



# Yojna IAS

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## FEBRUARY 2024

### WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

**YOJNA IAS WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**5/02/2024 TO 11/02/2024**

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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## FEBRUARY 2024

### IEA'S REPORT-ELECTRICITY 2024

*THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "IEA'S REPORT ELECTRICITY 2024". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.*

#### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Critical insights into India's energy future were recently revealed by the International Energy Agency (IEA) in its report "**Electricity 2024**." This thorough research identifies critical factors that will influence India's power sector through 2026, including the continued use of coal, the rise of renewable energy, and the potential expansion of nuclear power.

#### WHAT DOES THE ELECTRICITY REPORT 2024 SAY?

##### ONGOING DEPENDENCE ON COAL:

- India anticipates maintaining its reliance on coal to satisfy the escalating demand for electricity **until 2026**. Despite a decline from 74% in 2023, coal-fired generation is projected to account for **68%** of India's electricity demand by 2026. The annual increase in coal-fired power generation is expected to be 2.5% from 2024 to 2026. Despite India's commitment to achieving **net-zero emissions by 2070**, coal is expected to remain the dominant source, meeting 68% of the electricity demand.

##### RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION:

- The contribution of renewable energy (RE) generation remained relatively steady, constituting **21% of electricity generation in 2023**. The growth in solar and wind energy was offset by reduced hydropower output. Around 21 gigawatts (GW) of RE capacity was added in 2023, resulting in RE comprising almost 44% of the total installed capacity in the same year.

##### ELECTRICITY DEMAND DYNAMICS:

- India witnessed a **7% increase in electricity demand in 2023**, driven by rapid economic growth and heightened requirements for space cooling. The expected annual average growth between 2024 and 2026 is **6.5%**, with India's electricity demand projected to **surpass China's by 2026**,

boasting the world's fastest growth rate.

#### DIVERSIFICATION EFFORTS:

- Besides expanding wind and solar power capacity, India is focusing on developing large hydro and nuclear power projects. The country has ambitious plans **to triple its nuclear capacity by 2032**, aiming to add 13 GW, with 6 GW currently under construction. Atomic power, now providing about 2% of the country's electricity, is expected to increase in the coming years.

#### HYDROPOWER CHALLENGES AND MANDATES:

- Changing weather patterns led to a **15% decrease in hydropower generation in 2023**. The government mandated blending 6% of imported coal with domestic coal until March 2024 to ensure an uninterrupted power supply.

#### SMALL MODULAR REACTOR (SMR) TECHNOLOGY:

- The report underscores the increasing momentum behind small modular reactor (SMR) technology. **SMRs are advanced nuclear reactors with a power capacity of up to 300 MW(e) per unit**, about one-third of traditional atomic power reactors. These small, modular reactors can produce a significant amount of low-carbon electricity. While the development and deployment of SMR technology are progressing, challenges persist, and research and development efforts are accelerating.



#### GLOBAL COMPARISON AND EMERGING ECONOMIES:

- While China anticipates the most significant growth, India's electricity demand over the next three years may nearly match that of the United Kingdom. Developed economies experienced notable manufacturing and industrial output declines coupled with high inflation. Approximately 85% of new electricity capacity is anticipated from emerging economies, with South Asia, particularly China and India, taking the lead.

#### GLOBAL NUCLEAR LANDSCAPE:

- The World Nuclear Association estimates, as of November 2023, reveal that **68 GW of nuclear capacity** is under construction, 9 GW is planned, and 353 GW is proposed globally. Asia is anticipated to surpass North America's nuclear power growth by **2026**, capturing a 30% share of global nuclear generation.

## GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR GENERATING RENEWABLE ENERGY

- The **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** is a group of 121 nations founded by India. Most of these nations are sun-drenched countries entirely or partially located between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. The alliance's primary goal is to promote efficient solar energy to lessen reliance on fossil fuels.
- **PM KUSUM:** Farmers in the nation are encouraged to build solar pumps, grid-connected solar power plants, and other renewable energy sources. By 2022, the plan seeks to install 25,750 MW of solar and different renewable energy capacities.
- **SRISTI** is a program for **sustainable rooftop implementation** for solar transformation in India. The country's beneficiaries will receive a financial incentive from the central government in exchange for establishing solar power plant rooftops.
- **FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles)** scheme in India, launched to promote electric mobility, offers financial incentives and subsidies to boost the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles. FAME aims to reduce vehicular emissions, enhance energy security, and contribute to sustainable transportation. The scheme encourages the production and purchase of electric cars. It fosters charging infrastructure development, and overall advancement in the electric mobility ecosystem.
- In May 2018, a **Solar-Wind Hybrid policy** was released. The **strategy's primary goal** is to establish a framework for developing **large-scale grid-connected photovoltaic (PV) hybrid wind-solar systems** to optimise and reduce the use of land, transmission infrastructure, and wind and solar resources.

## PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

**Q1) In the context of India's preparation for Climate-Smart Agriculture, consider the following statements (UPSC Prelims 2021)**

- 1) The 'Climate-Smart Village' approach in India is part of a project led by the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), an international research programme.
- 2) The CCAFS project is conducted under the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), headquartered in France.
- 3) The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India is one of the CGIAR's research centres.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

**ANSWER: D**

## MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1) What challenges does India face in achieving its targets for renewable energy capacity, as outlined in the National Action Plan on Climate Change?

## UCC BILL IN UTTARAKHAND

*THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "UCC BILL IN UTTARAKHAND". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "POLITY & GOVERNANCE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.*

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami tables UCC Bill in the State Assembly. The UCC drafting group was chaired by Ranjana Prakash Desai, a retired Supreme Court judge.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF UTTARAKHAND'S UCC DRAFT REPORT

- The committee's key proposals include the **prohibition of polygamy, halal, iddat** (a mandatory period of waiting for women following the dissolution of a Muslim marriage), **triple talaq, and child marriage, a uniform age for girls' marriage across all religions, and mandatory registration of live-in relationships.**
- The proposed UCC seeks to promote gender equality by treating men and women equally in areas such as inheritance and marriage.
- The Code is also likely to grant Muslim women an equal property stake, as opposed to the current 25% share granted under Muslim personal rules.
- The minimum marriage age for men and women will stay the same: **18 years for women and 21 years for males.**
- The bill exempts Scheduled Tribes (STs) from its provisions. The state's tribal population, which is roughly 3%, has been vocally opposing UCC since they were granted special status.

### ABOUT THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

- UCC aspires to replace distinct religious personal laws with a focus on marriage, divorcing, adoption, and inheritance, as governed by **Article 44** of the constitution.
- **Article 44** of the Indian Constitution is a directive principle of state policy (DPSP). It emphasises that the state should work to create a unified civil code for all people of India.
- This code would be a unified collection of personal laws that would apply to every citizen,

irrespective of religion.

- **Goa** is India's sole state with a UCC, which follows the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867.

### LAW COMMISSION'S STANCE:

- The **21st Law Commission**, led by former Supreme Court judge **Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan**, issued a consultation paper on "Reforms of Family Law" in **2018**, stating that the "formulation of a Uniform Civil Code is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage".
- I recognise the passage of more than three years after the publication of the initial consultation document. In **2022**, the **22nd Law Commission**, led by **Justice (Retd) Rituraj Awasthi**, published a notification asking for feedback on the UCC from various stakeholders, including the general public and religious bodies.

### THE STANCE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA ON UCC

- **In the Mohd. Ahmed Khan vs Shah Bano Begum case in 1985**, the Court criticised the lack of execution of Article 44 and advocated for its full implementation. Such a demand was reinforced in the following cases, including **Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India (1995)** and **John Vallamattom v. Union of India (2003)**.
- **José Paulo Coutinho vs. Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira Case, 2019**: The Court lauded Goa as a "shining example" where "the UCC is applicable to all, irrespective of religion, with the exception while safeguarding certain limited rights" and advocated for its nationwide implementation.

### STATUS OF PERSONAL LAWS IN INDIA



- The Constitution's **Concurrent list** includes personal law matters like marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Both the Parliament and the state legislatures have the authority to pass legislation on any of the issues included in the Concurrent List.
- The Parliament codified Hindu personal laws into four parts in 1956:
  1. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
  2. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956
  3. The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956
  4. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956

In the context of these regulations, the term '**Hindu**' encompasses Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists.

- Muslim personal laws are not codified and are based on religious texts. However, certain aspects of them are expressly recognised in acts such as the Shariat Application Act, 1937, the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, and the Muslim Women (Protection of Marriage Rights) Act, 2019.
- Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews are also Subject to their laws.

## NEED FOR A UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

1. **Equality and Justice:** One of the UCC's founding values is to promote equal treatment and justice for all citizens, regardless of religious convictions. It seeks to remove discriminatory practices and create a unified set of rules covering personal concerns such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption.
2. **Secularism:** A UCC is viewed as a step towards reaching the constitutional Concept of secularism, which requires that laws not be based on religious concerns. It advocates that the state should not favour any specific religion and should treat all citizens fairly.
3. **Women's Rights:** Proponents of the Uniform Civil Code say that it will bring about gender justice by eliminating gender-based discriminatory practices seen in personal laws. This includes topics like divorce, maintenance, and inheritance, in which women may experience uneven treatment under current religious rules.



# UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

All sections of the society irrespective of their religion shall be treated equally according to a National Civil Code - the Uniform Civil Code.

### THEY COVER AREAS LIKE

- Marriage
- Divorce
- Maintenance
- Inheritance
- Adoption
- Succession of Property

It is based on the premise that there is necessarily no connection between religion and personal law in a civilized society.

"UCC refers to a common set of laws governing civil right of every citizen"  
Article 44 of Directive Principle sets duty of state for implementing UCC.

### TIMELINE

1954	Passage of Special Marriage Act provides permission of civil marriage above any religious personal law
1956	Hindu code bill passed dividing personal laws in - Common Indian Citizen - Muslim Community
1986	Rajiv Gandhi governments law in Shah Bano case widens the difference in civil rights.
2003	Then President Dr. Abdul Kalam supported UCC
2015	Supreme court asserted the need of UCC.

