

# FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST



> INDIA NEW ZEALAND FTA > WOMEN IN CORPORATE > DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDORS

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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**

**SWATHI S BABU**  
AIR 522

**MANJIMA P**  
AIR 235

**KASTURI SHA**  
AIR 68

**FABI RASHEED**  
AIR 71

**OORMILA J S**  
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W O M E N I N P O W E R

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# DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDORS

*Syllabus: GS III - Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.*

## PYQ MAPPING

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

## WHY IN NEWS

A man was killed during an attempted explosion on the **Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC)** near Shambhu station in Punjab's Patiala district, causing brief disruption to rail services.

## INTRODUCTION

Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) mark a **structural shift in India's rail logistics model**, separating freight from passenger traffic to address systemic inefficiencies and congestion. Implemented by Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited, they reflect a **strategic move towards logistics-led economic growth and infrastructure modernisation**.

### PM GATI SHAKTI SCHEME

- **Launch & Ministry:** Launched in 2021 by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** as a ₹100 lakh crore master plan.
- **Inter-ministerial Integration:** Coordinates **16+ ministries** including Railways, Roads, Ports, Aviation, and Power.
- **Multi-modal Connectivity:** Integrates **Bharatmala, Sagarmala, UDAN, and Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC)** for seamless logistics movement.
- **Digital Planning Platform:** GIS-based system using **200+ geospatial layers (ISRO-enabled)** for real-time infrastructure planning.
- **Economic Impact:** Aims to reduce logistics cost (13–14% of GDP) and enable **₹11+ lakh crore infrastructure projects** for growth and employment.

## WHAT ARE DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDORS (DFC) ?

- ➔ **Definition:** Dedicated Freight Corridors are **exclusive high-capacity railway lines for freight movement**, designed to separate goods trains from passenger traffic, ensuring faster and efficient logistics.
- ➔ **Origin of the Concept:** The idea of DFCs was proposed in **2005** as part of efforts to decongest existing railway networks and improve logistics infrastructure.
- ➔ **Implementing Agency:** The **Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCIL)** is a public sector undertaking under the **Ministry of Railways** responsible for planning, developing, constructing, and operating Dedicated Freight Corridors in India.
- ➔ **Major Corridors:**
  - ➔ **Upcoming project:** In the Union Budget 2026-27, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed a new Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) linking **Dankuni in West Bengal with Surat in Gujarat**.
  - ➔ **Technical Features:**
    - **High axle load (~32.5 tonnes):** Enables heavier freight trains
    - **Longer trains (1.5 km+):** Higher carrying capacity
    - **Advanced signalling (automatic block systems):** Enhances safety and speed
  - ➔ **Speed & Efficiency:** Freight train speeds increase from ~25 km/h to **60–70 km/h**, significantly reducing transit time.

Eastern DFC	Western DFC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» A <b>1,839 km corridor</b> from Ludhiana (Punjab) to Dankuni (West Bengal).</li> <li>» Developed at a cost of around <b>₹80,000 crore</b></li> <li>» Funded by the <b>Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)</b> and the Government of India.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» A <b>1,506 km corridor</b> from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal (Maharashtra) to Dadri (Uttar Pradesh).</li> <li>» Designed as a <b>double-line, fully electrified freight corridor</b></li> <li>» Developed at a cost of around <b>₹50,000 crore</b></li> <li>» Funded by the <b>World Bank and Government of India</b></li> </ul>

## SIGNIFICANCE

- ☀️ **Logistics Cost Reduction:** DFCs help reduce India's logistics cost (currently ~13–14% of GDP) towards global benchmarks (~8–10%), improving competitiveness.
- ☀️ **Decongestion of Rail Network:** DFCs have reduced congestion on existing passenger railway lines, allowing better utilisation of the rail network.
- ☀️ **Boost to Manufacturing & Exports:** Supports initiatives like **Make in India** and export-led growth and improves reliability of supply chains for industries
- ☀️ **Support to Core Sectors:**
  - o Coal movement to **thermal power plants in northern India** has been streamlined
  - o Facilitates transportation of **steel, cement,**

**petroleum products, fertilisers, containers, and industrial raw materials**

- ☀️ **Integration with Industrial Corridors:** Catalyses development of nodes along corridors like **Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)** and promotes **cluster-based industrialisation**
- ☀️ **Environmental Sustainability:** Electrified freight reduces **carbon emissions and air pollution** which supports India's climate commitments under global frameworks
- ☀️ **Employment & Regional Development:** Generates jobs in construction, logistics, and allied sectors and promotes **balanced regional development** by connecting hinterlands.

## CHALLENGES

- ▼ **Land Acquisition Bottlenecks:** Delays due to compensation disputes and legal hurdles particularly in densely populated states
- ▼ **Cost Overruns & Delays:**
  - o Large-scale infrastructure leads to **time and budget escalation**
  - o External factors like pandemic and supply chain disruptions
- ▼ **Last-Mile Connectivity Issues:** Inadequate linkages to ports, industrial hubs, and warehouses which limits full utilisation of DFC capacity

- ▼ **Coordination Challenges:** Multiple stakeholders (Railways, state governments, ports, industries) create **institutional delays**
- ▼ **Underutilisation Risk:** Freight demand may not immediately match designed capacity and requires complementary industrial growth
- ▼ **Operational Constraints:** Issues like **crew shortages, maintenance capacity, and scheduling integration** with Indian Railways.
- ▼ **Environmental & Social Concerns:** Land use changes, displacement, and ecological disruption in some stretches.

## WAY FORWARD

- \* **Expansion of DFC Network:** Develop proposed corridors: **East–West, North–South, East Coast DFCs** under the National Rail Plan
- \* **Strengthening Multimodal Integration:** Align with PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan for seamless connectivity across rail, road, ports, and waterways
- \* **Enhancing Last-Mile Connectivity:** Develop **multimodal logistics parks, private freight terminals, and industrial sidings**
- \* **Private Sector Participation (PPP):** Encourage private

investment in logistics infrastructure and operations

- \* **Technology Adoption:** Use **AI, IoT, predictive maintenance, and digital freight management systems**
- \* **Policy & Institutional Reforms:** Rationalise freight tariffs and improve ease of doing business in logistics
- \* **Demand Generation Strategy:** Promote industrial corridors and manufacturing zones along DFC routes
- \* **Sustainability Focus:** Integrate renewable energy and green logistics practices

## CONCLUSION

DFCs are a **game-changer for India's logistics ecosystem**, enabling faster, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable freight movement. Their success will depend on **efficient integration with industrial corridors and multimodal infrastructure**, helping India move towards a globally competitive economy.

