



Criminalisation of Politics

For Prelims: [Criminalisation of Politics](#), [Internal democratic structures](#), [Corruption](#), [RP Act 1951](#), [National Women's Commission](#), [National Human Rights Commission \(NHRC\)](#), [Law Commission](#)

For Mains: Criminalisation of Politics, its causes and key issues involved.

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

Recent cases of alleged sexual harassment of women on the various MP, MLA and government employees, sheds light on a concerning aspect of criminalisation of politics and the ethical issues involved like moral responsibility, failure to uphold professional ethics etc.

What does the Criminalisation of Politics Mean?

▪ About:

- **Criminalisation of politics** is when **people with criminal charges or backgrounds** become politicians and are elected to office.
- It can affect the basic principles of democracy, such as fairness in elections, accountability, and following the law.
- This growing menace has become a big problem for our society, affecting the basic principles of democracy, such as fairness in elections, following the law, and being accountable.

▪ Statistics:

- According to data from the [Association for Democratic Reforms \(ADR\)](#), the number of candidates with [criminal charges](#) being elected to Parliament in India has been on the rise since 2004.
- In **the 2009 Lok Sabha**, **30%** of parliamentarians had pending criminal cases, which rose to 34% in the 2014 Lok Sabha.
- In the **2019 Lok Sabha**, **233 (43%)** of 543 Lok Sabha members faced criminal charges.
 - In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, **112 MPs (21%)** faced **serious criminal cases** against them, including those of **rape, murder**, attempt to murder, kidnapping, crimes against women.

What are the Causes of Increasing Criminalisation of Politics?

▪ Nexus between Politicians and Criminals:

- Many politicians in India have established close ties with criminal elements, often using their money and muscle power to win elections.

▪ Weak Law Enforcement and Judicial System:

- The Indian criminal justice system is often characterised by slow, inefficient, and corrupt processes, making it difficult to effectively prosecute and convict politicians with criminal backgrounds.
 - A report by the [National Crime Records Bureau](#) revealed that the **conviction rate**

for crimes committed by Members of Parliament and State Legislatures was **only 6% in 2019**.

▪ **Lack of Internal Party Democracy:**

- Many political parties in India have **weak internal democratic structures**, allowing party leaders to handpick candidates, including those with criminal backgrounds, based on their **ability to win elections rather than their integrity**.
- This lack of internal party democracy **undermines the ability of citizens** to hold their **representatives accountable**.

▪ **Voter Apathy and Lack of Political Awareness:**

- Some voters, particularly in rural and impoverished areas, may prioritise immediate **tangible benefits** provided by criminal-backed candidates over long-term considerations of good governance and the rule of law.

What are the Ethical Issues Associated with Criminalisation of Politics?

▪ **Absence of Non-partisanship and Accountability:**

- The **failure to address misconduct** within the political class, underscores a lack of accountability and ethical standards.
- Examples of MPs facing serious criminal charges reveal a pattern of defending individuals accused of serious offences relating to women, indicating the **separation from ethical norms** across party lines.
- This separation often originates from **intense partisanship** and prioritisation of power over ethical conduct.

▪ **Lack of Democratic Accountability through Public Outrage:**

- **Public outrage often serves as the catalyst** for action within political parties, as seen in the case of Prajwal Revanna.
 - However, the reactive nature of political responses to scandals highlights a broader **issue of accountability** within democratic systems.
- Despite knowledge of misconduct, parties often remain inactive until forced to address public outcry, emphasising the need for more robust mechanisms of accountability beyond public pressure.

▪ **Culture of Impunity and Individual Accountability:**

- A culture of impunity diffuses through the political sphere, where norms and rules are **inconsistently enforced**, placing the burden of accountability on individual women.
- Despite systemic failures, **courageous women** like the complainant against Revanna or the **Unnao rape survivor** have played pivotal roles in holding perpetrators accountable.
- However, the **high personal costs of pursuing justice** highlight the **need for systemic reforms** to address impunity and ensure genuine accountability within the political sphere.

▪ **Women's Empowerment as a Fallacy:**

- Despite widespread agendas on women's empowerment, substantive progress on **women's issues** such as **respect, equality, and security** remains unaddressed.
 - While **women are mobilized as voters and beneficiaries of welfare schemes**, their **collective concerns** often remain on the periphery of political agendas.
- The gap between promises made and action undermines the potential for meaningful progress on women's issues within the political sphere.

