Today's Prelims Topics

India has contributed $ 2 billion to BRICS bank

Context

According to the Ministry of Finance India has contributed nearly $2 billion to the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB).

About BRICS Bank/ New Development Bank (NDB)

- **Establishment:** NDB was officially launched in 2014 during the **6th BRICS summit in Fortaleza, Brazil. (HQ- Shanghai, China)**
- **Founding members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.
- **New members:** Bangladesh, Egypt & UAE.
    - Its membership is **open** to members of the United Nations.
- **Capital**: The Bank has an **initial authorized capital of 100 billion dollars** and an initial **subscribed capital of 50 billion dollars.**
- **Governance Structure:**
    - NDB is overseen by a Board of Governors made up of the finance ministers of the BRICS countries.
    - The bank's president is chosen from among the member countries, and the remaining members are represented by four vice presidents.
    - While **new members can join the NDB, the 5 BRICS countries will retain a minimum of 55% of total shares.**
- **Purpose:**
    - Promote sustainable development in BRICS nations and other developing economies.
    - Support infrastructure development, which is critical for economic growth.
    - Reduce reliance on traditional financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF.
    - Promotes use of local currencies to reduce reliance on the US dollar

Source:
- **Indian Express - BRICS Bank**

Madhya Pradesh gets 8th Tiger reserve – Ratapani

Context
Madhya Pradesh government has declared Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary as State's 8th Tiger Reserve.

About Ratapani Tiger Reserve (TR)
- **Location:** It is situated in the Vindhyachal Mountain Ranges of Madhya Pradesh. (Raisen and Sehore districts)
- **Rivers:** It lies parallel to the northern side of the **Narmada River,** with the **Kolar River** forming its western boundary.
- The sanctuary houses **Bhimbetka rock shelters,** a UNESCO World Heritage site known for ancient rock paintings.
- **Biodiversity:**
  - **Fauna:** Tigers, leopards, sloth bears, hyenas, spotted deer, sambar deer etc.
    - It has an estimated population of **90 tigers.**
  - **Flora:** Dry and moist deciduous forests. About **55%** of the area is **covered by teak.**

Facts
- **Total Tiger Reserves in India: 57**
  - **54th:** Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh)
  - **55th:** Dholpur – Karauli Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan)
  - **56th:** Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve
- **Madhya Pradesh** has **highest number of Tiger Reserves in India**: 8
- Also **Madhya Pradesh** has the **highest number of national parks in India:** 11
- As of 2023, India had **3,682 wild tigers,** which is almost **75% of the world's wild tiger population:**
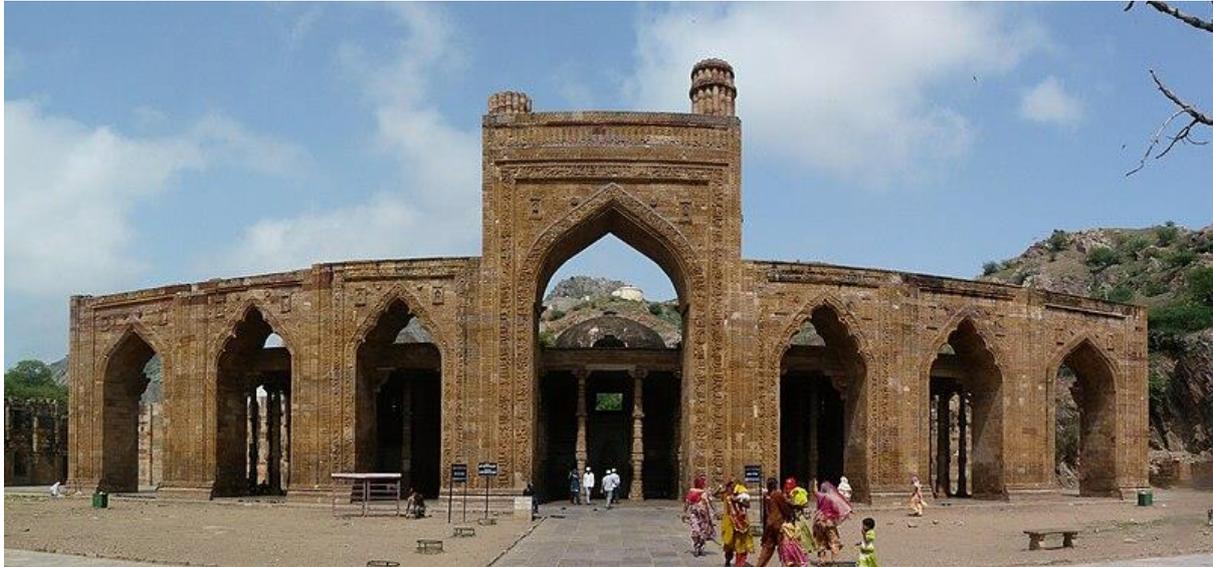

Source:
- **Indian Express - Ratapani TR**

Adhai Din ka Jhonpra

Context

Admission of petition seeking a survey of the Ajmer Sharif Dargah has reignited demands for a similar survey of the Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra, one of India's oldest mosques.

About Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra

- It is a historical mosque in the city of **Ajmer (Rajasthan).**
- It is one of the oldest mosques in India, and the oldest surviving monument in Ajmer.
- Its construction was commissioned by **Qutb-ud-Din-Aibak in 1192 CE** after the defeat of **Prithviraj Chauhan** in the **Second Battle of Tarain**. Its architect was **Abu Bakr of Herat.**
- The structure was completed in **1199 CE** and was further enhanced **by Iltutmish 1213 CE**.
  - The **seven-arched facade (screen wall)** was added by Iltutmish.
- Most of the building was constructed by Hindu masons, under the supervision of Afghan managers.
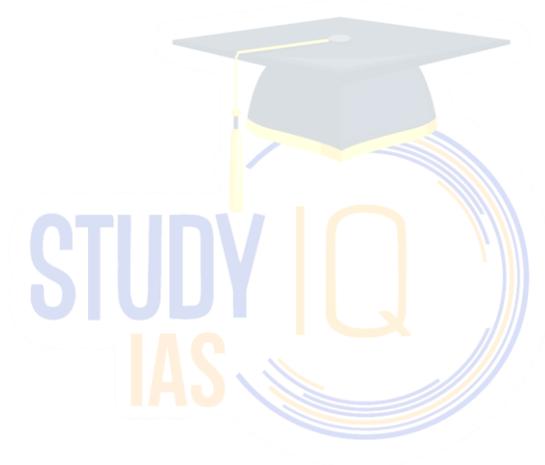- It is an **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-protected monument.**

Contested Origins

- **Jain Influence**:
  - Historian **Har Bilas Sarda** refers to Jain tradition that a temple was built in **660 CE by Seth Viramdeva Kala** for the Jain festival Panch Kalyan Mahotsava.
  - British officer **James Tod** (1819) identified it as a Jain temple, describing it as "one of the most perfect ancient monuments of Hindu architecture."
- **Architectural Insights:**
  - **Alexander Cunningham** (ASI, 1874) noted that the mosque was constructed using materials from multiple Hindu temples.
  - Cunningham also discovered **Kali sculptures** and inscriptions that were inconsistent with Jain traditions.
- **Sanskrit College**:
  - Excavations revealed inscriptions pointing to a Sanskrit college built by **Visaladeva**.

○ Similar structures, like **Raja Bhoja's Pathshala in Dhar,** support the idea that it had an educational purpose before becoming a mosque.

Source:

● **Indian Express - Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra**
● **Indian Express Explained**

ICJ begins hearing on landmark climate change case

Context

The International Court of Justice is hearing a landmark case on climate change obligations, initiated by **Vanuatu**, to determine the legal responsibilities of countries in protecting the climate system and the consequences for those causing harm.

International Legal frameworks involved in the case

- **Paris Agreement & UNFCCC**
- **UN Convention on the Law of the Seas**
- **Convention on Biological Diversity**
- **Convention to Combat Desertification**
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**
- **UN Charter**

About International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- ICJ is the **primary judicial body of the United Nations (UN).**
- It was established in **1945** and is located in The Hague, Netherlands.
  - **It is the only UN principal organ not in New York.**
- **Purpose:** To settle legal disputes between countries and to provide legal advice to authorized UN agencies and specialized organizations.
- **Judges:** It has **15 judges who serve nine-year terms.**
  - The UN General Assembly and the Security Council elect the judges, and both bodies vote separately but simultaneously.
  - To be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes in both bodies.
- **Official languages:** The official languages of the ICJ are English and French.
- **Advisory opinions:** The ICJ's advisory opinions are not binding, but they are associated with the court's prestige and authority. The requesting organization can choose to act on the opinion or not.
- The **hearings of the ICJ are always public.**

Difference between ICC & ICJ

Parameter	ICC (International Criminal Court)	ICJ (International Court of Justice)
Establishment & HQ	2002, Hague (Netherlands)	1946, Hague (Netherlands)
UN Relation	Independent- may receive case referrals from UN Security Council	Official court of the UN, known as the World Court
Case types	Criminal prosecution of individuals	Contentious between parties, and advisory opinions
Subject matter	Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, crimes of aggression	Maritime disputes, sovereignty, natural resources, trade, treaty violations and treaty interpretations, human rights, etc.

Funding	Contributions from parties to the Rome Statute, voluntary contributions from the UN, governments, corporations, organisations, etc.	UN

Source:

- **Indian Express - ICJ begins hearing on landmark climate change case**

Proudhon's theory of Mutualism

Context

Mutualism remains a foundational concept in **anarchist and socialist thought**, inspiring debates about fairness, equality and cooperation in economic systems.

About Mutualism

- The term "Mutualism" was coined by **French philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon** in the **mid-19th century** as part of his broader critique of capitalism and authoritarianism.
- Mutualism is a socio-economic theory that envisions a cooperative and fair society. It's based on:
  - **Voluntary cooperation** and **reciprocity**: People and communities work together without coercion.
  - **Fair exchange**: Goods and services are shared equitably, avoiding exploitation.
  - **Cooperative ownership**: Resources like land and tools are managed collectively for everyone's benefit.
  - **No central authority**: It opposes both capitalist exploitation and state control, promoting freedom and equality.
- **Mutualism view on Property:**
  - **Differentiated property into 2 Types:**
    - **Property:** Ownership that controls or exploits others (bad).
    - **Possession:** Using resources for your needs without harming others (good).
  - **Key Ideas:**
    - Ownership should be based on use, not accumulation or profit.
    - Mutualism rejects state-imposed property rights that perpetuate inequality.
    - Supports systems like worker cooperatives and shared resources to ensure fairness.
- **Real-World Examples -**Traditional African Communities:
  - Shared land ownership and collective labor were common.
  - Production was aimed to meet community needs, not generate profits.

Critiques of Mutualism

- **Challenges of Small-Scale Ownership:**
  - Critics argue small-scale property ownership does not fully challenge the **structural inequalities of capitalism (**May be insufficient to address wealth and power concentration).
- **Too Idealistic:**
  - Voluntary cooperation is hard to achieve on a large scale.
- **Marxist Critique:**
  - Marxists argue mutualism doesn't fully address capitalism's core problems, like exploitation and inequality.
  - They feel it underestimates the power struggles between large corporations and small producers.

