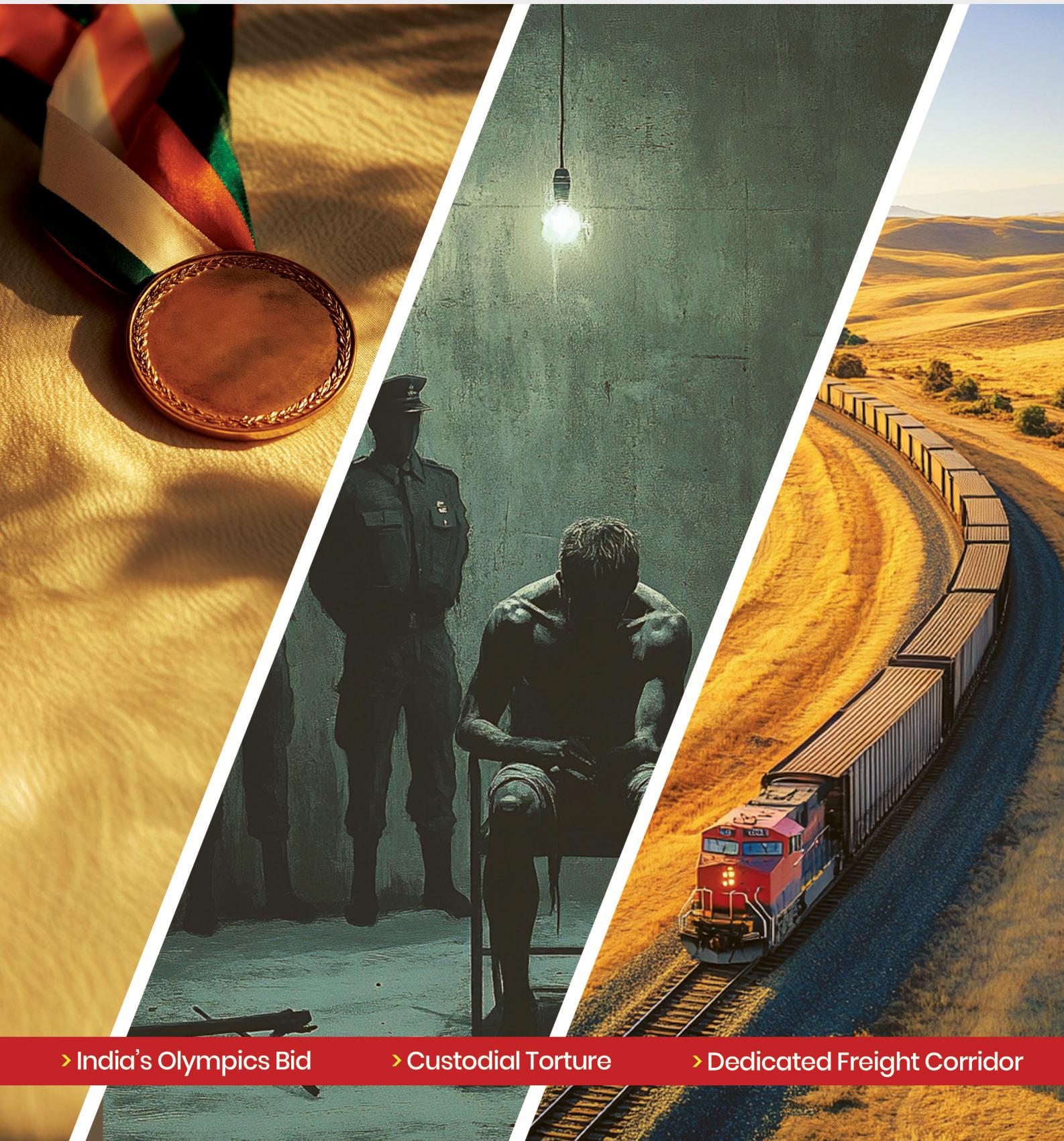




FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST



› India's Olympics Bid

› Custodial Torture

› Dedicated Freight Corridor

03rd NOVEMBER - 09th NOVEMBER, 2024

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As UPSC aspirants, it is essential to stay updated on current affairs to excel in the examination. This **Fortune Weekly Digest (ForWarD)** brings you the latest news and developments from around the world, carefully curated and analyzed to help you prepare for the Civil Services (Main) Examination.

We understand that time is precious, and we have made sure to present the information in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

The magazine is divided into different sections. Mains relevant topics have been covered in detail with a UPSC previous year question perspective. The jot downs are examples and interesting facts to enrich your answer writing. Cherrypicks has some key words from the week, helpful again in answer writing and essay. We have also included essay topics and sample questions to help you gauge your preparation.

We have designed this magazine to best supplement the daily current affairs notes we have launched by the name of **FIND (Fortune IAS News Daily)** and **FINDER (Fortune IAS News Daily Explainer)** and the **Fortune Prelims Precise** monthly compilation. This magazine will be explained in detail and your queries addressed in a live class we conduct.

At a time when there is no dearth of current affairs materials, our hope is help you get a one-stop solution for all your current affairs needs.

This magazine is a work in progress and your feedback will be appreciated.

We hope that this magazine will serve as a valuable resource for your exam preparation and contribute to your success in the UPSC examination.

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**FIRST ATTEMPT TOPPERS FROM
OUR PRELIMS CUM MAINS BATCH**



KASTURI SHA
AIR 68

MANJIMA P
AIR 235

SWATHI S BABU
AIR 522

FABI RASHEED
AIR 71

OORMILA J S
AIR 561

WOMEN IN POWER

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CUSTODIAL TORTURE

Syllabus: GS II - Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability

PYQ MAPPING

Q) National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in India can be most effective when its tasks are adequately supported by other mechanisms that ensure the accountability of a government. In light of above observation assess the role of NHRC as an effective complement to the judiciary and other institutions in promoting and protecting human rights standards. (2014)

Q) Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analyzing their structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures. (2021)

WHY IN NEWS

An FIR has been filed against the SHO and others at the Chinhat police station in Lucknow after a **32-year-old man, Mohit Pandey, died in police custody**, with his family alleging custodial torture. The incident has led to protests and calls for action against the police and political figures allegedly involved in the brutality.

INTRODUCTION

India faces a troubling record of police brutality, with **1,727 custodial deaths reported between 2001 and 2018 but only 26 convictions**. Custodial torture, a severe violation of human rights, persists despite legal safeguards, exposing deep flaws within the criminal justice system. This issue not only undermines the principles of justice and human dignity but also erodes public trust in law enforcement agencies.

SHORT TAKES

- **Third-degree methods:** Coercive interrogation techniques, often involving physical or psychological torture, used by law enforcement to forcibly extract confessions or information from suspects, violating ethical and legal standards. The term third degree is seen to have associated with torture in investigation since in 1900's. However the phrase is supposed to have derived from the gruelling initiation rituals of Masons, a global fraternal organisation focused on moral development, charity, brotherhood, and personal growth, with rituals, symbols, and a commitment to ethical behaviour.
- **Custodial Death:** it refers to any death of a person while they are in the care of the police or the judicial system.

Torture

Torture" has not been defined in Constitution or in other penal laws. 'Torture' of a human being by another human being is essentially an instrument to impose the will of the 'strong' over the 'weak' by suffering. The word torture today has become synonymous with the darker side of human civilisation.

Torture is a wound in the soul so painful that sometimes you can almost touch it, but it is also so intangible that there is not way to heal it. Torture is anguish squeezing in your chest, cold as ice and heavy as a stone paralyzing as sleep and dark as the abyss. - **DK Basu vs State of West Bengal (1996), Supreme Court**

STATISTICS

- **Custodial Deaths in India:** According to data from the Government of India, Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of custodial deaths in 2021-22, with 501 deaths out of 2,544 across the country, followed by West Bengal with 257 deaths.
- **National Crime Records Bureau Data:** Between 2001 and 2020, over 1,800 people died in police custody across India, but only 26 police officers were convicted, reflecting the systemic issues in holding authorities accountable.

IMPORTANT CASE LAWS

② **Sunil Batra v. State (UT of Delhi) (1978)**

- **Context:** **Suo motu** action was taken following a letter detailing torture inflicted by a prison warden on an inmate.
- **Key Findings:** The Court **struck down arbitrary solitary confinement under Section 30(2) of the Prisoners Act, 1900**, deeming it violative of prisoners' right to life under Article 21. It condemned indiscriminate handcuffing and chaining, except in rare cases, as inhuman and degrading.

② **D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997)**

- **Context:** The Supreme Court took **suo motu cognizance** of custodial deaths based on a letter highlighting this issue.
- **Important Directives:**
 - i. **Police Identification:** Officers must have visible ID and name tags, with details recorded.
 - ii. **Memo of Arrest:** A memo, signed by a witness and arrestee, must be prepared at the time of arrest. The arrest and custody details, including who was notified, must be recorded.
 - iii. **Right to Inform:** Arrestees must be allowed to have a friend/relative notified of their arrest. Police must notify distant relatives within 8-12 hours via legal aid or police station.
 - iv. **Awareness of Rights:** Arrestees must be informed of their right to have someone notified.
 - v. **Injury Check:** Arrestees must be examined for injuries at arrest, with findings documented. Arrestees must be medically examined every 48 hours by an approved doctor.
 - vi. **Document Submission:** Copies of arrest documents must be sent to the Magistrate.
 - vii. **Right to Lawyer:** Arrestees can meet a lawyer during interrogation, but not throughout.

Guidelines were issued to **ban third-degree methods** and promoting humane treatment of suspects.

② **Selvi v. State of Karnataka (2010)**

- **Context:** Legality of Deception Detection Tests (DDTs), such as polygraph and brain mapping, in custodial settings.
- **Key Findings:** The Court ruled that narco-analysis, polygraph, and brain-mapping tests **could not be conducted without the individual's consent**, aligning with the right to personal liberty and bodily integrity under Article 21.

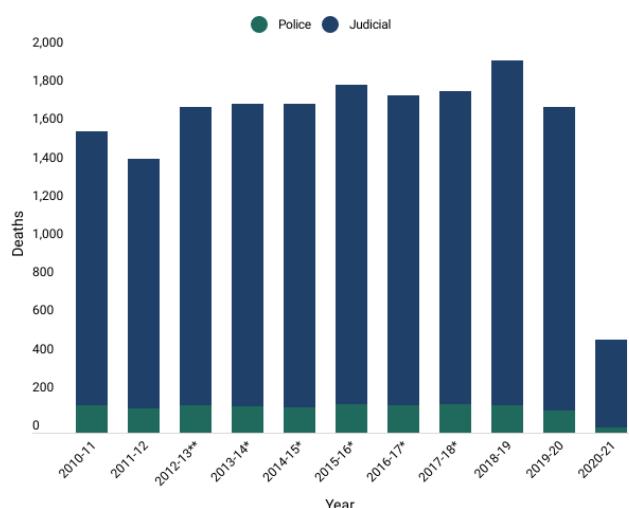
② **Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014)**

- **Context:** This case addressed unnecessary arrests and detention by police officers.
- **Key Directives:** The Court required police officers to issue a notice to the accused before arrest in cognizable offences, submit a checklist justifying the arrest, and produce this checklist before a Magistrate for validation.

