



**VAJIRAM & RAVI**  
Institute for IAS Examination

# The Analyst

**CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout**

**02nd May 2025**



# Urban Fire Safety in India



**CONTEXT:** Recent fire accidents in a hotel in Kolkata & Ajmer, as well as in Dilli Haat.

## Status of Urban Fires in India

- **2024:** fire tragedies at a **gaming zone in Gujarat Rajkot** and a **children's hospital in Delhi** have claimed the lives of at least 40 people in a span of 24 hours.
- **Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India Report**, by NCRB, as many as 7,435 people were killed in **over 7,500 fire accidents in 2022**.
- **NCRB report:** Maharashtra and Gujarat accounted for a significant portion (**about 30%**) of the country's fire-related deaths.
- **India Risk Surveys 2018** has placed **India at 3rd position** in fire incidents.

## Existing Fire Safety Standards and Regulations in India

- **Constitutional provisions:**
  - Fire service is a **State subject** and included in the **12th Schedule** of the Constitution of India.
- **National Building Code, 2016:**
  - Published by Bureau of Indian Standards.
  - **Part 4 of the NBC**, which deals with safety from fire.
  - **State governments are expected to incorporate** the provisions of the code into their **local building by laws**.
- **Model Building Bye Laws 2016:**
  - **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** issued it as a guide to the States and UTs to frame their respective building bylaws.

- **Fire and Life Safety guidelines:**
  - **Ministry of Health in 2020**, stipulating **third party accreditation** for fire safety, creation of Fire Response Plan, etc.
- **NDMA Guidelines on Fire Safety**

## Compliance Challenges

- **Lack of uniformity in safety legislation across states:**
  - National Building Code exist, they **aren't mandatory**.
  - Some states like **Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand** are **yet to enact any legislation** on fire safety.
  - **E.g.** Lack of separate fire escape staircases in Old Buildings and lack of fire safety audits.
- **Shortage of staff and proper firefighting equipment:**
  - **2019** – shortage of **5,191 fire stations and 5,03,365 personnel** than required.
- **Lack of robust fire mitigation technologies:**
  - such as smoke alarms and sprinkler systems.
  - **E.g. AMRI hospital in Kolkata, 2011**
- **Challenges related to Urbanisation:**
  - High Population density & poor urban planning
  - **E.g. Fire in coaching centre in Mukherjee Nagar, 2023**



# Urban Fire Safety in India



**CONTEXT:** Recent fire accidents in a hotel in Kolkata & Ajmer, as well as in Dilli Haat.

## Way Forward

- **Mandatory Fire Safety Audits:**  
annually by third-party
- **Regular Fire Safety Drills:**
  - residential colonies, schools, and other institutions.
- **Improve the outreach of the Fire Services: NDMA**
  - sub-divisional level in the beginning and ultimately to the block and the Gram Panchayat level.
- **Mitigation Technology:**
  - **water mist and drones & constructing water storage tanks** at suitable locations.
- **Financial support to the fire safety department:**
  - Urban govt can impose a **fire tax**.

## Mains Practise Question

*"Despite the existence of regulatory frameworks, fire safety in India remains a serious concern. Critically examine the effectiveness of existing fire safety regulations and highlight the key challenges in their implementation and compliance."*

**(15 Marks, 250 words)**



# Revamping Mental Healthcare in India



**CONTEXT:** Recent suicide incidents - BITS Pilani (Goa) & Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology.

## Mental Health

- **WHO defines mental health**  
*"condition of well-being in which every person is able to reach their full potential, manage everyday pressures, engage in productive and fruitful employment, and contribute to their community."*
- WHO emphasises that having a healthy mental state involves **"more than just being free of mental impairments or illnesses."**
- **National Mental Health Survey (2015-16): NIMHANS**
  - **13.7 %** suffering from a variety of **mental illnesses**
  - **10.6%** of this requires **immediate intervention.**
- **NCRB report: 1.71 lakh** people died by suicide in **2022 in India.**

## Reasons for poor status of Mental Health

- **Lack of Awareness and Sensitivity:**
  - Stigma and discrimination often undermine **social support structures.**
- **Social isolation and loneliness:**
  - From face-to-face relationships to dysfunctional family dynamics
  - erodes self-esteem due to unfavourable social comparison.