Source:

- **The Hindu - Proudhon's theory of mutualism: a critique of capitalism and authoritarianism**

Increase in number of voters per polling booth

Context
A petition was filed challenging the Election Commission's (EC) decision to increase the maximum number of voters per polling station to **1,500 from 1,200 in rural areas and 1,400 in urban areas.**

Key Issues
- **Disenfranchisement of Marginalized Voters**: Increased crowding at polling stations could deter underprivileged groups & daily wagers from voting due to longer queues and waiting times.
- **Violation of Legal Mandates**: As per the **Representation of People Act, 1951**, the EC is obligated to ensure a "sufficient number of polling stations" for every constituency.
- **Absence of Updated Census Data**: The petition has noted that the enhancement to **1,500 voters** lacked statistical backing, as the **last Census was conducted in 2011**.
- **Cost-Effectiveness vs Accessibility:** The EC's decision was perceived as a cost-cutting measure, but the petitioners argued this was counterproductive as it risks excluding certain sections of voters.

Supreme Court's Observations
- CJI has emphasized that "no voter should be turned down". He questioned why the limit was increased uniformly to **1,500 voters per station.**
- SC has directed ECI to file an **affidavit** explaining its position and the justification behind the decision.

Source:
- **The Hindu - No voter must be turned down, SC tells EC over increased voter limit**

Govt. scraps windfall tax on domestic crude oil, export of fuels

Context

The Union government has scrapped windfall tax on domestically-produced crude oil and export of jet fuel (ATF), diesel and petrol. It has also withdrawn road and infrastructure cess on petrol and diesel exports.

About Windfall Tax

- It refers to higher tax levied by the government on specific industries when the industry experiences unexpected and above-average profits.
- These could be due to various global and geopolitical events which are outside the control of the industry.
- **Windfall** refers to a dramatic and unanticipated increase in profits. On the other hand, **Tax** implies an imposition levied on this dramatic income growth.
- In India it is Imposed as a **Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED)** on crude oil production and exports of diesel, petrol and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

Facts

- India is the **3rd largest** consumer of oil in the world, after the **United States and China.**
- **Top Crude Oil Import Destinations:** Russia > Iraq > Saudi Arabia > UAE

UPSC PYQ

Q. The term 'West Texas Intermediate', sometimes found in news, refers to a grade of: **(2020)**

(a) Crude oil

(b) Bullion

(c) Rare earth elements

(d) Uranium

Answer: A

Source:

- **The Hindu - Govt. scraps windfall tax on domestic crude oil, export of fuels**
- **Indian Express - Windfall gains tax scrapped**

PRAGATI Platform

Context

A study by Oxford University's Saïd Business School has lauded the PRAGATI infrastructure monitoring system for accelerating 340 projects worth $205 billion across the country and bringing economic transformation.

About PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation)

- It is a multi-purpose and multi-modal platform launched in 2015.
- It is aimed at addressing common man's grievances and simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government (Both Centre & State).
- The PRAGATI platform uniquely bundles three latest technologies: **Digital data management, video-conferencing and geo-spatial technology.**

Key Features

- It is a three-tier system **(PMO, Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries of the States)**
- Monthly video-conferences led by the Prime Minister are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month (PRAGATI Day) to discuss flagged issues.
- Issues are sourced from public grievances, ongoing programs and pending projects and are uploaded 7 days prior to PRAGATI Day.
- Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries have to put their comments and updates about the flagged issues within 3 days
- The PMO reviews the data again before the next PRAGATI Day meeting.
- The system integrates data from CPGRAMS, PMG, and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- The design is such that when PM reviews the issue, he should have on his screen the issue as well as the latest updates and visuals regarding the same.

Source:

- **The Hindu - Oxford study lauds PRAGATI system for fast-tracking projects**
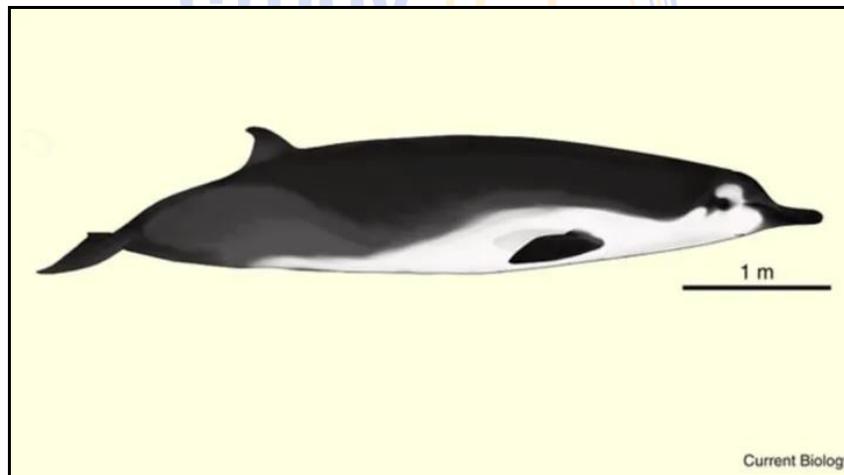
Scientists in NZ gather to decode puzzle of rarest whale

Context

The dissection process of a rare spade-toothed whale which was recently discovered on a New Zealand beach has started. This is the **first-ever detailed dissection** of a spade-toothed whale.

