



## MedTech Mitra: Revolutionizing India's Healthcare Innovations

Recently, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched '**MedTech Mitra**,' a transformative platform aimed to empower **MedTech Innovators** and advance healthcare solutions.

- It seeks to **shape and finalize the research, knowledge, and logic of aspiring MedTech innovators** while aiding them in securing regulatory approvals.
  - It aims to streamline innovation and service, reducing the nation's reliance on imported medical devices, currently at **80%**.
- MedTech refers to "**Medical Technology**," which encompasses a wide range of technological innovations, devices, equipment, and solutions used in the field of healthcare.
  - **Examples** of MedTech include devices like **MRI machines, pacemakers, insulin pumps** and surgical instruments, among others.

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## PT Instructors Come Within Definition of Teachers: SC

The [Supreme Court](#) has recently held that **Physical training instructors (PTIs) come within the definition** of "[teachers](#)" though they may not necessarily take classes within the four walls of a building.

- Highlighting the multifaceted responsibilities of a physical director, including **organizing sports activities, managing sports facilities, and overseeing tournaments**, the court underlined the inherent educational aspect of a PTI's role.
- SC was hearing a case involving a **sports officer/PTI contesting the university's retirement age policy**, seeking parity with other teaching faculty members.

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## Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023

**For Prelims:** Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, Metcalfe Act, Licensing Regulations by John Adams, Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023 .

**For Mains:** Press Regulation in India, Key Features of Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023

[Source: PIB](#)

## Why in News?

Recently, the **Lok Sabha** passed the **Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023**, repealing the colonial era law of the [Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867](#).

- The Bill has already been passed by Rajya Sabha in August 2023.

## What are the Key Features of Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023?

- **Registration of Periodicals:** The **Bill provides for the registration of periodicals**, which include any publication containing public news or comments on public news.
  - Periodicals do not include **books or scientific and academic journals**.
    - Whereas, the act provides for the registration of newspapers, periodicals, and books. It also provided for the cataloguing of books.
  - Books have been taken away from the purview of the bill, as books as a subject are administered by the [Ministry of Human Resource and Development](#).
- **Registration Protocols for Publications:** The Bill **enables periodical publishers to register online via the Press Registrar General and specified local authority**.
  - Also, Publishing a periodical is prohibited for individuals **convicted of terrorism or actions** against state security.
  - Whereas, the **act mandated a declaration to the [District Magistrate](#)**, who sent it to the Press Registrar for newspaper publication.
- **Foreign Periodicals:** Reproduction of foreign periodicals within India necessitates prior **approval from the central government**. Specific protocols for registering such periodicals will be outlined.
- **Press Registrar General:** This Bill introduces the role of the **Press Registrar General of India**, responsible for issuing registration certificates for all periodicals.
  - Additionally, their duties encompass maintaining a **periodical register, establishing guidelines for periodical titles, verifying circulation figures, and managing registration revisions**, suspensions, or cancellations.
- **Printing Press Registration:** Declarations regarding printing presses can now be submitted online to the **Press Registrar General**, deviating from the previous requirement of declarations made before the **District Magistrate**.
- **Suspension and Cancellation of Registration:** The Press Registrar General holds authority to **suspend a periodical's registration for a minimum of 30 days (extensible up to 180 days)** due to various reasons including furnishing false information, discontinuity in publication, or providing inaccurate annual statements.
  - Failure to rectify these issues could result in registration cancellation.
  - Further grounds for cancellation include **similarity in titles with other periodicals or convictions related to terrorism or acts against national security** by the owner/publisher.
- **Penalties and Appeals:** The Bill empowers the Press Registrar General to **levy penalties for unregistered periodical publication** or failure to furnish annual statements within specified timelines.
  - Non-compliance with these directives may lead to imprisonment for up to **six months**.
  - Additionally, provisions for appeals against refusal of registration certificates, suspension/cancellation of registration, or imposed penalties are available, with a **60-day window to file appeals before the Press and Registration Appellate Board**.