The dialogue for UCC was started by the Law Commission in the year 2016

## CRITICISM OF THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

1. **Religious and Cultural Diversity:** Critics believe that India is a diverse country with various religious and cultural customs and that enforcing a consistent set of rules may violate this diversity. They believe that personal laws enable communities to maintain their unique customs and traditions.
2. **Minority Rights:** Some claim that a UCC may disproportionately affect minority communities since it is regarded as imposing majority ideals on them. There are fears that it may violate the rights of religious and cultural minorities to practise their traditions.
3. **Social Acceptance:** Implementing a UCC may face opposition from diverse segments of society who are firmly committed to their religious practices. A lack of social acceptance may lead to noncompliance or opposition to the planned changes.
4. **Political Sensitivities:** A Uniform Civil Code is a politically delicate issue that has been debated for decades. Policymakers may be cautious to address it because of the potential response from



religious communities, and it frequently becomes a problematic topic during political debates.

### PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

**Q1) Consider the following statements:**

- 1) The main objective of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is establishing a theocratic state
- 2) A Uniform Civil Code covers criminal law
- 3) UCC primarily seek to protect the right to equality

**How many of the above statements are correct?**

- a) One
- b) Two
- c) Three
- d) None

**ANSWER: A**

**Q2) Which personal matters does a Uniform Civil Code aim to govern?**

- a) Economic policies
- b) Educational reforms
- c) Matters related to religion
- d) Marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption

**ANSWER: D**

### MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

**Q1) Examine the key provisions and principles that a Uniform Civil Code seeks to establish. How do these align with the values of equality, justice, and secularism?**

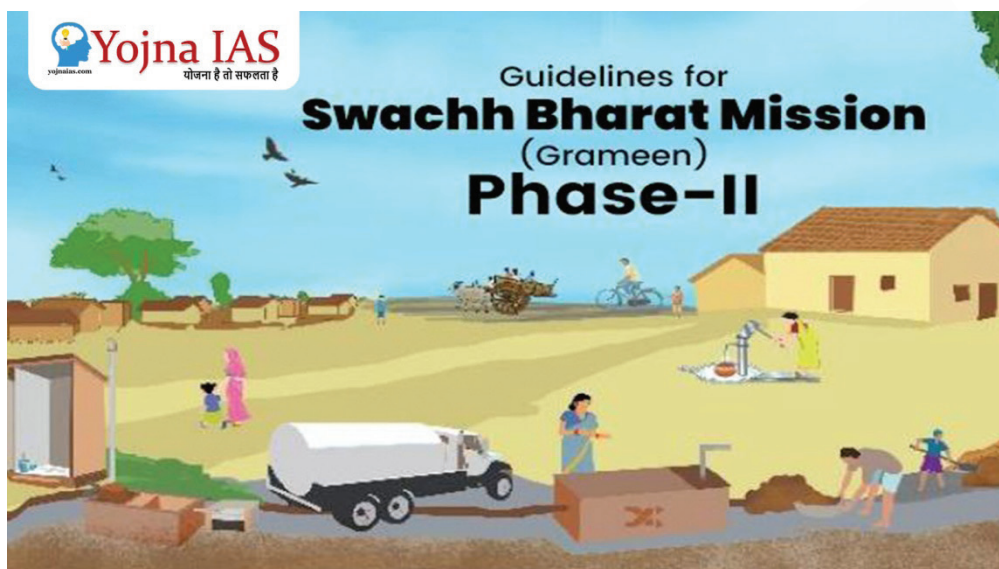
**Q2) Assess the impact of a Uniform Civil Code on women's rights, focusing on aspects such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. How does it contribute to or hinder gender equality?**

# SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (RURAL) PHASE II : A CRITICAL VIEW OF THE SANITATION MIRACLE IN RURAL INDIA

SOURCE – THE HINDU AND PIB.

GENERAL STUDIES – SOLID AND LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT, SWACHH BHARAT MISSION, SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (RURAL), STATE PUBLIC WELFARE SCHEMES, SOCIAL JUSTICE.

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



- Swachh Bharat Mission, the world's largest sanitation initiative, was launched by the Prime Minister of India in 2014 as a tribute to the birthday of Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, to achieve open defecation free India by October 2, 2019. More than 10 crore individual household toilets were constructed under this programme. Due to which in India the percentage which was 39% in the year 2014 became almost 100% in the year 2019. Because by then about 6 lakh villages in India had declared themselves open defecation free (ODF).
- The studies of cleanliness surveys conducted under the Swachh Bharat Mission clearly show that the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G) campaign has made a significant impact in the economic, environmental and health sectors in the Indian society and the campaign has especially contributed to the empowerment of women and self-respect of women. This also led to the achievement of SDG 6.2 (sanitation and hygiene) 11 years ahead of schedule.
- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi has recently approved the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) till 2024-25. This will focus on improving facilities in public toilets (ODF Plus) after eliminating open defecation, which will also include continuation of the open defecation free campaign and solid and liquid waste management (SLWM). In this program, work will be done to ensure that not even a single person is left out and every person uses the toilet.
- Lack of sanitation has been considered as a major problem in India. Even after 67 years of India's

independence, in 2014, about 10 crore rural and about 1 crore urban households in India did not have clean toilets and 55 crore people, or about half the country's population at that time, defecated in the open.

- The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) has advised all States to re-verify that there are no rural households that are unable to use toilets and to ensure that if any such household is identified, it should be provided necessary assistance for construction of individual household toilet so that no one is left behind under this programme.
- The main objective of Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (Phase 2) is to maintain the ODF status of all 6 lakh rural villages and improve the sanitation level by providing solid and liquid waste management as ODF Plus by 2024-25.
- Over the past decade, improving sanitation coverage has been one of the major public policy miracles in India. Access to water and sanitation is Goal 6 among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals envisioned by the United Nations.
- Public sanitation programs have a long history in the country, beginning with the launch of the highly subsidized Central Rural Sanitation Program (CRSP) in 1986.
- The Total Sanitation Campaign in 1999 marked a shift from a high-subsidy system to a low-subsidy system.
- The Public Sanitation Program evolved into a mission under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) in 2014 to make India open defecation free (ODF) by October 2019. Encouraged by the achievements under SBM, The government launched the second phase of SBM-G. The focus here was on sustainability of initial achievements by promoting solid and liquid waste management and covering households previously left out. The government aims to transform India from ODF to ODF Plus by 2024-25. According to government data, about 85% of villages in India have become ODF Plus. Yet, this impressive performance also needs to be viewed from the perspective of behavioral change that will truly bring sustainability.

## MAIN PROVISIONS OF SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (RURAL) CAMPAIGN :

**Swachh Bharat Mission Brings About a Sanitation Revolution**  
Rapid construction of toilets ensuring dignity of women & eradicating open defecation

- Over 5.08 lakh villages, 529 districts, 25 States/UTs declared Open Defecation Free
- Sanitation coverage goes up 38% in 2014 to over 94% at present
- Over 9.17 crore Toilets built

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- Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G) Phase-II will be implemented in mission mode with a total outlay of Rs 1,40,881 crore for the period from 2020-21 to 2024-25. This will be a good model of

synergy between different dimensions of funding as out of this, Rs 52,497 crore will be allocated from the budget of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation while the remaining funds will be allocated from the 15th Finance Commission and MNREGA. Especially for solid and liquid waste management. The fund will be funded from funds being issued under revenue generation models.

- The focus is on providing access to IHHL to the left out and newly emerging households to achieve the target of ODF Plus villages. Under this campaign, biodegradable waste management through composting and setting up biogas plants; Collection, separation and storage facilities for plastic waste management; Construction of soak pits, waste stabilization ponds etc. for greywater management; And the program also includes faecal sludge management through co-treatment and setting up of FSTPs in existing sewage treatment plants/faecal sludge treatment plants (STP/ FSTP) in urban areas.
- There are three progressive stages of ODF Plus villages. A village which retains its ODF status and has arrangements for solid waste management or liquid waste management is considered as an ODF Plus Aspirational Village. A village that maintains its ODF status and has both solid waste management or liquid waste management in place is considered an emerging ODF Plus village. On the other hand, an ODF Plus model village is one that retains its ODF status and has arrangements for both solid waste management and liquid waste management.
- Under this programme, the provision of providing an amount of Rs 12,000 to new eligible households as per existing norms to promote construction of Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) will continue. Funding norms for Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) have been rationalized and the number of households has been replaced by per capita income. Additionally, financial assistance to Gram Panchayats (GP) for construction of community sanitation complex (CMSC) at village level has been increased from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 3 lakh.

### FUND SHARING STRUCTURE UNDER SWACHH BHARAT MISSION RURAL (SBM-G) :

- The Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G) program will be implemented by the States/UTs as per the operational guidelines, which will be issued to the States shortly. The fund sharing structure for all components between the Center and the States is 90:10 between the North-Eastern States and Himalayan States and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, 60:40 between the other States and 100:00 between the other Union Territories.