② **People's Union for Civil Liberties v. State of Maharashtra (2014)**

- **Context:** Addressed the need for unbiased inquiry in custodial death cases.
- **Key Directive:** The Court mandated that Judicial Magistrates, rather than Executive Magistrates, should conduct inquiries into custodial deaths to ensure fair and impartial investigations.

In Decade To 2019-20, NHRC Registered 139 Police Custody Death Cases Each Year, On Average



Source: [Monthly reports](#) (April 2018- July 2020) and [annual reports](#) of the National Human Rights Commission [2010-11](#), [2011-12](#), **2016-17, *2017-18
Note: 2020-21 data from April to July 2020

REASONS FOR CUSTODIAL TORTURE

- ♣ **Political, Media, and Public Pressures:** Law enforcement often faces pressure from politicians, media, or the public to deliver swift results in high-profile cases which can lead to coercive interrogations.
- ♣ **Outdated Methods:** Police continue to rely on physical torture as an investigative tool instead of non-coercive techniques like forensic or psychological analysis
- ♣ **Lack of Awareness Regarding Rights:** Both detainees and law enforcement personnel often lack proper knowledge of rights enshrined in the Constitution and international treaties like the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT).
- ♣ **Overcrowding in Prisons:** Excessive congestion in **Indian prisons operating at over 130% capacity** lead to neglect, poor living conditions, and abuse by overburdened staff.
- ♣ **Impunity for Law Enforcement:** The lack of accountability in police forces is a major challenge as **police often investigate their own conduct**, which results in very few convictions.
 - o Another issue is that DK Basu guidelines (1997) start to operate only after the time of formal arrest. There is enough room for police foul play at the stage of custody before the formal arrest is recorded.
- ♣ **Inadequate Legal Safeguards:** India lacks a comprehensive law against torture. The **Prevention of Torture Bill, 2022, has yet to pass**, and there is no specific legislation to protect victims of custodial violence or ensure proper compensation.
 - o India **signed the United Nations Convention against Torture in 1997 but has yet to ratify it**, limiting its ability to implement global standards against custodial torture.
- ♣ **Judicial Delays:** Prolonged trials and weak prosecution in cases of custodial torture dissuade victims and their

families from seeking justice.

- o The DK Basu case (1997) has not been implemented and another PIL was filed in 2020 on which the SC hearing still continues.
- ♣ **Weak Monitoring Mechanisms:** Institutions like the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs) have limited power. Their recommendations are non-binding, reducing their effectiveness in ensuring justice for victims.
- ♣ **Caste and Religious Bias:** Police violence disproportionately targets communities based on caste and religion, with **Dalits, Muslims, and Adivasis** being especially vulnerable to abuse in custody.
 - o **Example:** Aman Gautam, a Dalit, reportedly died due to police torture, highlighting the disproportionate victimisation of disadvantaged groups in custody.
 - o **Example:** it was reported in New Indian Express that 80% of all custodial torture victims in Tamil Nadu are Dalits.
- ♣ **Hypermasculine Police Culture:** The deeply ingrained hypermasculine culture within the police force encourages brutal treatment of detainees, often leading to sexual violence and humiliation.
 - o **Example:** The torture of father-son duo **Jayaraj and Bennicks** in Tamil Nadu included genital mutilation, underscoring the sexual violence embedded in police practices.
 - o **Example:** Some states roll out severe deterrent and collective forms of punishment called in the media as “bulldozer justice” that side steps the judicial role in cases. This creates a sense of might is right in the eyes of police who then crush the accused than to bring them to justice.

WAY FORWARD

- ✿ **Comprehensive Torture Legislation:** India must ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture and the Prevention of Torture Bill should be passed to create a clear framework for accountability and victim compensation.
- o Enact the **Law Commission's 2003 recommendation** to amend the Evidence Act, shifting the burden of proof to police in cases of custodial torture.

- ✿ **Independent Investigations:** To prevent police impunity, custodial death cases should be investigated by independent bodies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), as in the **Krishna Yadav case**, where a CBI probe revealed the planned nature of the torture.
- ✿ **Adherence to Supreme Court Guidelines:** Implement strict measures to ensure police personnel comply with the Supreme Court's guidelines in **D.K. Basu v.**

State of West Bengal (1997).

- ✿ **Strengthening Human Rights Commissions:** Empowering the NHRC and SHRCs to take binding actions, including awarding compensation and taking direct legal action against perpetrators, would increase their impact and accountability.
- ✿ **Use of Technology with Caution:** Leverage AI-based systems, body cameras, and automated alert systems for monitoring police interactions with suspects, but establish strict ethical frameworks to avoid biased or excessive surveillance.
- ✿ **Reforming Police Training and Culture:** Police training should focus on human rights, **de-escalation techniques**, and sensitivity towards vulnerable communities, while addressing the hypermasculine culture within the force.

- ✿ **Public Awareness and Pressure:** Continuous media scrutiny and public activism can help bring attention to incidents and can lead to more transparency.
- o **Example:** The protests after Mohit Pandey's death led to an FIR being registered against police officials.
- ✿ **Addressing the Root Causes:** Government policies should focus on **building trust** between law enforcement and marginalised communities, ensuring fair treatment for all, regardless of social status or political influence.
- ✿ **Independent Oversight:** Set up an independent body to oversee custodial interrogations and conduct periodic reviews of police custody conditions, aiming to enhance transparency and build public trust.

CONCLUSION

Custodial torture remains a profound violation of human rights in India, highlighting the urgent need for robust legal reforms. Only through a **comprehensive approach that combines legal safeguards, ethical policing, and public awareness** can the dignity and rights of individuals in custody be truly protected.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Critically analyse the alignment of current custodial practices in India with the constitutional right to life and dignity under Article 21. Propose reforms needed to uphold human dignity within the custodial framework **(10marks)(150 words)**

OUR 14 TOPPERS FROM PRELIMS CUM MAINS BATCH

5 TOPPERS IN FIRST ATTEMPT



KASTURI SHA
AIR 68



FABI RASHEED
AIR 71



SIDDHANT KUMAR
AIR 114



MANJIMA P
AIR 235



PARVATHY
GOPAKUMAR
AIR 282



SWATHI S BABU
AIR 522



DEVIKRISHNA P
AIR 559



OORMILA J S
AIR 561



MRIDUL DARSEN
AIR 630



SAYANTH K
AIR 701



ANUSHA R CHANDRAN
AIR 791



SWATHY S
AIR 827



SACHIN ANAND
AIR 855



RAVEEN K MANOHARAN
AIR 888

BEST RESULTS FROM CLASSROOM PROGRAM (PCM BATCH) IN KERALA

DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDOR

Syllabus: GS III - Infrastructure

PYQ MAPPING

Q1 National urban transport policy emphasises on moving people instead of moving vehicles. Discuss critically the success of various strategies of the government in this regard. **(2014)**

Q2 Why is Public Private Partnership (PPP) required in infrastructure projects? Examine the role of PPP model in the redevelopment of Railway Stations in India. **(2022)**

SHORT TAKES

➤ Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd (DFCCIL)

- o It is a special-purpose vehicle set up under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways.
- o It mandates the planning & development, mobilisation of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the DFC.
- o DFCCIL was incorporated in October 2006 under the Indian Companies Act 1956.

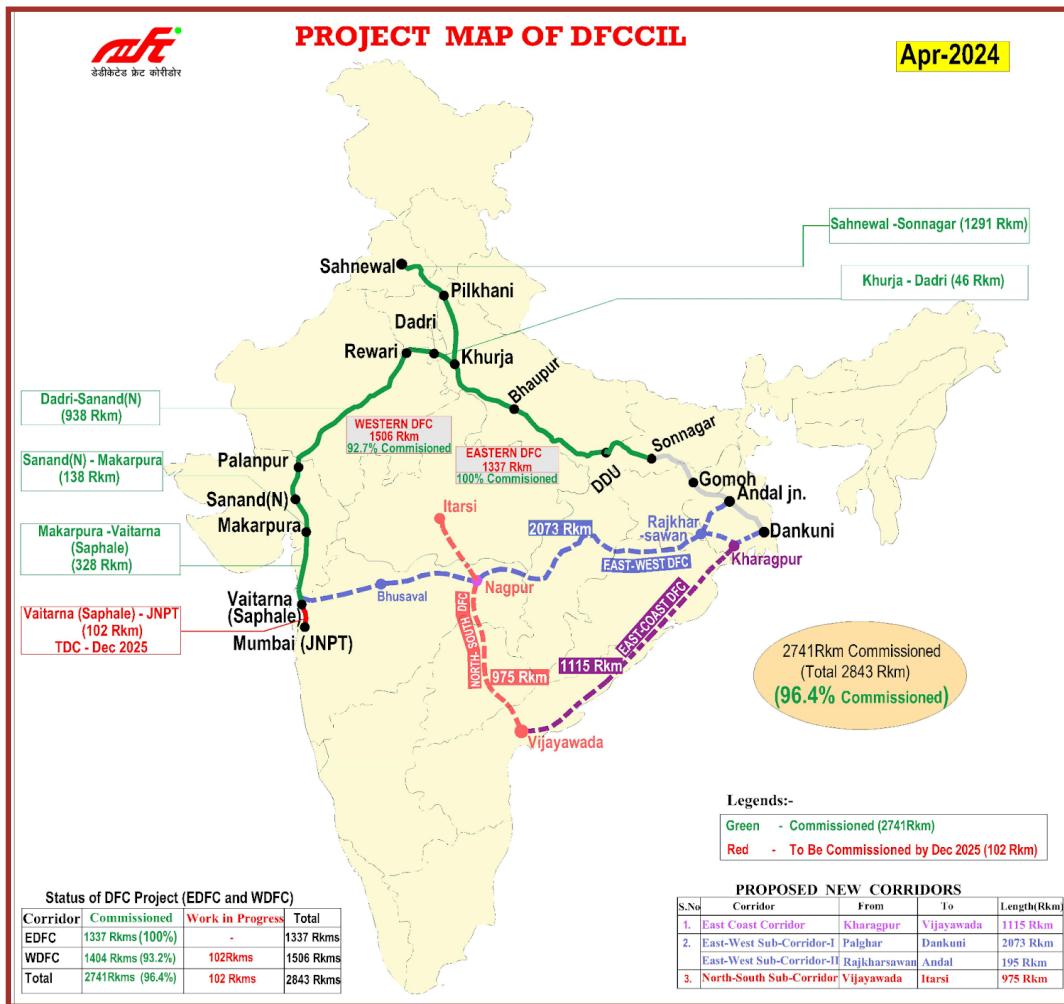
WHY IN NEWS

In a recent study, conducted by the University of New South Wales (UNSW), India's Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) were projected to boost the country's GDP by Rs. 16,000 crore.