▪ **Representation vs Empowerment:**

- **Equitable representation alone is insufficient** for true political empowerment of women. True empowerment requires the ability to set and enforce **normative ethical and moral standards**.
 - The disconnect between representation and empowerment is evident in the limited impact of bodies like the [National Women's Commission](#), [National Human Rights Commission \(NHRC\)](#) etc

- **Nonpartisanship** refers to the state of not being affiliated with or biased toward any particular political party or ideology. It is the idea of being neutral and unbiased in political matters, and not

taking sides with one party or another.

What are the Ethical Implications of Criminalisation of Politics?

▪ Societal Perspective:

- **Erosion of Moral Fabric:** When people with criminal backgrounds hold power, it sends a message that lawbreaking is acceptable, potentially leading to a **decline in societal ethics** and respect for the law.
- **Reduced Civic Participation:** There is a **high chance of erosion of trust in the democratic process**. Citizens will be less likely to vote or participate in civic life if they believe the system is corrupt and unresponsive.
- **Inequality and Exclusion:** Criminalization can **disproportionately affect marginalised communities**, limiting their representation and hindering progress on issues relevant to them.
- **Focus on Short-Term Gains:** Politicians with criminal backgrounds can **prioritise personal gain or quick fixes** over long-term societal development.

▪ Democratic Perspective:

- **Undermines Democratic Principles:** A core principle of democracy is electing representatives who can uphold the law. Politicians with criminal backgrounds **lack essential ethical qualities of integrity and honesty** which may lead to favouritism and unfair law-making.
- **Free and Fair Elections:** Criminalization can distort electoral processes through **money laundering, muscle power**, and intimidation, hindering a fair chance for honest candidates.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** When criminals hold office, they are less likely to face scrutiny or be held accountable for their actions, **reducing transparency in governance**.
- **Challenges to India's Development:** Criminalization can hinder India's development by **diverting resources towards personal gain** or stalling crucial reforms due to vested interests.

What are the Constitutional and Legal Aspects of Disqualification of Criminal Candidates?

▪ About:

- In this regard, **Indian Constitution does not specify** as to what disqualifies a person from contesting elections for the Parliament, Legislative assembly or any other legislature.
- The [Representation of Peoples Act 1951](#) mentions the criteria for disqualifying a person for contesting an election of the legislature.
 - **Section 8 of the act** provides for disqualification on conviction for certain offences, according to which an individual punished with a jail term of more than two years cannot stand in an election for six years after the jail term has ended.
 - However, the **law does not bar individuals** who have criminal cases pending against them from contesting elections therefore the disqualification of candidates with criminal cases depends on their conviction in these cases.

▪ Recommendations Against Criminalisation of Politics:

- In **1983**, the **Vohra Committee on Criminalisation of Politics** was constituted with an objective to identify the extent of the political-criminal nexus and to recommend ways in which the criminalisation of politics can be effectively dealt with.
- The [Law Commission](#) submitted its 244th report in 2014 which dealt with the need to curb the trend of criminal politicians in the legislature posing serious consequences to democracy and secularism.
 - The Law Commission recommended disqualification of people against whom charges have been framed at least one year before the date of scrutiny of nominations for an offence punishable with a sentence of five years or more.
- In 2017, the Union government started a scheme to establish **12 special courts for a**

year to [fast-track the trial of criminal cases against MPs and MLAs](#).

▪ **SC Judgements Regarding Criminalization of Politics:**

- **Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (2002):**
 - In 2002, the SC ruled that every candidate contesting an election has to declare his criminal and financial records along with educational qualifications.
- **PUCL v Union of India (2004):**
 - The SC ruled that a law nullifying the requirement for election candidates to disclose their criminal records was unconstitutional. The Court said voters have a right to know about candidates' backgrounds for fair elections.
- **Ramesh Dalal vs. Union of India (2005):**
 - In 2005, the SC had ruled that a sitting MP or MLA will be disqualified from contesting the election if convicted and sentenced for imprisonment for two years or more by a court of law.
- **Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013):**
 - The SC has declared that any member of parliament or state legislative assembly who is convicted of a crime and sentenced to a prison term of two years or more would be disqualified from holding office.
- **Manoj Narula v. Union of India (2014):**
 - The five-judge bench of the Supreme Court held that a person cannot be disqualified from contesting elections merely because they have been charged with a criminal offence.
 - However, the court also held that political parties must not field candidates who have a criminal background.
- **Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India (2018):**
 - The SC has ordered political parties to publish the criminal records of their candidates on their websites, social media handles, and newspapers.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for Accountability:**
 - **Empowering anti-corruption agencies** and the judiciary to effectively investigate and prosecute political corruption and abuse of power.
 - Establishing **stronger internal party disciplinary processes** that are transparent and impartial.
 - Ensuring the **independence and effectiveness of oversight bodies** like the **ECI, NRHC and National Commission for Women**.
- **Promoting a Culture of Ethical Conduct:**
 - **Developing a comprehensive code of conduct** for elected representatives and political party officials.
 - Mandating **ethical training and sensitization programs** for all members of the political class.
 - Imposing **stringent penalties**, including disqualification, for violations of ethical norms.
- **Empowering Citizens and Civil Society:**
 - **Improving civic education** to enhance political awareness and critical thinking among voters.
 - **Encouraging greater citizen participation** in the political process, including through grassroots movements and advocacy campaigns.
 - Supporting the **role of independent media**, watchdog organisations, and activists in investigating and highlighting issues of political misconduct.