## What are the other Pre-Independence Legislations Related to Press Regulation?

- **Censorship under Lord Wellesley (1799):** Enacted due to French invasion fears, imposing strict wartime press controls, including pre-censorship.
  - Relaxed later by **Lord Hastings** in 1818, removing pre-censorship.
- **Licensing Regulations by John Adams (1823):** Instituted penalties for starting or operating a press without a license, later extended to cover various publications.
  - Primarily targeted Indian language newspapers or those led by Indians, leading to the cessation of **Rammohan Roy's Mirat-ul-Akbar**.

- **Press Act of 1835 (Metcalf Act):** Repealed the restrictive 1823 ordinance, earning Metcalfe the title "Liberator of the Indian press."
  - Mandated precise declarations by printers/publishers about their premises and allowed cessation as required.
- **Licensing Act during the 1857 Revolt:** Imposed further licensing restrictions due to the 1857 emergency.
  - Augmented existing registration procedures, granting the government power to halt the circulation of any printed material.
- **Vernacular Press Act, 1878:** Designed to regulate the vernacular press, suppress seditious writing, and prevent discord among different communities.
  - Required printers and publishers of vernacular newspapers to sign a bond refraining from disseminating **anti-government or divisive content**.
  - Decisions made by the magistrate were final without any avenue for appeal in court.
- **Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act, 1908:** Empowered magistrates to seize press properties publishing objectionable content inciting violence or murder.
  - [Bal Gangadhar Tilak](#), a militant nationalist leader, faced sedition charges and was transported to Mandalay, sparking widespread protests and strikes.
- **Indian Press Act, 1910:** Local governments could demand security at registration, penalize offending newspapers, and require free copies for scrutiny.
  - Impeded press freedom by imposing stringent regulations similar to those in the Vernacular Press Act.

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## Increase Tiger Numbers in Valmiki Tiger Reserve

[Source: DTE](#)

### Why In News?

Recently, the [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#) had officially announced the increase in [tiger](#) population in **Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR)**.

- It witnessed the growth in the number of big cats from **31 (2018)** to **54 (2023)**.
- The **Bihar government** is waiting to obtain **NTCA** approval for declaring **Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary** as the **state's second tiger reserve** after VTR.

### Why Has the Number of Tigers in VTR Increased?

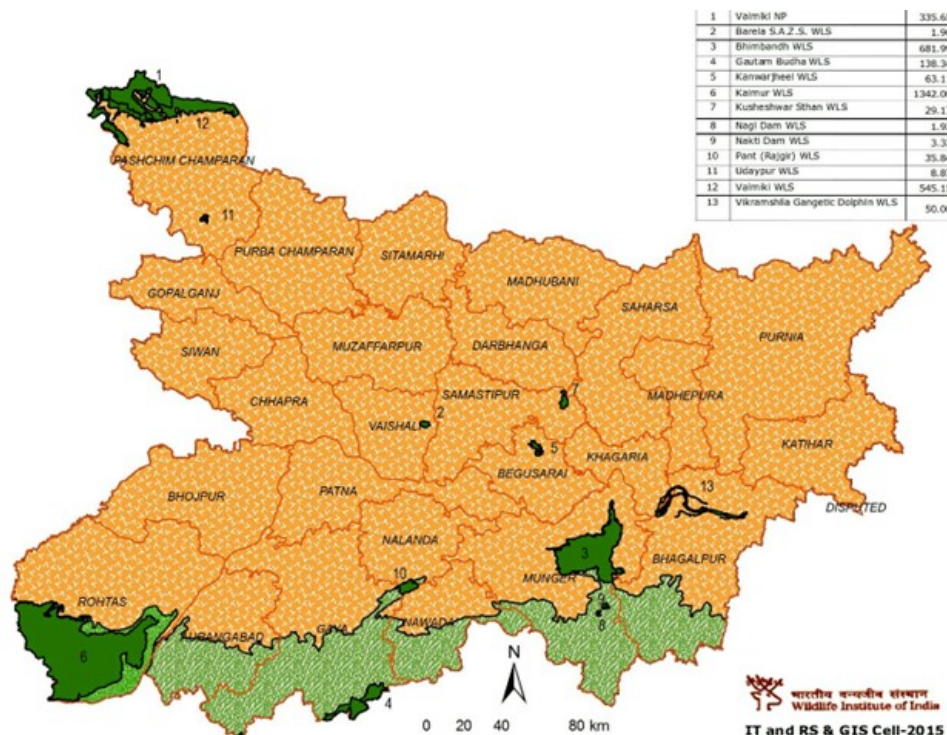
- A total ban on **sand and stone mining** inside **VTR**, and strict restrictions on **mining** in its **eco-sensitive zone**, helped increase **grassland cover**.
- An **increase in grassland cover** thus helps in supporting the **prey population**, in turn increasing the chances of the carnivores' survival.
- The reserve is dedicated to managing and sustaining the tiger population **by raising awareness among local residents** and monitoring mining activities in and around the area **to minimize human-wildlife conflict**.
- The **NTCA** placed the reserve in the **'Very Good' category**.