INTRODUCTION

Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) are specific routes for freight transportation, which offer higher transport capacity due to the faster transit of freight trains, running of double stack container trains, and heavy haul trains. This improves the supply chain for the industries/logistics players located at economic centres along the way, leading to growth of export-import traffic too.

PROJECT DETAILS



- ⌚ **Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC):** Fully commissioned and running close to 200 trains per day.
- o 1,506 km long, from **Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Mumbai to Dadri (UP)**, handling goods like textiles, chemicals, and industrial products.
- o The WDFC covers **Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra & Uttar Pradesh**.
- o It is being funded by the **Japan International Cooperation Agency**.
- ⌚ **Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC):** 93.2% complete and running 125 trains per day.

BACKGROUND

- ➡ The **Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs)** initiative was first announced in the **Railway Budget for FY 2005-06**.
- ➡ In **September 2006**, then-Prime Minister **Dr. Manmohan Singh** laid the foundation stone for the **Eastern DFC** in Ludhiana.
- ➡ In **October 2006**, the foundation stone for the **Western DFC** was laid in Mumbai.
- ➡ On **October 30, 2006**, the **Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL)** was established as a Special Purpose Vehicle to oversee

FUTURE PROPOSED CORRIDORS

- ☀ **East Coast Corridor:** From Kharagpur to Vijayawada (1115 km).
- ☀ **East-West Sub-corridors:**
 - o Sub-corridor-I: From Palghar to Dankuni (2073 km).

CURRENT STATUS

- ♣ Daily train operations on the DFCs have **risen by 60% from the previous year**, with an average of 325 trains now running each day.
- ♣ DFCs have **transported over 232 billion Gross Tonne**

NEED FOR DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDOR

- ⌚ **Overutilization of Existing Rail Network:**
 - o The Railways' golden quadrilateral, linking Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Howrah, along with its two diagonals (Delhi-Chennai and Mumbai-Howrah), constitutes only 16% of the total route but handles over 52% of passenger traffic and 58% of revenue-earning freight traffic.
- ⌚ **Declining Rail Freight Share:**
 - o The Railways' share of total freight traffic has been declining. The National Rail Plan aims to increase the rail freight share to 45% by 2030.
- ⌚ **Supporting Economic Growth and Industrial Expansion:**
 - o DFCs facilitate efficient and reliable freight transport, crucial for economic activities across sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and

- o 1,337 km long, from **Sonnagar (Bihar) to Sahnewal (Punjab)**, focusing on coal, steel, and agricultural products.
- o The EDFC route covers Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand & West Bengal
- o The EDFC route has coal mines, thermal power plants & industrial cities.
- o Feeder routes are also being made for these.
- o EDFC is being funded by the **World Bank**.
- o Connecting Link for Eastern & Western Arm is under construction between Dadri & Khurja.

the construction, operation, and maintenance of the DFCs.

- ➡ On **March 12, 2024**, Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** inaugurated three new DFC stretches:
 - o **135 km Makarpura-Sachin** section on the Western DFC (WDFC).
 - o **179 km Sahnewal-Pilkhani** section on the Eastern DFC (EDFC).
 - o **222 km Pilkhani-Khurja** section on the Eastern DFC (EDFC).

- o Sub-corridor-II: From Rajkarsawan to Andal (195 km).
- ☀ **North-South Sub-corridor:** From Vijayawada to Itarsi (975 km).

Kilometres (GTKMs) and 122 billion Net Tonne Kilometres (NTKMs) of freight payload since launch.

- ♣ DFCs now handle **more than 10%** of the total freight traffic for Indian Railways.

retail.

- o By enhancing connectivity between production hubs and markets, DFCs can significantly lower logistics costs, which in turn supports industrial growth, encourages exports, and strengthens national supply chains.

Improving Safety Standards:

CHALLENGES

Land Acquisition Delays:

- o Securing land along DFC routes often faces delays due to legal disputes and community resistance, leading to extended timelines and increased costs.

Funding and Financial Constraints:

- o DFC projects require substantial capital and are often dependent on government support and foreign loans.
- o Any funding delays can result in cost overruns and stalled progress.

Environmental and Social Clearances:

- o Obtaining clearances to meet environmental

- o Freight movement on dedicated corridors reduces the risk of accidents on passenger tracks, as heavy freight trains do not interfere with lighter, faster passenger trains.

Reducing Environmental Impact:

- o Moving freight by rail instead of road reduces fuel consumption, emissions, and environmental pollution.

and social standards can be time-consuming and complex, affecting the project's timeline and budget.

Technological Integration:

- o Implementing advanced technology like automated signalling and high-capacity tracking systems requires expertise and significant investment, posing technical challenges.

Coordination with Multiple Stakeholders:

- o Effective collaboration between various stakeholders—including state governments, local authorities, and other rail agencies—is essential but can lead to delays if not managed efficiently.

WAY FORWARD

Streamlining Land Acquisition and Clearances:

- o Establish a fast-track process for land acquisition and environmental clearances, using a central regulatory body to resolve disputes quickly and fairly to prevent delays.

Securing Stable Funding Sources:

- o Diversify funding by involving public-private partnerships (PPPs) and exploring international financing.
- o This approach reduces dependence on government budgets and ensures sustained financial support for DFC expansion and maintenance.

Leveraging Advanced Technology:

- o Invest in modern rail technologies like automated signalling, GPS-based tracking, and predictive maintenance systems.

- o These can improve operational efficiency, reduce downtime, and enhance safety across the DFC network.

Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration:

- o Create a dedicated coordination platform that includes all stakeholders (state governments, rail authorities, local communities) to ensure smooth planning and execution.

Promoting Modal Shift and Capacity Utilisation:

- o Launch incentives and awareness programs to encourage businesses to switch from road to rail for freight transport.
- o Reduced tariffs, reliable scheduling, and service guarantees could make rail transport more attractive, helping DFCs to reach full capacity and maximise economic impact.

CONCLUSION

Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) are essential for boosting logistics efficiency and sustainability. Overcoming challenges through innovation, technology, and collaboration will unlock their full potential, driving economic growth and strengthening India's logistics infrastructure for global competitiveness.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) are key to transforming India's logistics and transportation sectors. Critically examine the role of DFCs in improving freight efficiency and sustainability, highlighting the challenges in their implementation and the strategies required to overcome them." **(10marks)(150 words)**

PM INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME 2024

Syllabus: GS III - Employment

PYQ MAPPING

Q1 "Economic growth in the recent past has been led by an increase in labour productivity." Explain this statement. Suggest the growth pattern that will lead to creation of more jobs without compromising labour productivity. **(2022)**

Q2 "Success of 'Make in India' programme depends on the success of 'Skill India' programme and radical labour reforms." Discuss with logical arguments. **(2015)**

WHY IN NEWS

Recently, there have been growing concerns about the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme (PMIS), which targets youth aged 21-24. While the initiative is appreciated, critics highlight the exclusion of postgraduate degree holders, suggesting that they too could benefit from the scheme's focus on skill enhancement.

INTRODUCTION

PM Internship Scheme is a remarkable initiative launched by the Indian government, designed to provide valuable internship opportunities for the youth of India. The program, part of the larger vision for skill development and employment, aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world experience by offering internships across the top 500 companies.

ABOUT

Background:

- o Launched by the Finance Minister in the **2024-25 Union Budget**, the **PM Internship Scheme** provides **12-month** internships for youth **aged 21-24 from low-income households**.
- o The pilot phase aims to place **1.25 lakh individuals across 24 sectors**, including energy, hospitality, and finance, with the long-term goal of one crore internships in top companies known for their social responsibility.

Eligibility Criteria:

- o ITI: Matriculation + ITI in relevant trade
- o Diploma: Intermediate + AICTE-recognized diploma
- o Degree: Bachelor's degree from UGC/AICTE-recognized university

Benefits:

- o ₹5,000 monthly stipend
- o One-time payment of ₹6,000
- o Gain real-life work experience
- o **Insurance Coverage:**
 - Interns receive coverage under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, with premiums paid by the government.
- o **Facilitation and Assistance:**
 - A grievance redressal mechanism ensures prompt issue resolution.
 - Multilingual helpline (1800-116-090) offers support to stakeholders in various languages.

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES MENTIONED IN UNION BUDGET

The Union Budget's approach to addressing unemployment and job creation includes five major schemes with a total outlay of ₹2 lakh crore:

Employment Linked Incentive Schemes (3 schemes):

- o **Scheme 1:**
 - Focus on providing financial support to first-time employees.
 - One-month wage (up to ₹15,000) given to new employees in formal sectors.
 - The benefit will be provided via direct transfer

in three instalments.

- Eligibility: Salary up to ₹1 lakh per month.
- Expected to benefit 210 lakh youth.
- o **Scheme 2:**
 - Incentivize additional employment in the manufacturing sector.

- Linked to EPFO contribution for first-time employees over the first four years.
- Expected to create jobs for 30 lakh youth and benefit employers.

o **Scheme 3:**

- Incentivize additional employment in all sectors.
- Employers will receive ₹3,000 per month for two years to cover EPFO contributions for additional employees.
- Expected to benefit 50 lakh people.

❖ **Skill Development Scheme:**

- Aims to train 20 lakh youth over five years.
- Upgrades 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) with an outcome-oriented approach.

❖ **Internship Scheme:**

- Provides internship opportunities to 1 crore youth over five years.
- Youth will receive ₹5,000 per month as an allowance.
- One-time assistance of ₹6,000 provided.
- Companies will bear the training cost and 10% of the internship cost through their CSR funds.

SIGNIFICANCE

❖ **Practical Experience:**

- The scheme provides young individuals with hands-on training in top companies, allowing them to gain valuable industry experience and understand real-world business environments.

❖ **Skill Development:**

- By working in various sectors such as pharma, auto, and agriculture, interns can develop professional skills that are crucial for their careers.

❖ **Boost to Employability:**

- The exposure and training received through this scheme help bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements, thereby

improving the employability of the participants.

❖ **Support for Self-Reliance:**

- The scheme aligns with the government's vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)** by developing a skilled workforce that can contribute to the nation's growth.

❖ **Large Scale Impact:**

- With a target to provide internships to **one crore youth over five years**, the scheme aims to make a substantial impact on job creation and skill enhancement across the country
- Companies may provide extra accidental insurance coverage.

CHALLENGES

▼ **Exclusion of Postgraduate (PG) Students:**

- Despite their advanced skills, they are excluded from PMIS eligibility.
 - The exclusion of PG students **prevents sectors that require specialised knowledge** (e.g., energy, semiconductor, automotive, electronics) from benefiting from their skills.
- As PG enrollment includes a **high percentage of female students, especially in science (61.2%)**, excluding them from PMIS further restricts the participation of women in skill-building and career advancement opportunities.
 - This lack of inclusivity may reduce workforce diversity and restrict gender equity in India's development trajectory.
- Underutilization of the Government's Financial Investment:**

- With a substantial budget allocation (₹800 crore), excluding PG students may reduce the scheme's effectiveness, as the pool of highly skilled interns is limited.

