



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

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India & Taliban 2.0: Cautious Engagement

CONTEXT: Jaishankar meets Taliban Foreign Minister, raises concerns over forced repatriation of Afghan refugees by Pak., calls 'cross-border terror' a common challenge

The Graveyard of Empires

- **U.S. Involvement and Objectives**
- **The Longest American War (2001–2021)**
- **The Doha Agreement (2020)**
- **The Final Withdrawal (2021)**
- **Taliban 2.0**

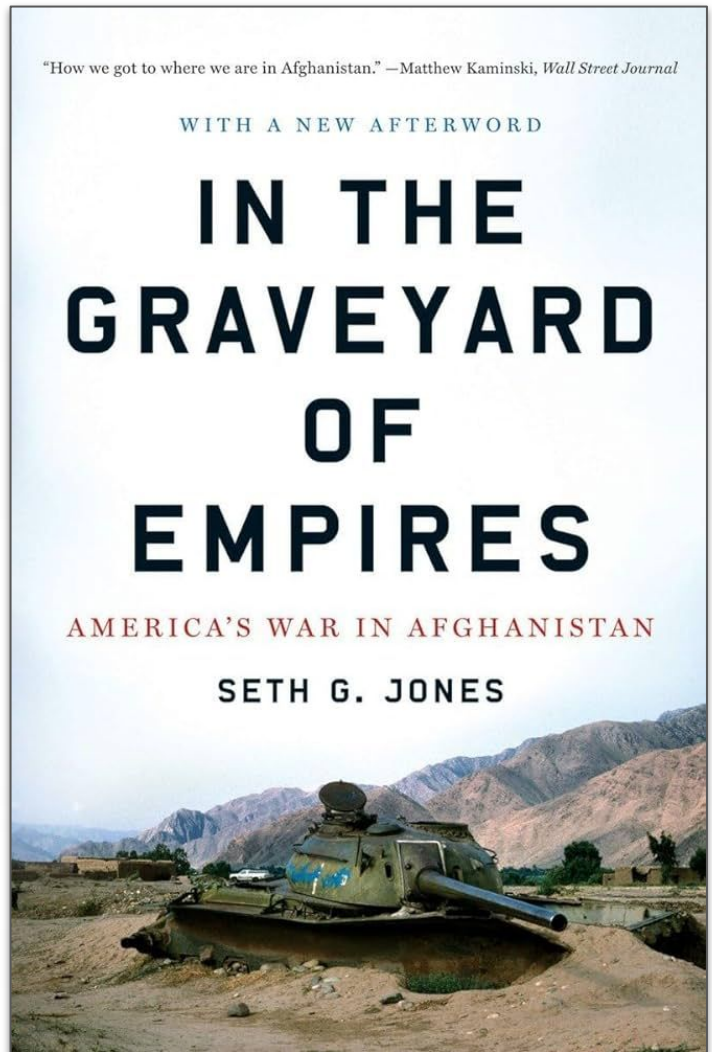
India–Afghanistan Relations: Overview

- **Pre-2021 (Republic era)** – One of the biggest regional donors to Afghanistan
- **Post-2021 (Taliban takeover)** – Technical Team – 2022
- **Current stance**

**MIX – PRAGMATISM + HUMANITARIAN
FOCUS + SECURITY-FIRST CALCULUS +
REGIONAL BALANCING**

What changed with the recent Muttaqi's visit?

- High-level contact & upgraded engagement
- Trade momentum and figure cited
- Security assurances publicly reiterated
- Political optics & concerns



India & Taliban 2.0: Cautious Engagement



CONTEXT: Jaishankar meets Taliban Foreign Minister, raises concerns over forced repatriation of Afghan refugees by Pak., calls 'cross-border terror' a common challenge

Strategic rationale behind India's Engagement?