### SAMPLE QUESTION

**Q)** "Dedicated Freight Corridors are central to reducing India's logistics cost and improving competitiveness." Examine.  
**(15 marks) (250 words)**

# INDIA NEW ZEALAND FTA

*Syllabus: GS II - International Relations*

## PYQ MAPPING

**Q)** What are the challenges before the Indian economy when the world is moving away from free trade and multilateralism to protectionism and bilateralism? How can these challenges be met? (2025)

## WHY IN NEWS

India and New Zealand officially signed a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on April 28, 2026, following negotiations concluded in December 2025.

## INTRODUCTION

India has expanded its global trade partnerships to strengthen economic growth, signing **9 FTAs covering 38 developed countries in recent years**. India's recent Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with New Zealand marks a significant step in its strategy to expand global trade partnerships and strengthen its presence in the Indo-Pacific region.

## SHORT TAKES

- **Most-Favoured Nation (MFN):** A WTO trade principle under which any trade advantage (like lower tariffs) given by one country to another must be extended equally to all WTO member countries, ensuring non-discrimination in international trade.

## INDIA NEW ZEALAND TRADE RELATIONS

### Rising Importance of New Zealand:

- o New Zealand has emerged as India's **second-largest trading partner in Oceania**, reflecting growing bilateral engagement.
- o New Zealand is a **high-income economy** with per capita income of **USD 49,380**.
- o In 2024, its **imports were USD 47 billion and exports USD 42 billion**.
- o It invests nearly **8% of GDP overseas**, with total overseas investments of **USD 422.6 billion (March 2025)**.

### Strong People-to-People Ties:

- o Around **300,000 persons of Indian origin** reside in New Zealand, forming nearly **5% of its population** and acting as a strong cultural and economic bridge.

### Trade Trends:

- o Bilateral trade increased from **USD 855 million (2015–16) to USD 1298 million (2024–25)**.
- o India maintains a **positive trade balance** with

exports growing faster than imports.

- o India's services exports grew by **13% in 2024**, reaching USD 634 million, led by sectors such as IT, travel, and business services.



## KEY FEATURES OF THE FTA

- ➔ **Comprehensive Scope:** The FTA is a forward-looking and comprehensive framework covering market access, agriculture, investment, services, mobility, and cultural cooperation.
- ➔ **Fastest Concluded FTA:** Negotiations began on **16**

**March 2025** and concluded within **9 months**, making it India's fastest concluded FTA.

- ➔ **Full Tariff Elimination for Indian Exports:** The agreement provides **duty-free access on 100% of Indian exports**, covering all tariff lines.

➔ **Balanced Market Access by India:**

- o India has offered market access on **70.03% of tariff lines**, while keeping **29.97% in exclusion**, protecting sensitive sectors.
- o Key sectors such as **dairy, certain agricultural products, metals, and defence-related goods** are kept in the exclusion list to safeguard domestic interests.

➔ **Phased Tariff Liberalisation:** About **35.60% of tariff lines** will see phased tariff reductions over 3–10 years, ensuring gradual adjustment for domestic industries.

➔ **Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) Mechanism:** Select products like **kiwifruit, apples, and Mānuka honey** are regulated through TRQs with safeguards like minimum import price and seasonal restrictions.

➔ **Investment Commitment:** New Zealand has committed **USD 20 billion investment over 15 years**, strengthening long-term economic cooperation.

➔ **Agricultural Productivity Partnership:** The agreement includes collaboration in agriculture through **centres of excellence, research, and supply chain improvements**.

➔ **Services Sector Expansion:** Commitment by New Zealand across 118 services sectors, with Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment in 139 sectors.

➔ **Trade Facilitation Measures:** The FTA introduces **faster customs clearance (24–48 hours), paperless systems, and single-window mechanisms** to ease trade.

➔ **Mobility and Migration Provisions:** The agreement provides **5,000 temporary employment visas**, student mobility benefits, and working holiday visas for Indian youth.

➔ **Recognition of Traditional Knowledge:** The FTA promotes India's **AYUSH systems and traditional medicine**

India – Benefits	New Zealand – Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <b>Duty-free access</b> improves export competitiveness in New Zealand.</li> <li>» Labour-intensive sectors like <b>textiles, leather, gems &amp; jewellery</b> gain advantage.</li> <li>» Cheaper inputs (coal, wood, scrap) reduce manufacturing costs.</li> <li>» MSMEs get better global market access and integration.</li> <li>» Export growth supports employment generation in India.</li> <li>» Boost to the <b>wellness industry</b> (Ayurveda, traditional medicine).</li> <li>» Better <b>integration into global value chains</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Access to <b>India's large consumer market</b> boosts exports.</li> <li>» India is projected to grow at <b>6.5% in the coming years</b>, which is faster than New Zealand's other major trade partners.</li> <li>» Agricultural exports like apples, kiwifruit, and honey gain market access.</li> <li>» Growth in services like education, tourism, and professional services.</li> <li>» Stronger linkages with Indian MSMEs and business ecosystem.</li> <li>» Wider business opportunities in a fast-growing economy.</li> </ul>

## CHALLENGES

⚠ **Sensitivity of Dairy Sector:** India's dairy sector faces concerns due to New Zealand's strong competitiveness, requiring protection measures.

⚠ **Risk of Import Surge:** Increased imports from New Zealand could affect domestic industries if not properly regulated.

⚠ **Implementation Challenges:** Effective execution of provisions like TRQs, SPS standards, and rules of origin

requires strong institutional capacity.

⚠ **Regulatory and Standards Barriers:** Differences in **sanitary, phytosanitary, and technical standards** may create trade frictions.

