types, primarily impacting files used by designers, engineers, and testers.

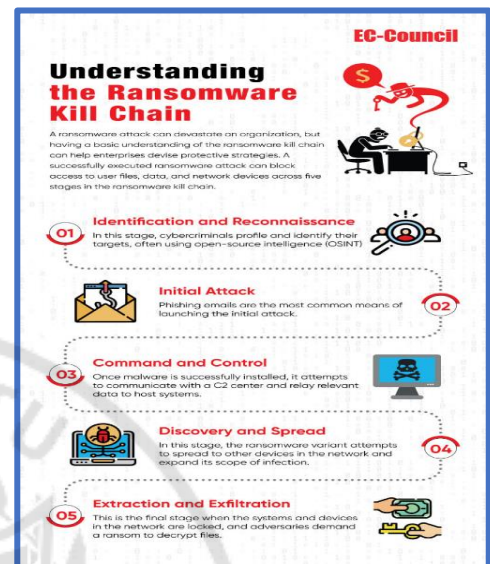
Cryptolocker: Emerged in 2017, infecting over 500,000 computers, encrypting local and network drive files.

NotPetya and Petya: Target Windows machines, encrypt an entire hard drive, and spread using various mechanisms.

Ryuk: Spreads through phishing or drive-by downloads, serves as a basis for an Advanced Persistent Threat (APT).

GrandCrab: Released in 2018, encrypts files and demands ransom, used in extortion attacks.

LockBit: It have executed over 1,400 attacks against victims in the United States in June 2023 and around the world, issuing over \$100 million in ransom demands.



WHY IT ORGANIZATIONS ARE TARGETED BY THREAT ACTORS:

Value of Data:

Threat actors target organizations with valuable data. Higher data value increases the likelihood of ransom payment.

Intellectual Property at Risk:

IT organizations and software vendors possess sensitive intellectual property.

Leaked IP can devalue the company, replicate software, and threaten revenue.

Cloud Security and Data Solutions:



IT firms offering cloud security and data solutions manage large data repositories.

Successful attacks can open channels to target supply chains, pressuring ransom payment.

Diverse Data Holdings:

Data held includes personally identifiable client information, IP, access credentials, and financial data. Such data is leveraged for launching additional attacks.

Early Adopters of Technology:

IT organizations pioneer new technologies and advocate open architecture.

Early adoption may lack the highest levels of protection, making them attractive targets.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RANSOMWARE THREATS IN INDIA:

Escalating Threat Landscape:

Ransomware attacks pose a growing concern for Indian organizations, with an increasing frequency of incidents.

A study by Sophos in 2023 revealed a significant rise, indicating that 73% of organizations reported falling victim to ransomware attacks, compared to 57% in the previous year.

Alarming Success Rates:

Among the affected organizations, 77% reported that attackers successfully encrypted their data.

This high success rate indicates the efficacy of ransomware tactics in infiltrating and compromising critical data systems.

Shifting Payment Dynamics:

The study noted a noteworthy shift in the payment dynamics, with 44% of organizations opting to pay the ransom for data retrieval—a decrease from the previous year's 78%.

Despite this decline, companies that paid the ransom experienced a doubled cost of recovery for their data compared to those relying on backups.

CERT-In's Ransomware Report:

India's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) reported a substantial 51% increase in ransomware incidents during the first half of 2022.

The majority of these attacks targeted crucial sectors such as data centers, Information Technology (IT), and Technology-enabled Services (TeS), posing a significant threat to critical infrastructure.

Surge in attacks

A report from French tech firm Thales, said one in four Indian organizations suffered a ransomware attack in 2021, which was higher than the global average of 21%.

Ransomware leaks in India (Jan 2021 to Feb 2022)

Ransomware	Leak
Lockbit 2.0	5
Avaddon	3
Conti	3
CoomingProject	3
Black Matter	2

How fast ransomware groups encrypt data (in minutes)

Lockbit 2.0	5.50
Babuk	6.34
Avaddon	13.15
Ryuk	14.3
Revil	24.16

Source: Palo Alto Networks

Source: Splunk Threat Research

KEY CYBERSECURITY LAWS IN INDIA:

Information Technology Act, 2000:

Enacted to regulate electronic transactions and define cybercrimes and penalties.