- **Protect Security Interests** - *'verification and enforcement' > 'legitimisation'*
- **Preserve Connectivity & Trade Options** - *Afghan economic recovery and Indian exporters*
- **Humanitarian & Soft-Power Reach** - *'connected' to Afghan society; prevents a vacuum*
- **Regional Balance and Influence** - *hedge against Pakistan-China*

Principal challenges India faces

- **Legitimacy & Recognition Dilemma** - *balance realpolitik needs against normative costs*
- **Counterterrorism Reliability** - *commitments are declarative*
- **Human-Rights & Domestic Political Optics** - *moral credibility*
- **Connectivity Constraints** - *sanctions on Iran*
- **Internal Instability in Afghanistan** - *must be ready for contingencies*

Prospects & Opportunities

- **Trade and People-to-People Ties**
- **Chabahar Potential**
- **Humanitarian Diplomacy**
- **Counterterror Cooperation (conditional)**
- **Regional Forums for Consensus**

A 'Balanced' Way Forward

- ***"pragmatic-conditional"***
Approach
- **Maintain "no-recognition + enhanced functional engagement"**
- Insist on **Verifiable Counterterror Guarantees**
- **Link Economic Cooperation to Clear Benchmarks**
- **Invest in Humanitarian & Development Footprint**
- **Use Regional and Global Diplomacy**
- **Protect India's Domestic and International Credibility**
- **Prepare Contingency / Resilience plans**



India & Taliban 2.0: Cautious Engagement

CONTEXT: Jaishankar meets Taliban Foreign Minister, raises concerns over forced repatriation of Afghan refugees by Pak., calls 'cross-border terror' a common challenge



Mains Practise Question

Examine India's policy of 'strategic pragmatism' towards the Taliban administration in Afghanistan. Discuss the key security, humanitarian and normative challenges and suggest a balanced way forward.

(15 Marks, 250 words)



Need for a holistic 'Demographic Mission'

CONTEXT: A true demography mission needs to examine India's various transformations

Need for a holistic 'Demographic Mission'

What is Demography?

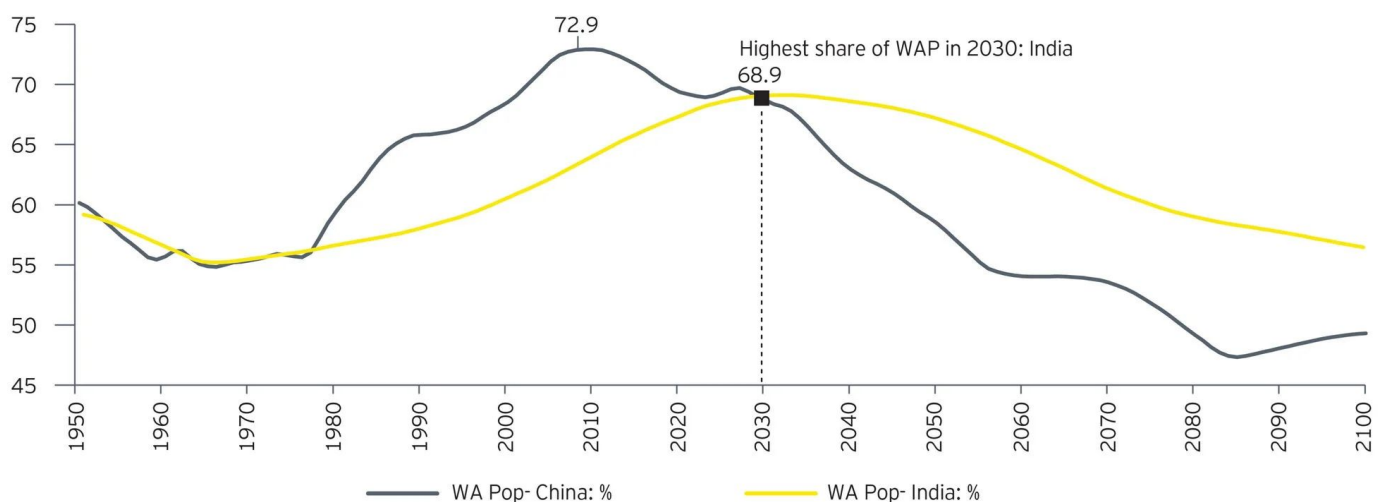
Indicators -

India has undergone the **Demographic Transition Model (DTM)** phases:

Phase	Period	Features
I. High Stationary	Pre-1920s	High birth & death rates; stagnant growth
II. Early Expanding	1920s–1950s	Death rate falls; birth rate high → population explosion
III. Late Expanding	1970s–2000s	Decline in fertility; slower growth
IV. Low Stationary	2010s onwards	Low birth & death rates; nearing replacement level (TFR ≈ 2.0)

A worker boom

India's working age population to total population ratio will be the highest of any large economy



Source (basic data): UN Population statistics 2022; WAP stands for working age population



Need for a holistic 'Demographic Mission'



CONTEXT: A true demography mission needs to examine India's various transformations

Current Status (NFHS-5, 2019–21):

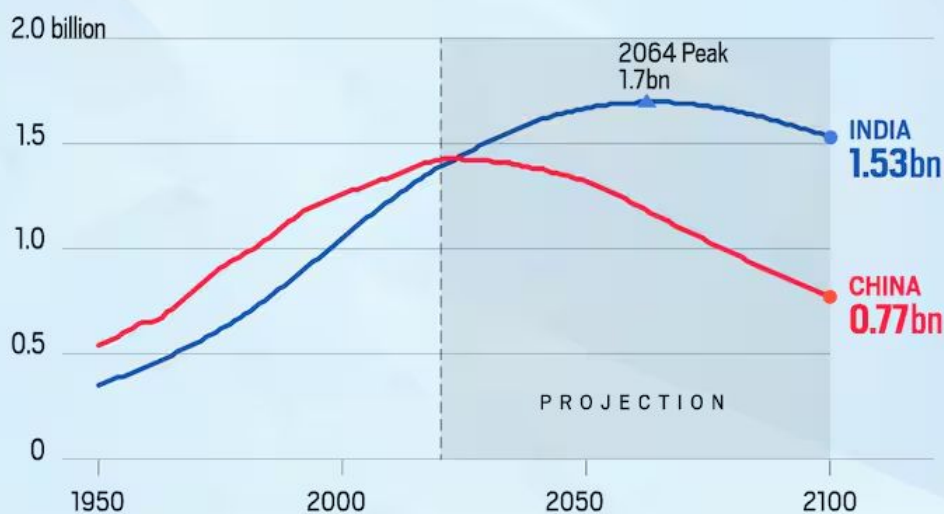
- TFR: **2.0** (below replacement level of 2.1)
- Life Expectancy: **~70.1 years**
- IMR: **28 per 1,000**
- Literacy rate: **77.7%**
- Working-age population (15–59 years): **~67%**

India is thus in a **demographic dividend phase** — a window expected to last till around **2055**.

India's Population Double of China by 2100



India's population is projected to grow and peak by 2064 while China's will continue to fall



Note: Population estimates for January 1 each year till 2021, rest are medium variant projections; China excludes Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan

Source: UN | Graphic: Dipu Rai, Sarfaraz



Need for a holistic 'Demographic Mission'



CONTEXT: A true demography mission needs to examine India's various transformations

The announcement of a **"Demographic Mission" on August 15, 2025**

- **Demographic Issues in India - NARROW LENS**
- **NEED? - Broader and Holistic Demographic Approach**

Beyond Fertility, Mortality and Migration

- Transformation in Age and Gender Composition
- Regional Distribution of Households
- Emerging Human Capabilities
- ISSUES - Educational and Skill infrastructure; Jobless Growth; Labour-Market Mismatches

Migration as a Population Equaliser

- Challenges and Political Discourse
 - Discrimination
 - Identity is Socially Constructed
 - Disenfranchisement
 - "battle of belonging"
- NEED: Equal & Safe Choice

Longevity and Social Security - Trends

- New Challenges - Redefine Ageing & Social Security
- Rethinking Social Security - NOT just State's Responsibility; Employers; Dignity

Way Forward

- **Whole-of-Government Approach**
- **Mainstreaming Demographic Thinking** - DATA Focus - Tech.
- **Manage Migration Positively**
- **Inclusive Development** - Address marginalisation; 'demography is not just a statistical tool'
- **Empower Human Capabilities**
- **Secure Ageing Populations**

Mains Practise Question

"Examine the need for a holistic Demography Mission in India. Discuss its possible objectives, challenges, and significance for inclusive and sustainable development."