⚠ **Dependence on Investment Realisation:** The success of the agreement depends on the actual realization of the **USD 20 billion investment commitment**.

## WAY FORWARD

✦ **Balanced Trade Liberalisation:** India should pursue **calibrated liberalisation** while safeguarding sensitive sectors like dairy and agriculture.

✦ **Strengthening Domestic Competitiveness:** Enhancing productivity, infrastructure, and innovation will help Indian industries compete globally.

- \* **Effective Implementation Mechanisms:** Robust monitoring systems are needed for **TRQs, rules of origin, and investment commitments.**
- \* **Leveraging Services and Skill Advantage:** India should capitalize on its strength in **services and skilled workforce exports.**
- \* **Deepening Strategic Engagement:** The FTA should be used to strengthen India's presence in the **Oceania and Indo-Pacific region.**

## CONCLUSION

The India–New Zealand FTA presents a balanced framework that combines market access, services expansion, and strategic cooperation while safeguarding sensitive sectors. Its success will depend on effective implementation, domestic preparedness, and India's ability to leverage its strengths in services and skilled workforce to maximise long-term gains.

### SAMPLE QUESTION

**Q)** India's Free Trade Agreement with New Zealand reflects a strategic shift in its trade diplomacy. Discuss the significance of this agreement in the context of India's Indo-Pacific strategy. **(10 marks) (150 words)**

# RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

*Syllabus: GS I - Salient features of Indian Society*

## PYQ MAPPING

- Q)** Does urbanization lead to more segregation and/or marginalization of the poor in Indian metropolises? **(2023)**
- Q)** Has caste lost its relevance in understanding the multi-cultural Indian Society? Elaborate your answer with illustrations. **(2020)**

## WHY IN NEWS

An article titled “How residential segregation shapes public health access in India” by Christynez Ratna Kiruba, published in The Hindu, highlights how **caste- and religion-based residential segregation** limits equitable access to healthcare services in India.

## INTRODUCTION

Residential segregation refers to the spatial separation of social groups based on caste, class, religion, or ethnicity, shaping patterns of habitation in both rural and urban India. It reflects deep-rooted structural inequalities and continues to influence access to resources, opportunities, and social mobility.

## TYPES OF RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

- ➔ **Caste-based segregation:** Residential patterns in India reflect caste hierarchy, with **lower castes pushed to village peripheries**, thereby institutionalising inequality in access to water, temples, and public spaces.
- ➔ **Religious segregation:** Muslims and other minorities tend to cluster in specific localities due to discrimination, insecurity, and social preference.
- ➔ **Class-based segregation:** Economic inequality creates separation between affluent gated communities and low-income slums.
- ➔ **Ethnic/Migrant segregation:** Migrants often settle in clusters based on region/language for social support and employment networks which leads to formation of “urban enclaves”

## KEY DRIVERS OF RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

- 🕒 **Socio-cultural factors:** Caste rules and purity-pollution beliefs keep communities living separately, both by choice and due to discrimination.
  - o **Example-** In **Agraharam settlements of Tamil Nadu and Kerala**, Brahmin households are clustered around the temple, while **Dalit communities (Cheris/Colonies)** are located on the outskirts.
- 🕒 **Economic inequality:** Poor people cannot afford better areas, so they are pushed into low-quality neighbourhoods.
  - o **Example-** The contrast between the luxury high-rises of **Bandra** and the sprawling informal settlements of **Dharavi** in Mumbai.
- 🕒 **Housing discrimination:** Certain communities like SCs and Muslims are often denied houses, forcing them to live in separate areas.
- 🕒 **Urban planning gaps:** Poor housing policies and slum demolitions without proper relocation increase segregation.
- 🕒 **Security concerns:** Fear of violence drives communities to self-segregate into “safe” homogeneous areas, leading to ghettoisation.
  - o **Example-** Juhapura, located in southwest Ahmedabad, evolved into a mostly Muslim-populated, 7.61 sq km "city within a city" following the 2002 riots, driven by residential relocation from other parts of the city.

## IMPACTS

- ★ **Inequality in access to public services:** Segregated communities have **systematically lower access to schools, hospitals, and infrastructure**.
- ★ **Poverty and underdevelopment:** Residential segregation leads to **concentration of poverty and backwardness**.
- ★ **Limited social mobility:** Isolation reduces access to job networks and economic opportunities.
- ★ **Reinforcement of social hierarchies:** Spatial separation sustains caste and communal divisions across generations.
- ★ **Social fragmentation and polarisation:** Reduced interaction between groups leads to mistrust and communal tensions.

## GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- 🇮🇳 **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban (PMAY-U) 2.0:** Provides housing to **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)** and **Low-Income Groups (LIG)** and promotes **Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)** to reduce segregation through mixed-income housing.
- 🇮🇳 **Smart Cities Mission:** Ensures inclusive development via **in-situ slum redevelopment**, upgrading slum areas without relocation to reduce spatial exclusion.
- 🇮🇳 **Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA):** In states like **Maharashtra and Delhi**, prohibits housing discrimination based on **caste, religion, or food habits** in property transactions.
- 🇮🇳 **Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY):** Develops **Scheduled Caste (SC)-dominated areas as “Adarsh Grams”** by improving basic infrastructure and reducing spatial inequality

### CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION



**DEEP-ROOTED SOCIAL NORMS**

Caste and religious biases continue to influence housing choices.





**INFORMAL NATURE OF DISCRIMINATION**

Housing discrimination is often covert and difficult to regulate.





**MARKET-DRIVEN EXCLUSION**

Rising land prices and real estate dynamics push poor to city margins.





**LACK OF DATA**

Segregation at neighbourhood level is under-documented.





**POLICY IMPLEMENTATION GAPS**

Weak enforcement of inclusive housing policies limits effectiveness.