### INDICATOR BASE FOR MONITORING ODF PLUS :




The SLWM component of ODF Plus is monitored based on output-outcome indicators of the following four key areas –

1. **Plastic Waste Management.**
  2. **Biodegradable Solid Waste Management (SLWM) (which includes animal waste management).**
  3. **gray water management and**
  4. **Fecal sludge management.**
- The second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G) will continue to boost employment generation and rural economy sector through construction of household toilets and community toilets, as well as infrastructure for SLWM such as compost pits, absorbents Will continue to encourage pits, waste stabilization ponds, treatment plants etc.
  - The Cabinet's approval for Swachh Bharat Mission Rural (SBM-G) Phase II will help rural India effectively meet the challenge of solid and liquid waste management and thereby significantly improve the health of villagers in the country.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF TOILETS UNDER SWACHH BHARAT MISSION RURAL (SBM-G) :

**Provisions under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)**  
cont..

- **School toilets** - Department of School Education and Literacy
- **Anganwadi toilets** - Women and Child Development.
- **Triggering 'Behaviour change' by intensifying IEC campaign and Inter Personal Communication (IPC).**
- **Outputs (Construction) and Outcomes (Usage)** will be monitored.
- Innovative, **Low cost and User friendly technologies** for toilet and Solid and Liquid Waste Management to be pursued.
- States, which performs well in their IEC campaign, behavioural change and toilet construction effort under the Swachh Bharat Mission to be **Incentivised.**

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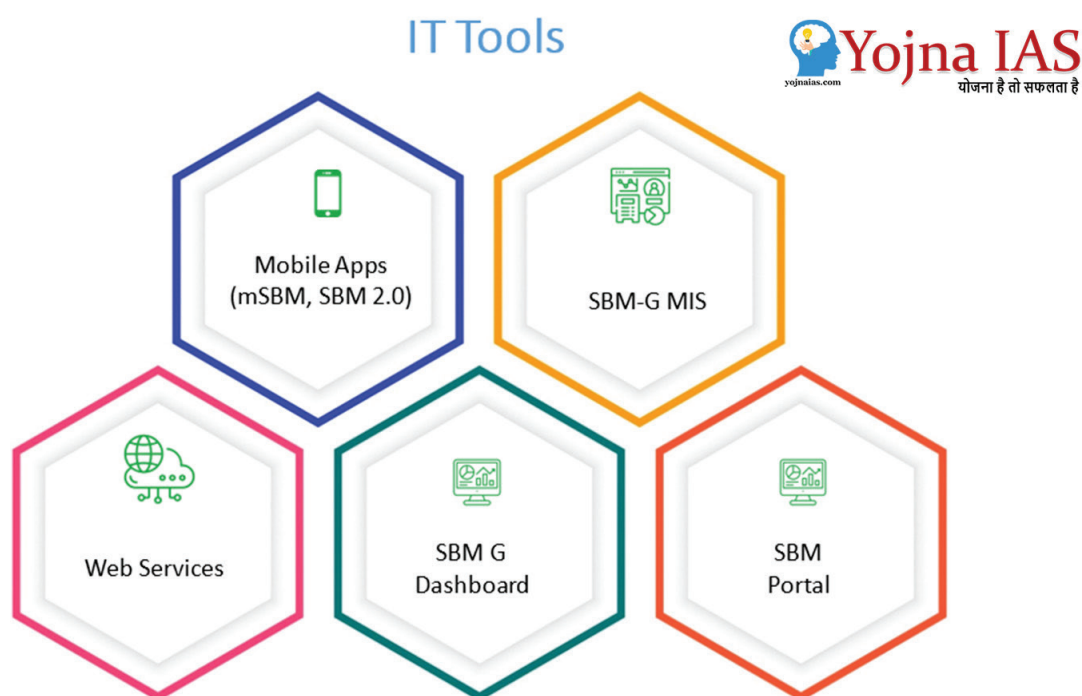
The following qualifications are required for construction of toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G) –

1. The construction of the toilet will have to be completed in one go, which must include a double pit toilet, water tank, a wash basin for hand washing and a double pit toilet.
2. A round block made of bricks or cement must be inserted in the pit.
3. In a double pit toilet, the size of each pit should be 4 feet deep, 4 feet long and 4 feet wide and the distance from one pit to the other should be at least 3 feet.

- Both these pits should be near the toilet which should be connected to a section box. The distance between them should be at least one meter and this pit must be at a distance of at least 15 meters i.e. 40-45 feet from any tap or water source.
- The beneficiary of the toilet must have a bank account so that the amount allocated for the construction of the toilet can be sent directly to his bank account through DBT.
- Only one toilet will be constructed on one ration card.

### PROCESS FOR OBTAINING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN TOILET CONSTRUCTION :

- Before getting a toilet built, it is mandatory for the applicant to inform the village Sarpanch or Village Secretary. To get financial assistance after construction of a toilet, the applicant can first obtain the form from the village Sarpanch or Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) office.
- The applicant can fill all the information required in the form and after getting it certified by the Sarpanch, can submit it either to the Sarpanch or directly to the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) office. The applicant also has to attach a color photograph of himself/herself along with the form.
- The toilet is surveyed by the authorized officer and it is seen whether the toilet is properly constructed or not. Along with this, it is also checked whether the toilet is being used or not. If satisfied after investigation, the amount of financial assistance is deposited in the bank account of the person by the authorized officer.



### CONCLUSION / SOLUTION:

- If the government wants to transform India from open defecation free to open defecation free plus status by 2024-25, it needs to identify the gaps in the current programme.

2. The receipt of Cabinet approval for Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) Phase-2 will help rural India effectively meet the challenge of solid and liquid waste management and improve the health of villagers in the country.

### PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM:

**Q.1 Consider the following statements with reference to Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) in India.**

1. In India, Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) has played an important role in the empowerment of women.
2. Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), India has seven stages of open defecation free (ODF) plus villages.
3. In the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), only one toilet will be constructed per ration card.
4. In the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), a lump sum amount of fifty thousand is provided to the beneficiaries for the construction of toilets.

**Which of the above statement /statements is correct?**

- (A) Only 1, 2 and 3
- (B) Only 2, 3 and 4
- (C) Only 2 and 4
- (D) Only 1 and 3

**Answer - (D)**

### PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM:

**Q.1. Highlighting the main features of the second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), discuss how this program has played an important role in the empowerment of women in India and in the field of economic, environmental and health management ?**

# HUMBOLDT'S ENIGMA

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## WHY IN THE NEWS?

In recent years, Humboldt's enigma has received more attention in the study of ecology as researchers seek to comprehend the unexpected richness seen in alpine habitats, contradicting conventional wisdom.

## ABOUT HUMBOLDT'S ENIGMA

- For ages, explorers and naturalists have sought to identify the variables that contribute to biodiversity concentration.
- **Alexander von Humboldt** (1769-1859) was a polymath who observed natural occurrences in subjects such as **geography, geology, meteorology, and biology**.
- Humboldt's varied research suggested a **link between temperature, height, and humidity** on the one hand **and** species occurrence patterns – or **biodiversity** – on the other.
- Two centuries later, a group of biogeographers, or scientists who study the relationship between diversity and location, employed new methods to reexamine the drivers of biodiversity.
- They provided their own account of the relationship between biodiversity and mountains, dubbed Humboldt's enigma.

## WHAT IS HUMBOLDT'S ENIGMA?

- Humboldt's enigma suggests that biodiversity is not limited to Earth's tropical regions.
- It implies that regions other than the tropics, such as hilly areas, have tremendous biodiversity.
- **For example**, in India, biodiversity is not limited to the tropical regions of MP, Chhattisgarh, and the Western Ghats but also includes such areas as the eastern Himalayas, where climate variations and a diverse geological makeup contribute to abundant biodiversity.

## DRIVERS OF MOUNTAIN BIODIVERSITY:

- **GEOLOGICAL PROCESSES:**
  1. Mountains serve as 'cradles' and 'museums' for biodiversity.
  2. Uplifts and other geological events produce new environments in which new species can arise

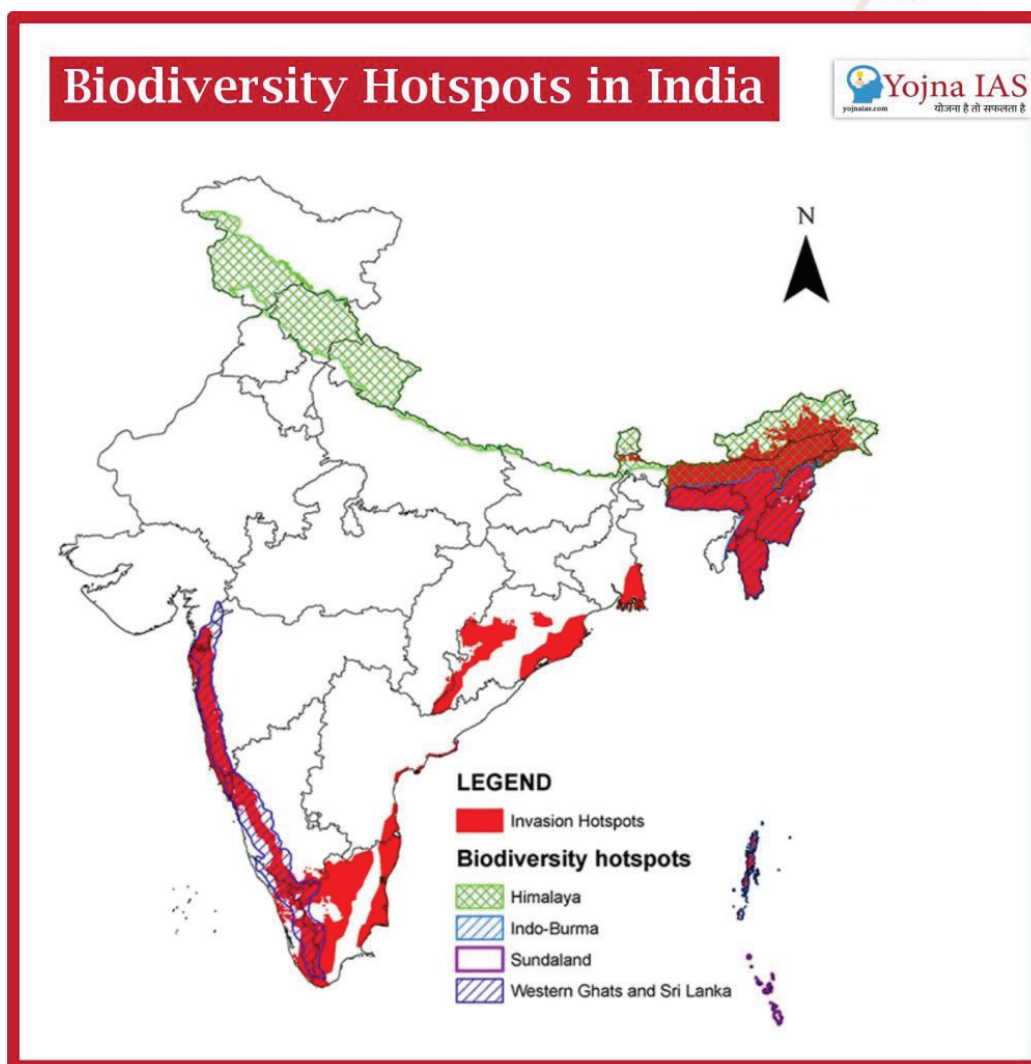


(‘cradles’).