(15 Marks, 250 words)



SC hints revisiting Firecrackers Ban



SYLLABUS : G.S.3: Environment

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 10

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday indicated that it may revisit its April 3 order imposing a year-long ban on the manufacture, storage, sale, and use of firecrackers in Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR), while reserving its verdict on pleas seeking permission to allow their production and sale in the region.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai and Justice K. Vinod Chandran said it would examine the possibility of allowing the sale and use of green firecrackers certified by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) and the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) during Deepavali.

"We will permit them on a trial basis during Deepavali. We will revisit the *Arjun Gopal* judgment if necessary, and whatever has been held in it, along with any modifications suggested by you and the *amicus curiae*. We will try to balance it out," the Chief Justice told Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Centre.

In its 2018 ruling in *Arjun Gopal v. Union of India*, the top court had declined to impose a complete ban on firecrackers but permitted the manufacture and sale of only "green" variants with reduced emissions and permissible noise levels. It had also prohibited online sales and directed that such crackers be sold only through licensed traders.

During Friday's hearing,



Green firecrackers will allowed on a trial basis during this Deepavali, said CJI Gavai.

Chief Justice Gavai asked advocate Uttara Babbar, who was appointed *amicus curiae*, whether there had been any significant change in air quality since the 2018 ruling. "Has the Air Quality Index (AQI) worsened? Was it much lower in 2018 than in 2024?" he asked.

Ms. Babbar referred to a report by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), noting that

there was no conclusive data to show deterioration, but that the report had recorded a dip in post-Diwali pollution levels when bans were in place. "In 2021, pre-Diwali PM2.5 was 163 and post-Diwali it rose to 354 – a 117% increase. This percentage came down to 61% in 2024," she said.

The Solicitor-General, however, countered that there was no data establishing firecrackers as a primary cause of pollution spikes. "Except during the COVID-19 period, the AQI has remained more or less the same. There is nothing on record to show the exact contribution of firecrackers," he submitted.

Mr. Mehta also presented a detailed proposal from the Centre seeking to lift the blanket ban in Delhi-NCR and allow the sale

of NEERI-approved green firecrackers under strict regulation. The proposal suggested that only licensed traders be permitted to sell crackers, while e-commerce platforms like Flipkart and Amazon be barred from processing online orders. It also proposed banning "joined" or chain-linked firecrackers.

The Centre proposed fixed time slots for bursting firecrackers, between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. on Deepavali and other major festivals. On Christmas and New Year's Eve, fireworks would be allowed from 11.55 p.m. to 12.30 a.m. For Gurgurab, they could be used for one hour each in the morning and evening. It further suggested permitting green firecrackers for weddings and other private celebrations.



CSIR - NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING RESEARCH INSTITUTE

सीएसआईआर-राष्ट्रीय पर्यावरण अभियांत्रिकी अनुसंधान संस्थान

A constituent laboratory of Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)

(AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATION UNDER THE DEPT. OF SCIENTIFIC & INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH, MINISTRY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, GOVT. OF INDIA)



Welcome to CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute



The CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) is a research institute created and funded by the Government of India. It was established in Nagpur in 1958 with a focus on water supply, sewage disposal, communicable diseases, and industrial pollution. NEERI is a pioneer in environmental science and engineering and operates under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), known for its cutting edge R&D knowledge base in diverse S&T areas, is a contemporary R&D organization under Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India. CSIR-NEERI has five zonal laboratories in Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai.



SYLLABUS : G.S.3: Environment

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 10

भारत सरकार
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

वाणिज्य और उद्योग मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



Petroleum & Explosives Safety Organization (PESO)

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade

The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO), formerly known as Department of Explosives, since its inception on 05/09/1898, has been serving the nation as a nodal agency for regulating safety of hazardous substances such as explosives, compressed gases and petroleum. PESO's major work is to administer the responsibilities delegated under the Explosives Act 1884 and Petroleum Act 1934 and the Rules made there under with the motto **"Safety First"**.