- **Lancet Public Health journal 'The burden of mental disorders across the states of India: The Global Burden of Disease Study 1990-2017' -** higher prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders in southern states
- **Shortage of Mental Health Professionals:**
  - **Only 0.75 psychiatrists/lakh population** - Economic Survey 2023-24
  - desirable number is anything **above 3 Psychiatrists per 100,000.**
- **High cost of mental health services**
- **Low budget Allocation:**
  - **FY 2024-25** - mental health budget **1% of the total health budget.**
  - **Developed countries** - **5-18% of their annual healthcare budget.**

## Steps Taken

- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017**
- **National Mental Health Programme**
- **National Tele Mental Health Programme:** Kiran & Mano Darpan
- **SAATHI Program**
- **SC banned ragging in 2001**



# Revamping Mental Healthcare in India

**CONTEXT:** Recent suicide incidents - BITS Pilani (Goa) & Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology.

## Way Forward

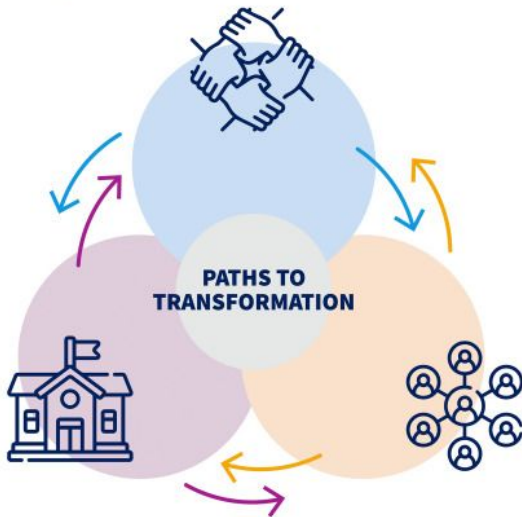
- **Implement Regular Training Programs:** identify and support students at risk.
- **Digital Detox Programs:** balance digital activities with physical exercise, hobbies, and offline social interactions.
- **Addressing the Infrastructural & personnel gap**
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:**
  - Organizations like Banyan (Tamil Nadu), Sangath (Goa), and the Centre for Mental Health Law and Policy (Pune).
- **WHO's transformative path**

## Mains Practise Question

*"Despite increasing awareness, mental health continues to be a neglected aspect of public health in India. Critically examine the challenges in addressing mental health issues and suggest a comprehensive strategy for improvement."*

**(15 Marks, 250 words)**

### Three transformative paths towards better mental health



#### DEEPEEN VALUE AND COMMITMENT

- Understand and appreciate intrinsic value
- Promote social inclusion of people with mental health conditions
- Give mental and physical health equal priority
- Intensify engagement across sectors
- Step up investment in mental health



#### RESHAPE ENVIRONMENTS

- Reshape physical, social and economic characteristics of different environments for mental health, including
  - homes
  - schools
  - workplaces
  - health care services
  - communities
  - natural environments



#### STRENGTHEN MENTAL HEALTH CARE

- Build community-based networks of services
- Move away from custodial care in psychiatric hospitals
- Diversify and scale up care options
- Make mental health affordable and accessible for all
- Promote person-centred, human rights-based care
- Engage and empower people with lived experience





# Revising a far sighted but forgotten bill mechanism

**SYLLABUS: GS Paper 2: Functioning of Parliament & State Legislature**  
**Newspaper : The Hindu, Page No : 8**

**P**rivate Member's Bills (PMBs) are a mechanism through which Members of Parliament (MP), who are not Ministers, can propose their own legislation. In India's parliamentary system, most laws are introduced by the government, drafted by Ministries and tabled by Ministers. In contrast, PMBs come from individual MPs, both ruling party or the Opposition. In each session, Fridays are usually reserved for discussion on PMBs. PMBs are perhaps the last remaining intervention wherein MPs are not strictly guided by party mandate.

However, this crucial intervention has steadily eroded. Frequent disruptions, pre-emptive adjournments, and the increasing prioritisation of government business have reduced the PMB to a symbolic gesture rather than a serious legislative exercise. Ignoring the PMB is a procedural lapse and also signals a democratic backslide.

## PMB trends, 17th and 18th Lok Sabha

Since Independence, only 14 PMBs have been passed and received presidential assent and none has cleared both Houses since 1970. In the 17th Lok Sabha (2019-24), 729 PMBs were introduced in the Lok Sabha and 705 in the Rajya Sabha. However, only two in the Lok Sabha and 14 in the Rajya Sabha were ever discussed.

In the 18th Lok Sabha, only 20 MPs have introduced PMBs so far. During the inaugural and Budget Sessions of 2024, 64 PMBs were introduced in the Lok Sabha, but not a single one was discussed.