3. Furthermore, climatologically stable mountains act as ‘ museums,’ preserving species for long periods.
4. The Northern Andes, notably Chimborazo, exemplify this by spanning a wide diversity of biomes across short distances.

- **GEOLOGICAL HETEROGENEITY:**

1. Mountains with firm geological heterogeneity have increased biodiversity.
2. The various compositions of rocks create various habitats, promoting biological diversity.
3. This occurrence is especially common in tropical mountains, adding to their distinctive biological tapestry.



### EASTERN HIMALAYA: A CASE STUDY

1. The Eastern Himalaya presents an anomaly in terms of biodiversity beyond the tropics. The Eastern Himalaya has extraordinary variety, contradicting the usual tropical biodiversity paradigm.

2. Climate variability and geological heterogeneity contribute to high biodiversity.
3. Different temperatures and rainfall amounts on the same mountain support a variety of biomes.
4. According to the **World Wildlife Fund**, the Eastern Himalayas support thousands of diverse species, including over **10,000 plants, 900 bird species, and 300 animal species**. Many of them are either endangered or highly endangered.
5. Its meadows host the densest populations of Asian elephants, Bengal tigers, and one-horned rhinos. Its mountains shelter snow leopards, Himalayan black bears, takins, red pandas, and golden langurs, while its waterways are home to the world's rarest dolphins (Gangetic).

### CHALLENGES IN IDENTIFYING THE PATTERN OF BIODIVERSITY RICHNESS:

- A significant restriction of scientists' attempts to explain biodiversity patterns is a lack of fine-grained data on where species appear.
- There is a shortage of research & development.
- Several locations, particularly in India, remain understudied.
- We cannot expect to comprehend a location's genuine biodiversity without employing contemporary genomic technologies.

### PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

**Q1) If you travel through the Himalayas, you are likely to see which of the following plants are naturally growing there. (UPSC Prelims-2014)**

- 1) Oak
- 2) Rhododendron
- 3) Sandalwood

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

**ANSWER: A**

**Q2) Which biome is known for having the highest biodiversity?**

- a) Desert

- b) Rainforest
- c) Tundra
- d) Grassland

**ANSWER: B**

**Q3) What is the role of keystone species in maintaining biodiversity?**

- a) They are the most abundant species in an ecosystem.
- b) They have no impact on the ecosystem.
- c) They play a crucial role in maintaining the structure and function of an ecosystem.
- d) They are invasive species.

**ANSWER: C**

**MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

- Q1) Describe the major biodiversity hotspots in India. Analyze the factors that contribute to the high concentration of species in these regions and discuss the conservation efforts being undertaken to preserve these hotspots.

## INCLUSION OF NEW TRIBES IN STS

*THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "INCLUSION OF NEW TRIBES IN STS". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "POLITY & GOVERNANCE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.*

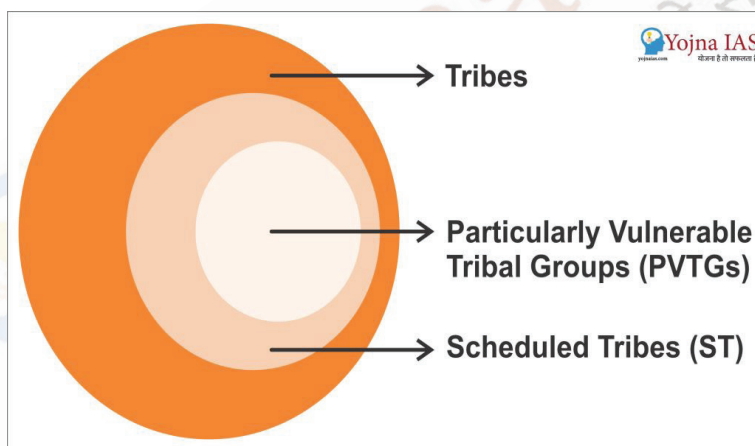
### WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Rajya Sabha has passed the Constitution (STs) Order Amendment Bill 2024 and the Constitution (SCs and STs) Order Amendment Bill 2024, both presented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. This paved the path for the inclusion of several new communities on the Odisha STs list, as well as synonyms and phonetic variations of existing tribes on the Andhra Pradesh and Odisha ST lists.

### KEY PROVISIONS OF THE BILL?

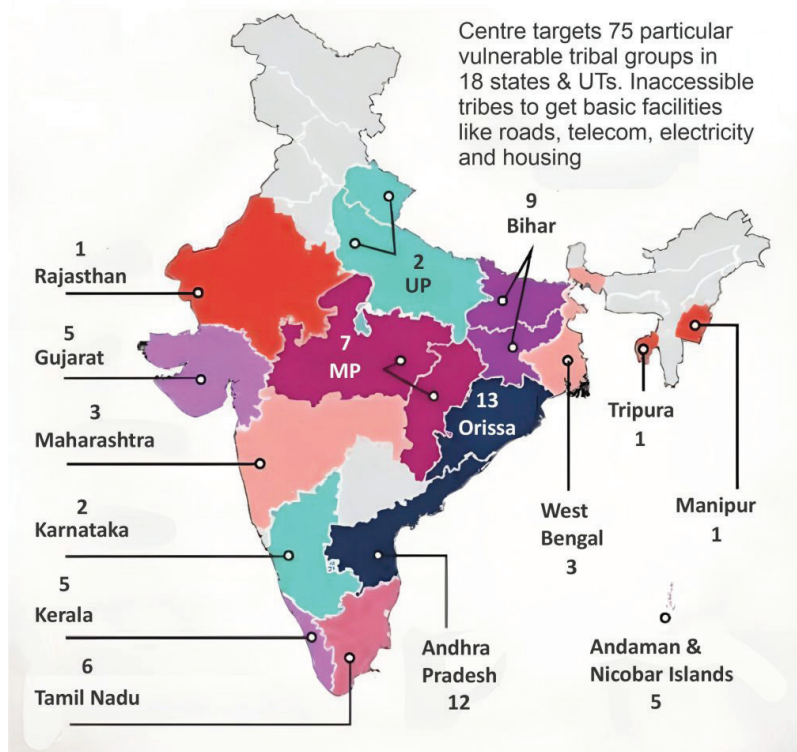
- Among the additions were seven Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) (a subset of STs): **four in Odisha and three in Andhra Pradesh.**

- These PVTGs' independent names were expressly inserted as synonyms or sub-tribes of communities that were previously on these States' ST lists.
- In Odisha, PVTG communities include **Pauri Bhuyan** and **Paudi Bhuyan**, which are synonyms of the Bhuyan tribe, **Chuktia Bhunjia**, a sub-tribe of the Bondo Poraja tribe, and **Mankidia**, a synonym for the Mankirdia tribe.
- In Andhra Pradesh, the PVTG communities used **Bondo Porja** and **Khond Porja** as synonyms for the **Porja tribe** and **Konda Savaras** as a synonym for the Savara tribe.
- These groups belong to PVTGs and have been included in the scheduled list after 75 years of independence.
- The Bill also included synonyms, phonetic variations, and sub-tribes for at least 8 existing communities on the State's ST list.
- Furthermore, Odisha's ST list was increased with the addition of two new communities. These are —
  1. The **Muka Dora** community (and synonyms) is in the undivided Koraput District, which encompasses Koraput, Nowrangapur, Rayagada, and Malkangiri districts.
  2. The **Konda Reddy** (or synonyms) community.



## ABOUT PVTGS

- PVTGs are particularly vulnerable among tribal communities. Because of this feature, more developed and assertive tribal groups receive a significant portion of tribal development monies, necessitating the allocation of more funds for PVTG development.
- In this backdrop, the Government of India classified 52 tribal tribes as PVTGs in 1975, based on the **Dhebar Commission's suggestion**.
- There are **75 PVTGs** out of 705 Scheduled Tribes.



- The PVTGs are scattered across 18 states and one Union Territory (UT) in the country (2011 census).
- Odisha has the highest number of PVTGs (almost 2.5 lakh).
- Characteristics of PVTGs:
  1. Population – stagnant/declining
  2. Economy – Subsistence level
  3. Literacy Level – extremely low
  4. Technology – pre-agricultural

## INITIATIVES FOR TRIBAL GROUPS

- **PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN)** is an initiative aimed at protecting and nurturing tribal groups, particularly those on the verge of extinction. It covers 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in 18 states and union territories, covering 22,544 villages in 220 districts. The initiative emphasizes the government's commitment to uplifting tribal communities, preserving their cultural heritage, and integrating them into mainstream development.
- **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra** focuses on welfare schemes like sanitation facilities, financial services, electricity connections, food security, healthcare, and clean drinking water.
- **The PM PVTG Development Mission** program aims to improve the socio-economic status of PVTGs, with a budget of Rs 24000 Crore for Scheduled Tribes. The mission includes providing basic facilities like safe housing, clean drinking water, education, health, nutrition, and better

access to roads for backward scheduled tribes.

- **Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS)** was established in 1997-98 to provide quality education to Scheduled Tribes (ST) in remote areas. It aims to provide opportunities for high and professional courses, employment, and overall development. Each school has a capacity of 480 students, catering to Class VI to XII. Grants under Article 275(1) of the Constitution support the establishment of these schools. Eklavya Model Day Boarding Schools (EMDBS) are proposed for higher ST population density in identified Sub-Districts.
- **“Development of PVTGs”** Under the system, state governments submit conservation-and-development (CCD) plans based on their needs. States receive 100% grants-in-aid under the scheme’s terms.

### PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

**Q1) Consider the following pairs: (UPSC PRELIMS-2013)**

Tribe	State
1) Limboo (Limbu)	Sikkim
2) Karbi	Himachal Pradesh
3) Dongaria Kondh	Odisha
4) Bonda	Tamil Nadu

**Which of the above pairs are correctly matched?**

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 4 only
- c) 1, 3 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**ANSWER: A**

**Q2) Consider the following statements about Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India: (UPSC PRELIMS-2019)**

- 1) PVTGs reside in 18 States and one Union Territory.
- 2) A stagnant or declining population is one of the criteria for determining PVTG status.
- 3) There are 95 PVTGs officially notified in the country so far.
- 4) Irular and Konda Reddi tribes are included in the list of PVTGs.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 2, 3 and 4
- c) 1, 2 and 4
- d) 1, 3 and 4

ANSWER: C

## MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Q1) Examine the socio-economic challenges faced by scheduled tribes in contemporary society. What are the key factors contributing to their marginalization, and what strategies can be implemented to address these issues effectively?
- Q2) Discuss the conservation and protection of tribal lands and natural resources. How can sustainable development practices be implemented to balance the needs of scheduled tribes with environmental preservation?

## CAMEROON ADOPTED THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL

*THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "CAMEROON ADOPTED THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.*

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Cameroon, a country located in central Africa and having a high biodiversity with around 11,000 plant, animal, and microbe species, recently adopted the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, a United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) accord.

### WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR CAMEROON TO SIGN THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL?

- **Preserving Traditional Knowledge:** Many plants, animals, and microorganisms contain valuable genetic information or resources, such as genes for creating medications or crops. Traditional knowledge refers to the indigenous and local communities' knowledge, innovations, and practices about these resources.
- **Benefiting Local Communities:** The firms' revenues did not assist the communities where the plants were collected. Adopting the Nagoya Protocol contributes to the **protection of indigenous and local communities' rights and interests**, as well as the promotion of biodiversity-driven innovation and development.
- **Stopping Biopiracy and Equitable Sharing of Resources:** Both genetic resources and conventional knowledge are **important for bioprospecting**, which involves exploring biological material for new sources of medications, food, and products. Bioprospecting can also contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. For example, **Prunus Africana**, a Cameroonian plant, is **used to create prostate cancer treatments**, yet foreign corporations pay USD

2.11 per kilogramme and sell the resulting pharmaceuticals for USD 405.

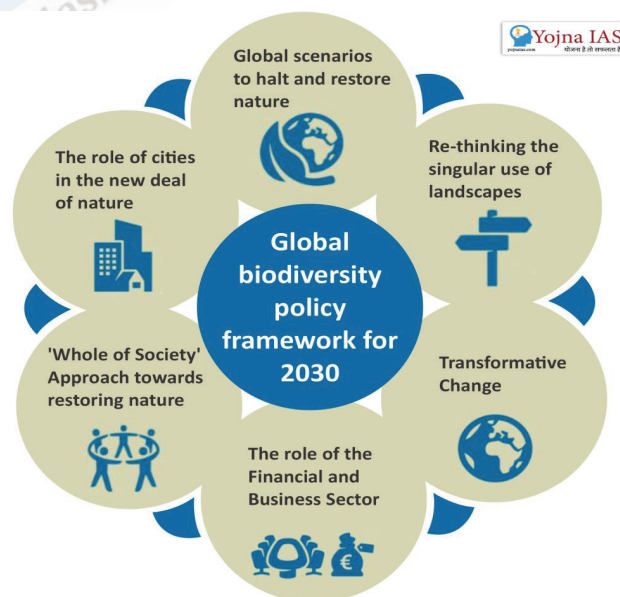
## ABOUT NAGOYA PROTOCOL:

- The Nagoya Protocol, which **focuses on Accessibility to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits** arising from their Use (the Protocol), is a legally binding worldwide agreement that carries out the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) access and benefit-sharing provisions.
- It was **accepted by the CBD in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010** and went into effect on October 12, 2014, 90 days following the deposit of the 50th instrument of ratification.
- It establishes a transparent legal framework for the proper fulfilment of **one of the CBD's three objectives**: the fair and equitable distribution of benefits deriving from the use of genetic resources.

## WHAT ARE ITS ADVANTAGES?

1. It creates a framework that allows researchers to **gain access to genetic resources for biotechnology research, development, and other activities** in exchange for a fair share of any advantages derived from their use.
2. This gives the **research and development sector the confidence** it needs to invest in biodiversity-related research.
3. **Indigenous and local communities may benefit** from a legal framework that recognises the significance of traditional knowledge connected with genetic resources. **India signed the Nagoya Protocol in 2011** and ratified it in October 2012. India ratified the CBD at the 11th Conference of Parties (COP), held in Hyderabad.

## ABOUT THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD):





- The CBD, which now has **196 contracting parties**, is the most comprehensive and legally binding international agreement on nature protection and the sustainable use of natural resources.
- It was opened for signatures at the **1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development** in Rio de Janeiro.
- It has **three main objectives**:
  1. The preservation of biological diversity (including genetic diversity, species diversity, and habitat diversity).
  2. The sustainable utilisation of biological diversity.
  3. The equal distribution of advantages derived from the use of genetic resources.
- Two globally binding agreements were adopted within the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity to help execute the CBD's objectives.
  1. **The Cartagena Protocol**: In 2000, countries adopted the Cartagena Protocol, which governs the cross-border movement of living-modified organisms (LMO) and went into effect in 2003.
  2. **The Nagoya Protocol**, enacted in **2010**, establishes a legally binding framework for access to genetic resources as well as the fair and equitable distribution of benefits resulting from their utilisation.

### PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

**Q1) What is/are the importance of the ' United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification'? (UPSC Prelims-2016)**

- 1) It aims to promote effective action through innovative national programmes and supportive international partnerships.
- 2) It has a special/particular focus on South Asia and North Africa regions, and its Secretariat facilitates the allocation of major portions of financial resources to these regions.
- 3) It is committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification.

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

**ANSWER: C**

**Q2) Consider the following statements:**

- 1) Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a financial mechanism to support the objectives of the CBD
- 2) The Nagoya Protocol addresses issues related to Climate change adaptation
- 3) CBD aims to achieve a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2030
- 4) Montreal is the headquarters of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

**How many of the above statements are correct?**

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) All four

**ANSWER: C**

**MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

- Q1) Explain the concept of “keystone species” in the context of biodiversity conservation. Provide examples and discuss their significance in maintaining ecosystem stability.**
- Q2) Reflect on the role of education and awareness in biodiversity conservation. How can environmental education programs contribute to fostering a sense of responsibility and sustainable practices among communities?**

## FISCAL CONSOLIDATION

**SOURCE – THE HINDU AND PIB.**

**GENERAL STUDIES – GROWTH OF INDIAN ECONOMY, FISCAL CONSOLIDATION, FISCAL DEFICIT, GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT, DIRECT TAXES, INDIRECT TAXES.**

**WHY IN THE NEWS ?**

- In February 2024, India’s Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while presenting her interim budget in the Parliament, had said that a target has been set to limit India’s fiscal deficit in this financial year.
- It is worth noting that India is facing fiscal challenges in dealing with its national debts, hence

in its interim Budget 2024-25, the Finance Ministry has reduced India's fiscal deficit to 100 per cent of the **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** in the financial year 2024-25. It has been decided to reduce the GDP growth to 5.1%.



- In her budget speech, the Finance Minister spoke about the government's aim to reduce the fiscal deficit to 5.1% of GDP in 2024-25 and to 4.5% by 2025-26, which surprised many economic analysts, who expected little. Had expected a higher deficit target.
- The government aims to limit the fiscal deficit to 5.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), as against 5.9 per cent estimated in the first budget for the fiscal year, and aims to reduce the fiscal deficit by 2025-26 on the back of a strong surge in tax revenues. Emphasis has been laid on keeping the target below 4.5 percent.
- Direct tax revenues have seen a sharp increase, with income tax 13.5 per cent higher than the budget estimate and securities transaction tax (STT) revenue 15.8 percent higher than the budget estimate for this financial year.
- For the next financial year, direct tax collections, which include income tax and corporate tax, are estimated to grow by 13.1 per cent to Rs 21.99 lakh crore. In the current financial year 2023-24, direct tax revenue is estimated to increase by 17.2 percent on an annual basis to Rs 19.45 lakh crore.
- Income tax collections have seen a sharp growth in 2023-24 and are expected to be Rs 1.2 lakh crore higher than the Budget Estimate, while corporate tax collections have been maintained at the Budget Estimate level of Rs 9.23 lakh crore. With this, income tax revenues are seen exceeding corporate tax collections, even though they were kept at a lower level than corporate tax revenues in the Budget Estimates for 2023-24.
- Securities transaction tax, which is levied on securities traded on stock exchanges, is estimated to rise to Rs 32,000 crore in the revised estimates for 2023-24, an increase of 27.6 per cent over the actual revenue in 2022-23. STT revenue is estimated to increase to Rs 36,000 crore for 2024-25.
- The government's gross tax revenue is expected to increase by 11.5 percent to Rs 38.31 lakh crore in the next financial year.
- The Centre's net tax revenue is estimated to grow by about 12 per cent to Rs 26.02 lakh crore in 2024-25. This compares with a 10.8 per cent increase over actual revenues in 2022-23 in the revised estimate for the current financial year 2023-24. The growth rate of around 12 percent of tax revenues projected for 2024-25 is much higher than the 10.5 percent nominal GDP growth projected for the budget arithmetic of 2024-25.
- The strong growth in tax revenue reflects higher tax buoyancy, which stands at 1.2 in the revised estimate for FY 2023-24, compared to 1.0 in FY23. For 2024-25, the tax jump is seen at 1.1.