PESO has its Headquarters at Nagpur in Maharashtra and serves through nine Circle Offices viz Agra, Bhopal, Chennai, Faridabad, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Vadodara and their subordinate Sub-Circle offices across the country.

With an overall objective of ensuring safety and security of public and property from fire and explosion, the Organisation as a statutory authority is entrusted with the administration of Explosives Act, 1884, Petroleum Act, 1934; Inflammable Substances Act, 1952 and the following Rules framed under these Acts

EXPLOSIVES ACT, 1884:

- ✓ Explosives Rules, 2008
- ✓ Gas Cylinder Rules, 2004
- ✓ Static & Mobile Pressure Vessels (Unfired) Rules, 1981
- ✓ Ammonium Nitrate Rules, 2012
- ✓ Notification No. GSR 625(E) dated 07.08.1983 regarding Acetylene Generation

PETROLEUM ACT, 1934:

- ✓ Petroleum Rules, 2002
- ✓ Calcium Carbide Rules, 1987
- ✓ Cinematography Film Rules, 1948

To administer the responsibilities delegated under the Explosives Act 1884 and Petroleum Act 1934 and the rules made there under related to manufacture, import, export, transport, possession, sale and use of Explosives, Petroleum products and Compressed gases.

- ✓ Providing operational and technical Advice and Assistance to the Central Government, States, Local Bodies, Law Enforcement Agencies, Industry, Trade and end users of these products.
- ✓ Uphold the commitment to transparency and efficiency.
- ✓ Develop alert, Innovative, and well trained work force to achieve our goals.
- ✓ Embrace learning and change in order to meet the challenges of the future.



SYLLABUS : G.S.3: Environment

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 10

About Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM):

- The CAQM is a **statutory body** established under the **Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region (NCR) and Adjoining Areas, Act 2021**.
- **Mandate:** Better coordination, **research, identification, and resolution of problems surrounding the air quality index** and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- It undertakes action for **the prevention and control of Air pollution in Delhi-NCR & Adjoining Areas** which impacts the air quality of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi.
- The Commission is required to **coordinate its actions on monitoring of air quality with the government of Delhi and the adjoining states**, which includes Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Powers:**
 - **Restricting activities** influencing air quality.
 - **Investigating and conducting research** related to environmental pollution impacting air quality, preparing codes and guidelines to prevent and control air pollution,
 - **Issuing directions** on matters including **inspections, or regulations**, which will be binding on the concerned person or authority.
 - **All the directions** and orders by the Commission **are of binding nature**, and any person, officer, or authority shall be bound to comply with the same.
 - The commission is **directly accountable to the parliament**.
- **Composition:**
 - **Chairperson:** To be chaired by a **government official of the rank of Secretary** or Chief Secretary. He will hold the post for three years or until s/he attains the age of 70 years.
 - It will also have five **ex officio members** who are **either Chief Secretaries** or Secretaries in charge of the department dealing with environment protection in the **States of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh**.
 - Three full time technical members.
 - Three **members from non-government organisations**.
 - Technical members from **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, Indian Space Research Organisation, and NITI Aayog



SYLLABUS : GS 2 : Governance, Transparency

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 12

Decoding the News

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

As the 20th anniversary of the Right to Information Act, 2005 approaches, many State Information Commissions (SICs) and the Central Information Commission (CIC) are either paralysed or so understaffed that hearings could take years to happen, according to a report by a citizens' group working to promote transparency in government functioning.

The SICs and the CIC hear appeals and complaints when citizens are dissatisfied with the result of an RTI application. There were over 2.4 lakh appeals in 2024.

The latest edition of the Satark Nagrik Sangathan

(SNS)'s annual assessment shows that six SICs – Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Goa, Tripura and Madhya Pradesh – were defunct for varying periods of time between July 1, 2024 to October 7, 2025 as no new Commissioners were appointed upon the incumbents demitting office.”