About Spade Toothed Whale

- **Scientific Name**: Mesoplodon traversii
- It is **one of the 21 species of beaked whales.**
- **Rarity**: They're enigmatic animals.
  - The spade-toothed whale is considered the **world's rarest whale**.
  - There have been no live sightings recorded.
  - Previously, only six other spade-toothed whales had been identified.
  - Past opportunities for study were missed because these specimens were buried before DNA tests could be conducted.
- **Habitat**:
  - Probably inhabits the southern Pacific Ocean.
  - Its exact living areas are largely unknown, due to the deep oceanic trenches in this region.
- **Biological Mysteries**: Details about its diet, population size and specific behaviors are not well understood.
- **IUCN Status**: Data Deficient (DD)
- Many **Maori** communities consider whales as their **Ancestors.**

Current Biology

Source:
- **The Hindu -rarest whale**

Air independent propulsion systems in submarines

Context

Larsen and Toubro (L&T) and its Spanish partner Navantia have showcased the integration of a hydrogen-based air-independent propulsion (AIP) into an S-80 class diesel-electric submarine.

About Air-independent propulsion (AIP)

● It is a technology that allows non-nuclear submarines to operate without atmospheric oxygen

● **Working Mechanism:** AIP systems produce oxygen, which is then used to generate power. There are two main methods for producing oxygen:

○ **High Test Peroxide (HTP):** A concentrated hydrogen peroxide that decomposes into oxygen and water with the help of manganese

○ **Stored liquid oxygen (LOX):** Oxygen stored in cryogenic tanks

● **Advantages:**

○ **Increase underwater endurance:** AIP allows submarines to stay submerged longer than conventionally powered submarines.

○ **Augment or replace diesel-electric propulsion:** AIP can be used in addition to or instead of a submarine's diesel-electric propulsion system.

○ **Can be installed in existing submarines:** AIP systems can be added to existing submarines by inserting a new hull section.

○ **Enhanced Stealth**: Since AIP submarines do not need to surface as often, they are less detectable, providing a strategic advantage.

● **Limitations:**

○ **Complexity and Cost:** AIP systems can be more complex and expensive to maintain than traditional diesel-electric systems.

○ **Limited Power Output:** Some AIP technologies may not provide enough power for high-speed maneuvers or extensive combat operations.

○ **Fuel Supply:** Systems like fuel cells require a reliable supply of hydrogen, which can be logistically challenging.

Source:

● **Indian Express - In race of a key Navy deal**

News in Shorts

India-Malaysia joint military exercise - Harimau Shakti
- The 4th edition of HARIMAU SHAKTI started at **Bentong camp, Pahang district, Malaysia.**   - It is an annual training event conducted alternatively in India and Malaysia.   - In 2023 it was conducted at **Umroi Cantonment in Meghalaya, India.**   **Aim:** To enhance joint military capability of both sides to undertake counter insurgency operations in jungle terrain.   **Source:**   **PIB - INDIA - MALAYSIA JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE**
Fentanyl
- In recent cases it has been discovered that **Drug cartels in Mexico** recruit chemistry students from colleges to make fentanyl.   - It is a powerful synthetic opioid, often used in medicine to treat severe pain after surgery or for cancer patients. It is also used as **Anesthesia.**   - It is 50 **to 100 times more potent than morphine and about 50 times more potent than heroin.**   - It is classified as a **Schedule II** controlled substance due to its high potential for abuse and addiction.   **Source:**   **Indian Express - Drug cartels recruit chemistry students to make fentanyl**

Editorial Summary

Rise of Religious Nationalism In South Asian Countries

Context
- There has been a rise of religious nationalism in the south Asian countries resulting in destruction of both democracy and decency in their societies.
- There is a growing sentiment to revisit the settlement of 1947, not to promote freedom and human rights but rather to exacerbate targeted conflicts, reinforcing the logic of partition.

Bangladesh's Political Landscape
- **Sheikh Hasina's Regime:** Sheikh Hasina has lost popular legitimacy, raising concerns about the nature of her successor regime.
  - There is uncertainty about whether it will promote inclusive democracy or perpetuate cycles of political recrimination.
- **Rise of Islamism:** There is an observable increase in the visibility and influence of Islamist groups in Bangladesh, posing threats to minorities, particularly Hindus.
  - The ruling elite often dismiss concerns about minority safety as exaggerated or politically motivated.
- **Recent Violence:** Following Hasina's ousting in August 2024, there were over 200 attacks on Hindus and other minorities across 52 districts within a week.
  - This highlights the vulnerability of these communities during political upheaval.

India's Current Situation
- **Majoritarianism and Authoritarianism:** Currently, India has seen a shift towards majoritarian policies that marginalize minorities.
  - This includes rising incidents of lynching, hate speech, and state-sanctioned violence against Muslims.
- **Ayodhya Temple Inauguration:** The inauguration of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya in January 2024 was a significant event that reignited communal tensions.
  - This act was perceived as a culmination of Hindu nationalist aspirations rather than a reconciliation of communal identities.
- **Deteriorating Religious Freedom:** Reports indicate that religious freedom conditions have worsened significantly in 2024, with increasing attacks on religious minorities and the enforcement of discriminatory laws targeting non-Hindu communities.

Pakistan's Struggles with Religious Identity
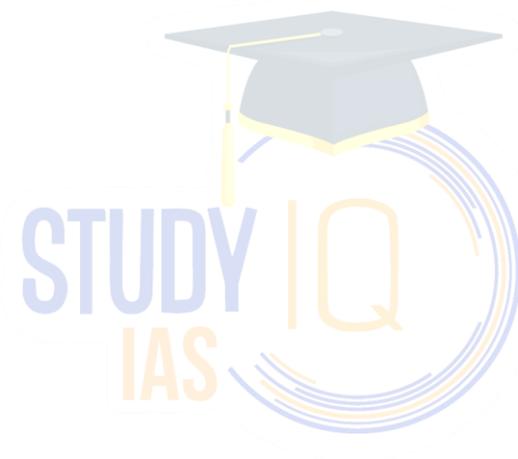- **State-Sponsored Religious Nationalism**: Pakistan exemplifies the dangers of intertwining state identity with religion.
  - All minorities face risks, including **Ahmadiyyas and Shias** who are often targets of violence driven by sectarian divides.
- **Ongoing Crisis**: The ideological foundation of Pakistan is under strain due to a disconnect between popular sentiment and military legitimacy.