In the winter session, two Fridays in the Lok Sabha were lost to disruptions, while another was taken up by a general discussion on the Constitution. Even in the Budget Session, the first Friday, usually reserved for private members, was used for discussions on the Union Budget. Only one Friday in the Lok Sabha saw any private member business-related activity, and even this was limited to a resolution. In the Rajya Sabha, out of 82 PMBs listed during the Budget Session, only 49 were introduced on a single Friday, and discussion began on just one, only to be cut short as the House was adjourned *sine die*.

PMBs have long provided a platform for MPs to introduce pieces of legislation that reflect personal convictions, constituency demands, or emerging social needs, regardless of party affiliation.

A notable example is the 'Right to Disconnect' Bill introduced by Supriya Sule of the Nationalist Congress Party, in the Lok Sabha on October 28, 2019. The Bill proposed granting employees the legal right to disengage from work-related



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The Private Member's Bill has the potential to be a gold mine for India's legislative landscape.

WhatsApp

communication beyond official working hours, addressing the increasing intrusion of work into personal life in the digital age. Though it did not proceed beyond the initial stage, the Bill sparked an important national conversation on mental health, work-life balance, and labour rights in a hyper-connected economy. It exemplifies how PMBs can be vehicles for forward-looking and unconventional ideas.

In contrast, some PMBs have had a more tangible legislative impact. In 2014, Tiruchi Siva of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Rajya Sabha), introduced the 'Rights of Transgender Persons Bill'. On April 24, 2015, the Bill made history by becoming the first Private Member's Bill in over four decades to be passed by the Rajya Sabha. Though it did not clear the Lok Sabha, it laid the groundwork for the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, introduced and passed by the government. This Bill is a powerful reminder of how private initiatives can shape the legislative agenda and compel government action on socially sensitive issues.

PMBs also offer space for MPs from the ruling party to express independent thought. Bharatiya Janata Party MP Gopal Chinaiya Shetty's Bill calling for free medical and health-care facilities to the senior citizens in all Government and private hospitals is an example. His intervention demonstrates that even Treasury Bench MPs, often bound by government priorities, can use PMBs to introduce legislation based on personal insight or constituency feedback.

## Shrinking space for independent action

One cannot overlook the institutional changes that have contributed to the reduced space for individual legislative initiative. The 52nd Constitutional Amendment, which introduced the Anti-Defection Law through the Tenth Schedule, aimed to ensure political stability. However, it has also had the unintended effect of limiting the ability of MPs, particularly the Treasury Benches, to independently question or deviate from their party's legislative agenda. In such a structured environment, the PMB remains one of the few avenues through which MPs across party lines can suggest constructive policy alternatives.

While voters in India may cast their ballots for candidates contesting on party symbols, their choices are often equally influenced by the individual's integrity, expertise and track record within the constituency. MPs are elected not solely to reiterate the party's position, but to serve as a voice for the aspirations and concerns of their constituents.

To safeguard the PMB process, a series of

procedural and structural reforms must be considered.

## Reforms to pursue

The first is the need to treat the time earmarked for PMBs as sacrosanct. Amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business should explicitly protect this time from being overridden, except in cases of a national emergency. Dedicated hours for PMBs must not only be preserved but also enforced with consistency, enabling meaningful debate and potential adoption of the PMB.

Parliament could consider instituting a review committee specifically for PMBs, responsible for screening Bills for quality, relevance, and constitutionality. It could even recommend a priority list for discussion based on public importance and cross-party support. A fast-track mechanism may also be introduced for high-impact or broadly supported Bills to reach the floor in a time-bound manner.

In instances where the government feels constrained by time to transact its own legislative business, it should consider extending the overall working hours of Parliament, rather than encroaching upon the Fridays reserved for PMBs. The working hours in both Houses typically run from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., which includes a lunch break. A modest extension, even by an hour or two, would significantly improve the productivity of Zero Hour and Question Hour, while ensuring that PMBs remain undisturbed. With the prospect of delimitation and a likely increase in the number of MPs in both Houses, the urgency of reform is greater than ever.

One compelling reform that could be adapted from international practice is the Ten-Minute Rule of the U.K. Parliament – any MP can make a short speech of up to 10 minutes in support of a PMB along with its introduction after which another MP may oppose it for an equal length of time. This allows Bills to be introduced, heard, and recorded without long time slots. Adopting a similar provision in the Indian context, either as an addition to or as a substitute for existing PMB procedures, could create a channel for a greater number of legislative ideas to enter the public domain.

The Vice President of India/Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Jagdeep Dhankhar, has laid emphasis on the role of private member's business in deepening democracy. He described PMBs as "far-sighted, forward-looking, and a gold mine" for India's legislative landscape. These are words that reflect both the value and the potential of this mechanism when nurtured with sincerity.