The SICs of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar are functioning without a full strength of Commissioners.

Meanwhile, the Central Information Commission, which hears appeals against RTI responses to Union government organisations, is functioning with only two Information Commissioners, with nine va-

cancies, including for the Chief Information Commissioner, and hearings can take over a year to come up.

The backlog is mounting, with Commissions only able to dispose of 1.8 lakh cases in a year with 2.4 lakh appeals. In some States, the current speed of hearings taking place is far slower: the SNS's report “shows that the Telangana SIC would take an estimated 29 years and two months – a matter filed on July 1, 2025 would be disposed [of] in the year 2054.”

Over 4 lakh appeals and complaints were pending as of June, with Maharashtra (95,340), Karnataka (47,825) and Tamil Nadu (41,059) with the largest outstanding backlog.



SYLLABUS : GS 2 : Governance, Transparency

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 12

What are Central Information Commission (CIC) and State Information Commissions (SIC)?

CIC is a statutory body constituted under section 12 of the **Right to Information Act, 2005**. Similar to CIC, SIC is also a statutory body constituted under section 15 of the Right to Information Act, 2005. The main objectives of CIC and SIC are:

- To exercise the powers conferred on them under the RTI Act, 2005.
- To receive and inquire into complaints from any citizen (Section 18 of the RTI Act, 2005).
- To receive and decide upon the second appeal from any citizen (Section 19 of the RTI Act, 2005).
- To perform the duty of " Monitoring and Reporting " (Section 25 of the RTI Act, 2005).

What are the salient features of CIC and SIC?

Features	CIC	SIC
Composition	• CIC consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information Commissioners.	• SIC consists of a State Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten State Information Commissioners.
Appointment	• They are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.	• They are appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of a committee consisting of Chief Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, and a State Cabinet Minister nominated by the Chief Minister.



RTI Panels defunct



SYLLABUS : GS 2 : Governance, Transparency

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 12

Eligibility	• The members of CIC and SIC shall be persons of eminence in public life with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media, or administration and governance. • Members shall not be a Member of Parliament, or Member of the Legislature of any State or Union Territory as the case may be, or hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party or carry on any business or pursue any profession.	
Tenure	• The members shall hold office for such term as prescribed by the Central Government or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.	
Reappointment	• Chief Information Commissioner is not eligible for reappointment. • Each IC shall on vacating his office be eligible for appointment as the CIC. Further, His/her term of office shall not be more than five years in aggregate as the IC and the CIC.	• Every State Information Commissioner shall, on vacating his office be eligible for appointment as the State Chief Information Commissioner. Further his/her term of office shall not be more than five years in aggregate as the state information commissioner and state chief information commissioner.



RTI Panels defunct



SYLLABUS : GS 2 : Governance, Transparency

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 12

Removal	- The President can remove the members of CIC and the Governor can remove the members of SIC from the office under the following circumstances: - If the member is adjudged as an insolvent - If the Central government(for CIC) /Governor(for SIC) holds him responsible for an offense involving moral turpitude/ or he is convicted for such an offense. - If he engages during his term of office in any paid employment outside the duties of his office - If he is declared unfit by reason of infirmity of mind or body, by the President (for CIC)/Governor (for SIC). - The President/Governor can also remove the members on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity. In such cases, the President(for CIC)/Governor (for SIC) has to refer the matter to the Supreme Court for an enquiry. After the enquiry, if the Supreme Court upholds the cause of removal and advises so, then the President(for CIC) /Governor(for SIC) can remove him. - During the inquiry by the Supreme Court the President(for CIC)/Governor(for SIC) may suspend the member from office or prohibit him from attending the office.	
Salary and Allowances	The salary, allowances, and other service conditions of the members shall be as prescribed by the Central Government (RTI Amendment Act, 2019).	
Jurisdiction	It extends over all Central Public Authorities.	It extends over all State Public Authorities.



SYLLABUS : GS 2 : Governance, Transparency

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 12

What are the powers and functions of CIC and SIC?