Conclusion

Restoring accountability and ethical standards within the Indian political sphere will be a complex and long-term endeavour. However, a multipronged approach that addresses institutional, cultural, and societal dimensions can help to counter the concerning trends of criminalization and partisan protection that have undermined the integrity of the democratic process.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss about the criminalisation of politics with the help of examples. Also, Mention key ethical issues involved with it.

Q. Enumerate the ethical issues involved with the criminalisation of politics. Also, suggest the ethical implications of it?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q.1 Consider the following statements: (2021)

1. In India, there is no law restricting the candidates from contesting in one Lok Sabha election from three constituencies.
2. In the 1991 Lok Sabha Election, Shri Devi Lal contested from three Lok Sabha constituencies.
3. As per the existing rules, if a candidate contests in one Lok Sabha election from many constituencies, his/her party should bear the cost of bye-elections to the constituencies vacated by him/her winning in all the constituencies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q.1 Discuss the procedures to decide the disputes arising out of the election of a Member of the Parliament or State Legislature under The Representation of the People Act, 1951. What are the grounds on which the election of any returned candidate may be declared void? What remedy is available to the aggrieved party against the decision? Refer to the case laws. **(2022)**

Q.2 It is often said that 'politics' and 'ethics' do not go together. What is your opinion in this regard? Justify your answer with illustrations. **(2013)**

UN: Trillions Required to Rescue SDGs

For Prelims: [United Nations](#), [Sustainable Development Goals](#), [Least developed countries](#), [OECD](#), [Climate Finance](#)

For Mains: Progress of India in Achieving SDGs, Measures to Boost SDG Financing.

[Source: DTE](#)

Recently, a new report released by the [United Nations \(UN\)](#) stated that more investment is needed if the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), agreed upon by all **United Nations** members back in 2015, are to be achieved by 2030.

- The reason for this situation is due to **staggering debt burdens and sky-high borrowing costs faced by developing countries** that prevent them from responding to the confluence of crises they face.

What are the Key Highlights of UN Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024 ?

▪ Key Issues:

- **Lack of Basic Services:** Rising geopolitical tensions, climate disasters and a global cost-of-living crisis have hit billions of people globally, which has halted the progress on healthcare, education, and other development targets.
- **Increase in Debt Services:** Debt services in the [Least developed countries \(LDC\)](#) will increase from USD 26 billion annually in 2022 to **USD 40 billion annually** between 2023 and 2025.
 - Stronger and more frequent disasters, caused by the ongoing climate crisis, account for more than **half of the debt upsurge** in vulnerable countries.
- **Higher Burden of Interest Payment:** The poorest countries now spend 12% of their revenues on interest payments, 4 times more than they spent a decade ago.
 - Roughly **40%** of the global population live in countries where governments spend more on interest payments than on education or health.
- **Slowing Development Fundings:** In **Least developed countries**, development fundings are slowing down.
 - Due to several reasons such as **low domestic revenue growth** due to tax evasion and avoidance, falling rate of corporate tax (which was 28.2% in 2000 to 21.1% in 2023), due to **globalisation** and tax competition etc.
 - Also, **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** from [OECD](#) countries and [climate finance commitments](#) are not being met.
 - According to the **Financing for Sustainable Development Report: Financing for Development at a Crossroads Report 2024**, around **USD 4.2 trillion** investments is needed to close the development financing gap.
 - This number was **USD 2.5 trillion before the Covid-19** pandemic began.

▪ Suggestions:

- International financial system, which was set up at the **1944 Bretton Woods Conference**, is no longer fit for purpose.
 - A **“massive surge of financing”** and a **“reform of the international financial architecture”** can help to achieve SDGs goals by 2030.
 - Setting up a **new coherent system** that is better equipped to respond to **crises**.
- To achieve the SDGs **global cooperation, targeted financing, and, crucially, the political will** is the need of the hour.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



What is the Progress of India in Achieving SDGs?