# Revising a far sighted but forgotten bill mechanism



**SYLLABUS: GS Paper 2: Functioning of Parliament & State Legislature**  
**Newspaper : The Hindu, Page No : 8**

Public Bill	Private Bill
1. It is introduced in the Parliament by a minister.	1. It is introduced by any member of Parliament other than a minister.
2. It reflects of the policies of the government (ruling party).	2. It reflects the stand of opposition party on public matter.
3. It has greater chance to be approved by the Parliament.	3. It has lesser chance to be approved by the Parliament.
4. Its rejection by the House amounts to the expression of want of parliamentary confidence in the government and may lead to its resignation.	4. Its rejection by the House has no implication on the parliamentary confidence in the government or its resignation.
5. Its introduction in the House requires seven days' notice.	5. Its introduction in the House requires one month's notice.
6. It is drafted by the concerned department in consultation with the law department.	6. Its drafting is the responsibility of the member concerned.

**Context:** The Vice President of India described **"Private member bills"** as **"far-sighted, forward-looking, and a gold mine"** for India's legislative landscape.

## PMBs Trends:

- **Since Independence, only 14 PMBs** have been passed and received presidential assent and **none has cleared both Houses since 1970.**
- **17th Lok Sabha (2019–24) – 729 PMBs** were introduced in the Lok Sabha and **705 in the Rajya Sabha.** However, **only two in the Lok Sabha and 14 in the Rajya Sabha** were ever discussed.
- **18th Lok Sabha–** During the **Budget Sessions of 2024, 64 PMBs** were introduced in the **Lok Sabha**, but **not a single** one was discussed.

## • Lok Sabha:

- **Winter session – two Fridays** in the **Lok Sabha were lost to disruptions**, while **another** was taken up by a **general discussion on the Constitution.**
- **Budget Session – first Friday**, usually **reserved for private members**, was used for **discussions on the Union Budget. Only one Friday** in the Lok Sabha saw any **private member business-related activity.**

## • Rajya Sabha:

- **82 PMBs listed during the Budget Session**, only **49 were introduced** on a **single Friday**, and **discussion began on just one**, only to be cut short as the House was **adjourned sine die.**

## • Reasons:

- Frequent disruptions, pre-emptive adjournments, and the **increasing prioritisation of government business** have reduced the PMB to a symbolic gesture rather than a serious legislative exercise.



# Revising a far sighted but forgotten bill mechanism



**SYLLABUS: GS Paper 2: Functioning of Parliament & State Legislature**  
**Newspaper : The Hindu, Page No : 8**

- **Significance of PMBs:**

- **Anti- Defection Law:** MPs can't deviate from their party's legislative agenda. **PMBs** –
  - MPs across party lines can **suggest constructive policy alternatives.**
  - MPs are elected **not solely to reiterate the party's position**, but to **serve as a voice** for the aspirations and concerns of their constituents.
- **Express independent thought:**
  - **Bharatiya Janata Party MP Gopal Chinayya Shetty Bill** calling for free medical and health-care facilities to the senior citizens in all Government and private hospitals

- **Vehicles for forward-looking and unconventional ideas:**

- **'Right to Disconnect' Bill** – Supriya Sule Nationalist Congress Party, in the Lok Sabha **2019.**
- legal right to disengage from work-related communication beyond official working hours
- Sparked an important national conversation on **mental health, work-life balance, and labour rights in a hyper-connected economy**

- **Tangible legislative impact:**

- **2014** – Tiruchi Siva, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (**Rajya Sabha**), introduced the **'Rights of Transgender Persons Bill'.**
- **Groundwork for the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**, introduced and passed by the government.

**Procedural and structural reforms:**

- **Amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business:** explicitly protect this time from being overridden, except in cases of a national emergency. Hence, enabling meaningful debate and potential adoption of the PMB.
- **Instituting a review committee specifically for PMBs:**
  - screening Bills for **quality, relevance, and constitutionality.**
  - It could even **recommend a priority list for discussion** based on **public importance and cross-party support.**
- **Introduce a fast-track mechanism:**
  - **high-impact or broadly supported** Bills to reach the floor in a time-bound manner.
- **Extending working hours of Parliament:**
  - working hours in both Houses **typically run from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**, which includes a lunch break.