Some of the important functions of the CIC and SIC under the RTI Act, 2005 are:

- **Section 18:** It is a duty of the CIC and the SIC to inquire the complaints received from any person regarding information requested under RTI Act 2005
- **Section 19:** Adjudication in the second appeal for giving information.
- **Section 20:** Imposition of penalties by CIC and SIC if it is of opinion that the Public Information Officer, either at the central or state level, has not performed his duty and, without reasonable cause, rejects or refuses to entertain the application made by the complainant.
- **Access to all public records:** During the inquiry, CIC and SIC can ask for any records under the control of a public authority.
- **Suo-moto Power:** It can order an inquiry into any matter with reasonable grounds (suo-moto power). While inquiring, CIC and SIC have the powers of a **civil court** in respect of summoning, requiring documents, etc.
- **Secure Compliance:** CIC and SIC have the power to secure compliance with its decisions from the public authority.
- **Annual Report:** CIC submits an annual report to the Central Government. The central government places this report before the Parliament.
 - The SIC submits an annual report to the State Government. The State Government places this report before the State Legislature.



SYLLABUS : GS 2 : Governance, Transparency

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 12

What are the changes to CIC and SIC under the RTI Amendments Act 2019?

Changes to CIC and SIC through the RTI Amendment Act 2019 are

- **Term:** The term of Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioner shall be prescribed by the Central Government.
 - The term of State Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioner shall also be prescribed by the Central Government.
- **Salary, Allowances, and Services Conditions:** These shall now be prescribed by the Central Government.
 - Salary, Allowances, and Services Conditions of the State Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioner shall also be prescribed by the Central Government.



SYLLABUS : G.S. 2 : Governance

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 8

The National Crime Records Bureau's annual reports on crime and prison statistics have to be read with a strong caveat – most of the numbers cannot be compared between States because they are largely dependent upon the registration/reporting of crimes in the first place. However, certain national trends and sharp year-on-year changes within States can still reveal meaningful patterns that could demand policy intervention. The recent NCRB report for 2023 – delayed by a year – points to a worrying trend of postponed surveys, reports and even the Census under the current Union Government. But there are also three telling numbers: the 2.8% decrease in murder cases across the country; a staggering 28.8% surge in crimes against Scheduled Tribes (ST), and a 31.2% increase in cyber crimes. While the decrease in murder cases will come as a relief to law enforcement – most of the cases pertain to disputes, personal vendetta or enmity and “gain” – the other two numbers are alarming. The steep rise in crimes against STs is largely due to the ethnic violence in Manipur, with the registered numbers jumping from just one in 2022 to 3,399 in 2023 – which a more effective government could have mitigated. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan also recorded significantly high crime rates against tribals suggesting their vulnerability in the central Indian States. This is not a new phenomenon; previous NCRB reports have highlighted higher crime rates in regions with significant tribal populations.

With greater Internet penetration across the country, there has been an increase in cyber-crime, particularly related to financial fraud and sexual exploitation. Anecdotally, it is evident that these numbers must have gone up even further in the last two years with the greater use of digital financial instruments in daily transactions and investment. While policing has tried to keep up with the growing menace of cybercrime, with specialised cells, the ubiquitousness and deepening spread of digital crimes require more sophistication and dedication by the police to tackle them. Crimes against children rose by 9.2% in 2023 – with the offender known to the victim in 96% of the cases. While the increase could be a function of improved reporting across States, the high number (1,77,335 cases) suggests that States must work on a war footing to sensitise children about these crimes and inappropriate behaviour by adults. A subset of these crimes could also include the application of the POCSO Act in the case of consensual adolescent relationships and this is an area that needs to be carefully handled by the prosecuting and policing agencies. Reported crimes against women registered a modest increase of 0.4%, but this masks a 14.9% spike in dowry-related crimes, pointing to a persistent societal problem.



SYLLABUS : G.S. 2 : Governance

Newspaper : The Hindu Page No : 8

What is the National Crime Records Bureau?