○ This has resulted in a perpetual crisis where minorities are continually at risk as the state seeks to reinforce its religious character.
● **Recent Violence:** Incidents such as the massacre in Kurram reflect deep-seated sectarian tensions and highlight the ongoing vulnerability of minority communities amidst state-sponsored religious nationalism.

Conclusion

The intertwined fates of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh illustrate a troubling trend towards authoritarianism fueled by religious nationalism. Each country faces unique challenges but shares common vulnerabilities that threaten democratic principles and minority rights. The rise of majoritarian ideologies not only exacerbates internal conflicts but also complicates regional relations, suggesting that without significant intervention towards inclusivity and tolerance, South Asia may continue on a path toward increased instability and violence.

Source: Indian Express: Neighbourhood is on Edge

Reasons Behind High Number of Pending Cases

Context

The issue of pending cases in Indian courts is a significant concern, with various factors contributing to the backlog.

Reasons Behind High Number of Pending Cases

- **Frequent Adjournments**: Approximately half of the 90 cases listed daily in district and subordinate courts get adjourned.
  - Reasons for adjournments include the need for:
    - Evidence gathering.
    - Legal research.
    - Filing motions or awaiting external events affecting the verdict.
- **Complex Judicial Processes**: Multiple stages of a case—charge sheet filing, charge framing, evidence presentation, arguments, and judgment—each introduce delays due to structural inefficiencies.
  - **Examples of delays**:
    - Prolonged evidence collection by investigation officers.
    - Inefficient summons processes by police and public prosecutors.
    - Misleading or outdated information in case records (roznama).
    - Misplacement of case files, especially in prolonged cases.
- **Limited Use of Technology**: Many district courts lack adequate video conferencing facilities, hindering modernization.
- **Inadequate Legal Aid**: Undertrials from poor socioeconomic backgrounds lack awareness of free legal aid and face issues with the quality of legal assistance.

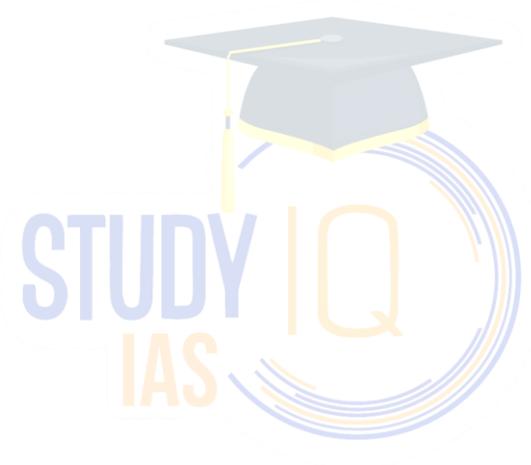### Challenges in Proposed Solutions

- **Performance Metrics for Judges**: Encouraging judges to prioritize high-disposal cases may sideline sensitive or complex cases.
  - Hasty judgments can increase appeals, further burdening the judiciary.
- **Engaging Retired Officials for Administrative Tasks**: Retired officials may lack sensitivity and familiarity with judicial procedures, potentially creating inefficiencies and unfairness.
- **Video Proceedings**: Intimidation during virtual hearings as accused are surrounded by jail officers.
  - Inability to assess the physical condition or well-being of the accused.
  - Loss of crucial rights like meeting family and lawyers confidentially during court appearances.

Key Recommendations

- **Structural Reforms in Judicial Processes**: Identify and address delays at critical stages like evidence collection, summons issuance, and documentation accuracy.
  - Improve case records (roznama) to ensure accurate tracking of case stages.
- **Improve Legal Aid Access**: Allocate more resources to strengthen free legal aid systems.
  - Raise awareness about legal aid among underprivileged undertrials.

- **Balanced Approach to Adjournments**: Avoid rigid limits on adjournments; evaluate the justification based on case-specific needs.
- **Responsible Use of Technology**: Enhance video conferencing facilities while safeguarding the rights of undertrials.
  - Address issues of intimidation and ensure confidentiality during proceedings.
- **Focus on Fair and Speedy Trials**: Ensure the pursuit of faster case disposal does not compromise fairness.
  - Prioritize systemic solutions over quick fixes like performance metrics or external delegations.
- **Resource Allocation**: Increase investments in judicial infrastructure, technological modernization, and human resources to address systemic bottlenecks effectively.

Source: [Indian Express: Fairness, Not Just Speed](#)

Electronic Monitoring Of Prisoners

Context

The report "*Prisons in India: Mapping Prison Manuals and Measures for Reformation and Decongestion*", released by President Droupadi Murmu highlights overcrowding in Indian prisons and proposes measures for decongestion, including electronic tracking of prisoners.

More in News

● The report, authored by the Supreme Court's Centre for Research and Planning.