- Indirect tax collections, which include customs duty, excise duty and GST (including compensation cess), are expected to fetch the government Rs 16.22 lakh crore in 2024-25.
- In the current financial year, the revised estimates of customs duty and excise duty collections have been revised to Rs 2.19 lakh crore and Rs 3.08 lakh crore, respectively, while GST collections (including compensation cess) are estimated at the budgeted level of Rs 9.57 lakh crore. ,
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in the Parliament of India that – **“The government is not only keeping pace with fiscal consolidation but also improving it. Not only aligning with the fiscal consolidation roadmap that we gave earlier, but also improving it is a priority for the government.”**

### FISCAL DEFICIT :

- **Definition:** The difference between the total revenue of any government and its total expenditure is called fiscal deficit. Whenever the government’s expenditure exceeds the revenue it receives, the government has to either borrow money or sell its government assets to meet the deficit.
- **Primary source of revenue:** The primary source of revenue for any government is tax. Tax receipts in 2024-25 are expected to be ₹26.02 lakh crore, while total revenue is estimated at ₹30.8 lakh crore. Total government expenditure for the same period is estimated at ₹47.66 lakh crore.

### NATIONAL DEBT :

- The national debt of any country is the total amount that the government of a country has to pay to its creditors at a given time.
- Government debt includes various liabilities including domestic and external debt along with obligations of schemes such as small savings, provident funds and special securities.
- These liabilities include both interest payments and repayment of the principal amount, placing a considerable financial burden on the government’s finances.
- This is usually the amount of debt that the government has accumulated over several years by borrowing to finance fiscal deficits and deficits.
- The higher the government’s fiscal deficit as a share of GDP, the less likely it is to make payments to its creditors without any hassle.

### FINANCING OF FISCAL DEFICIT BY THE GOVERNMENT :

- **Borrowing from the market:** The government borrows money from the market through its bonds to meet its fiscal deficit, the lender from the market buys the bonds issued by the government. From which the government receives income. In 2024-25, the Center aims to borrow ₹14.13 lakh crore from the market, lower than the target for 2023-24.

- Indirectly providing funds to the government by the Reserve Bank of India: Central banks like the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) play an important role in the credit market by indirectly providing funds to the government, by purchasing government bonds in the secondary market.
- Monetary Policy of the Government: Monetary policies of the government also play an important role in reducing the cost of borrowing money from the market for the governments.
- Central Bank Lending Rates: Central Bank lending rates for the government also affect the fiscal deficit of the government. For example – Central bank lending rates in many countries were close to zero before the Covid pandemic, but they have increased rapidly after the pandemic. This makes it more expensive for governments to borrow money. It is because of the lending rates of the Central Bank that the Central Government is determined to reduce its fiscal deficit.



## ROLE OF FISCAL DEFICIT :



**Inflation :** High fiscal deficit can lead to inflation, as the government may resort to printing money to meet the deficit. Fiscal deficit reached a high of 9.17% of GDP in 2020 during the pandemic. It has declined significantly since then and is expected to reach 5.8% in the year 2023-24.

**Building confidence among creditors :** Any fiscal discipline, reflected in a lower deficit, can enhance confidence in the government among market creditors. This could potentially improve the rating of the bond and also reduce the cost of borrowing. Lower fiscal deficit indicates better government

fiscal discipline. This may lead to higher ratings of Government of India bonds. When the government relies more on tax revenues and borrows less, it increases lender confidence and reduces the cost of borrowing.

**Public debt management :** A high fiscal deficit under any circumstances can put pressure on the government's ability to manage public debt. Due to this, India's public debt can increase at a rapid pace, which also affects the financial management of the country.

**Getting cheap loans from the international market :** It makes the process extremely simple for any government to issue its bonds in foreign markets and get cheap loans to compensate for the low fiscal deficit. Through this process also the fiscal deficit is reimbursed by the government.

## MAIN METHODS OF MEASURING FISCAL DEFICIT :

**FISCAL DEFICIT = TOTAL EXPENDITURE – TOTAL RECEIPTS (EXCEPT BORROWING).**

**Revenue Deficit :** Revenue deficit in any business or for any government is determined by subtracting the total revenue expenditure from the total revenue receipts. Therefore

**REVENUE DEFICIT = TOTAL REVENUE RECEIPTS – TOTAL REVENUE EXPENDITURE.**

**Negative GDP ratio:** Negative GDP ratio is a method of measuring how much a country owes on its GDP. Therefore

**DEBT TO GDP = TOTAL DEBT OF THE COUNTRY / TOTAL GDP OF THE COUNTRY.**

## LAWS RELATED TO FISCAL MANAGEMENT :

### FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT (FRBM) FRAMEWORK :

- The FRBM Act, enacted in 2003, set ambitious targets for debt reduction, aiming to limit general government debt to 60% of GDP by 2024-25. The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) framework failed to achieve its stated goals. As a result, the outstanding debt of the Central Government of India exceeded the prescribed limit.
- The FRBM Review Committee report has recommended a debt-to-GDP ratio of 60% for the general (combined) government by 2023, which includes 40% for the central government and 20% for the state governments.

## MEASURES TO MANAGE NATIONAL DEBT AND FISCAL DEFICIT IN INDIA :



### TO INCREASE REVENUE COLLECTION :

- There is an urgent need to strengthen tax administration and its strict compliance to improve revenue collection and widen the tax base by the government.
- There is also a need to impose environmental taxes or taxes on luxury goods, new taxes or duties on property to diversify revenue sources.

### FISCAL DISCIPLINE AND CONSOLIDATION :

- Compliance with the FRBM Act is of utmost importance to comply with the fiscal consolidation targets. The government should aim to gradually reduce the fiscal deficit and GDP ratio to ensure sustainable public finances.
- The government's implementation of prudent fiscal policies along with rationalization of its expenditure, revenue enhancing measures and reforms in subsidies can reduce its dependence on borrowing and help manage fiscal imbalances.

### CREATING DEBT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES :

- The government needs to develop a prudent debt management strategy to optimize the cost of borrowing and minimize refinancing risks.
- There is a need to diversify the investor base and sources of financing in domestic and international markets to reduce the risk of market volatility.

### REFORMS AT STRUCTURAL LEVEL :

- There is a need to undertake structural reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the economy, including labor market reforms, ease of doing business initiatives and improving governance.
- To enhance growth potential and maintain fiscal stability, it is necessary to address structural constraints and challenges in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and services.

### TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE :

- The government should conduct a comprehensive review of government expenditure to prioritize spending on key sectors such as public health care, education and infrastructure.
- Policies should be made to reduce existing non-essential provisions and subsidies to ensure targeted support to the country's deprived communities and vulnerable populations living below the poverty line.

## CONCLUSION/ SOLUTION :

- By implementing a combination of fiscal consolidation measures, India can effectively manage its national debt and fiscal deficit while ensuring fiscal stability, economic growth and long-term prosperity.
- Achieving fiscal sustainability requires a balance between short-term stabilization efforts and long-term structural reforms.
- Fiscal deficit, the difference between government revenue and expenditure, has a significant impact on inflation, market confidence, debt management and international borrowing.
- The government's plan to reduce the fiscal deficit in the coming years involves a delicate balance of revenue generation and expenditure control.
- Announcing consolidation plans and measures is a prerequisite for restoring public finances in India and maintaining market confidence. In India its objective is to reduce government deficit and debt accumulation.

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :

### Q.1. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS REGARDING FISCAL CONSOLIDATION.

1. The government borrows money from the market through its bonds to meet its fiscal deficit.
2. High fiscal deficit can lead to inflation.
3. The difference between the total revenue of the government and its total expenditure is called fiscal deficit.
4. Government debt includes various liabilities including domestic and external debt along with obligations of schemes such as small savings, provident funds and special securities.

### Which of the above statement /statements is/ are correct ?

- (A). Only 1, 2 and 3  
(B). Only 2, 3 and 4  
(C) None of these.  
(D). All of these.

**Answer - (D)**

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM :

**Q.1. Define fiscal deficit and national debt and discuss how fiscal consolidation is necessary to strengthen India's GDP and Indian economy. Present a logical explanation.**



# THE 96.88 CRORE PEOPLE REGISTERED TO VOTE FOR THE FORTHCOMING GENERAL ELECTION IN INDIA

*THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS '96.88 CRORE PEOPLE REGISTERED TO VOTE FOR THE FORTHCOMING GENERAL ELECTION IN INDIA.' THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT TO THE POLITY AND GOVERNANCE SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.*

## WHY IN THE NEWS?

On Friday, the Election Commission said nearly **97 crore Indians** will be eligible to vote in this year's Lok Sabha elections. It also said over **two crore young electors** aged 18 to 29 years have been added to the voters' list.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT:

- **Inclusive Participation:** With meticulous planning and coordination, the electoral rolls now boast inclusivity on an unparalleled scale, reflecting the vibrant diversity of India's electorate. As per the finally published electoral roll, over 96.88 crore voters are registered nationwide.
- **Gender Parity:** Noteworthy in this publication is the remarkable increase in female voter registrations, exemplifying a concerted effort towards gender parity and inclusivity within the electoral framework. The Electoral Roll gender ratio has surged positively, indicating the growing role of women in shaping the democratic fabric of the nation. Over 2.63 crore new electors have been included in the electoral roll, of which around 1.41 crore are female electors, surpassing the newly enrolled male voters (~ 1.22 crore) by over 15%. Gender Ratio increases from 940 in 2023 to 948 in 2024.
- **Youth Engagement:** More than two crore young electors, spanning the 18-19 and 20-29 age groups, have been added to the electoral roll. Special Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) were appointed at the constituency level to facilitate youth enrolment directly from educational institutions, fostering greater civic engagement among the younger populace.
- **Rigorous scrutiny:** After thorough house-to-house verification, names of 1,65,76,654 deceased, permanently shifted, and duplicate electors have been deleted from the electoral rolls. This comprehensive cleanup ensures the integrity and purity of the electoral process. It includes 67,82,642 dead voters, 75,11,128 permanently shifted/absent voters and 22,05,685 duplicate voters.
- **Focus on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups:** Special endeavours have been undertaken to achieve 100% registration of PVTG, making the electoral rolls the most inclusive to date.