▼ **Implementation Challenges:**

- Ensuring the effective implementation of such a large-scale scheme can be challenging.
 - Issues like timely placement, quality of internships, and monitoring the progress of interns need to be addressed.

▼ **Limited Insurance Coverage:**

- Basic government-provided insurance may not cover all health or accident-related expenses during the internship.
- While companies can add extra coverage, this is optional, potentially leaving some interns under-protected.

▼ **Unequal Access Across Regions:**

- o Industrialised states host a majority of internships, leading to fewer opportunities in less industrialised regions. This could disadvantage students from rural areas or regions with limited access to the top companies.

▼ Low Financial Assistance:

- o The ₹5,000 monthly stipend, though helpful, may be insufficient for interns from low-income backgrounds, especially in urban areas with higher living costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusion of PG Students:

- o Extend eligibility to PG students in critical fields like engineering and healthcare, enabling specialised expertise to benefit high-demand sectors such as renewable energy and technology.

★ Increased Financial Support Based on Location:

- o Adjust the stipend according to city living costs, offering a higher allowance in expensive urban areas (e.g., ₹7,000-₹8,000 for interns in cities like Mumbai) to make internships accessible for low-income youth.

Balanced Regional Distribution:

- o Partner with local businesses and MSMEs in

underrepresented states and offer incentives to companies in these areas. This would ensure more equitable access to internships nationwide.

★ Standardised Internship Quality:

- o Implement a set of best practices or a basic curriculum for internships, including mentorship and project-based learning. Partnering with established companies like Infosys or Tata could help create quality guidelines.

★ Enhanced Digital Accessibility:

- o Develop a mobile-friendly application process and hold registration drives in remote areas through local institutions, ensuring the scheme is accessible to candidates with limited digital resources.

CONCLUSION

The Prime Minister's Internship Scheme is a forward-looking initiative that not only empowers youth with hands-on experience in governance and policy-making but also addresses the need to overcome existing challenges in India's public sector. As the **Prime Minister** aptly stated, ***"Skill development and employment are essential needs in India. Our government is continuously working in this direction."***

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Critically analyse the objectives and impact of the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme in addressing skill development and governance challenges in India. How can the scheme contribute to building a future-ready workforce? (15marks) (250 words)

MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME ANALYSIS

Syllabus: GS II - Government Policies and Interventions

PYQ MAPPING

Q1 The Central Government frequently complains on the poor performance of the State Governments in eradicating suffering of the vulnerable sections of the society. Restructuring of Centrally sponsored schemes across the sectors for ameliorating the cause of vulnerable sections of population aims at providing flexibility to the States in better implementation. Critically evaluate **(2013)**

Q2 Reforming the government delivery system through the Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme is a progressive step, but it has its limitations too. Comment. **(2022)**

SHORT TAKES

➤ "Internal Audit Wing" of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)

- It is responsible for conducting independent audits of financial operations and programs under its jurisdiction. It ensures proper fund utilization, compliance with regulations, and identifies areas for improvement in rural development schemes.
- Function:** Review financial records, internal controls, and project processes to identify risks and irregularities.
- Reporting Structure:** Operates under the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).
- Scope of Audit:** Includes schemes like MGNREGA, PMGSY, and other rural development initiatives.

WHY IN NEWS

- Recently, a government audit revealed anomalies in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), resulting in a loss of ₹35 crore across three districts.
- These findings are part of the 2023-24 Annual Review of Performance Audit by the Office of the Chief Controller of Accounts, shared with the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).

INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) ensures 100 days of annual work for rural households to improve livelihood security. As the government's sole employment guarantee program, it has lifted many from poverty, though challenges remain.



Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA)

Launched in 2005 by the Ministry of Rural Development, MGNREGA is one of the world's largest work guarantee programs. MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of wage employment per year to every rural household, whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual labour.

It is demand driven programme focussing on rural infrastructure like roads, water conservation, afforestation etc. It also provides an unemployment compensation if employment is not provided within 15 days of request.

KEY STATS

- 14.32 crore registered Job Cards (household level official record of employment), with 68.22% active.
- 25.25 crore workers, 56.83% active

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2022-23

- 11.37 crore households availed employment.
- 289.24 crore person-days of employment were generated.
- 56.19% women
- 19.75% Scheduled Castes (SCs)
- 17.47% Scheduled Tribes (STs)

SIGNIFICANCE

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

- o World Bank reports that MGNREGA employs about one in six Indian families
- o It helps overcome the seasonal unemployment in rural areas
- o Reduces urban migration.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION & RURAL TRANSFORMATION

- o empowered the rural poor by increasing wages and promoting financial inclusion through direct bank payments

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- o Priority for women in the ratio of 1/3rd of total workers employed.

EMPOWERMENT OF MARGINAL SECTION

- o According to the Ministry of Rural Development it benefits about 20% Scheduled Caste and 17% Scheduled Tribe workers.

INTERNAL AUDIT WING (IAW) REPORT

Scope of Audit:

- o The IAW conducted a risk-based audit of 92 projects across various rural development schemes, including MGNREGS, covering multiple states in 2023-24.

Findings from the Internal Audit Wing (IAW) report:

Discrepancies:

- The IAW uncovered discrepancies in **MGNREGS** implementation in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, leading to losses totaling ₹35.37 crore.

Wasteful spending:

- o The IAW identified ₹15.20 crore in wasteful and unauthorised spending under **MGNREGS, PMAY-G, and PMGSY** across Gujarat, Sikkim, Manipur, Odisha, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Bihar.

Comparison to Last Financial Year Audit (2022-23):

- o In 2022-23, the IAW detected losses totaling ₹23.17 crore across NREGS, PMGSY, and the National Social Assistance Program (NSAP).
 - The largest losses were recorded under MGNREGS (₹22.39 crore), followed by PMGSY (₹74 lakh), and NSAP (₹2 lakh).

HOW MGNREGA IS FUNDED?

It is funded through a cost-sharing mechanism:

- » **The Central Government covers 90%** of the total expenditure, including wages, material costs, and administrative expenses.
- » **The State Government contributes 10%** of the total expenditure for wages and materials.
 - o Wages & Material Costs: The central government funds most wages, while material costs are shared between both levels.
 - o Fund Releases: Funds are released based on demand and project progress, with supplementary grants given in times of high demand or crises.

OTHER CHALLENGES

▼ Financial Issues:

○ Insufficient Budget Allocation:

- Despite high demand, budget allocations for MGNREGA from 2019-20 to 2023-24 were consistently lower than the previous year's revised estimates.
- In 2022-23 and 2023-24, the allocations were just **one-fourth** and **one-third**, respectively, of the previous year's revised budget.

○ Negative Balance and Pending Liabilities:

- States had a negative balance of ₹22,563 crore (approx. \$2.7 billion), over 25% of the 2024-25 MGNREGS budget.
- Pending liabilities included ₹20,232 crore for wages, materials, and administrative expenses.
- On average, **17% of the MGNREGS budget** is used to clear these pending liabilities annually.

○ Delayed Supplementary Grants:

- Even when the initial budget is low, supplementary grants are often delayed, further impacting the scheme's ability to meet demand during peak work periods.

○ State-Level Variations:

- Funding disparities exist between states, with some receiving significantly less funding than others based on their rural population and demand for work.

▼ Delay in Wages:

- The Union Ministry withholds wages for states failing to meet administrative requirements, causing delays in payments without proper compensation.

▼ Low wage rate:

- wages in many states are below minimum wages, leading to disinterest among workers and allowing contractors and middlemen to take control.

▼ Low Employment Completion:

- MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of employment, but since 2016-17, fewer than 10% of households have completed 100 days.

▼ Corruption and Fraud:

- Challenges include fake job cards, widespread corruption, late uploading of muster rolls, and inconsistent payment of unemployment allowances, as pointed out by the Parliamentary Committee.

▼ Social Audit Challenges:

- Limited financial resources** hinder the ability of Social Audit Units (SAUs) to carry out effective Social Audit.
- Lack of proper protection and support mechanism** for Whistleblowers and social auditors.
- Lack of proper coordination and follow-up** action between the implementing agencies and Social Audit Units (SAUs).

RECENT INITIATIVES

☀ Use of Technology:

- Geo-Tagging of Assets:** To ensure better monitoring and transparency, assets created under MGNREGA are being geo-tagged.
- MGNREGA 3.0:** Introduced to integrate more digital tools for monitoring progress, such as **Mobile App-based Job Card Management** and **direct wage payments** to workers' bank accounts.
- National Mobile Monitoring Service (NMMS)**
 - An app that allows for real-time attendance tracking and geotagged photographs of workers at MGNREGA worksites

• **Janmanrega**

- A multilingual app developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and others, which is useful for stakeholders at various levels of MGNREGA

☀ Focus on Natural Resource Management:

- Increased emphasis on creating durable assets for **water conservation, soil health, and drought-proofing**, such as the development of ponds, wells, and irrigation systems.

☀ Aadhaar-based payment bridge system (APBS)

- The APBS uses Aadhaar numbers to send payments directly to the beneficiary's bank or post office account.
- Rolled out since 2017, it has been **made mandatory** and the only method of disbursing payments to MGNREGA workers.
- While it reduces the chances of corruption, intermediaries and delays, it has also raised issues of deletion of many job cards due to lack of Aadhar linking, payment delays and payment to incorrect accounts.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ ON MGNREGA

- » Increase guaranteed work days from 100 to 150. 0.05% of unpaid wages per day.
- » Consult local stakeholders to address area-specific needs.
- » Raise wages in line with inflation and link to CPI-Rural instead of CPI-Agricultural Labour.
- » Compensate beneficiaries for payment delays at 0.05% of unpaid wages per day.
- » Ensure annual social audits with public disclosure of reports.
- » State governments must comply with appointment of ombudsman for each district who will receive grievances, conduct enquiries, and pass awards in matters of MGNREGA.

WAY FORWARD

✳ Adequate Funds:

- o The World Bank recommends allocation of 1.7% of the GDP for optimal functioning of MGNREGA.
 - The current allocation is around 0.5% of the GDP.
- o Ensuring uninterrupted operations requires consistent and adequate funding.

★ **Timely Payments:**

- o Timely wage payments should be prioritised, with efforts to reduce delays.
- o Additionally, simplifying MGNREGA payment procedures will enhance transparency and

accountability.

Increasing Wage Rates:

- o Raising wages will better support the rural poor, fostering economic empowerment.
- o Higher incomes will lead to increased spending on health and education, promoting overall social welfare.

Involving Civil Society Organizations:

- o Civil society organisations, like the Paani Foundation, can partner in implementing MGNREGA, offering support for monitoring and maintaining water-related projects.