Benefits of Electronic Tracking

● **Cost-Effectiveness:** The implementation of electronic monitoring could significantly reduce costs associated with incarceration.
   ○ **E.g.,** Maintaining a single undertrial prisoner in Odisha costs approximately Rs 1 lakh annually, while the cost of an electronic tracker is estimated to be between Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000. This represents substantial savings for the state.
● **Reduction in Overcrowding:** Indian prisons had an occupancy rate of 131.4% as of December 2022, with 573,220 inmates compared to a capacity of 436,266 (according to statistics by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)).
   ○ Electronic tracking could allow low and moderate-risk undertrials to remain in the community while being monitored, thereby alleviating prison overcrowding.
● **Improved Rehabilitation**: By allowing undertrials to stay in their communities, electronic tracking facilitates continued education and employment opportunities.
   ○ This support is crucial for maintaining family connections and aiding reintegration into society.
● **Enhanced Monitoring:** Electronic tracking provides a reliable means to ensure compliance with release conditions.
   ○ This can help reduce the risk of absconding or re-offending while maintaining oversight without the need for constant physical incarceration.
● **Administrative Efficiency:** The use of electronic trackers could reduce the administrative burden on law enforcement agencies by minimizing the resources needed to monitor individuals on bail or parole.

Challenges Associated with Electronic Tracking

● **Privacy Concerns**: The use of electronic monitoring raises significant privacy issues.
   ○ Continuous surveillance may infringe on individuals' fundamental rights, as highlighted by recent Supreme Court rulings that deemed certain tracking conditions as violations of privacy.

Supreme Court Ruling (July 2023): Struck down a Delhi HC bail condition requiring location tracking on Google Maps, citing violations of privacy under Article 21.

● **Technical Reliability:** The effectiveness of electronic tracking systems is contingent upon the reliability of technology.

○ Issues such as device malfunctions or signal loss can undermine monitoring efforts and lead to potential failures in compliance enforcement.

● **Human Rights Risks:** There is a danger that electronic monitoring could be misused or overused, leading to human rights violations.

● **Stigmatization:** Visible devices such as ankle monitors lead to social isolation and shame.

○ Prisons in India report highlighted that these devices lead to psychological distress, including anxiety and depression

● **Cost Implications**: While initial costs may be lower than incarceration, establishing a comprehensive electronic tracking system requires significant investment in technology and training for law enforcement personnel.

● **Impact on Marginalized Groups**: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes backgrounds are overrepresented in prison populations and there is a concern related to systemic inequities.

● **Potential for E-Carceration**: Critics argue that electronic monitoring could simply extend incarceration into the community, creating an environment of constant surveillance akin to "e-carceration."

○ This concern is particularly relevant given that marginalized communities are often overrepresented among those monitored.

Story of Electronic Monitoring in the US

● Electronic monitoring (EM) in the United States emerged as a tool to manage individuals in the criminal justice system while addressing overcrowding in prisons.

● Initially introduced as an innovative solution to alleviate the burden on the incarceration system, it has since become a widespread practice **for pre-trial detainees, individuals on probation, and parolees**.

What were the Challenges Arised?

● **E-Carceration**: Extends punitive control beyond prisons.

● **Inequity**: Disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, mirroring incarceration biases.

● **Privacy Concerns**: Invasive measures like home searches and random drug testing.

● **Stigma**: Visible devices cause social isolation and mental health issues.

● **Financial Burden**: Individuals often bear monitoring costs, leading to economic strain.

Key Recommendations from the Report

● **Limited Application**: Suggested for **grave and heinous crimes** where the accused has prior convictions.

○ Aligns with the **268th Law Commission Report**, which advocates legislative amendments for proper regulation.

● **Safeguards and Guardrails**: Ensure privacy protection and obtain informed consent from inmates.

○ Devices should not exacerbate inequalities or stigmatization.

● **Government Responsibility for Costs**: Avoid passing financial burdens onto monitored individuals to prevent penalizing economically vulnerable populations.

● **Balanced Use**: Tracking should complement judicial processes, not replace or undermine them.

Source: Indian Express: Electronic Monitoring Of Prisoners

Detailed Coverage

Inclusion of Person with Disabilities

Context

International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is observed annually on December 3rd.

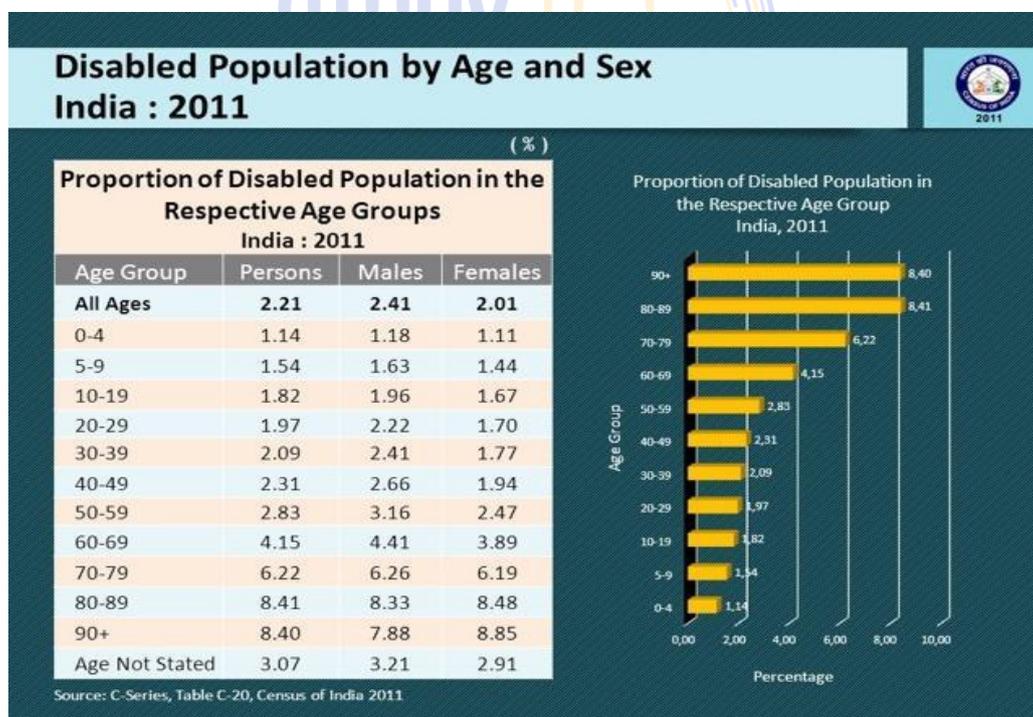**About International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)**