Efforts have also been undertaken to assist voters with disabilities (PwD) by designating around 8.835 million PwD voters in the electoral roll database, guaranteeing accessibility and inclusiveness on election day.

The Lok Sabha elections are the largest and most crucial democratic event in the country. These elec-

tions are held to elect the new members in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, and the next central government. The election result will significantly impact the political landscape and the lives of 1.4 billion people for the next five years.

## THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR INDIVIDUALS TO VOTE IN GENERAL ELECTIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. **Citizenship:** The individual should be a citizen of India.
2. **Age:** The minimum age for voting is 18 years. Individuals must be at least 18 years old on the qualifying date specified by the Election Commission of India.
3. **Electoral Rolls:** The individual must be registered as a voter in the electoral roll of their respective constituency. This involves completing the registration process, typically including submitting an application and necessary documents such as proof of identity and residence.
4. **Mental Soundness:** The individual must be of sound mind, not disqualified by law, and not declared as mentally unsound by a competent court.

Once a person meets these criteria and is registered as a voter, they are eligible to vote in general elections in India. It's important to note that the Election Commission of India periodically updates the electoral rolls, and citizens are encouraged to verify and update their details as necessary to ensure they can exercise their voting rights.

## ABOUT THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA (ECI):

The ECI is an autonomous constitutional body responsible for administering elections to the Parliament of India, State Legislative Assemblies elections and the offices of the President and Vice President in India. Established in 1950, it operates under the authority of the Constitution of India. The ECI was established under Article 324 of the Indian Constitution. The Election Commission operates and ensures its independence and authority in conducting free, fair, and transparent elections in India. The constitutional provisions of the Election Commission are discussed in below:

1. **Article 324:** This article deals with the power of superintendence, direction, and control of elections, which shall be vested in the Election Commission of India.
2. **Article 325:** This article deals with the eligibility to vote in elections in India. It guarantees that elections to the Lok Sabha and to the State Legislative Assembly of every State shall be based on adult suffrage.
3. **Article 326:** This article provides the concept of “universal adult suffrage” in India. It also empowers Parliament to enact laws to extend further or limit the right to vote.
4. **Article 327:** This article grants Parliament the power to make provisions concerning the election procedures for both Parliament and State Legislatures and, including the powers to delimit constituencies, allocate seats, and determine the manner of filling seats.
5. **Article 328:** This article empowers the State Legislature to make laws regarding elections to the

State Legislature and the subjects to the provisions of the Constitution and any laws made by Parliament.

### **Key responsibilities of the Election Commission of India include:**

1. **Conducting free and fair elections:** The ECI ensures that elections are conducted in a free, honest, and transparent manner, without any bias or undue influence.
2. **Voter registration:** The commission oversees the registration of voters, updating electoral rolls, and ensuring that eligible citizens can participate in the electoral process.
3. **Candidate nomination:** The ECI manages the candidate nomination process, scrutiny, and withdrawal for various elections.
4. **Election planning and logistics:** It is responsible for planning and organizing elections, including deploying polling personnel, security arrangements, and logistical support.
5. **Election monitoring and enforcement:** The commission monitors the conduct of elections to prevent malpractices such as electoral fraud, bribery, or intimidation. It also enforces the Model Code of Conduct, which sets guidelines for the behaviour of political parties and candidates during elections.
6. **Voter education and awareness:** The ECI conducts voter education programs to inform citizens about their voting rights and responsibilities and to promote voter turnout.
7. **Implementing the Model Code of Conduct:** The commission enforces the Model Code of Conduct, which sets guidelines for political parties and candidates regarding campaigning activities to ensure a level playing field during elections.

### **HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRITY IN THE ELECTION PROCESS IN INDIA:**

- **Conduct Voter Registration Drives:** Conduct voter registration drives to ensure eligible citizens are registered to vote. Utilize community outreach programs, social media campaigns, and collaboration with local organizations to reach underserved populations and encourage registration.
- **Engagement of Civil Society Organizations:** Partner with civil society organizations, NGOs and community groups to mobilize citizens, conduct voter education activities, and promote voter turnout. Leverage their grassroots networks and expertise to enhance outreach efforts.
- **Public Awareness:** Launch campaigns to raise awareness about the electoral process, key election dates, and voting procedures. To reach a wide audience, utilize diverse communication channels such as radio, television, social media, and community events.
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Ensure the electoral process is accessible and inclusive for all citizens, including persons with disabilities, elderly voters, and marginalized communities. Provide accommodations such as accessible polling stations, voter assistance services, and information

in multiple languages.

- **Transparent Electoral Roll Management:** Ensure accurate and up-to-date voter lists to prevent disenfranchisement and reduce the risk of electoral fraud. Utilize technology such as biometric authentication and regular audits to maintain the integrity of voter rolls.
- **Strict Enforcement of Electoral Laws:** Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to deter electoral malpractices such as vote-buying, booth capturing, and intimidation. Implement stringent penalties for electoral law violations to uphold the electoral process's sanctity.
- **Independent Election Commission:** Uphold the independence of the Election Commission of India (ECI) by providing it with adequate resources, autonomy, and authority to conduct elections impartially and efficiently.
- **Monitoring and Observation:** Deploy independent observers, both domestic and international, to monitor the electoral process and report any irregularities or violations. Facilitate transparency and accountability through comprehensive monitoring mechanisms.
- **Use of Technology:** Leverage technology for voter registration, electronic voting, and result tabulation to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and transparency in the electoral process. Implement robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard against digital threats.

**Q. Choose the INCORRECT statement about the Election Commission of India:**

- A. It is a statutory body.
- B. The commission consists of one Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.
- C. Article 324 states that superintendence, direction and control of elections are to be vested in an Election Commission.
- D. The President appoints Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.

**Answer: A**

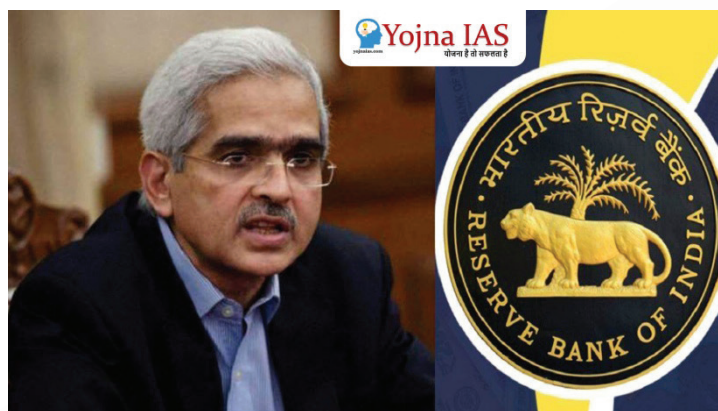
**Q. Discuss challenges faced by the Election Commission of India in conducting elections and how to overcome them. Critically examines.**

# MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE (MPC) OF RBI

SOURCE - THE HINDU AND PIB.

**GENERAL STUDIES – GROWTH OF INDIAN ECONOMY, BANKING AND ECONOMY, RBI, MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE, INFLATION, REPO RATE, REVERSE REPO RATE, LIQUIDITY ADJUSTMENT FACILITY, BANK RATE, CASH RESERVE RATIO (CRR), STATUTORY LIQUIDITY RATIO (SLR), MARKET STABILIZATION SCHEME (MSS).**

WHY IN THE NEWS ?



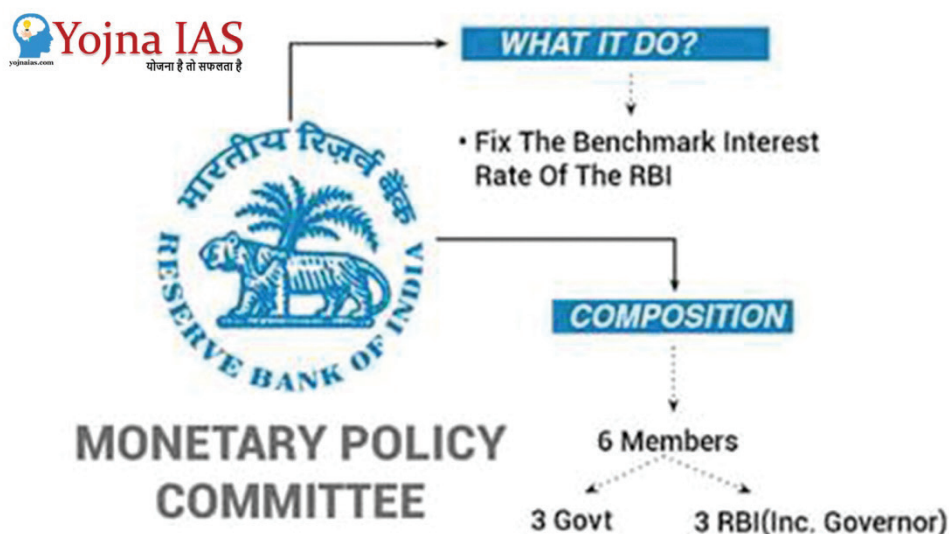
- In February 2024, the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has ensured that inflation is increasingly in line with the target by keeping interest rates unchanged and by sticking to its stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation', as well as RBI's It has been chosen as a prudent option to continue the objective of the Monetary Policy Committee.
- With a 5-1 majority in the voting among the members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI, it has committed to keeping the monetary policy clearly deflationary so as to control inflation. Especially at a time when 'large and repetitive price shocks are disrupting the pace of deflation'.
- Behind the repo rate being kept unchanged at 6.5% in the sixth meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), Governor Shaktikanta Das said domestic economic momentum remains strong. Uncertainties in food prices are impacting the headline inflation trajectory. Are.
- The majority of the MPC was united in giving priority to the fight against inflation. This should be seen in the backdrop of recent trends in retail inflation. Headline retail inflation, which declined from a 15-month high of 7.4% in July 2023, to 4.87% in October 2023. However, it reached a four-month high of 5.69% in December 2023.
- The increase in food prices was estimated by the Consumer Food Price Index by 9.53%. Which is 292 basis points more than 6.61% in October 2023.
- The MPC cut its estimate of average retail inflation in the January-March quarter to 5.0%, 20 basis points lower than the December forecast, indicating that policymakers have taken into account seasonal improvement along with improvement in Rabi sowing. Have taken some relief from.