### What are the Important Facts of Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR)?

- The **VTR** is the **only tiger reserve** in **Bihar**, which forms the easternmost extent of the **Himalayan Terai forests** in India.
  - The **VTR** is located in **Bihar's West Champaran district**, bordering **Nepal** to its **north** and **Uttar Pradesh** to its **west**.

- Situated in the **Gangetic plains bio-geographic region**, the vegetation of this Tiger Reserve is a combination of **Bhabar** and **Terai regions**.
- According to the **Forest Survey of India Report 2021**, **85.71%** of its total area is covered by forest cover.
- Wild mammals found in the forests of **Valmiki Tiger Reserve** include **tiger, sloth bear, leopard, wild dog, bison, wild boar** etc.
- **Rivers Gandak, Pandai, Manor, Harha, Masan and Bhapsa** flow through various parts of the reserve.

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## What is the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)?

- **About:**
  - **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** is a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change**.
  - It was established in **2005** following the recommendations of the **Tiger Task Force**.
  - It was constituted under enabling provisions of the [Wildlife \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#), as amended in **2006**, for **strengthening tiger conservation**, as per powers and functions assigned to it.
- **Objectives:**
  - Providing **statutory authority** to [Project Tiger](#) so that compliance of its directives becomes legal.
  - Fostering **accountability** of **Center-State** in management of **Tiger Reserves**, by providing a basis for **MoU** with States within our federal structure.
  - Providing for an **oversight by Parliament**.
  - Addressing livelihood interests of local people in areas surrounding Tiger Reserves.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q1.** Consider the following protected areas: (2012)

1. Bandipur
2. Bhitarkanika
3. Manas
4. Sunderbans



Which of the above are declared Tiger Reserves?

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

**Ans: (b)**

**Q2.** From the ecological point of view, which one of the following assumes importance in being a good link between the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats? (2017)

- (a) Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve
- (b) Nallamala Forest
- (c) Nagarhole National Park
- (d) Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve

**Ans: (a)**

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## Progress in Ending Child Marriage

**For Prelims:** [Sustainable Development Goal 5.3](#), [UNICEF](#), [Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2006](#), Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, Dhanalakshmi Scheme.

**For Mains:** Major Factors Associated with Child Marriage, Legislative Framework and Initiatives Related to Child Marriage in India.

[Source: ET](#)

### Why in News?

A recent study published in 'The Lancet Global Health' journal sheds light on the **prevailing scenario of child marriage in India**, revealing both progress and setbacks in the fight against this deeply rooted practice.