- **Progress:** India ranks **112th out of 166 countries** (from **121st in 2022**) in terms of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in United Nations SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2023.
- **Progress in Key Goals:**
 - **Goal 1- No Poverty:** India has successfully lifted millions of people out of poverty, **reducing the poverty rate from 45% in 1993 to around 21% in 2011.**(Goal 1: No Poverty)
 - Around **415 million** people exited poverty within a span of just 15 years between 2005 to 2021 in India, according to the latest **Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2023**
 - **Goal 2- Zero Hunger:** The prevalence of **undernourishment** in India has decreased from 18.2% in 2004-2006 to **14.5% in 2016-2018.**
 - However, India is still home to a **quarter of all undernourished people worldwide**, making the country a key focus for tackling hunger on a global scale.
 - **Goal 3- Good Health and Well-being:** India has made significant improvements in **maternal and child health**, with a reduction in maternal mortality ratio from **384 in 2000 to 103 in 2020 (UN MMEIG 2020 report).**
 - Under-five mortality rate has also declined from 89 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to **34 in 2019.**
 - **Goal-4 Quality Education:** According to the Education Ministry, the literacy rate in rural India stands at 67.77%, while in urban India, it is 84.11%
 - The [ASER 2023](#) data shows that in the surveyed rural districts, more than **85%** of youth (age 14-18) are currently enrolled in some kind of educational institution.
 - **Goal 5- Gender Equality:** The **female labour force participation rate** in India increased from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 37.0% in 2022-23 (**PLFS-5**)

What Measures can be Adopted to Boost SDG Financing?

- **Dedicated Investment Funds:** Establishing specialized investment funds dedicated to financing projects and initiatives that directly contribute to specific SDGs.
 - These funds could be structured as **public-private partnerships**, attracting investments from governments, institutional investors, and impact-driven private investors.

- **Policy and Institutional Reforms:** Ensure national policies and regulations are conducive to SDG implementation.
 - Enhancing **domestic resource mobilization** through measures such as progressive taxation, reducing tax evasion and tackling illicit financial flows can increase the availability of funds for SDG implementation.
- **International Cooperation:** International cooperation and coordination among governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector are crucial for mobilizing resources, sharing best practices, and addressing common challenges in SDG financing.
 - Providing **debt relief** for developing countries to free up resources for SDG investments.
 - Developed countries should meet their **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** commitments to support SDG implementation in low-income countries.
 - Bringing **Global Tax Reforms** to address **tax havens** and ensuring multinational corporations pay their fair share of taxes.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Data analytics and predictive modeling techniques can be used to analyze large datasets and identify trends, patterns, and investment opportunities related to SDGs.
 - By these tools, **financial institutions, investors, and policymakers** can make informed decisions, optimize resource allocation, and maximize the impact of SDG financing initiatives.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss India's progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and analyse the key challenges hindering its path. How can India further accelerate its efforts to meet the SDGs by 2030?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements: (2016)

1. The Sustainable Development Goals were first proposed in 1972 by a global think tank called the 'Club of Rome'.
2. The Sustainable Development Goals have to be achieved by 2030.

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

Ans: (b)

Q. Sustainable development is described as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this perspective, inherently the concept of sustainable development is intertwined with which of the following concepts? (2010)

- (a) Social justice and empowerment
- (b) Inclusive Growth
- (c) Globalization
- (d) Carrying capacity

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy is the sine qua non to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." Comment on the progress made in India in this regard. **(2018)**

Q. National Education Policy 2020 is in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (2030). It intends to restructure and reorient the education system in India. Critically examine the statement. **(2020)**

Regulating Misleading Advertisements in India

For Prelims: [Supreme Court of India](#), [Central Consumer Protection Authority](#), [Consumer Protection Act, 2019](#), [Advertisement Standard Council of India](#)

For Mains: Consumer rights and prevention unfair trade practices, Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements, Advertising regulations and public health concerns

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

In a move to safeguard consumers from **misleading advertisements**, the [Supreme Court of India](#) has issued directives for **advertisers to submit self-declarations** before promoting products in the media.

- In further development, the Union government has withdrawn an AYUSH Ministry letter, which "omitted" **Rule 170 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, with immediate effect.**

Note:

- Rule 170 **prohibits advertisements** of [Ayurvedic, Siddha, or Unani drugs](#) without licensing authorities' approval.

What are the Key Directives from the Supreme Court?