# Revising a far sighted but forgotten bill mechanism



**SYLLABUS: GS Paper 2: Functioning of Parliament & State Legislature**  
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- A modest extension, **even by an hour or two**, would significantly improve the productivity.
- **Ten-Minute Rule of the U.K. Parliament :**
  - any MP can make a **short speech of up to 10 minutes in support of a PMB** along with its introduction after which **another MP may oppose it for an equal length of time.**

As due to **delimitation there would be increase in the number of MPs**, the urgency of reform is greater than ever



**SYLLABUS:** Prelims: Economy  
**Newspaper :** The Hindu, Page No : 8

## China's strategic push — Asia ties amid tariff tensions

The President of China, Xi Jinping's three-nation tour of Southeast Asia (April 14-18, 2025) to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, had one goal: to pitch Beijing as the only reliable partner of choice. Facing what is at the moment a 145% tariff on Chinese exports imposed by the Trump administration, China is actively recalibrating its external economic engagement, especially in geographies where it enjoys strategic proximity and relatively receptive partners.

This Southeast Asia outreach is not just routine diplomacy. It is a considered move by Beijing to mitigate external economic pressure, project stability, and cement its leadership narrative in the Indo-Pacific. The visit also comes in the wake of the "Central Conference on Work Relating to Neighbouring Countries" (April 8-9). This relatively rare workshop was attended by senior party leaders and underscored the importance of fostering a "community with a shared future" with neighbouring states.

### As a buffer and bridge

China is keen to insulate itself from the ramifications of a deepening trade war with the U.S., which now extends beyond tariffs to export controls, technology bans and financial decoupling. In this context, Southeast Asia serves as a buffer and a bridge. It offers China resilient trade channels, manufacturing alternatives, and diplomatic partners to collectively push back against the narrative of de-risking or containment led by Washington.

Under U.S. President Donald Trump, Cambodia could face a combined tariff of up to 59% (including a 10% universal tariff and an additional 49% once a 90-day pause ends), while Vietnam and Malaysia would be hit with tariffs of 46% and 24%, respectively. Conversely, Mr. Xi's message was that China is open for business, supports multilateralism, and opposes unilateral coercion – a direct rebuttal to U.S. policies. In Vietnam, his meeting with key Vietnamese leaders resulted in the signing of 45 cooperation agreements. In Malaysia, discussions focused on enhancing economic cooperation and addressing regional security concerns. The two countries



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signed over 30 agreements, encompassing sectors such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, agriculture and infrastructure development. The Cambodia visit (Mr. Xi's first since 2016), underscored China's role as Cambodia's largest investor and trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding \$15 billion in 2024. All these agreements, particularly the Funan Techo Canal project in Cambodia, are an effort to show that China continues to offer public goods and economic opportunities, while the U.S. pivots toward protectionism.

### To project a contrast

Beyond economics, the visit was also about ideological and normative competition as Beijing attempts to draw a contrast between its model of non-interference and economic engagement, and what it portrays as U.S. interventionism and ideological rigidity. This narrative particularly resonates in Cambodia, which has long been a close political ally of Beijing, and to a lesser extent in Malaysia, where the government has sought to mostly maintain a balanced foreign policy between major powers.

Mr. Xi's call to advance a code of conduct in the South China Sea, support for infrastructure development through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and lay an emphasis on cultural linkages are part of this soft power strategy. It seeks to recast China not just as a neighbour but as a normative leader in regional order-building, offering an alternative vision to the U.S.-led liberal international order.

The timing of this visit is politically significant. U.S. engagement with Southeast Asia has been episodic and often perceived to be reactive, despite Washington's measures to the contrary. The U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy is also often seen in parts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as security heavy and narrowly focused on countering China. Mr. Xi's visit, in contrast, offers tangible deliverables: infrastructure projects, digital collaboration, trade facilitation, and security dialogues.

By visiting key ASEAN members, he also played into intra-ASEAN dynamics. For instance, the effort to deepen ties with Vietnam,

traditionally wary of Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea, is an attempt to reassure Hanoi. In Malaysia, China's emphasis on peaceful dispute resolution and BRI collaboration appeals to a government that is cautious about becoming a pawn in the U.S.-China rivalry. While Washington continues to emphasise security partnerships – through AUKUS (Australia, the United Kingdom, the U.S.), the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, the U.S.), and bilateral alliances – China is doubling down on economic diplomacy, where the U.S. is perceived to have underdelivered. Initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity have been criticised for lacking market access incentives, in contrast to China's clear offers of investment and trade.

### The larger picture

Moreover, Beijing's ability to present itself as an indispensable economic partner may complicate U.S. efforts to build a coalition to isolate or deter China economically. If Southeast Asia increasingly leans further towards economic interdependence with China, Washington will find it harder to operationalise a robust economic counter-strategy. Mr. Xi's Southeast Asia tour is a forward-looking strategy to entrench Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific at a time of systemic flux. In the contest between the U.S. and China for regional primacy, this kind of diplomacy is calculated strategic positioning, with long-term implications for regional alignment, economic integration, and rule-setting.