## WAY FORWARD

- ✦ **Promoting mixed-income housing:** Encourage socially diverse neighbourhoods to reduce segregation.
  - **Example:** Ethnic Integration Policy in Singapore sets quotas for **Chinese, Malay, and Indian/Other groups** in housing blocks to prevent racial enclaves.
- ✦ **Anti-discrimination enforcement:** Strict regulation of housing markets to prevent exclusion.
- ✦ **Inclusive urban planning:** Integrate marginalised communities into mainstream city planning.
  - **Example:** **Jaga Mission in Odisha** granted land rights to over 1.7 lakh slum households and upgraded their neighborhoods with basic infrastructure.
- ✦ **Improving public service delivery:** Ensure equitable access to infrastructure across neighbourhoods.
  - **Example:** **Medellín’s Urban Integral Project in Colombia** revitalized segregated hillsides with Metrocables and high-quality public spaces like library parks and schools.
- ✦ **Community-level integration:** Promote social cohesion through education, awareness, and local governance initiatives.

## CONCLUSION

Addressing residential segregation is essential for achieving inclusive development and the constitutional vision of equality and social justice. A combination of inclusive urban planning, anti-discrimination measures, and social transformation is necessary to dismantle entrenched spatial inequalities.

### SAMPLE QUESTION

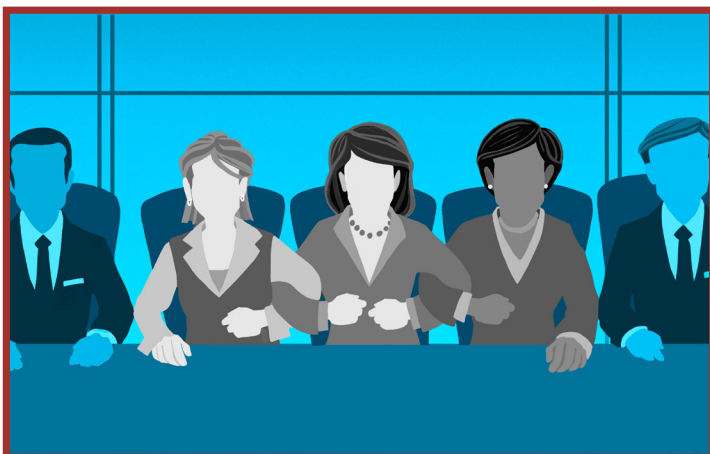
**Q)** “Residential segregation in India reflects the deep interlinkages between caste, class, and urbanisation.” Discuss. **(10 marks) (150 words)**

# WOMEN IN CORPORATE

**Syllabus: GS I - Role of women and women organisation; Social empowerment**

## PYQ MAPPING

**Q)** *Women’s movement in India has not addressed the issues of women of lower social strata.” Substantiate your view. (2018)*



## WHY IN NEWS

Recently, concerns were raised regarding the underrepresentation of women on corporate boards in India despite mandatory legal provisions under the Companies Act, 2013. Data shows that 17 Nifty 50 companies have only one woman director, highlighting the persistence of token representation rather than substantive gender inclusion in corporate governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Women’s participation in decision making institutions is a key indicator of inclusive development and democratic governance. While India has taken legislative steps such as the Women’s Reservation Act and mandatory female representation on company boards, the gap between formal compliance and meaningful empowerment continues to remain significant.

## KEY DATA AND TRENDS

- The Companies Act, 2013 mandates at least one woman director in listed companies with paid up capital above Rs 100 crore or turnover above Rs 300 crore.
- Among Nifty 50 companies, only 107 out of 517 board members are women, accounting for nearly 21 percent representation.
- Seventeen Nifty 50 firms have only one woman director, indicating minimum compliance.
- ONGC currently has no woman director after the end of Alka Mittal’s tenure in 2022.
- Globally, women occupied 28.3 percent of board seats in publicly listed companies in 2025 as per MSCI’s Women on Boards report.
- Nearly 49 percent of global companies have at least 30 percent female board representation.
- Companies such as Eternal and Apollo Hospitals have achieved 50 percent representation of women on their boards.
- Nine companies including TCS, Wipro, HCL Technologies and Hindustan Unilever have crossed one third female representation.

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

### ➔ Tokenism in Representation:

- o Many firms appoint women directors merely to satisfy legal requirements rather than to promote genuine participation.
- o Example- Several companies maintain only one woman director despite having large boards.

### ➔ Patriarchal Corporate Culture:

- o Leadership positions continue to be dominated by men due to entrenched social and institutional biases. Women often face barriers in networking, mentorship and career progression.

### ➔ Family Based Appointments:

- o In some cases, promoter family members are appointed as women directors without independent decision making powers. This weakens the objective of diversity in governance.

### ➔ Limited Pipeline of Women Leaders:

- o Lower female labour force participation reduces the pool of women reaching senior managerial positions. Women remain underrepresented in sectors like manufacturing, infrastructure and finance.

### ➔ Lack of Inclusive Work Environment:

- o Workplace challenges such as wage gaps, maternity related discrimination and poor work life balance discourage women's advancement.
- o **Example:** Mid career attrition among women professionals remains high in India.

### ➔ Weak Focus on Women's Advancement:

- o According to McKinsey, companies prioritise diversity and inclusion broadly but give less

importance to women's career advancement. Gender diversity is often viewed as a compliance issue rather than a strategic priority.

### ➔ Inadequate Monitoring and Accountability:

- o There are limited disclosure norms regarding women's participation in leadership roles beyond board membership. Absence of measurable diversity targets reduces institutional pressure for reform.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF GREATER WOMEN REPRESENTATION ON BOARDS

### ☀ Better Corporate Governance:

- o Diverse boards improve transparency, accountability and quality of decision making.

### ☀ Improved Financial Performance:

- o Studies show companies with gender diverse leadership often demonstrate stronger profitability and innovation.

### ☀ Inclusive Economic Growth:

- o Women's participation in leadership contributes to equitable growth and better workplace policies.

### ☀ Social Justice and Equality:

- o Equal representation reflects constitutional values of equality and empowerment.

### ☀ Enhanced ESG Credentials:

- o Gender diversity strengthens Environmental, Social and Governance standards, improving investor confidence.

## WAY FORWARD

### ✦ Move Beyond Minimum Compliance

- o Companies should adopt voluntary targets for higher female representation.
- o **Example:** Firms can aim for at least 30 percent women directors in line with global standards.