Establishes an adjudicating mechanism for resolving disputes related to cybercrimes.

Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007:

Governs electronic payments and mandates security requirements for payment systems.

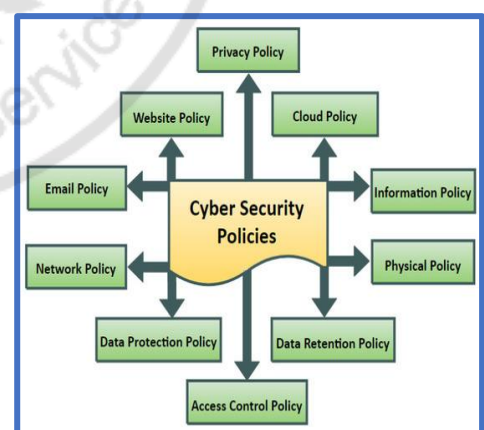
Requires payment system operators to maintain robust security systems to prevent unauthorized access to customer information.

Reserve Bank of India Guidelines:

Issued by RBI to banks and financial institutions to ensure secure online transactions.

Mandates security measures like two-factor authentication, encryption, and firewalls.

Information Technology Rules, 2011:



Requires companies to **implement reasonable security practices** for protecting sensitive personal information.

Applies to entities handling financial information, health records, and biometric data.

National Cyber Security Policy, 2013:

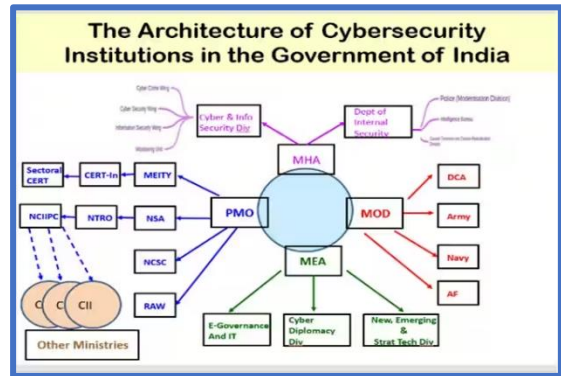
Outlines the **government's approach to securing cyberspace.**

Establishes the **National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre** and promotes cybersecurity awareness and education.

Cyber Appellate Tribunal:

Hears appeals against decisions under the **Information Technology Act of 2000.**

Empowered to hear **appeals related to cybercrimes**, including orders on compensation and damages.



Additional Cybersecurity Laws in India:

Companies Act (2013):

Addresses **regulatory compliance, e-discovery, cyber forensics, and cybersecurity diligence.**

Defines responsibilities of company directors concerning cybersecurity obligations.

NIST Compliance - Cybersecurity Framework (NCFS):

Authorized by the **National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).**

Contains guidelines, standards, and best practices for **addressing cybersecurity risks responsibly.**

STEPS TAKEN TO DEAL WITH CYBER CRIME AND CYBER SECURITY:

Online Reporting Portal:

Launch of www.cybercrime.gov.in for reporting cybercrimes, with a focus on offenses like child pornography and explicit content.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):

Implementation of the **I4C scheme to comprehensively address national-level cybercrime issues.**

Incident Reporting Mandate:

Mandatory reporting of cybersecurity incidents by organizations providing **digital services to CERT-In.**

Cyber Swachhta Kendra:

Establishment of a **centre for botnet cleaning and malware analysis**, providing detection tools and free programs for malware removal.

Audit of Government Websites:

Provision for **pre-hosting and periodic audits** of government websites and applications.

Training Programs:

Conducting training programs for administrators and **Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs)** to enhance IT infrastructure security and mitigate cyber-attacks.



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