- **Submission of Self-Declarations:**
 - Advertisers must submit **self-declarations** before promoting products in the media.
 - Advertisers are **now obligated to declare that their advertisements do not deceive or make untrue statements** about their products in order to prevent misleading consumers.
- **Online Portal for Advertisers:**
 - Advertisers intending to run TV ads must upload declarations on the '**Broadcast Seva**' portal, which serves as a one-stop facility for stakeholders to request permissions, registrations, and licenses for broadcast-related activities from the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**.
 - A similar portal for print advertisers is to be established.
- **Responsibility of Endorsers:**
 - Social media influencers, celebrities, and public figures endorsing products **must act responsibly.**

- Endorsers should possess adequate knowledge about the products they promote to avoid deceptive advertising.
- **Ensuring Consumer Protection:**
 - Establish a transparent process for consumers to report misleading advertisements and ensure they receive updates on complaint status and outcomes.

What Recent Cases of Misleading Advertisements have Emerged?

- The **Advertisement Monitoring Committee** at [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India \(FSSAI\)](#) identified 32 cases of misleading claims by **food business operators (FBOs)** bringing the total count of such violations to 170 in the last six months.
 - **Variety of Offenders:** Violators span diverse product categories, including health supplements, organic products, and staples.
- The [Supreme Court recently rebuked Patanjali Ayurved](#) for disseminating misleading advertisements, leading to a ban on its marketing activities.
 - The [Indian Medical Association](#) accused Patanjali of denigrating [allopathic medicine](#) and **spreading false information** about vaccines during [Covid-19](#).
 - The allegations led to legal arguments citing violations of the [Drugs & Other Magical Remedies Act, 1954](#), and the [Consumer Protection Act, 2019](#).

How Do Misleading Advertisements Violate Ethical Principles?

- **Violation of Truthfulness:** Honesty and truthfulness are essential ethical principles that should guide all business practices, including advertising.
 - These advertisements manipulate consumer perceptions and **exploit vulnerabilities for commercial gain; they** persuade individuals to make purchasing decisions based on false premises.
- **Fairness and Justice:** Misleading advertisements create an uneven playing field, giving an **unfair advantage to companies that engage in deceptive practices** over those that prioritize ethical advertising.
 - This violates the principle of fairness and justice in the marketplace, as it disadvantages honest competitors and undermines consumer trust.
 - **Example:** Companies making false **environmental claims (greenwashing) to capitalize** on the growing demand for sustainable products, while their competitors truthfully disclose their environmental impact.
- **Consumer Harm:** Misleading advertisements can lead to financial losses for consumers who purchase products or **services based on false claims, resulting in dissatisfaction.**
 - It can also harm consumers' physical or mental well-being if the advertised products or services are potentially harmful or ineffective.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Repeated exposure to misleading advertisements **erodes trust in products, brands, and advertising**, undermining the ethical principle of integrity in business and society.
 - When consumers feel deceived, they **lose confidence in the market's integrity, as words and actions become inconsistent.**

How Misleading Advertisements are Regulated in India?

- **Definition of Misleading Advertisement:**
 - A misleading advertisement is defined under **Section 2 (28) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, as any advertisement that:
 - Provides a false description of a product or service;
 - Offers false guarantees that mislead consumers;
 - constitutes an unfair trade practice through express representation;
 - Deliberately omits essential information about the product.
- **Central Consumer Protection Authority:**
 - The [Central Consumer Protection Authority \(CCPA\)](#) operates under the **Department of Consumer Affairs**.