### ✦ Strengthen Leadership Pipeline

- o Organisations should invest in mentorship, leadership training and promotion opportunities for women employees.
- o **Example:** Dedicated executive leadership programmes for women managers.

### ✦ Encourage Independent Women Directors

- o Greater appointment of qualified independent women professionals rather than promoter family members can improve board effectiveness.

### ✦ Improve Workplace Flexibility

- o Flexible working arrangements, childcare support and equal pay policies can help retain women in the workforce.

### ✦ Mandatory Diversity Disclosure

- o SEBI can mandate annual disclosure of gender diversity metrics across managerial levels.

### ✦ Promote Women in STEM and Emerging Sectors

- o Targeted skilling and education initiatives can improve women's participation in technology, infrastructure and finance sectors.

### ✦ Government and Industry Collaboration

- o Industry associations and government bodies should create gender inclusion benchmarks and recognition mechanisms.
- o **Example:** Awards and incentives for companies demonstrating exemplary women leadership practices.

## CONCLUSION

The presence of women on corporate boards should not remain a symbolic exercise in regulatory compliance but must evolve into meaningful participation in decision making. Achieving substantive gender diversity in corporate governance is essential not only for women's empowerment but also for improving institutional efficiency, economic growth and social justice in India.

## SAMPLE QUESTION

**Q)** "Despite legislative measures to ensure women's representation in corporate governance, meaningful participation of women in leadership positions remains limited in India." Examine the challenges associated with women's representation on corporate boards and suggest measures to promote substantive gender inclusion. **(10 marks) (150 words)**

## WEEKLY DOSSIERS

### ABORTION LAWS AND REPRODUCTIVE AUTONOMY IN INDIA

#### Why in News

Recently, debates have intensified on whether India's abortion laws should be amended for minor rape victims, especially in cases where pregnancies cross the statutory limit under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.

#### Introduction

The Supreme Court has recognised reproductive decisional autonomy as a fundamental right. However, rigid gestational limits, criminalisation and procedural barriers continue to restrict access to safe abortion, particularly for minors and sexual assault survivors.

#### Key Issues and Challenges

- ◆ **Rigid Gestational Limits**
  - The MTP Act allows abortion only up to specified weeks except in limited cases.
  - Minor rape victims often discover pregnancy late due to trauma and lack of awareness.
- ◆ **Criminalisation of Abortion**
  - Abortion remains linked to criminal law under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.
  - Doctors fear prosecution if legal conditions are not strictly fulfilled.
- ◆ **Conflict with POCSO Act**
  - Mandatory reporting requirements discourage minors from seeking timely abortion services.
  - Example- Adolescents in consensual relationships fear criminal action against partners.
- ◆ **Judicial Delays**
  - Survivors frequently approach courts for permission for late term abortions.
  - Delays increase physical and mental distress.
- ◆ **Lack of Healthcare Access**
  - Shortage of trained providers and facilities affects safe abortion access, especially in rural areas.
- ◆ **Social Stigma**

- Patriarchal attitudes and fear of social judgement force women toward unsafe abortions.

#### Need for Reform

- ◆ **Rights Based Approach**
  - Abortion should be treated as a reproductive healthcare right rather than merely a criminal exception.
- ◆ **Flexible Limits for Vulnerable Groups**
  - Minor rape survivors and women in distress should receive greater legal flexibility.
- ◆ **Clinical Assessment over Legal Barriers**
  - Medical safety should guide decisions instead of rigid statutory cut offs.
- ◆ **Better Implementation of Supreme Court Rulings**
  - Clear protocols are needed to protect confidentiality and ensure access.

#### Way Forward

- ◆ **Amend the MTP Act**
  - Introduce flexible gestational provisions for rape survivors and minors.
- ◆ **Strengthen Healthcare Infrastructure**
  - Increase trained providers and specialised abortion facilities.
- ◆ **Reform POCSO Procedures**
  - Ensure confidentiality safeguards for adolescents seeking abortion.
- ◆ **Reduce Criminalisation**
  - Shift toward a healthcare centred reproductive justice framework.

#### Conclusion

India's abortion laws must evolve from a restrictive and criminalised framework to a rights based and survivor centric approach. Ensuring safe, timely and dignified access to abortion is essential for protecting reproductive autonomy and justice for vulnerable women and minors.

## INDIA'S AGEING CHALLENGE AND THE NEED FOR LONG TERM CARE

### Why in News

Recently, concerns have been raised regarding India's rapidly ageing population and the inadequacy of the healthcare system in addressing long term elderly care needs beyond hospital based disease treatment.

### Introduction

India is witnessing a demographic transition with a rapidly growing elderly population. As ageing is associated with chronic illnesses, dependency and social vulnerabilities, the healthcare system must move from an acute disease centred approach to a comprehensive long term care model focused on dignity, continuity and wellbeing.

### Key Data and Trends

- ◆ India's population aged above 60 years is expected to reach 347 million by 2050 according to the UNFPA India Ageing Report 2023.
- ◆ One in every five Indians will be a senior citizen by 2050.
- ◆ More than 75 percent of elderly persons live with at least one chronic disease.
- ◆ Only 18 percent of senior citizens have any form of health insurance coverage.
- ◆ India has fewer than 1000 certified geriatricians for over 150 million elderly people.
- ◆ India's home healthcare market is projected to grow to 21.3 billion dollars by 2027.

### Issues and Challenges

- ◆ **Hospital Centric Healthcare Model**
  - India's healthcare system primarily focuses on episodic treatment rather than continuous elderly care.
  - Chronic illnesses often remain poorly managed leading to preventable hospitalisation.
- ◆ **Rising Burden of Chronic Diseases**
  - Elderly persons commonly suffer from multiple coexisting conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and cognitive decline.
  - Example- Parkinson's disease with dementia and cardiovascular disorders in the same patient.

- ◆ **Lack of Geriatric Workforce**

- There is a severe shortage of trained geriatricians, nurses, therapists and caregivers.
- Geriatric medicine remains an underdeveloped speciality in India.

- ◆ **Weak Long Term Care Infrastructure**

- India lacks adequate assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centres and transition care systems.