- **Origin**: The day was proclaimed by the **United Nations General Assembly** in 1992 (Resolution 47/3).
  - It builds on decades of UN efforts to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.
- **Theme**:
  - **2023:** "Transformative solutions for inclusive development: The role of innovation in fueling an accessible and equitable world."
  - **2024:** "Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future."
- **Significance**:
  - Promotes **inclusive societies** that respect diversity and ensure equal opportunities.
  - Encourages action to implement the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, adopted in 2006.
  - Highlights the importance of **accessibility** in physical environments, transportation, and information systems.
- **Global Context**:
  - Approximately **15% of the world's population**, or over **1 billion people**, live with some form of disability.
  - Disability inclusion is integral to achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, ensuring no one is left behind.

Note: India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on October 1, 2007.

Challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities

- **Discrimination and Inequality:** PwDs experience various forms of discrimination, including reluctance by employers to hire them, leading to limited employment opportunities.
  - This discrimination hampers their social and economic integration, contributing to inequality.
- **Loss of Social Status:** Limited opportunities for education and employment can result in PwDs experiencing a loss of social status.
  - The lack of financial independence and inadequate access to **resources especially health** and support networks further exacerbate this issue.
- **Inhuman Treatment:** PwDs, especially those with mental illness or mental retardation, often face social exclusion and inhumane treatment.

○ Stigma and misunderstanding surrounding mental health contribute to their marginalization within society.

- **Accessibility**: Infrastructure and services, including schools, public transport, and healthcare facilities, remain inaccessible to persons with disabilities.
  ○ **E.g.**, Only 3% of buildings in India were found to be fully accessible (according to a 2018 report by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities).

- **Digital Divide**: Many PwDs are left behind due to inaccessible digital platforms and technologies.
  ○ **E.g.**, 98% of websites fail to comply with accessibility requirements for PWDs (2020 Web Accessibility Annual Report).

- **Access to Education:** Students with visual impairments may lack appropriate educational materials, while children with learning disabilities may face exclusion and rejection from schools.
  ○ Insufficient special schools and a lack of trained teachers for specific disabilities further impede educational opportunities.
  ○ **E.g.,** Approximately 45% of disabled people are illiterate, and only 62.9% of disabled people aged 3 to 35 have ever attended regular schools.

- **Unemployment:** PwDs experience lower employment rates, primarily due to stereotypes, stigma, and a lack of inclusive hiring practices.
  ○ The reluctance of the private sector to hire PwDs restricts their ability to be financially independent and self-sufficient.
  ○ **E.g.,** India has almost 3 crore people with disability (PwD) of which around 1.3 crore is employable but only 34 lakh of them have been employed (according to Unearthinsight, market intelligence firm).

Disabled Population by Age and Sex India : 2011

(%)

Proportion of Disabled Population in the Respective Age Groups India : 2011

Age Group	Persons	Males	Females
All Ages	2.21	2.41	2.01
0-4	1.14	1.18	1.11
5-9	1.54	1.63	1.44
10-19	1.82	1.96	1.67
20-29	1.97	2.22	1.70
30-39	2.09	2.41	1.77
40-49	2.31	2.66	1.94
50-59	2.83	3.16	2.47
60-69	4.15	4.41	3.89
70-79	6.22	6.26	6.19
80-89	8.41	8.33	8.48
90+	8.40	7.88	8.85
Age Not Stated	3.07	3.21	2.91

Source: C-Series, Table C-20, Census of India 2011

Proportion of Disabled Population in the Respective Age Group India, 2011

Age Group	Percentage
90+	8,40
80-89	8,41
70-79	6,22
60-69	4,15
50-59	2,83
40-49	2,31
30-39	2,09
20-29	1,97
10-19	1,82
5-9	1,54
0-4	1,14

National Legislations:
To address the needs and rights of PwDs, there are **four major national legislations in India** that

include:

- **The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992:** It provided statutory status to the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI, established in 1986).
    - The mandate given to RCI is to **regulate and monitor services given to persons with disability**, to standardise syllabi and to maintain a Central Rehabilitation Register of all qualified professionals and personnel working in the field of Rehabilitation and Special Education.
- **The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation, and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999:** The Trust strives to enable persons with disability to live independently by:
    - Promoting measures for their protection in case of death of their parents;
    - Evolving procedures for appointment of their guardians and trustees;
    - Facilitating equal opportunities in society.
- **The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:** It replaced the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- **The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** which is implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It replaced the Mental Health Act, 1987.
    - It has been passed with the objective to provide for mental healthcare and related services for persons with mental illness and to protect, promote and fulfill their rights.