CONCLUSION

Increasing the budget for programs like MGNREGA is crucial, as it would boost the disposable income of the poor and generate positive economic ripple effects. Timely wage payments and higher wages would significantly alleviate rural distress and improve livelihoods. However, challenges such as delayed payments, inadequate implementation, and low wage rates must be addressed to ensure the program's effectiveness.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Evaluate the impact of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on rural development and poverty alleviation in India. Discuss the challenges faced in its implementation and suggest measures to enhance its effectiveness. (15 marks)(250 words)

INDIA'S OLYMPICS BID

Syllabus: GS II - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

PYQ MAPPING

Q) An athlete participates in Olympics for personal triumph and nation's glory; victors are showered with cash incentives by various agencies, on their return. Discuss the merit of state sponsored talent hunt and its cultivation as against the rationale of a reward mechanism as encouragement. (2014)

SHORT TAKES

- **International Olympic Committee (IOC):** The supreme authority of the Olympic Movement, responsible for organising the Olympic Games, establishing policies, and promoting the Olympic values globally. Founded in 1894, the IOC works with national Olympic committees to ensure the smooth execution of the Games and the growth of sports worldwide.
- **Indian Olympic Association (IOA):** The governing body for the Olympic movement in India, responsible for coordinating India's participation in the Olympic Games and other international sports events. Established in 1927, the IOA is a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

WHY IN NEWS

India has formally expressed its **intent to host the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games**, with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) highlighting the country's cultural diversity, strategic location, and message of peace in its pitch to the International Olympic Committee.

INTRODUCTION

India has proposed hosting the 2036 Olympics, highlighting its cultural diversity as a symbol of peace and unity. In a letter to the International Olympic Committee, the Indian Olympic Association emphasised India's strategic trade-route location and its growing global influence. **Competing with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey**, India aims to showcase its unique **blend of religious diversity and historic traditions** as strengths in its bid.

INDIA'S BID FOR THE 2036 OLYMPICS: KAY ASPECTS

➡ Official Submission and Support:

- The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has formally submitted a '**Letter of Intent**' to the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Future Host Commission on October 1 for hosting the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

○ Key Competitors:

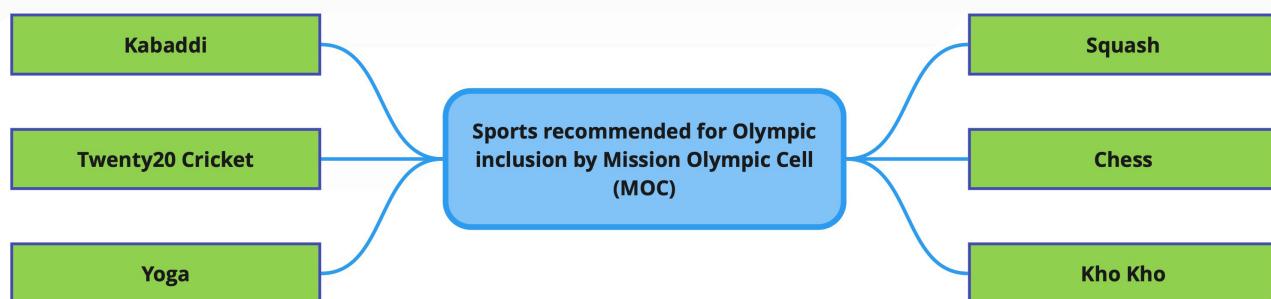
- **Qatar:** Despite previous unsuccessful bids (2016, 2020), Qatar has heavily invested in sports infrastructure and global events, including hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup.
- **Saudi Arabia:** The country has recently poured significant resources into global sports and

infrastructure, positioning itself to bid for the 2036 Games.

- **Istanbul (Turkey):** Istanbul has previously bid for the Olympics and will host the 2027 European Games and the 2032 European Football Championship.

- **Indonesia:** Actively pursuing the bid, Indonesia visited the Paris 2024 Games and received acknowledgment from IOC President Thomas Bach.

➡ Proposed Inclusions by MOC, a dedicated body created to assist the athletes who are selected under the Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme.



WHY IS INDIA A STRONG CANDIDATE TO HOST THE 2036 OLYMPICS?

- ⌚ **Message of Global Unity:** India's bid embodies the spirit of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family)**, aiming to promote peace, friendship, and collective progress among nations.
- ⌚ **Strategic Global Location:** Positioned along **ancient trade routes like the Silk and Spice Routes**, India has been a cultural and trade crossroads for centuries, reflecting the inclusive and unifying principles of the Olympic movement.
- ⌚ **Significance for Regional Development:** India remains **the only major economy that has yet to host the Olympics**, underscoring the potential for sport-driven economic and social development in South Asia, particularly for SAARC nations.
- ⌚ **Youth Demographic Advantage:** With over **600 million Indians under 25**, the Games would tap into a vibrant, young population, driving job creation and business opportunities in sports infrastructure, services, and tourism.
- ⌚ **Potential for Economic Growth:** Hosting the Olympics could serve as a powerful catalyst for India's economic rise, promoting sectors related to **sports, tourism, and infrastructure development**.
- ⌚ **Support Infrastructure and Host City Planning:** Ahmedabad is the likely host city, supported by the Gujarat government's dedicated **Gujarat Olympic Planning and Infrastructure Corporation Limited (GOLYMPIC)**, with oversight from high-level officials

HOW IS A HOST COUNTRY SELECTED?

- ★ **Permanent Discussions:** The IOC maintains an open dialogue with cities, regions, or countries, through their National Olympic Committees (NOCs), interested in hosting the Games.
- ★ **Future Host Commissions:** Separate commissions for summer and winter Games oversee the initial assessment of interested parties.
 - o These commissions, comprising IOC members and other stakeholders, evaluate potential hosts and make recommendations to the IOC Executive Board
- ★ **Executive Board's Role:** The IOC Executive Board reviews the recommendations of the Future Host Commissions and decides which candidates to propose for election.
- ★ **Election by IOC Members:** The final host is elected by IOC members during a Session.
- ★ **Voting Process:**
 - o Voting is conducted via a secret ballot, where each active member has one vote.
 - o IOC members cannot vote if the election involves their home country.
 - o Honorary, honour, and suspended members are not eligible to vote.

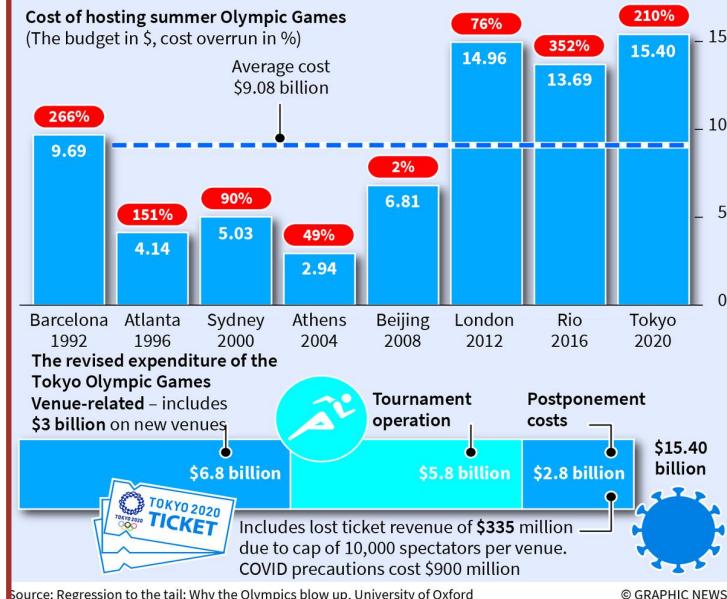
BENEFITS OF HOSTING THE OLYMPICS

- ⌚ **Boost to Tourism:** Attracts global audiences and new visitors, increasing tourism revenue.
 - o **Example:** The 2016 Rio Games had 6.6 million foreign tourists, generating \$6.2 billion in tourism revenue.
 - o The 2012 London Olympics led to a 12% rise in visitors and a 13% increase in spending in June 2013.
- ⌚ **Economic Surplus and City Revitalisation:** Host cities often report financial surpluses and urban transformation.

- ★ **Majority Requirement:** A candidate must secure a majority of votes to be elected. If no majority is achieved in the first round, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and additional rounds are conducted until a majority is reached.

The price of the Olympics

With India openly declaring its willingness to host the 2036 edition of the Olympic Games, a look at the cost of the Games as they become bigger and better each year



- **Example:** The 1984 Los Angeles Olympics netted a \$215 million surplus, and Barcelona's 1992 Games revitalised the city, boosting its global status.
- **Example:** Japan joined the IMF and OECD after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, and China engaged with the WTO after the 2008 Beijing Games.
- **Increase in Global Trade and Prestige:** Hosting signals trade liberalisation and opens doors to prestigious global organisations.
- **Sense of National Pride:** Instils national pride by showcasing a country's talent and culture on a global stage, inspiring citizens to unite in support of their athletes.

DRAWBACKS OF HOSTING THE OLYMPICS

- **Financial Drain:** No Olympics since 1960 has stayed within budget.
 - **Example:** The Tokyo 2020 Games cost \$15.84 billion, 200% over budget, with COVID-19 restrictions potentially adding \$23 billion in losses.
 - Montreal's 1976 Olympics overran costs by 796%, taking 30 years to pay off and leaving a stadium requiring \$300 million in repairs.
- **Underused Infrastructure:** Host cities often construct expensive venues that fall into disuse after the Games.
 - **Example:** The \$78 million PyeongChang stadium

(demolished post-2018 Games), Rio's \$700 million athletes' village (now vacant), and Beijing's Bird's Nest Stadium (\$11 million annual maintenance, mostly unused).

- **Displacement and Burden on Residents:** Hosting often displaces residents and creates economic hardships.
 - **Example:** For the 2016 Rio Games, homes were demolished, leading to violent confrontations.
 - For the 2008 Beijing Olympics, 1.5 million people were forcibly evicted and relocated far from their communities.

Target Olympics Podium Scheme (TOPS)

- ❖ **Launch and Purpose:** The Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) was **launched in September 2014 by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS)** to improve India's performance at the Olympics and Paralympics by providing targeted support to top athletes.
- ❖ **Revamping:** In April 2018, TOPS was revamped to provide a more comprehensive support system, **including foreign training, international competitions, coaching camps, and essential equipment.**
 - o Each athlete under the scheme receives a **monthly stipend of Rs. 50,000** to aid their training and development.
- ❖ **TOPS Elite Athlete Identification Committee:** A dedicated committee was set up **to identify high-potential athletes across various sports**, particularly in high-priority areas like Archery, Badminton, Boxing, Hockey, Shooting, and Wrestling.
- ❖ **Success at Events:**
 - o In the **2016 Rio Olympics**, athletes like P.V. Sindhu (silver in Badminton) and Sakshi Malik (bronze in Wrestling) achieved podium finishes.
 - o At the **2016 Paralympic Games**, TOPS athletes won 2 golds, 1 silver, and 1 bronze.
 - o At the **2018 Commonwealth Games**, 47 out of the 70 Indian athletes who won medals were supported by TOPS.
- ❖ **Mission Olympic Cell (MOC):**
 - o It oversees the implementation of TOPS, with representatives from **elite athletes, IOA and other stakeholders.**
 - o It approves customised programs, recommends financial disbursements, monitors athlete performance, and addresses immediate needs.