- ◆ **Financial Vulnerability**

- Insurance systems mainly cover hospitalisation but not preventive or home based elderly care.
- Example- Readmission costs are covered while post surgical home care is often excluded.

### Way Forward

- ◆ **Develop Integrated Long Term Care Systems**

- Create a continuum of care connecting hospitals, rehabilitation centres, assisted living and home care services.

- ◆ **Strengthen Geriatric Workforce**

- Expand training programmes for geriatricians, nurses and caregivers through accredited institutions.

- ◆ **Expand Insurance Coverage**

- Insurance should include preventive, home based and rehabilitative elderly care services.

- ◆ **Strengthen Digital Health Infrastructure**

- Integrate elderly care records with Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission for seamless care continuity.

- ◆ **Promote Community Based Care**

- Local governments and NGOs can establish daycare and outreach services for senior citizens.

### Conclusion

India's ageing population requires a shift from disease treatment to holistic long term care. Building an inclusive elderly care ecosystem based on continuity, accessibility and dignity is essential to ensure healthy ageing and social security in the coming decades.

## SEASONAL TRENDS IN AIR POLLUTION AND NEED FOR TARGETED ACTION

### Why in News

Recently, a decade long analysis of air quality data by Envirocatalysts highlighted that pollutants in Indian cities follow distinct seasonal patterns, emphasising the need for pollutant specific strategies instead of relying only on broad air quality trends.

### Introduction

Air pollution in India is a multidimensional environmental and public health challenge driven by diverse sources and meteorological conditions. Understanding the seasonal behaviour of individual pollutants is essential for designing targeted and effective pollution control measures.

### Key Findings of the Study

- ◆ PM2.5 and PM10 show severe spikes during winter months, especially from October to February.
- ◆ Ozone levels peak during summer months due to higher sunlight intensity.
- ◆ NO2 concentrations increase during summer and post monsoon months due to combustion related activities.
- ◆ Pollutant reduction during monsoon is influenced more by meteorological dispersion than actual emission reduction.
- ◆ Delhi recorded PM2.5 levels between 153 to 240  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in January, far above WHO safe limits.
- ◆ PM10 levels in winter reached as high as 446  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in some years.

### Issues and Challenges

- ◆ **One Size Fits All Approach**
  - Current pollution control policies often focus on aggregate AQI rather than pollutant specific trends.
- ◆ **Dependence on Meteorological Conditions**
  - Seasonal improvement in air quality is often due to rainfall and wind dispersion rather than actual emission reduction.
- ◆ **Weak Source Specific Action**
  - Lack of targeted interventions for transport, dust and industrial emissions.
- ◆ **Urbanisation and Construction Growth**

- Expanding infrastructure projects contribute significantly to particulate pollution.

#### ◆ **Inadequate Monitoring Infrastructure**

- Limited monitoring stations in smaller cities affect data quality and policy response.

#### ◆ **Public Health Burden**

- Air pollution contributes to respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disorders and premature deaths.

### Way Forward

#### ◆ **Pollutant Specific Action Plans**

- Develop separate mitigation strategies for PM2.5, PM10, ozone and NO2.

#### ◆ **Strengthen Emission Control**

- Reduce vehicular emissions, industrial pollution and coal based energy dependence.

#### ◆ **Improve Dust Management**

- Strict regulation of construction activities and mechanised road cleaning.

#### ◆ **Expand Air Quality Monitoring**

- Increase monitoring stations in tier two and tier three cities.

#### ◆ **Integrate Meteorology with Policy**

- Use seasonal forecasting and meteorological data for preventive interventions.

#### ◆ **Promote Clean Energy and Public Transport**

- Encourage electric mobility, renewable energy and mass transit systems.

#### ◆ **Enhance Regional Coordination**

- Interstate coordination is necessary to address transboundary pollution and stubble burning.

### Conclusion

India's air pollution challenge cannot be addressed through generalised approaches alone. A scientific understanding of seasonal pollutant behaviour and source specific interventions is essential for achieving sustainable improvements in air quality and protecting public health.

## BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS

### Supreme Court Expands Rights of Acid Attack Victims

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India has expanded the definition of **acid attack victims** under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 by including victims of **forcible acid ingestion** and those suffering from **internal injuries**, even in the absence of visible disfigurement.
- ◆ The Court also suggested shifting the **burden of proof** onto the accused in acid attack cases to strengthen victim protection and access to justice. The RPwD Act, 2016 seeks to ensure that all **Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)** can live with **dignity**, free from discrimination and with equal opportunities in society.

### Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026

- ◆ The Union Cabinet has approved the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, which seeks to increase the strength of judges in the Supreme Court of India from the present 33 to 37, excluding the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**.
- ◆ The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 was enacted under **Article 124** of the Constitution, which empowers Parliament to determine the number of Supreme Court judges. Initially, the Act fixed the strength at 10 judges excluding the CJI, and it was later expanded through amendments in 1977, 1986, 2008 and 2019.
- ◆ After the amendment comes into force, the **Supreme Court Collegium** will recommend appointments for the additional judges. The appointment process begins with the CJI in consultation with Collegium members, after which recommendations are forwarded by the Union Law Minister to the Prime Minister, who advises the President for formal appointment.

### Misuse of Public Interest Litigation (PIL)

- ◆ Judges of the Supreme Court of India recently expressed concern over the growing misuse of **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)**.
- ◆ The Court observed that PILs were originally introduced to promote **social justice** and improve **access to justice** for disadvantaged sections of society, but are increasingly being misused as tools for **private interest, publicity, political motives** and even **financial gain**, often referred to as “private interest litigation”, “publicity interest litigation” and “paisa interest litigation”.

### Rising Drug Menace and NDPS Courts

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India recently expressed concern over the growing **drug menace** in Punjab and highlighted the large pendency of cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.
- ◆ The Court recommended establishing **specialised NDPS courts** across all states to ensure faster trials and more effective handling of drug related offences.

### National Investigation Agency (NIA)

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India recently directed that at least one **special court** be established to handle 10 to 15 trials related to cases investigated by the National Investigation Agency.
- ◆ The NIA was established under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 following the 2008 Mumbai Terror Attacks to investigate and prosecute offences related to terrorism and national security.