Finally, this tour is also about domestic political signalling. For Mr. Xi, the ability to show that China is not internationally isolated, despite mounting western pressure, is crucial. The optics of warm receptions, economic deals, and strategic dialogues serve to buttress his authority at home and offset negative headlines around the economic slowdown or diplomatic frictions with the West. At the same time, they signal to the region – and the Global South at large – that China continues to be there for them to lean on. How receptive Southeast will be to Mr. Xi's outreach, despite Beijing's own unilateral tendencies, remains to be seen.

**Context:** The President of China, Xi Jinping's three-nation tour of Southeast Asia (April 14-18, 2025) to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, had one goal: to pitch Beijing as the only reliable partner of choice.

### Why This move?

- **US reciprocal Tariff:**
  - **145%** tariff on **Chinese** exports.
  - **Cambodia – 59%** ( 10% universal tariff and an additional 49% once a 90-day pause ends)

- **Vietnam and Malaysia** would be hit with tariffs of **46% and 24%**, respectively.
- opposes **unilateral coercion** – a direct rebuttal to U.S. policies.
- **Trade War with USA:**
  - China is keen to **insulate itself** from the ramifications of a **deepening trade war**.
  - By actively recalibrating its external economic engagement, especially in geographies where it **enjoys strategic proximity and relatively receptive partners**.



# China's Strategic Push – Asia ties amid tariff tensions



**SYLLABUS: Prelims:** Economy  
**Newspaper :** The Hindu, **Page No : 8**

- now extends beyond tariffs to export controls, technology bans and financial decoupling.

- **A Considered move by Beijing:**

- mitigate external economic pressure, project stability, and cement its **leadership narrative in the Indo-Pacific.**

**Key Agreements signed:**

- **Vietnam:** signing of **45 cooperation agreements.**
- **Malaysia:**
  - enhancing **economic cooperation** and **addressing regional security concerns.**
  - **signed over 30 agreements,** encompassing **sectors** such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, agriculture and infrastructure development.
- **Cambodia:**
  - underscored **China's role as Cambodia's largest investor and trading partner,** with **bilateral trade exceeding \$15 billion in 2024.**
  - **Funan Techo Canal project** effort to show that **China continues to offer public goods** and economic opportunities, **while the U.S. pivots toward protectionism.**

**The Larger Picture:**

- **Ideological and normative competition:**
  - Beijing **model of non-interference and economic engagement,** and what it portrays as U.S. **interventionism and ideological rigidity.**
- **Advance a code of conduct in the South China Sea:** support for **infrastructure development** through BRI, and lay an **emphasis on cultural linkages** are part of this **soft power strategy.**
- China is giving **signal to the region and the Global South** at large that China continues to be there for them to lean on.
- **Washington continues to emphasise security partnerships** through **AUKUS ,the Quad ,** and **bilateral alliances** whereas **China is doubling down on economic diplomacy** (infrastructure projects, digital collaboration, trade facilitation), where the **U.S. is perceived to have under delivered.**
- As Initiatives such as the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity** have been criticised for **lacking market access incentives,** in contrast to China's clear offers of investment and trade.
- Beijing's ability to present itself as an **indispensable economic partner** may complicate U.S. efforts to build a coalition to **isolate or deter China economically.**





# Inter State River Water Dispute



**SYLLABUS:** Prelims: Polity

**Newspaper:** The Hindu, Page No : 2

**T**he ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Delhi on Thursday attacked the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab for “endangering” the lives of crores of Delhi residents by “stopping” the supply of water to the Capital.

Delhi Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh alleged that by preventing supply from the Bhakra Nangal dam during the peak summer season, the Punjab government is “depriving Delhi of its rightful share” and “trying to create an artificial water crisis” in the city.

## About the News:

- The dispute between the **governments of Punjab and Haryana** over the sharing of water from the **Bhakra Nangal dam** grew louder.
- Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said **Punjab does not have “surplus water to share with anyone”**.
- Delhi Govt. has alleged that Punjab government is **“depriving Delhi of its rightful share”** and **“trying to create an artificial water crisis” in the city**

## Water Crisis in India:

- **World Bank** defines water scarcity as a condition when the **annual per-capita availability is less than 1000 cubic metres**.
- Water starved **Bengaluru** is facing the looming threat of **Day Zero**.