CHALLENGES FOR INDIA

- ❖ **Infrastructure Readiness:** India's infrastructure, particularly for world-class sports facilities, is still evolving. The challenge lies in **building and maintaining durable, sustainable stadiums and venues** that can withstand extreme weather conditions and meet international standards.
- ❖ **Logistics and Hospitality:** Ensuring seamless transportation, comfortable athlete accommodations, and high-quality amenities for athletes and spectators will be crucial.
- ❖ **Technical Expertise:** India needs to upskill its workforce, especially in areas like **event management, technical officiating, and equipment handling**, to ensure smooth competition standards across diverse sports.
- ❖ **Spectator Experience:** The spectator experience in sports events, especially in terms of **cleanliness, punctuality, and comfort**, needs improvement.
- ❖ **Climate and Environmental Sustainability:** India's infrastructure and road quality require stricter quality checks, especially given the impact of climate change, such as flooding in major cities.
- ❖ **Sports Performance:** With only a few medals in recent Olympics, India will need to **elevate its athlete**



training and development programs to compete effectively across a broad range of Olympic sports.

- ❖ **Law and Order:** Hosting a large international event requires a secure and peaceful environment. Ensuring safety for all, while promoting India's message of amity, will be critical to avoiding negative press and potential disruptions.

WAY FORWARD FOR INDIA'S OLYMPICS BID

- ❖ **Invest in World-Class Infrastructure:** India should invest in resilient, eco-friendly infrastructure with an emphasis on durability and sustainability, aiming to meet international standards and mitigate risks posed by climate change.
- ❖ **Enhance Logistics and Service Standards:** Training and certifying professionals in hospitality, transport, and event coordination will improve logistics and ensure a smooth experience for athletes and visitors.
 - o India should enhance stadium amenities

and spectator comfort, ensuring punctuality, cleanliness, and accessibility, **particularly for differently-abled attendees**.

- ❖ **Focus on Athlete Development:** Establish focused athlete training programs and funding support to elevate performance in diverse Olympic sports.
- ❖ **Strengthen Security and Promote Peace:** Develop robust security frameworks that balance law enforcement with India's image as a peaceful and welcoming host nation.

CONCLUSION

The 2036 Olympics bid offers India a platform to unite cultural diversity with modern infrastructure, symbolising growth and unity on a global scale. Addressing logistical, environmental, and operational challenges with precision will be key to turning this ambitious vision into a lasting legacy.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Discuss the significance of India hosting the 2036 Olympics in the context of its rise as a global economic and cultural power. What are the challenges and opportunities it faces in successfully hosting the event? **(10 marks)(150 words)**

AIR QUALITY INDEX

Syllabus: GS III - Environmental pollution and degradation

PYQ MAPPING

Q1 What are the key features of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) initiated by the Government of India? **(2020)**

Q2 Describe the key points of the revised Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) recently released by the World Health Organisation (WHO). How are these different from its last update in 2005? What changes in India's National Clean Air Programme are required to achieve these revised standards? **(2021)**

WHY IN NEWS

Delhi's air quality plunged into the 'severe' category, with the 24-hour average AQI rising sharply to 382, marking **the worst air quality in the country post-Diwali**. Pollution hotspots across the Capital, including areas like Anand Vihar and Rohini, reported AQI levels exceeding 400, highlighting severe air pollution concerns.

INTRODUCTION

The Air Quality Index (AQI) serves as a **vital indicator of air pollution levels**, reflecting the concentration of key pollutants and their health impact on the population. As urban areas experience rising pollution, the AQI has become essential in raising awareness and guiding actions to protect public health.

SHORT TAKES

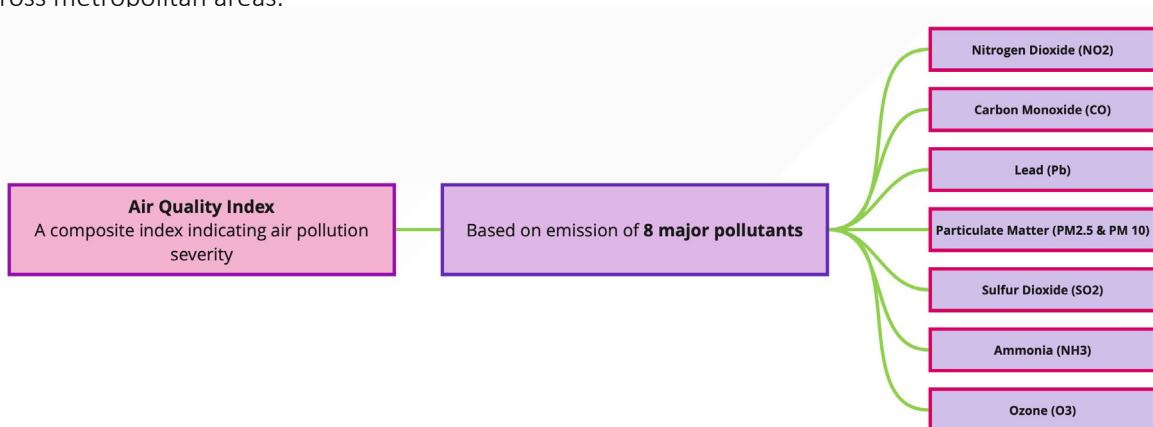
- **Secondary inorganic aerosols (SIAs):** Fine particulate matter formed in the atmosphere through chemical reactions of sulphur dioxide (SO_2), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and ammonia (NH_3), resulting in compounds such as **sulphates, nitrates, and ammonium**.
- **Short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs) :** Greenhouse gases like black carbon, tropospheric ozone, and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) which have a **stronger warming effect than carbon dioxide but have shorter atmospheric lifetimes**. Reducing SLCPs can significantly slow near-term global warming by up to half a degree by 2050.
- **Kigali Amendment:** Adopted on 15 October 2016, aims to **phase down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Montreal Protocol**. Countries agreed to reduce HFC consumption by 80-85% by the late 2040s, with developed nations starting reductions in 2019 and developing countries freezing consumption in 2024, followed by reductions in 2028.

AIR QUALITY INDEX: KEY FEATURES

History

- **Origins of AQI:** The Air Quality Index (AQI) was initially developed in **1968** by **Jack Fensterstock** of the **U.S. National Air Pollution Control Administration**, aimed at assessing air quality across metropolitan areas.

- **India's National AQI Launch:** India introduced its National AQI in **October 2014**, as part of the Swachh Bharat campaign, and has since expanded to cover 34 cities.



➡ How is AQI Calculated?

- o **Sub-Indices Calculation:** Sub-indices for individual pollutants (e.g., PM2.5, PM10, CO, O3) are calculated based on their average concentration over 24 hours (8 hours for carbon monoxide and ozone).
- o **Health Breakpoints:** Each pollutant's sub-index is compared to health-based breakpoint concentration ranges.
- o **Worst Sub-Index Selection:** The AQI for a location is determined by the highest sub-index value among the pollutants measured
- o **Data Requirements:**
 - AQI is calculated only if **data is available for at least three** of the eight major pollutants, **including either PM2.5 or PM10.**

- **At least 16 hours of data** is necessary to calculate the sub-indices.

➡ AQI Categories Based on Health Impact:

- o **Good (0-50):** Minimal impact on health.
- o **Satisfactory (51-100):** Minor discomfort to sensitive individuals.
- o **Moderate (101-200):** Discomfort for those with lung, heart diseases, and asthma.
- o **Poor (201-300):** Breathing discomfort to most on long exposure.
- o **Very Poor (301-400):** Potential respiratory illnesses on prolonged exposure.
- o **Severe (401-500):** Significant impact on healthy individuals; harmful to those with existing health issues.

AQI Category, Pollutants and Health Breakpoints								
AQI Category (Range)	PM ₁₀ 24-hr	PM _{2.5} 24-hr	NO ₂ 24-hr	O ₃ 8-hr	CO 8-hr (mg/m ³)	SO ₂ 24-hr	NH ₃ 24-hr	Pb 24-hr
Good (0-50)	0-50	0-30	0-40	0-50	0-1.0	0-40	0-200	0-0.5
Satisfactory (51-100)	51-100	31-60	41-80	51-100	1.1-2.0	41-80	201-400	0.5-1.0
Moderately polluted (101-200)	101-250	61-90	81-180	101-168	2.1- 10	81-380	401-800	1.1-2.0
Poor (201-300)	251-350	91-120	181-280	169-208	10-17	381-800	801-1200	2.1-3.0
Very poor (301-400)	351-430	121-250	281-400	209-748*	17-34	801-1600	1200-1800	3.1-3.5
Severe (401-500)	430 +	250+	400+	748+*	34+	1600+	1800+	3.5+

THE INDIAN AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI) SCENARIO (2024)

♣ Current Situation:

- o **Declining AQI:** *With the post-monsoon season, many Indian cities are experiencing* worsening air quality, particularly in northern regions like Delhi, **due to seasonal** crop stubble burning, regular emissions, diwali celebrations and construction activities.
- o **National Capital's Air Quality:** *As of October 31, 2024, Delhi's AQI has been categorised as "very poor" with a reading of 349, attributed to*

pollutants like PM2.5 and PM10.

- o **Health Impact:** *Poor air quality in India contributes to serious health issues, such as respiratory diseases, asthma, stroke, and worsened cognitive development in children.*
 - *Example: The World Health Organization (WHO) links air pollution to millions of premature deaths globally, and in Delhi, around 12,000 annual deaths are attributed to pollution.*

TOP 10 INDIAN CITIES WITH THE BEST AIR QUALITY AS OF OCTOBER 2024

Rank	City	State	AQI Value	AQI Category	Prominent Pollutant
1	Madurai	Tamil Nadu	22	Good	PM10
2	Chikkaballapur	Karnataka	25	Good	PM10
3	Ooty	Tamil Nadu	25	Good	CO
4	Madikeri	Karnataka	28	Good	PM10
5	Gadag	Karnataka	28	Good	CO
6	Kalaburagi	Karnataka	28	Good	CO, PM10
6	Palkalaiperur	Tamil Nadu	29	Good	PM10
7	Thanjavur	Tamil Nadu	29	Good	PM10
8	Nagaon	Assam	30	Good	PM10
9	Belgaum	Karnataka	30	Good	CO
10	Udipi	Karnataka	30	Good	CO

TOP 10 INDIAN CITIES WITH THE WORST AIR QUALITY AS OF OCTOBER 2024

Rank	City	State	AQI Value	AQI Category	Prominent Pollutant
1	Delhi	Delhi	310	Very Poor	PM2.5, PM10
2	Singrauli	Madhya Pradesh	300	Poor	PM2.5
3	Bhiwani	Haryana	289	Poor	PM2.5
4	Rohtak	Haryana	283	Poor	PM2.5
5	Jind	Haryana	277	Poor	PM2.5
5	Ghaziabad	Uttar Pradesh	257	Poor	PM2.5
6	Bahadurgarh	Haryana	255	Poor	PM2.5
7	Noida	Uttar Pradesh	252	Poor	PM2.5
8	Kaithal	Haryana	239	Poor	PM2.5
9	Hajipur	Bihar	236	Poor	PM2.5
10	Charkhi Dadri	Haryana	235	Poor	PM2.5

REASONS FOR DETERIORATION OF AQI IN INDIA

● **Pollution:** Pollution from various sources significantly contributes to the worsening air quality and the situation is **exacerbated during Diwali** due to the addition of firecracker emissions.