## ETHICS - CASE STUDY

**Q)** Arvind, a 29 year old employee, works in the regional office of a large public sector organisation. Over the past few months, one of his senior colleagues has repeatedly made inappropriate remarks, passed sexist comments during meetings and often sent uncomfortable messages outside office hours to a female co worker, Meera. Although Meera is disturbed by the behaviour, she is hesitant to file a formal complaint due to fear of social stigma, career repercussions and possible retaliation from senior officials.

Arvind is aware that the organisation has an Internal Complaints Committee under the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, but he also knows that complaints in the past were handled slowly and informally. Some colleagues advise him to stay silent to avoid conflict and protect his own career prospects.

Meanwhile, the inappropriate behaviour is affecting workplace morale and creating a hostile work environment for several employees.

### Questions

- Identify the ethical issues involved in the above case.
- What are the options available to Arvind? Evaluate their merits and demerits.
- What values and ethical principles should guide Arvind's decision?
- As a responsible employee, what course of action should Arvind adopt? Justify your answer.
- Suggest measures to ensure a safe, ethical and gender sensitive workplace environment in public institutions.

## ETHICS - EXAMPLES

- Social Influence:** Married at 14 in Bihar to a man three times her age and a mother by 15, Roshni Perween endured abuse and abandonment before transforming her experience into action, personally intervening to stop over 60 child marriages. In 2023, she became the first Indian youth leader honoured at the UN Young Activists Summit in Geneva, using her lived experience to persuade families and protect young girls.
- Public Service Ethics:** IPS officer Veerendra Mishra in Madhya Pradesh founded *Samvedna* in 2005, starting with 13 Bedia children and relocating them to Bhopal for education to break the cycle of community-based sexual exploitation. Through sustained engagement across 60 villages, he has helped over 5,000 children access education and pursue alternative livelihoods.
- Social Responsibility/Innovation:** Shakti Yadav, from Mumbai's Bhandup, started the initiative *Buy Food With Plastic* to tackle both hunger and plastic pollution by exchanging 20 plastic bottles for a hot meal. His grassroots model has so far served over 45,000 meals and collected more than 1 lakh plastic items, which are upcycled into products distributed even internationally.
- Problem Solving:** Arunachalam Muruganantham from Tamil Nadu, founder of *Jayashree Industries*, developed low-cost sanitary pad-making machines that enabled rural women-led production across 27 Indian states and 100+ countries. His work to tackle period poverty through affordable pads (₹2-₹5) and women's employment has earned him a nomination for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize.
- Courage:** At Bargi Dam in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, a group of 35 labourers formed a human chain during a sudden storm-induced cruise boat sinking and rescued passengers using ropes and sheer physical effort, without any safety equipment or training. Among them, 22-year-old Ramzan saved six people by jumping into the water, helping in the rescue of 12 passengers in total.
- Public Health Ethics:** The Dutch-flagged MV Hondius, carrying 149 passengers and crew, is heading to Tenerife in the Canary Islands, Spain, for an emergency evacuation after a hantavirus outbreak that killed 3 people. Spanish authorities, coordinating with the WHO, will conduct testing and repatriation within a narrow Sunday weather window to avoid delays from worsening sea conditions.
- Empowerment:** The Thaliru Foundation in Mysuru and Bengaluru, Karnataka runs the "Swavalambi Stree Auto-Rickshaw Driving" initiative, training single mothers and survivors of abuse to become financially independent auto drivers through free CSR-funded driving courses.

## MODEL ESSAY

*"Forests precede civilizations and deserts follow them"*

### Introduction

- Quote by **François-René Chateaubriand**
- Highlights the **interdependence between human civilization and environment**,
- Forests enable early human settlements, but unsustainable development leads to ecological degradation and desertification.

### Drivers of Forest Loss Leading to "Deserts"

- **Agricultural expansion and monocropping:** Forests are cleared for farming and single crops, causing soil depletion, as seen in Indonesia–Malaysia (palm oil).
- **Industrialisation and urban sprawl:** Forest land is converted into cities and industries, such as **Delhi NCR's Aravalli loss**
- **Mining and infrastructure projects:** Mining and construction degrade forests and leave barren land, as in **Odisha's mining belts**
- **Overgrazing and fuelwood dependency:** Excess grazing and fuelwood use prevent regeneration, seen in **Rajasthan drylands**
- **Climate change intensifies land degradation:** Rising heat and erratic rainfall increase fires and droughts, as in **Australia's bushfires**.

### Positive Trends

- **Afforestation & reforestation:** Restoring degraded land through large-scale planting, with India restoring about **9.8 million hectares (2011–2019)**.
- **Bonn Challenge:** Global goal to restore **350 million hectares by 2030**, with India pledging **21 million hectares**.
- **Green India Mission:** Under NAPCC, aims to expand and improve **10 million hectares of forest cover**.

- **Mangrove restoration:** Strengthens coastal protection, seen in efforts across the **Sundarbans and Odisha–Maharashtra coasts**.

### Way Forward

- **Sustainable development model:** Balance growth and ecology, as seen in **Tamil Nadu's 15% urban green cover policy (2024)**.
- **Strengthen forest governance:** Enforce conservation laws like the **Forest Conservation Act, 1980**
- **Climate-smart agriculture:** Promote agroforestry and efficient farming, under India's **Green India Mission**.
- **Community participation:** Strengthen tribal and local stewardship through **Joint Forest Management and Forest Rights Act-based conservation models**.
- **Urban planning reforms:** Adopt green infrastructure like **Miyawaki forests**, e.g., **Mumbai's Uttan dump transformed into an 8,600-tree urban forest**.

### Conclusion

- A **warning that civilisations flourish only when nature is respected, but collapse when exploitation exceeds limits**.
- A sustainable future requires shifting from **"conquest of forests" to "coexistence with forests"**, ensuring that deserts do not become the legacy of development.