Other Initiatives

- **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan):** Launched in 2015, this campaign aims to make public spaces, transportation, and information and communication technologies (ICT) accessible to PwDs.
    - It focuses on retrofitting existing infrastructure, promoting accessibility standards, and raising awareness about disability rights.
- **National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (NAP-SDP):** This initiative focuses on enhancing the employability and skills of PwDs through vocational training, skill development programs, and creating inclusive employment opportunities.
- **Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS):** The scheme provides financial assistance for various rehabilitation services, including education, skill training, healthcare, and assistive devices, to economically disadvantaged PwDs.
- **Scholarship Schemes:** The government offers various scholarship schemes for PwDs to support their education and skill development.
    - These include the National Scholarship Scheme for Persons with Disabilities and the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship schemes.
- **Accessible Education:** The government has taken steps to promote inclusive education for PwDs, such as the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** and the **Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS)** programs.
    - These initiatives aim to ensure equal access to education for children with disabilities and provide necessary support services and accommodations.
- **Reservation in Government Jobs:** PwDs are entitled to reservation in government jobs and public sector undertakings as per the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.
    - This reservation quota varies depending on the type and severity of disability.

- **Anganwadi Protocol for Divyang Children (2023)**: Launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
  - National guidelines for frontline nutrition workers for disability inclusion.
  - **Instructions for**:
    - Early identification of disabilities.
    - Monitoring milestones via **POSHAN Tracker**.
    - Referrals in collaboration with **ASHA workers**.
- **Haryana's Experience**
  - **Disability Inclusion Protocols**: Haryana's Department of Women and Child Development uses **Mission Vatsalya and the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)** for disability inclusion.
    - Initiatives include the **Divyang Protocol** and **'Nanhe Farishtey' Podcast** to raise awareness and educate communities.
  - **World Food Programme (WFP) Partnership**: A 3-year initiative with Haryana's **25,000 Anganwadi workers** to improve norms around gender and disability inclusion.
    - Needs Assessment Study (4 districts): Found Anganwadi workers instrumental in:
      - Early identification of children with disabilities.
      - Connecting individuals to medical, educational support, and government benefits (e.g., National Disability Pension).

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act)

The **RPWD Act, 2016** was enacted to align India's disability framework with the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, which India ratified on **October 1, 2007**. It replaced the **Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995**, incorporating a more inclusive social and human rights approach to disability rights.

Key Features of the RPWD Act

- **Expanded Definition of Disability**
  - Recognizes **21 disabilities**, including intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disabilities, and acid attack survivors.
  - Allows periodic revision of disability types by the central government.
- **Rights and Entitlements**
  - Provides for **reservations** in education (5%) and employment (4%).
  - Ensures **free education** for children with disabilities (6-18 years) and penalties for discrimination.
- **Institutional Framework**
  - Establishment of the office of **State Commissioners** with **quasi-judicial powers** to monitor the law's implementation and protect rights.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion**
  - Mandates barrier-free access in public spaces, transport, and information.
  - Stipulates equal opportunities in employment, education, and social settings.
- **Welfare Measures**
  - Disability pensions, healthcare benefits, and skill development programs.
  - Promotes **research and innovation** in assistive devices and technology.

Challenges Associated with the RPWD Act
- **Underreporting of Disability**
  - **2011 Census** reported persons with disabilities constitute **2.21%** of the population, a gross underestimation.
  - **2019 WHO Brief Disability Model Survey** estimates **16%** severe disability prevalence among Indian adults.
- **Inadequate State Implementation:** Delay in appointing **State Commissioners** and lack of independent appointees.
  - **Example**: As of 2021-22, only 8 States had non-civil-servant commissioners, undermining the intended impartial oversight.
- **Limited Capacity and Awareness:** Lack of trained personnel and insufficient resources at the state and district levels to address grievances and ensure compliance.
- **Insufficient Grievance Redressal**
  - Many complaints regarding the deprivation of rights remain unresolved due to a lack of proactive measures by the State Commissioners.
  - **Example**: In Karnataka, mobile adalats addressed complaints efficiently, but this practice has not been widely adopted.
- **Intersectional Challenges:** Women and girls with disabilities face **intersectional discrimination**, limiting their access to rights and services.

Way Forward
- **Strengthening State Commissions:** Appoint qualified professionals from **civil society** with expertise in disability rights, human rights, and law.
  - **Example**: States like Karnataka and Delhi have successfully fostered confidence among persons with disabilities by appointing capable commissioners.
- **Capacity Building:** Train State Commissioners and staff on quasi-judicial functions.
  - Collaborate with law schools and legal experts to strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms.
- **Promote Inclusive Governance:** Adopt practices like **District Disability Management Review (DDMR)**, as done in Karnataka, to monitor the implementation of welfare programs.
  - Introduce **mobile adalats** for outreach in remote areas.
- **Improve Data Collection:** Conduct nationwide, detailed disability surveys to ensure accurate data collection and informed policymaking.
- **Increase Accessibility:** Invest in **barrier-free infrastructure**, affordable assistive devices, and disability-inclusive technology.
  - Ensure schools and workplaces are universally accessible.
- **Intersectional Policies:** Appoint women with disabilities as State Commissioners to address the unique challenges faced by this group.
- **Research and Collaboration:** Collaborate with **UN entities** for research on issues like social protection and the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities.
  - **Example**: Studies on disability-inclusive care economy to enhance rights-based interventions.
- **Essential Interventions:** Early intervention and **accessible medical therapies**.
  - Capacity-building for Anganwadi workers on disability protocols.
- **Community Engagement:** Combat disability stigma through education and awareness.

○ Collaboration among development actors to support infrastructure and services for children with disabilities.

Related Mains PYQs

UPSC CSE 2022

Q. *The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 remains only a legal document without intense sensitization of government functionaries and citizens regarding disability. Comment.* (10 Marks)

UPSC CSE 2017

Q. *Does the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 ensure effective mechanism for empowerment and inclusion of the intended beneficiaries in the society?* (10 Marks)

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