- Established under section 10 of the [Consumer Protection Act, 2019](#), it regulates matters related to consumer rights violations and unfair trade practices.
- The act empowers the CCPA to prevent false or misleading advertisements and ensure consumer rights are protected.
- **Enforcement of Guidelines:**
 - The CCPA enforces the '[Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022](#)', which were issued per the powers conferred by the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
 - **Objective of the Guidelines:**
 - The guidelines seek to ensure that **consumers are not being fooled by unsubstantiated claims, exaggerated promises, misinformation and false claims.**
 - Such advertisements violate various rights of consumers such as **the right to be informed, the right to choose and the right to be safeguarded against potentially unsafe products and services.**
 - **Provisions of the Guidelines:**
 - The guidelines define "**bait advertising**", "**surrogate advertisement**" and "**free claim advertisements**".
 - They also lay down provisions to **protect children from exaggerated or unsubstantiated claims** in advertisements.
 - Advertisements targeting children are prohibited from featuring personalities from sports, music, or cinema for products that require a health warning or cannot be purchased by children.
 - Disclaimers in advertisements should not hide material information or attempt to correct misleading claims.
 - The guidelines also outline the **duties of manufacturers, service providers, advertisers, and advertising agencies** to bring more transparency and clarity to advertisements.
 - This aims to help consumers make informed decisions based on facts.
 - **Penalties for Violations:**
 - CCPA can **impose penalties of up to 10 lakh rupees** on manufacturers, advertisers, and endorsers for misleading advertisements.
 - For subsequent violations, the penalty can be up to 50 lakh rupees.
 - The Authority can also **prohibit the endorser of a misleading advertisement from making any endorsements** for up to 1 year, and for subsequent violations, the prohibition can extend up to 3 years.
- **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):**
 - Deceptive advertising falls under **Section-53 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**, making it punishable. FSSAI mandates advertisements to be truthful, unambiguous, and substantiated scientifically.
 - FSSAI uses the **Food Safety and Standards (Advertisements & Claims) Regulations, 2018** which specifically deal with **food (and related products)** while CCPA's regulations cover goods, products and services.
- **Legislations Governing Advertising:**
 - **ASCI (Advertisement Standard Council of India):**
 - It is a **nonstatutory tribunal** established as a self-regulated mechanism to introduce advertising ethics in India.
 - It judges advertisements based on its [Code of Advertising Practice, also known as the ASCI code](#) which applies to advertisements seen in India, even if they are from abroad and directed at Indian consumers.
 - **Consumer Protection Act, 1986:**
 - Grants consumers the right to be informed about goods and services' quality, quantity, and price.
 - Section 2(r) covers false advertisements under the definition of unfair trade practices.
 - Provides redressal against misleading advertisements.
 - **Cable Television Network Act of 1995 and the Cable Television Amendment Act of 2006:**
 - Prohibits transmission of advertisements that do not conform to the prescribed

- advertisement code.
- Ensures advertisements do not offend morality, decency, or religious sensitivities.
- **Restrictions on Tobacco Advertisement:**
 - Prohibits direct and indirect advertisement of [tobacco products](#) in all forms of media.
 - Enforced under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003.
- **Drug and Magic Remedies Act, 1954 & Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:**
 - It regulates drug advertisements. Prohibits the use of test reports for advertising drugs.
 - Penalties for violations include fines and imprisonment.
- **Regulation of Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques:**
 - Prohibits advertisement related to prenatal sex determination under the [Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques \(Regulation and Prevention of Misuse\) Act, 1994](#).
 - Advertising harmful publications under the Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act, 1956, is punishable.
- **Criminality of Advertisements under the Indian Penal Code (IPC):**
 - [IPC](#) prohibits obscene, defamatory, or inciteful advertisements.
 - Offenses related to inciting violence, terrorism, or crime are illegal and punishable under IPC provisions.

Initiatives for Consumer Protection

- [Consumer Welfare Fund](#)
- [Integrated Grievance Address Mechanism \(INGRAM\) Portal](#)
- [Bureau of Indian Standards \(BIS\)](#)
- [Jago Grahak Jago Campaign](#)
- [National Consumer Day](#) (24th December)
- [Central Consumer Protection Council](#).
- National and State Consumer Helplines.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Describe the legislative framework governing advertising practices in India. How do these laws and institutions contribute to maintaining ethical standards in advertising?

[Read more...](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question

Prelims

Q.1 With reference to 'consumers' rights/privileges under the provisions of law in India, which of the following statements is/are correct ? (2012)

1. Consumers are empowered to take samples for food testing.
2. When a consumer files a complaint in any consumer forum, no fee is required to be paid.
3. In case of death of consumer, his/her legal heir can file a complaint in the consumer forum on his/her behalf.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. What are social networking sites and what security implications do these sites present? (2013)

Shaping the Future of India's Toy Industry

For Prelims: [India's Toy Industry](#), Global Trade Research Initiative Report, International Standards Organization (ISO), Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

For Mains: [Strategy for India's Toy Industry](#)

[Source: GTRI](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the **Global Trade Research Initiative report** has proposed a comprehensive strategy to develop India's toy industry and enhance exports.

- The objective is to **elevate India into a global hub** for toy manufacturing and export by implementing **strategic interventions** focused on improving quality, fostering innovation, and expanding market reach.

What is the Status and Potential of India's Toy Industry?