- NCRB was set up in 1986 to function as a **repository of information on crime and criminals** to assist the investigators in linking the crime to the perpetrators based on the recommendations of the **Tandon Committee, National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Taskforce (1985)**.
 - It is part of the **MHA and is headquartered in New Delhi**.
- It also acts as a **“national warehouse” for the fingerprint records** of Indian and foreign criminals, and assists in locating interstate criminals through fingerprint search.
- The NCRB has four divisions: Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS), Crime Statistics, Finger Prints, and Training.
- **NCRB Publications:**
 - **Crimes in India, Accidental Deaths and Suicides, Prison Statistics, and Reports on Missing Women and children in India.**
 - These publications serve as principal reference points on crime statistics not only for police officers but also for criminologists, researchers, media and policymakers not only in India but abroad as well.



SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : Important Events

Newspaper : The Hindu **Page No :** 14

Venezuela's María Machado wins Nobel Peace Prize

Associated Press

OSLO

Venezuelan Opposition leader María Corina Machado won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for her struggle to achieve a democratic transition in the South American nation, winning recognition as a woman “who keeps the flame of democracy burning amid a growing darkness”.

The former Opposition presidential candidate is a “key, unifying figure” in the once deeply divided Opposition to President Nicolás Maduro’s government, said Jørgen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Norwegian Nobel committee.

Reacting to the honour, Ms. Machado said she was confident the Opposition would succeed in securing a peaceful transition to democracy in her country.



María Corina Machado

“We’re not there yet. We’re working very hard to achieve it, but I’m sure that we will prevail,” she told Kristian Berg Harpviken, the director of the Nobel Institute and secretary of the Nobel Committee.

Dedicates win to Trump

“I dedicate this prize to the suffering people of Venezuela and to President Trump for his decisive support of our cause!” she later wrote on X.

Mr. Maduro’s government has routinely targeted its real or perceived opponents.

Ms. Machado, who turned 58 this week, was set to run against Mr. Maduro in last year’s presidential election, but the government disqualified her.

The crackdown on dissent only increased after the country’s National Electoral Council, which is stacked with Maduro loyalists, declared him the winner despite credible evidence to the contrary. The election results announced by the Electoral Council sparked protests to which the government responded with force that ended with more than 20 people dead.

Ms. Machado becomes the 20th woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

(With inputs from AFP)



SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : Military Exercises

Newspaper : The Hindu **Page No :** 12

Sea phase of KONKAN 25 ends with high operational tempo

The sea phase of the bilateral maritime exercise KONKAN 25 between the Indian Navy and U.K.'s Royal Navy concluded on Wednesday following a series of high-tempo naval operations designed to enhance interoperability, operational readiness, and maritime cooperation between the participating navies. Indian Navy informed that during the sea phase, the forces undertook a wide spectrum of complex maritime drills encompassing tactical air warfare, air defence, surface and anti-submarine operations, and underway replenishment. The sea phase ended with a ceremonial steampast, where participating units exchanged traditional naval courtesies.



Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Chabahar Port:

1. It is located on the Gulf of Aden.
2. It is the only Iranian port having direct access to the Indian Ocean.
3. It consists of two separate ports called Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari.

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: b

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Commission for Air Quality Management:

1. It is an executive body constituted through a government resolution.
2. It is responsible for the prevention, control, and abatement of air pollution in Delhi-NCR and adjoining areas.
3. The Chairperson holds office for three years or until the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier.
4. It has Technical members from the Central Pollution Control Board, Indian Space Research Organisation, and NITI Aayog.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) Only Three
- d) All Four

Answer: c

Q3. Regarding the Supreme Court's verdict in Arjun Gopal vs Union of India (2018), consider the following statements:

1. The Court permitted the use and sale of "green crackers".
2. The verdict imposed a total ban on bursting firecrackers across India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: a

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding National Crime Records Bureau:

1. It was established in 1986 to act as a repository of information on crime and criminals.
2. It was set up based on the recommendations of the Tandon Committee.
3. It functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Law and Justice.

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: a

Q5. Exercise KONKAN-25 is a bilateral naval exercise between:

- a) India and Australia
- b) USA and Japan
- c) India and United Kingdom
- d) China and Bangladesh

Answer: c





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