- The Department of Consumer Affairs' daily price monitoring dashboard shows average retail prices of more than two-thirds of major food items remained higher on a year-on-year basis through February 8, 2024.
- Policymakers need to remain firm in their resolve to permanently slow price growth towards the 4% target or risk reducing consumption and thus weakening growth momentum.

## MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE :

- Monetary Policy Committee is a committee constituted by the Government of India which was formed on June 27, 2016 to make interest rate determination more useful and transparent. Policy making in India has been handed over to a newly constituted Monetary Policy Committee by amending the Reserve Bank of India Act.
- In May 2016, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934 was amended to provide for a flexible inflation targeting framework. The amended RBI Act also provides that the Government of India will set an inflation target once every 5 years in consultation with the Reserve Bank. The first meeting of the MPC was held on 3 October 2016 in Mumbai.
- Under Section 45ZB of the RBI Act, 1934, which has been amended in the year 2016, the Central Government has the right to constitute a six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).
- Section 45ZB states that the Monetary Policy Committee will determine the policy rate necessary to achieve the inflation target.
- The decision of the Monetary Policy Committee in India will be binding on banks.

## COMPOSITION OF MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE :



- The Chairman of the Monetary Policy Committee is the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India and at present the Chairman of the Monetary Policy Committee is the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Shaktikanta Das.
- As per Section 45 ZB, the Monetary Policy Committee of RBI will consist of 6 members.

- The Governor of RBI is its ex-officio Chairman.
- The deputy governor is in charge of monetary policy.
- It has an officer of the Bank nominated by the Central Board as its member.
- Three persons are appointed by the Central Government in the Monetary Policy Committee.
- Under this process, competent and impartial persons having knowledge and experience in the field of economics or banking or finance or monetary policy will be appointed.

### TENURE OF MEMBERS OF THE MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE :

- The tenure of the members of the Monetary Policy Committee will be only for four years and they will not be eligible for reappointment.
- Members of the Monetary Policy Committee are appointed for a term of four years only.

### PRESENT MEMBERS OF THE MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE OF INDIA:

At present the following are the 6 members of the Monetary Policy Committee of India –

- Shaktikanta Das (Governor of RBI)
- Michael Debabrata Patra (Deputy Governor)
- Ashima Goyal
- Shashank Bhide
- Rajeev Ranjan
- Jayant R. Varma.

### MONETARY POLICY :



## MONETARY POLICY

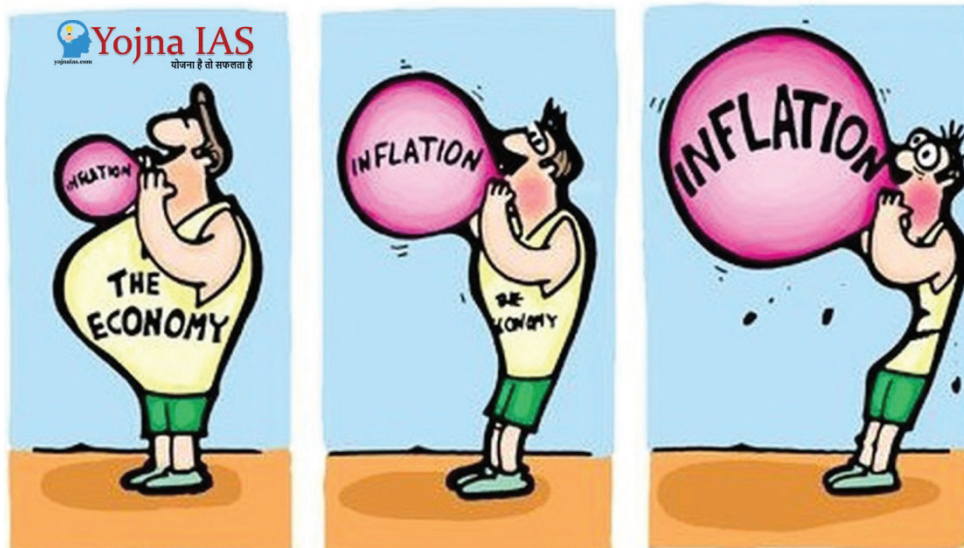
- Monetary policy refers to the policy of the central bank regarding the use of monetary instruments under its control to achieve the objectives specified in the Act.

- The primary objective of RBI's monetary policy is to maintain price stability while keeping growth in mind. Price stability is an essential pre-condition for sustainable development.
- The amended RBI Act, 1934 also provides for setting of an inflation target (4% + -2%) by the Government of India in consultation with the Reserve Bank once every five years

## OBJECTIVE OF MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE :

### The objectives of the Monetary Policy Committee are as follows –

- The primary objective of RBI's monetary policy is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- Price stability is a necessary condition for sustainable development.
- The work of the Monetary Policy Committee is also to prepare the citizens of the country to face the challenges of an increasingly complex economy.
- The function of the Monetary Policy Committee is also to maintain inflation at a certain level (4%+/-2%). The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is responsible for keeping the inflation target at 4% (with a deviation of 2%).
- Improving the repo rate and reverse repo rate is also the work of the Monetary Policy Committee.
- Determining the policy interest rate is also the work of the Monetary Policy Committee.
- The function of the Monetary Policy Committee is also to provide reasonable price stability.
- Keeping the business cycle stable is also the work of the Monetary Policy Committee.
- The work of the Monetary Policy Committee is also to pay attention to exchange rate stability.
- It is also the job of the Monetary Policy Committee to accelerate the growth of the economy.
- The work of the Monetary Policy Committee also includes focusing on employment creation in the country.





## INDIAN ECONOMY AND BANKING TERMINOLOGY :

### REPO RATE :

- The interest rate at which the Reserve Bank provides overnight liquidity to banks on the collateral of government and other approved securities under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).



### REVERSE REPO RATE :

- The interest rate at which the Reserve Bank receives liquidity from banks on a daily basis under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).

### LIQUIDITY ADJUSTMENT FACILITY :

- The Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) includes daily as well as term repo auctions.
- The purpose of term repos is to facilitate the development of an interbank term money market, which in turn can set market-based benchmarks for pricing loans and deposits and thus improve the transmission of monetary policy.
- RBI also conducts variable interest rate reverse repo auctions, as required under market conditions.

### MARGINAL STANDING FACILITY (MSF) :

- It is a facility under which scheduled commercial banks can charge a penal rate of interest by borrowing an additional amount of overnight currency from the Reserve Bank of India up to a limit in their Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) portfolio.
- It acts as a safety valve to the banking system against unexpected liquidity shocks.

### CORRIDOR :

- The MSF rate and the reverse repo rate determine the corridor for daily movement in the weighted

average call money rate.

### **BANK RATE :**

- It is the rate at which the Reserve Bank is ready to buy or exchange bills of exchange or other commercial papers. The Bank Rate is published under Section 49 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- This rate is linked to the MSF rate and hence changes automatically when the MSF rate changes with the policy repo rate.

### **CASH RESERVE RATIO (CRR) :**

- The share of net demand and time liabilities that banks are required to maintain as cash balances with the Reserve Bank is notified by the Reserve Bank in the Gazette of India from time to time.

### **STATUTORY LIQUIDITY RATIO (SLR) :**

- The share of net demand and time liabilities that banks hold in secured and liquid assets such as unencumbered government securities, cash and gold.
- Changes in SLR often affect the availability of resources in the banking system for lending to the private sector.

### **OPEN MARKET OPERATIONS (OMO) :**

- These include both outright purchase/sale of government securities and infusion/absorption of sustainable liquidity respectively.

### **MARKET STABILIZATION SCHEME (MSS) :**

- It was started in the year 2004 for monetary management in India.
- In this, surplus liquidity of a more permanent nature arising from large capital inflows is absorbed through the sale of short-term government securities and revenue bills.
- The cash raised is kept in a separate government account with the Reserve Bank.

### **CONCLUSION / SOLUTION :**

- External members are government nominees who are appointed on the basis of the recommendations of a search cum selection committee consisting of the Cabinet Secretary (Chairman), the RBI Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs (Union Finance Ministry). Nominated members must have knowledge in the field of economics, banking or monetary policy.
- MPC nominees will hold office for a term of four years and will not be eligible for reappointment. The RBI prohibits the appointment of MPs, legislators, public servants or staff/committee members of the RBI or anyone with a conflict of interest with the RBI or anyone above 70 years of age.

- The Central Government also retains the powers to remove its nominees from the MPC, subject to certain conditions and if the situation so requires.

### PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR PRELIMINARY EXAM :

#### Q.1. Consider the following statements regarding the Monetary Policy Committee of RBI.

1. The members of the Monetary Policy Committee are appointed for a term of six years only.
2. The Chairman of the Monetary Policy Committee is the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.
3. In India, the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee is binding on the banks.
4. Members of the Monetary Policy Committee are eligible for reappointment.

#### Which of the above statement/statements is correct?

- (A) Only 1, 2 and 3  
(B) Only 2, 3 and 4  
(C) Only 1 and 4.  
(D) Only 2 and 3

**Answer- (D)**

### PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM :

**Q. 1. What do you understand about repo rate and reverse repo rate? Discuss how the Monetary Policy Committee of RBI affects the Liquidity Adjustment Facility and Statutory Liquidity Ratio in the development of the Indian economy? Present rational opinion.**