- **Status:**
 - **As per Global Trade Research Initiative report** India holds a marginal position in the global toy trade, with a mere **0.3% share in exports and 0.1% share in imports**.
 - **India ranks 27th in global toy exports**, with a share of only 0.3%, and 61st in toy imports, with imports totalling USD 60 million.
 - India exports a **significant amount of electronic toys** compared to other categories, while also making a significant contribution to the toy trade through the export of plastic dolls, metal, and other non-electronic toys, highlighting its **diverse manufacturing capabilities**.
- **Potential:**
 - The Indian toy industry is among the **fastest-growing globally**, projected to reach **USD 3 billion by 2028**, growing at a CAGR of 12% between 2022-28.
 - The Indian toy industry is expanding its global presence, with increased high-value exports to **Middle East and African countries**.

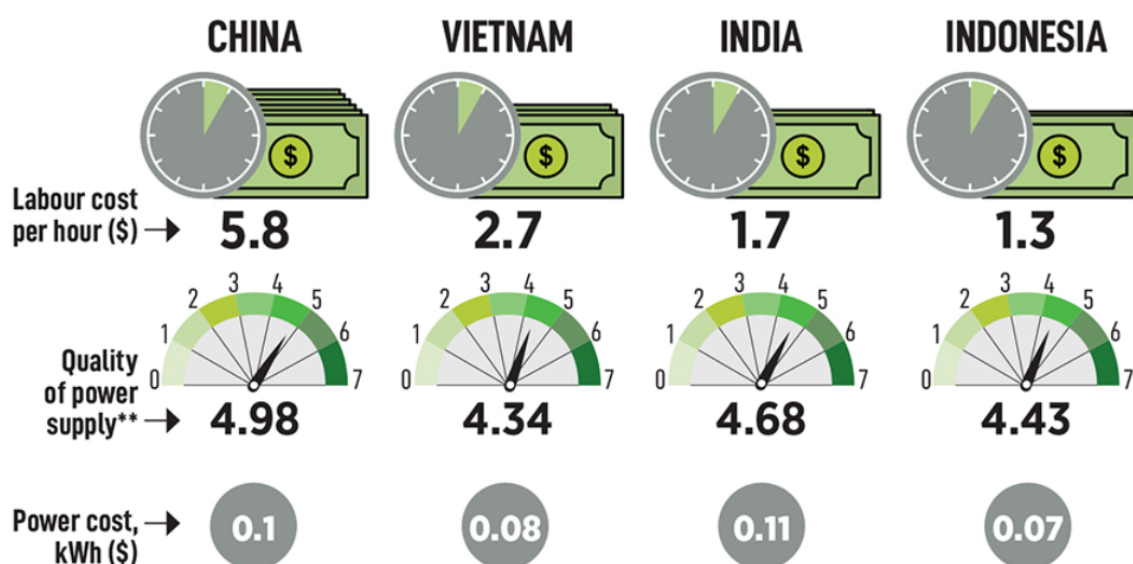
Global Toy Industry:

- **As per Global Trade Research Initiative report** In 2022, the global toy market witnessed imports valued at approximately USD 60.3 billion with **China dominating** this market with exports worth USD 48.3 billion, representing **80% of global exports**.
- The USA leads as the largest importer of toys, while other major importers include the European Union, Japan, Canada, Australia, Mexico, and South Korea signifying a **diverse market**.

What are the Challenges Faced by India's Toys Industry?

- **Lack of Technology:** It hinders the Indian toy industry by causing most domestic manufacturers to use outdated technology and machinery, impacting the quality and design of the toys.
- **High GST rates:** Mechanical toys attract 12% GST while tax on electronic toys is 18%. A mere addition of a bulb or a sound mechanism changes the classification of the toy.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** The toy industry in India faces challenges due to poor infrastructure, lack of end-to-end manufacturing facilities, inadequate testing labs, toy parks, clusters, and logistics support.
- **Unorganized and Fragmented:** The Indian Toy Industry is still significantly fragmented, with 90% of the market being unorganized, and harnessing the maximum benefit becomes very difficult.
- **Other Challenges:** Factors such as **cost-effectiveness, product diversity**, quality standards, and trade agreements play pivotal roles in shaping the global toy trade landscape.
 - Shifts in consumer preferences, technological advancements, and regulatory changes also impact market dynamics.