## Reasons:

- **Rising water demand:** NITI Aayog – India’s water demand will be twice the available supply by 2030.
- **Groundwater use for agriculture:** Water-intensive paddy cultivation in the states of Punjab and Haryana.
- **Encroachment of Natural Water Bodies: Vembanad lake, Kerala** – reduction in surface area by 27% b/w 1917 & 1990 mainly due to land encroachment.
- **Climate Change:** erratic monsoon and reduced water levels in many rivers.
  - **Bhakra beas Management Board** advised member states to project their **water demands cautiously**, citing low water storage levels.
- **Water governance Issues:** Central Water Commission (**for surface water**) and Central Ground Water Board (**for groundwater**).

## Constitutional Provisions:

- **Entry 17 of the State List** – water supply, irrigation, canal, drainage, embankments, water storage and hydro power.



# Inter State River Water Dispute



**SYLLABUS: Prelims: Polity**

**Newspaper : The Hindu, Page No : 2**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Entry 56 of the Union List</b> – regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by Parliament to be expedient in the public interest.</li><li>• <b>Article 262:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Parliament may by law provide for the adjudication of any dispute</b> or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters of, or in, any inter-State River or river valley.</li><li>○ Parliament may, by law, provide that <b>neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction</b> in respect of any such dispute or complaint as mentioned above.</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>River Board Act, 1956:</b> This empowered the GoI to establish Boards for Interstate Rivers and river valleys in consultation with State Governments.</li><li>• <b>Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:</b> This empowers the <b>union government</b> to set up an <b>ad hoc tribunal</b> for adjudication of Interstate River Water Disputes. The decision of the tribunal is final &amp; binding.</li></ul> |
|---|---|



**SYLLABUS: Prelims:** International bodies  
**Newspaper:** The Indian Express, **Page No :** 1

# India works to throttle Pak terror funding, get it back in watchdog FATF 'grey list'

New Delhi to also raise objections on IMF aid flow to Pak

**AANCHAL MAGAZINE**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

AS PART of its escalatory matrix against Pakistan for the terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, India is considering two specific moves aimed at curbing financial flows that aid the neighbour fund terror activities.

The first is to make a concerted effort to try and bring back Pakistan into the 'grey list' of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global money laun-

dering and terror financing watchdog, two people in the know told *The Indian Express*.

Pakistan was put in the 'grey list' in June 2018, and faced "increased monitoring" till it was removed in October 2022. Being in this list adversely impacts FDI and capital flows as businesses have to undertake enhanced due diligence. Government officials said this had helped curtail illicit fund flows from Pakistan into India, especially into J&K.

The second is to raise objections to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF's) continued financing of a \$7-billion aid package that commenced July 2024, citing diversion of funds by Pakistan for nefarious activities

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EXPLAINED

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**A strike on terror funding**

THE MOVE on FATF is the latest in a raft of measures taken by India against Pakistan following the terror attack in Pahalgam. It also directly confronts the spectre of cross-border terror and aims to strike at its financial sources. The next step would be to rally support within the task force — 23 of the 40 members had sent condolence messages over the attack that killed 26 people.





**SYLLABUS: Prelims:** International bodies  
**Newspaper :** The Indian Express, **Page No : 1**

## About Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

- **Genesis:** It was established in **1989**, by a **Group of Seven (G-7)** Summit held in **Paris**.
- **Headquarters:** Paris, France.
- **Membership:**
  - **38 member countries including Russia** whose membership is **currently suspended** on 24th Feb, 2023.
  - **India** is a member since **2010**.
  - **Pakistan is not a member** but is a member of Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering.
- **Objective:**
  - to examine and develop measures to **combat money laundering**.
  - **After the 9/11 attacks on the US**, the FATF in **2001 expanded** its mandate to incorporate **efforts to combat terrorist financing**.
  - **In April 2012**, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of **Weapons of Mass Destruction**.
- **Grey and Black Lists of the FATF:**
  - The **FATF Plenary meets tri-annually** - in **February, June and October**, to take stock of **"Mutual Evaluation Reports"** of the countries it reviews.
  - If a country appears to have **major deficiencies in its AML/CFT regime:**
    - it is put on a list of **"jurisdictions under increased monitoring"** - **"grey list"**

- if it fails to address FATF concerns, it is put on a **"high-risk jurisdictions" list** - **"black list"**.

- **Grey List:** considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering.
  - It serves as a warning that the country may enter the blacklist.
- **Black List:** Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories that support terror funding and money laundering activities.
  - **Iran, North Korea and Myanmar.**
  - Myanmar has been recently added to the list due to actions by the military leadership after the **2021 coup**.
- **Consequences of being on the FATF blacklist:**
  - **No financial aid** is given to them by the International Monetary Fund (**IMF**), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (**ADB**), and the European Union (**EU**).
  - They also face a number of **international economic and financial restrictions** and sanctions.
- **Pakistan and FATF GreyListing:**
  - Added in **2018**, but was removed from the list after **four years** in **2022**.