### Sample Quotes

- *Nature never did betray the heart that loved her* - William Wordsworth
- *An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind* - Mahatma Gandhi
- *When the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind*- African Proverb

## MAINS JOT DOWN



### GS II: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- During the official visit of India's External Affairs Minister to Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, the importance of the **Girmitiya communities** was highlighted as a key cultural bond between India and these nations.
- Girmitiyas were Indian **indentured labourers** who migrated to British colonies during the mid to late 19th century to address labour shortages after the Slavery Abolition Act 1833.



### GS II: GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

- The Centre plans to expand the rollout of the **Samarth Panchayat Portal** to states such as Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- Developed by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the portal is a **digital governance platform** designed to help Panchayats improve and transparently monitor their **tax and non tax revenue sources**.
- It strengthens the **Own Sources of Revenue (OSR)** of Gram Panchayats through **UPI based online tax assessment** and seamless digital tax payments, thereby promoting financial autonomy and efficient local governance.



### GS III: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- India's space start-up GalaxEye recently launched Mission Drishti aboard the Falcon 9 developed by SpaceX.
- It is India's largest privately built Earth observation satellite and the world's first mission to integrate Multispectral Imaging (MSI) and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) on a single platform through OptoSAR technology.
- Placed in a Sun synchronous Low Earth Orbit at an altitude between 160 km and 2000 km, the satellite provides all weather and day night imaging capabilities for improved Earth observation and space based surveillance.
- It also offers the highest imaging resolution achieved by an Indian private sector satellite mission.



### GS III: INDIAN ECONOMY

- According to the annual report of the Enforcement Directorate, 21 individuals have been declared as **Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEOs)** over the last seven years.
- An FEO is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for committing **scheduled economic offences** involving more than ₹100 crore and who has either fled India to avoid prosecution or refuses to return for trial.
- The concept is defined under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018, which aims to deter economic offenders from evading the Indian legal system by remaining outside the country.



### GS III: DEFENCE

- An Indian Army contingent recently departed to Cambodia for the second edition of the **India Cambodia Bilateral Military Exercise (CINBAX)** conducted jointly with the **Royal Cambodian Army**.
- The exercise aims to strengthen **interoperability**, improve **coordination**, and enhance **operational synergy** between the armed forces of both countries, reflecting growing defence cooperation between India and Cambodia.



**GS III: POLLUTION**

- India is currently the **third largest e waste generator** in the world, reflecting the rapid growth of electronic consumption and digitalisation.
- India's **e-waste generation** increased from nearly **2.76 million metric tonnes (MMT) in 2020** to around **6.19 MMT in 2024**, and is projected to reach approximately **14 MMT by 2030**.
- The rising volume of discarded electronic devices has raised concerns regarding environmental pollution, resource recovery and safe recycling infrastructure.



**GS II: HEALTH**

- AIIMS Delhi has introduced India's first **portable bedside Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) system**, enhancing access to advanced diagnostic imaging within hospital settings.
- **MRI** is a **non invasive medical imaging technique** that uses a powerful **magnetic field** and **computer generated radio waves** to create detailed and high resolution images of organs, tissues and the skeletal system.
- A Hantavirus outbreak aboard the Dutch flagged cruise ship MV Hondius has reportedly trapped around 150 people and caused three deaths. **Hantavirus** is a group of **zoonotic viruses** primarily carried by rodents such as rats and mice, which can lead to severe illness in humans. Infection usually occurs through contact with infected rodents or exposure to their **urine, saliva or droppings**, particularly through contaminated air or surfaces.
- Scientists have warned that rising temperatures linked to climate change may increase the spread of the **brain eating amoeba**, a dangerous disease causing microorganism found in warm environments.
- The amoeba commonly lives in **soil** and warm **freshwater bodies** such as lakes, rivers, ponds and hot springs across the world. It enters the human body through the **nose**, usually during swimming or water related activities, and can attack brain tissues causing severe and often fatal infections.



**GS III: AGRICULTURE**

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **Mission for Cotton Productivity** in line with the government's **5F vision** of "Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign" to strengthen the global competitiveness and self-sufficiency of India's textile sector.
- The mission aims to improve **cotton productivity** by addressing issues such as stagnant yields, quality concerns and supply bottlenecks.
- Jointly implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and the Ministry of Textiles, the mission will run from 2026 27 to 2030 31 with an outlay of ₹5,659.22 crore.
- It targets increasing **lint productivity** from 440 kg per hectare to 755 kg per hectare and raising total cotton production from 297 lakh bales to 498 lakh bales by 2030 31. Initially, the programme will cover 140 districts across 14 cotton producing states in India.

## CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

### ECOCIDE

- It refers to large scale environmental destruction caused by human activities.
- The term was coined in 1970 by Arthur W. Galston to describe the damage caused by **Agent Orange** during the Vietnam War. Later, several countries included ecocide related provisions in their domestic laws.

### ANEEL (ADVANCED NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR ENRICHED LIFE) FUEL

- It is a unique nuclear fuel blend made of **thorium** and a small quantity of **High Assay Low Enriched Uranium (HALEU)**. The fuel is named in honour of Anil Kakodkar, one of India's leading nuclear scientists. ANEEL fuel is significant for reducing **nuclear waste**.

### ELECTRONIC GOLD RECEIPTS (EGRS)

- They are **dematerialised securities** representing ownership of physical gold stored in SEBI accredited vaults and held electronically through depositories. Each EGR is fully backed by physical gold of assured quality and can be traded on stock exchanges, integrating gold into the formal financial system.
- Unlike **Gold ETFs**, EGRs can be redeemed anytime in the form of physical gold instead of cash settlement. EGRs are regulated by SEBI and are recognised as securities under the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956. Retail investors, jewellers and bullion traders are among the key market participants.

### GEOCELLS

- They are three dimensional honeycomb-like cellular structures made from synthetic strips and filled with materials such as soil, sand, gravel, concrete or recycled materials for **ground stabilisation**. They are widely used in **embankments, river channels, retaining walls, airport runways** and urban green infrastructure projects.

### EXTRAGALACTIC JETS

- They are highly energetic streams of plasma and radiation emitted from regions around **supermassive black holes** at galactic centres. They travel nearly at the **speed of light**, extend thousands of light years into space, and emit radiation across the electromagnetic spectrum from radio waves to gamma rays.