- o Biomass burning, including agricultural residue, fuelwood, and dung cakes, contributes **48% of PM2.5 emissions**.
- o Industries and power plants are the **second-largest contributors**, emitting **37% of PM2.5**, primarily due to coal usage.
- o The **Asian Brown Cloud**, driven by biomass and fossil fuel combustion, impacts **regional temperatures, precipitation, and pollution**, reducing agricultural productivity and causing health issues.

● **Stubble Burning:** Farmers in Punjab and Haryana practice stubble burning, especially in October and November, **to clear fields for winter crops**, which has a severe impact on Delhi's air.

- o **Example:** Climate Trends' 2023 study highlighted a strong correlation between wind from Punjab and Haryana and rising pollution in Delhi; stubble burning accounted for about **15% of Delhi's October air pollution**.

● **Transport Emissions:** The transport sector contributes around **7% of PM2.5 emissions**, including pollutants from petrol, diesel, and natural gas usage.

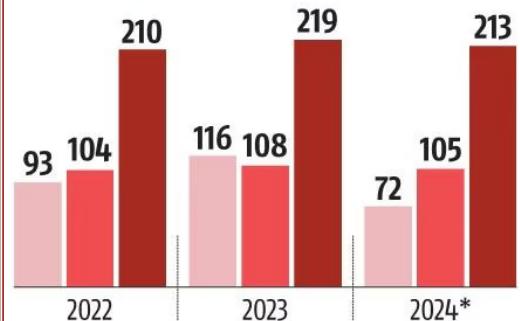
● **Secondary Inorganic Aerosols (SIA):** Analyses from IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi, and TERI show that secondary inorganic aerosols (SIA), largely originating from beyond Delhi, contribute the most to Delhi's PM 2.5 pollution.

- o SIA accounts for 32% of the pollution load, with biomass burning contributing 24%, and vehicles 17%, as per winter pollution source apportionment.

TRACKING AIR

Month-wise daily avg AQI for Delhi

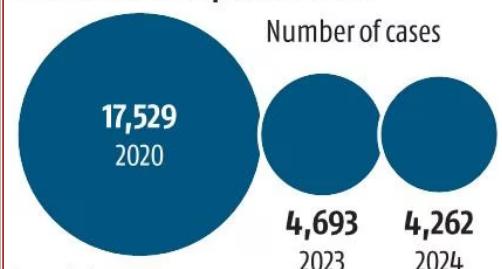
■ August ■ September ■ October



* October data till 23rd

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Cases of stubble burning between 15 Sep and 8 Oct



Data is for six states:

Punjab, Haryana, UP, Delhi, Rajasthan and MP

Source: Indian Agricultural Research Institute

GLOBAL INITIATIVES

WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQG):

- o Provide **thresholds and limits** for key air pollutants harmful to health.
- o Include interim targets for gradual improvement in air quality and health benefits (e.g., achieving interim targets one could save 300,000 lives annually).
- o Offer qualitative recommendations for managing particulate matter (e.g., black carbon, ultrafine particles) with insufficient quantitative evidence for AQG levels.

Resolution A68.8 -Health and the Environment: Addressing the health impact of air pollution:

- o Approved by all World Health Organization (WHO) member states in **2015**, it was a landmark decision and the **most high-level health action on air pollution at the time**.
- o The resolution recognized air pollution as a leading cause of disease and death and **identified 13 measures** for member states to implement it.

Climate & Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)

- o Established in **2012** by **UNEP and partner governments**, focuses on **reducing short-lived climate pollutants (SLCPs)** to mitigate global warming and improve air quality.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

- o Enacted and amended in 1987 to prevent, control, and reduce air pollution by establishing standards and regulating emissions from industrial and vehicular sources.

The National Clean Air Program (NCAP)

- o Launched in **January 2019** by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, aims to reduce air pollution across India, **targeting a 20-30% reduction in PM10 and PM2.5 levels by 2024**, using 2017 as the baseline year.
- o The programme initially identified 94 **nonattainment cities (NACs)**, which increased to 124 in 2020, and the focus now includes 132 million-plus population cities as of 2021.
- o Despite Rs 9,650 crore allocated for pollution control in 131 non-attainment cities, only 60% of the funds have been utilised, and the reduction targets remain unmet.

- o The CCAC has implemented sector-specific solutions, and supported international agreements like the Kigali Amendment.

- o India joined in 2019

BreatheLife

- o A campaign by the World Health Organization (**WHO**), United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**), and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (**CCAC**) to encourage governments to meet the WHO's air quality guidelines by 2030

International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies (September 7)

- o Designated by the **United Nations General Assembly in 2019**, highlighting global commitment to improving air quality for better health.

Breathe Cities

- o A \$30 million initiative by Bloomberg Philanthropies, Clean Air Fund, and C40 Cities, supported by the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, aims to combat urban air pollution through data-driven policies, community engagement, and technical support for clean air solutions.

National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP):

- o Managed by the **Central Pollution Control Board**, it monitors air quality across India by systematically measuring pollution levels and tracking changes over time.
- o As of 2023, NAMP operates 931 monitoring stations in 398 cities and towns to collect data for formulating air quality improvement plans.

Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM):

- o Established under the 2021 Act, it focuses on improving air quality in Delhi-NCR by coordinating efforts with neighbouring states like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Graded Response Action Plan:

- o To control air pollution in Delhi NCR.
- o This plan specifies **actions required for controlling particulate matter** (PM emissions from various sources and prevent PM10 and PM2.5 levels to go beyond 'moderate' national Air Quality Index

(AQI) category.

Online Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS)

- These are devices installed in **industrial chimney stacks** to measure and relay pollutant concentrations and flow to pollution control boards at frequent intervals.
- For strengthening effective compliance through self-regulatory mechanisms, CPCB directed all **17 categories of highly polluting industries** to install OCEMS.

Implementation of BS-VI Emission Norms

- BS-VI emission norms, which aim to significantly reduce vehicular pollution, was implemented from April 1, 2020, ahead of the original 2022 deadline.

Clean Air Research Initiative (CARI):

- Aims to address air pollution in India with a focus on **innovative solutions for mitigating pollution sources**. Key programmes under CARI include:



- Traffic Junction Air Pollution Abatement Plan:** Development of **Wind Augmentation and Air Purifying Unit (WAYU)** to reduce

pollutants at traffic intersections using filters, activated carbon, and UV lamps, **purifying air within a 500-square-metre area** costing Rs. 60,000 with low operational costs.

- Landfill Fire Control Mechanism:** Addressing air pollution from landfill fires through an **integrated approach to control emissions** like Carbon Monoxide (CO), Hydrocarbons (HC), Particulate Matter (PM) which are major pollutants in cities like Mumbai.
- Suddha Vaayu:** An **electrical chamber** that uses multi-stage filtration, including solar power, to remove PM 2.5 and PM 10, with expected efficiency of 88-90%.
- Particulate Matter Collection Using Moving Car Filters:** Development of a mobile **air purifier mounted on cars**, using multiple filtration stages and sensor systems for real-time air quality mapping.
- Indigenous Photonic System for Air Quality Monitoring:** Creating a novel system for real-time remote monitoring of air quality using indigenous photonic technology.
- Mitigation of Air Pollution with Liquid Droplets:** Studying particle capture by liquid droplets as a method to mitigate aerosols and reduce the health impacts of air pollution.

Harit Diwali-Swasth Diwali campaign

- Initiated in **2017-18**, **promotes eco-friendly Diwali celebrations** by reducing cracker usage and encouraging activities like gifting saplings, donating essentials, and lighting diyas.
- It has since been extended to Pan-India and merged with the "Green Good Deed" movement.

WAY FORWARD

- Stricter Emission Reductions:** Regulatory bodies should implement time-bound emission reduction targets, with clear accountability at city, district, state, and national levels.

- Example:** The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has enacted the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to counteract rising pollution levels, while Delhi has imposed a firecracker ban.

Energy Transition for Households:

- Promote a shift to clean cooking and heating options like **LPG, biogas, or electricity** to eliminate PM 2.5 emissions.

- Implement a new **PM Ujjwala Yojana with adequate incentives for low-income households** to transition away from biomass.

Address Stubble Burning:

- Promote technological solutions like **combine harvesters** that leave minimal stubble.
- Initiatives like **Haryana Parali Protsahan Yojana 2024-25**, where farmers can receive **Rs 1,000 per acre** as subsidy for proper crop residue management can be promoted.
- Strengthen **cross-state cooperation** to address stubble burning and other cross-boundary pollution sources effectively.

- ✿ **Electrification of Transportation:** Implement a **phased, multi-year approach** to fully electrify the transportation sector by expanding EV infrastructure and incentivising the shift to electric mobility.
- ✿ **Urban Planning and Green Spaces:** Enhance urban planning with more green spaces, parks, and tree plantations to absorb pollutants.
- ✿ **Enhanced Enforcement of Existing Laws:** Reinforce the Environmental Protection Act with penal actions rather than just fines, ensuring robust enforcement.
- ✿ **Incentivise Innovation:** Support research and development in clean technologies and solutions for air quality improvement by **creating platforms to scale up successful innovations.**

CONCLUSION

To effectively combat rising pollution levels, it is essential to **adopt stricter emissions regulations** and expand green infrastructure. Enhancing AQI monitoring systems across more cities and **improving real-time data access** can empower citizens and policymakers to take informed actions towards cleaner air.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Despite various measures to control air pollution, cities like Delhi continue to face severe air quality issues. Analyse the reasons for persistent air pollution in urban India and suggest a multi-pronged approach for long-term solutions **(10 marks)(150 words)**



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ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) Child sexual abuse has become a widespread social issue in Indian society, particularly in urban areas. This crime has a profound impact, not only due to its high frequency but also because of the deep trauma inflicted on affected children. Although incidents often occur randomly and may appear unrelated, certain patterns emerge. Many abused children come from economically disadvantaged families living in slums, and both the victims' families and the offenders are often migrants who have moved to cities in search of better job opportunities.

- What behavioural challenges do migrants face upon moving to cities, and how can these challenges contribute to antisocial behaviour?
- What measures can be implemented to foster respect for the law and prevent heinous crimes against children?