**SYLLABUS: Prelims:** Economy

**GS Paper 3:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

**Newspaper :** The Hindu, **Page No : 5**

## Vizhinjam port set to boost South Asia's maritime trade

PM Narendra Modi to dedicate the project to the nation today; the seaport will have an AI-driven control room; the new port is expected to reduce India's dependence on international facilities

**Dhinesh Kallungal**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

**T**he Vizhinjam International Seaport, an all-weather port which is poised to be a pivotal hub for India's maritime transshipment, will script a new history in the annals of Indian maritime trade on Friday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicating the ambitious port project to the country by 11 a.m. Leveraging cutting-edge technology, the Vizhinjam port is expected to be a game-changer in South Asia's maritime trade.

The Prime Minister arrived at Thiruvananthapuram International Airport on Thursday evening to officially commission the project. The formal commissioning of the port will be attended by Kerala Gover-



**Cordial welcome:** CM Pinarayi Vijayan receiving PM Narendra Modi in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

nor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Ministers of State George Kurien and Suresh Gopi, State Ministers, Opposition Leader and others.

Armed with an AI-driven control room and Vessel Traffic Management System (VTMS) developed by IIT-M

and Maritime Technology Pvt Ltd, the port could track ships approaching the port using radar and sensors, providing real-time location and movement updates to nearby vessels and optimising port traffic flow and berthing assignments.

The port is also expected to reduce the dependence of the country on other international ports. Around

75% of the country's transshipment cargo is being handled at international ports, resulting in a loss of up to \$200-220 million of potential revenue each year, rendering the Indian industries vulnerable to an increase in costs, potential inefficiencies and congestion issues, and creating long-term risks for India's trade competitiveness.

The port has weathered many challenges in its way. The stiff protest raised against the construction of the breakwater by fishermen backed by a prominent church outfit was the main issue the Kerala government had to deal with, although the location offers several advantages, such as natural depth and lack of littoral movement, making it an ideal location for an international-scale seaport.



# Vizhinjam Port



**SYLLABUS: Prelims:** Economy

**GS Paper 3:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

**Newspaper :** The Hindu, **Page No : 5**

## About Vizhinjam International Seaport Project:

- India's **first deepwater transshipment port**, near Thiruvananthapuram.
- It is positioned to **compete with global transshipment hubs like Colombo, Singapore, and Dubai**, reducing the **cost of container movement** to and from foreign destinations.
- The port boasts a **natural depth of more than 18 meters**, which can be further scaled up to 20 meters. This depth is crucial as it enables the port to **accommodate large vessels** with substantial cargo capacities.
- A **transshipment port** is a port where goods are unloaded and loaded onto a different ship to continue their journey to their final destination.
- It is being **built by Adani Ports and SEZ Private Limited**.

- It is being built on a **design, build, finance, operate and transfer (DBFOT) model**.
  - The private partner is granted a concession by the public sector to finance, design, construct, own, and operate the project for a **period of 20 to 30 years**.
  - After that period, the project is returned to the public entity that originally granted the concession.





**Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Urban Fire Safety in India:**

1. Fire services fall under the Concurrent List of the Constitution.
2. The National Building Code, 2016, published by the Bureau of Indian Standards, provides guidelines for fire safety.
3. Model Building Bye Laws, 2016 were issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs as a guide to States.

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

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

**Answer: c**

**Q2. Regarding a Private Member's Bill, consider the following statements:**

1. It is introduced by any member of Parliament other than a minister.
2. Its rejection has no implication on the government's stability or confidence.
3. Seven days' notice is required prior to its introduction in the House.

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

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

**Answer: b**

**Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Water Crisis in India:**

1. The World Bank defines water scarcity as annual per capita availability below 1,000 cubic metres.
2. Entry 17 of the Concurrent List includes matters related to water supply and irrigation.
3. NITI Aayog predicts that India's water demand will be half its supply by 2030.

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

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

**Answer: a**

**Q4. Regarding the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), consider the following statements:**

1. FATF was established by the G-7 in 1989.
2. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
3. India has been a member of FATF since 2010.
4. Pakistan is currently a full member of FATF.

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

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

**Answer: b**

**Q5. Consider the following statements about Transshipment Ports:**

1. A transshipment port allows cargo to be shifted from one ship to another en route to the final destination.
2. India's first deepwater transshipment port is located at Vizhinjam.

**Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?**

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

**Answer: d**





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