### What are the Major Trends Highlighted by the Study?

- **Status in India:**
  - Girl child marriages declined from **49% in 1993 to 22% in 2021**. Boy child marriages reduced from **7% in 2006 to 2% in 2021**, indicating an overall national decline.
  - However, between **2016 and 2021**, the progress plateaued, with certain states experiencing a troubling rise in child marriages.
    - Notably, six states witnessed an **increase in girl child marriages**, including **Manipur, Punjab, Tripura, and West Bengal**.
    - Eight states observed a rise in boy child marriages, encompassing **Chhattisgarh, Goa, Manipur, and Punjab**.
- **Global Trends:** Globally, progress against child marriage has been notable, but the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) threatens this advancement, putting approximately **10 million more girls at risk of child marriage** over a decade.

## What are the Major Factors Associated with Child Marriage?

- **Economic Factors:** Families living in poverty might see **marriage as a means to reduce the economic burden** by transferring responsibility for the girl to her husband's family.
  - In some regions, the tradition of providing dowry can influence families to **marry off daughters at a young age to avoid higher dowry costs later.**
  - Also, in areas prone to [natural disasters](#) or **agrarian crises**, families facing economic hardships might resort to early marriage as a coping mechanism or to secure stability.
- **Social Norms and Traditional Practices:** Long-held customs and traditions often prioritize **early marriage as a social norm**, perpetuating the practice across generations.
  - **Pressure from the community or family** to conform to prevalent customs and traditions lead to early marriages, particularly for girls.
- **Gender Inequality and Discrimination:** Unequal power dynamics and **limited agency for girls compared to boys** contribute significantly to early marriage.
  - **Lack of access to education and opportunities for girls often pushes families to opt for early marriages**, viewing it as a way to secure their daughters' futures.

**Note:** [UNICEF](#) categorizes **child marriage as a human rights violation** due to its adverse impacts on the development of both girls and boys.

- [Sustainable Development Goal 5.3](#) states that Child marriage elimination is pivotal in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, aiming for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls by 2030.
- According to the UN, **1 in 5 young women worldwide** (19%) were married in childhood in 2022.

## What are the Legislative Framework and Initiatives Related to Child Marriage in India?

- **Legislative Framework:** India enacted the [Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2006](#), establishing the legal age for marriage at 21 for men and 18 for women.
  - Section 16 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act allows State Governments to appoint '**Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO)**' for specific areas.
    - CMPOs are responsible for preventing child marriages, collecting evidence for prosecutions, counseling against promoting or aiding such marriages, raising awareness about their harmful effects, and sensitizing communities
  - Government has introduced a bill namely '**the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 for raising the age of marriage of women to 21 years** to make it at par with the men.
- **Related Initiatives:**
  - **Dhanalakshmi Scheme:** It is a conditional cash transfer scheme for a girl child with insurance coverage.
    - It also aims to **eliminate child marriage by offering parents insurance coverage** of medical expenses and encouraging the education of the girl child.
  - Schemes like [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao \(BBBP\)](#), also aims to empower girls through education, health and protection, and discourage child marriage.

**Note:** **Odisha Government** has devised a comprehensive strategy to tackle child marriage. They track girls' school attendance and village presence and utilize the "**Advika**" **platform** for girls aged 10 to 19.

- Guidelines are in place to **declare villages free of child marriage**, with incentives for vulnerable tribal groups.
- Districts implement various approaches, such as maintaining girl databases and mandating [Aadhaar numbers](#) in marriages.

## Way Forward

- **Economic Empowerment Initiatives:** Offering **vocational training and entrepreneurship opportunities to girls at risk**, providing viable alternatives to early marriage.
  - Facilitate access to microloans for families, encouraging income generation and reducing financial pressure for early marriages.
- **Community Engagement through Art and Media:** Organizing **art-based workshops, theater performances, or community storytelling sessions** to engage and educate on the consequences of child marriage.
  - Collaborate with local artists and influencers to create impactful campaigns via music, street art, or short films.
- **Peer Education and Mentorship Programs:** Training **young leaders as advocates against child marriage**, empowering them to educate and mentor peers within their communities.
  - Introducing comprehensive education modules within schools, fostering discussions and awareness among students.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation. (2016).

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