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

- Consumer Rights:** A Bengaluru consumer court fined matrimony portal Dilmil Matrimony Rs 60,000 for failing to find a potential bride for a client, despite promising to do so within 45 days. The court cited deficiency in service and unfair trade practices, ordering a refund along with additional reliefs.
- AI Ethics:** A Polish radio station, Off Radio Krakow, faced public outrage after using AI to generate interviews with deceased cultural figures, including Nobel laureate Wislawa Szymborska, sparking ethical concerns about replacing human presenters with artificial voices.
- Lack of Ethics in civil service:** Kerala cadre IAS officer K. Gopalakrishnan filed a police complaint after his phone was allegedly hacked to create two WhatsApp groups, "Mallu Hindu Officers" and "Mallu Muslim Officers," which were later deleted. However, a police investigation found no evidence of hacking, leading the Kerala government to suspend the officer.
- Lack of Integrity in Governance:** Chhattisgarh's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has filed an FIR against two retired IAS officers and a former Advocate General for allegedly influencing the 2015 Nagrik Apurti Nigam scam trial. They are accused of misusing their positions to secure anticipatory bail and obstruct the investigation.
- Inclusivity:** In Baubau, Indonesia, the Cia-Cia language is being preserved through the Korean Hangul script, introduced in 2009 after a cultural exchange with South Korea. This has helped document the language and sparked renewed pride in the Cia-Cia culture.
- Social Justice:** The Union Cabinet approved the PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme, providing collateral-free education loans for students admitted to Quality Higher Education Institutions, with a 75% credit guarantee for loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh. The scheme will benefit 7 lakh students annually from 2024 to 2031.
- Environmental Ethics:** In Haryana's Charkhi Dadri, villagers are protesting illegal mining and water extraction in the Aravallis, citing issues like water table depletion, air and water pollution, declining agriculture yields, and health problems. They demand permanent cessation of mining, fair compensation, and government accountability.
- Human Rights:** On November 7, 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that sexual harassment cases, particularly those involving minors, cannot be closed after a compromise, as such offences have a serious societal impact, overturning the Rajasthan High Court's decision to quash an FIR against a teacher accused of molesting a 16-year-old student.
- Social Media Ethics:** Australia plans to introduce legislation this month to ban social media for children under 16, citing concerns over its harmful effects on children's mental health, including anxiety and low self-esteem.
- Social Responsibility:** The India Vision Foundation, founded by Dr. Kiran Bedi, is reforming prisons by offering inmates educational and vocational opportunities to aid their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Through skills training and counselling, the foundation helps reduce recidivism and provides former convicts with a chance for a fresh start.



MODEL ESSAY

"Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely"

Introduction

- o Quote by former US President Franklin D Roosevelt
- o Definition of democracy as governance by the people, where each vote matters.
- o **Meaning:** Democracy's success depends on citizens making wise choices, underpinned by awareness, critical thinking, and civic responsibility.

Importance of Education in Shaping Wise Voters

- o **Role of Civic Education:** Educating citizens on their rights, responsibilities, and the workings of government. **Eg:** Election Commission's Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program focuses on voter education, especially in rural and remote areas.
- o **Media Literacy and Critical Thinking:** Media literacy enables citizens to verify information sources, reducing the impact of fake news.
- o **Role of Institutions and Civil Society:** The impact of NGOs, educational programs, and awareness campaigns in fostering informed voters.

Challenges to Wise Decision-Making

- o **Misinformation and Fake News:** Distorts voter choices and erodes democratic values. **Eg:** The use of deepfakes and AI-generated content to manipulate public opinion.
- o **Political Propaganda and Populism:** Influence of rhetoric that appeals to emotions over rational policies.
- o **Complexity of Issues:** Many political issues are complex and require specialised knowledge to fully understand.
- o **Voter Apathy and Disengagement:** When citizens are disinterested, leading to uninformed choices or lack of voting altogether.

- o **Economic Inequality and Social Injustice:** Create divisions within society and undermine trust in democratic institutions, leading to social unrest and political instability.

Way Forward

- o **Improving Education Systems:** Integrating civic responsibility and critical thinking into school curricula.
- o **Regulating Media:** Stricter controls on fake news and more accountability for media sources.
- o **Fact-Checking Platforms:** Collaboration between government, NGOs, and tech platforms to establish fact-checking tools that voters can easily access.
- o **Encouraging Public Debates and Policy Discussions:** Promoting forums for informed discourse among citizens and political candidates.
- o **Youth Voter Programs:** Initiatives like youth parliaments, mock elections, and internships with government institutions

Conclusion

- o Reiteration of the link between wise choices and the success of democracy.
- o Emphasising that the health of a democracy-informed, aware, and responsible electorate-choices are made for the greater good of society.

Sample Quotes

- o *Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is* -Albert Camus
- o *Poverty is the worst form of violence.*- Mahatma Gandhi

The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places- Ernest Hemingway

MAINS JOT DOWN



GS- I - IMPORTANT PERSONALITIES

→ **National Education Day** is celebrated on November 11 to honour the birth anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (since 2008).

→ **About Maulana Abul Kalam Azad:**

» Born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Azad was an educationist, polyglot, and India's first Education Minister (1947-1958).

→ **Key Contributions:**

» President of the Indian National Congress (1923, 1940)
» Led the All-India Khilafat Committee (1920-24)
» Participated in the Dandi March (1930) and Quit India Movement (1942)
» Member of the Constituent Assembly
» Played a key role in founding institutions like the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and University Grants Commission.

→ **Recognition:**

» Awarded the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1992.



GS- II - EDUCATION

→ The **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** has issued guidelines to prevent misleading advertisements in the **coaching sector**.

→ **Key Points:**

» Coaching centres are prohibited from making false claims, misrepresenting quality, or creating false urgency (e.g., limited seats).
» Violations will be considered a breach of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.



GS- II - INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

→ Australia is launching the **Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early-professionals Scheme (MATES)**, a visa program that **enables Indian graduates and early-career professionals to live and work in Australia for up to two years**.

→ **Eligible Fields of Study:**

» Renewable energy, mining, engineering, ICT, AI, fintech, and agricultural technology.



GS- III - DEFENCE

→ The Ministry of Defence has launched the AI-enabled **e-Tarang System**, developed by the Integrated Defence Staff in collaboration with Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space.

→ **Key Features:**

» Automates and streamlines Defence Spectrum planning and management.
» Ensures interference-free operation of equipment during both peacetime and wartime.
» Supports the development of new technologies in higher frequency bands.



GS- III - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

→ **ISRO to Launch ESA's Proba-3 Mission:**

» Marking a milestone in international space collaboration, ISRO will launch the European Space Agency's Proba-3 mission—ESA's first launch from India since 2001.

→ **About Proba-3 Mission:**

» Goal: To study the Sun's corona (outer atmosphere) via an innovative satellite formation.
» Details: Two satellites, launched aboard ISRO's PSLV-XL, will enter a high elliptical orbit reaching 60,000 km from Earth and maintain autonomous formation for continuous observation.



GS- III -AGRICULTURE FISHERIES

→ **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana Initiative: Climate-Resilient Fishermen Villages**

- » The government will develop 100 climate-resilient coastal fishermen villages under the PMMSY to boost resilience against climate change. The initiative includes facilities like fish drying yards and emergency rescue centres.

→ **About PMMSY:**

- » **Objective:** To double the incomes of fishers and fish farmers, enhance fish production, and modernise the value chain.
- » **Target:** Increase fish production to 22 million metric tons by 2024-25.
- » Implementing Agency: Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying.
- » **Duration:** 2020-21 to 2024-25

→ Indian scientists have developed a nanomaterial coating using nano clay for muriate of potash (MoP), which serves as 80% of the potassium fertiliser requirements.

→ **About Nano Fertilisers:**

- » Nano fertilisers are nutrients encapsulated in nanomaterials (100 nanometers or smaller), allowing for controlled release and slow soil diffusion.
- » **Benefits:**
 - Sustainable Farming: Reduces soil and water contamination.
 - Cost-Effective: Enhances nutrient absorption, minimises waste, and reduces application frequency.



GS- III - ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION; RENEWABLE ENERGY

→ The Union Minister of Power, Housing & Urban Affairs recently launched the '**EV as a Service' Programme** by Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL), a subsidiary of Energy Efficiency Services Limited.

→ This initiative follows the **PM E-DRIVE Scheme** to accelerate India's shift to electric mobility.

→ **About the Programme:**

- » **Goal:** Deploy 5,000 electric cars in government departments over the next two years.
- » **Model:** Subscription-based access to EVs, bypassing high upfront purchase costs.
- » Supports India's target of achieving net zero emissions by 2070.



GS- III - ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT

→ The International Energy Agency has released the **World Energy Employment 2024** report.

→ **Key Highlights:**

- » Global energy employment outperformed broader labour market trends in 2023. Clean energy remains the primary engine of job growth.

→ **India-Specific Insights:**

- » India's energy sector employed over 8.5 million people, accounting for 1.5% of total employment (566 million) in 2023.
- » The sector relies significantly on informal labour.



GS- II - JUDICIARY

- ➡ The Supreme Court has raised concerns about the **shortage of members in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)**, affecting the insolvency resolution process.
 - » **Current Status:** NCLT has 43 members, though it is authorised for 63.
 - » **Challenges:** Limited members and inadequate infrastructure hinder tribunal operations, with sessions held only a few days per week or for limited hours.
 - » **Impact:** Delays in insolvency resolutions, with the average time increasing from 654 days in 2022-23 to 716 days in 2023-24.
- ➡ The issue was raised by a bench led by ex-CJI DY Chandrachud during the hearing of Jet Airways' liquidation case.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

ALLULOSE

- Also known as **D-allulose or D-psicose**, is a **low-calorie sugar** naturally found in small amounts in fruits like figs and kiwis.
- It's also commercially made from beet sugar or corn.
- With a taste and texture similar to table sugar, allulose may help lower blood sugar, support weight loss, and reduce health risks linked to added sugars.

SALAD BAR EXTREMISM

- A form of extremism driven by a **mix of beliefs rather than a clear ideology**, also known as composite or MUU (mixed, unstable, unclear) extremism.
- It combines various extremist agendas and can form alliances across ideological lines, including misogynistic, anti-minority, and anti-Semitic views.
- Recent examples include the Edmonton city hall shooting (2024) and the Texas Mall attack (2021).

BORING BILLION

- A period in Earth's history from 1.8 billion to 800 million years ago marked by geobiological stasis and low atmospheric oxygen, which delayed the evolution of complex life.
- During this time, life was primarily simple, unicellular organisms with minimal requirements.
- The era reflects prolonged stability in energy, nutrients, climate, atmosphere, and tectonics.

PARI-PASSU

- It is a Latin phrase meaning "**equal footing**."
- In finance, "equal footing" means that two or more parties to a financial contract or claim are all treated the same.
- Pari-passu is common in bankruptcy proceedings as well as debts such as parity bonds in which each party gets the same amount.
- Wills and trusts can also assign a pari-passu distribution where all the named parties share the assets equally.

PIGOVIAN TAX

- It is levied on goods or services that create negative externalities, like pollution, to offset societal costs by adding them to the product price.
- Examples include carbon and tobacco taxes.