India's Cost Competitiveness Vis-à-Vis Other Nations



**Score on 1-7 scale with 7 being the best

SOURCE Industry consultations, World Bank, global petrol prices.com (power cost for businesses), Statista, KPMG in India Analysis

GoI Measures to Promote the Local Toy Industry

- **Import Duty Increase:** India significantly **raised import duties** on toys, increasing the basic customs duty from 20% to 70% in July 2021.
 - This made imported toys much more expensive, giving locally produced toys a **competitive advantage**.
- **Quality Control Order (QCO):** Since January 2021, the **QCO** has required all toys sold in India to meet specific Indian safety standards, covering aspects like sharp edges, small parts hazards, flammability, and harmful chemical migration.
 - Toys must also have the **BIS certification mark** and undergo random checks and testing in **NABL-accredited laboratories**.
 - The QCO checked substandard imports from China but did not result in higher exports from India.
- **National Action Plan for Toys:** An initiative by the Government of India, it involves

collaboration among 15 ministries and includes measures such as **creating toy production clusters**, introducing schemes to encourage manufacturing and exports, enhancing research and development, ensuring quality standards, integrating toys with education, and organizing toy fairs and exhibitions.

Note:

- **Toy quality** is determined by meeting performance standards, which can be **voluntary or mandatory**.
- The **Quality Control Order 2020** is a **mandatory technical regulation in India**.
- Internationally, standards are set by the [International Standards Organization \(ISO\)](#), while in India, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) sets specific standards for toys, covering aspects like mechanical safety, flammability, and element migration.

Way Forward

- **Government initiatives:** Support the toy industry through schemes like [SFURTI \(Scheme of Funds for the Regeneration of Traditional Industries\)](#) by the [Ministry of MSME](#) and promote exports that could further boost India's presence in the global toy market.
- **Encourage Global Toy Brands to Manufacture in India:** Invite **international toy manufacturers** who currently operate in China, such as Hasbro, Mattel, Lego, Spin Master, and MGA Entertainment, to consider setting up production facilities in India.
 - **Collaboration with international partners** for technology transfer and skill development can enhance India's competitiveness in the global toy trade.
- **Learn from China:** The Indian toy industry has an estimated value of USD 3 billion in contrast to USD 100 billion in China.
 - India should **study China's success** in becoming a major exporter to demanding markets like the USA, EU, Japan, and the rest of the world, despite initially supplying low-standard and unsafe toys.
- **Localize Production of Key Inputs:** To **enhance self-sufficiency** and reduce costs, promote local manufacturing of essential toy-making materials like **glass eyes, beads, imitation stones**, plastics, electric motors, and remote control devices, **reducing dependency on imports**.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the challenges faced by the Indian toys industry and evaluate potential strategies to address them. How can the Indian government and industry stakeholders collaborate to promote the growth and competitiveness of the domestic toys sector?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. What is/are the recent policy initiative(s) of Government of India to promote the growth of manufacturing sector? (2012)

1. Setting up of National Investment and Manufacturing Zones
2. Providing the benefit of 'single window clearance'
3. Establishing the Technology Acquisition and Development Fund

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

Mains:

Q. "Success of 'Make in India' program depends on the success of 'Skill India' programme and radical labour reforms." Discuss with logical arguments. **(2015)**

Aurora Borealis in India

Why in News?

Recently, **Auroras** which are typically visible in **high-latitude regions** such as the **North and South Poles**, were observed worldwide, including in areas where they are uncommon.

- In India, they were observed through all-sky cameras positioned around the [Indian Astronomical Observatory \(IAO\)](#) in [Hanle, Ladakh](#).

What is the Aurora Phenomenon?





▪ About:

- **Auroras** are **bright and colourful lights**, formed due to an active interaction in Space between charged **solar winds** and the **Earth's magnetosphere**.
- They occur when **violent solar events** eject charged particles into space, which become trapped in [Earth's magnetic field](#) and interact with atmospheric atoms, ultimately resulting in [geomagnetic storms](#) and the **creation of aurora**.
 - The constantly changing inputs from the sun, the varying responses from the Earth's upper atmosphere, and the motion of the planet and particles in near-Earth space all **work together to create different auroral motions and shapes**.
- In the Northern Hemisphere, the phenomenon is called the northern lights (***aurora borealis***), while in the Southern Hemisphere, it's called the southern lights (***aurora australis***).

▪ Composition and Colors:

- Auroras **consist of gases and particles**, including oxygen and nitrogen.
- The collisions of these particles with the atmosphere release energy in the form of light.
- The colors observed in auroras depend on the **type of gas and altitude** of the collisions.

▪ Impact:

- They can trigger **blackouts on the Earth**, knock out **satellites in space**, endanger the lives of astronauts, and affect **space weather** throughout the Solar System.

Note: **STEVE** is an **aurora-like phenomenon** that appears as a distinct, purple-colored arc with a moving green "picket-fence" structure. It can be observed from **lower latitudes** than the typical northern and southern lights.

Geomagnetic Storm

- A geomagnetic storm is a major disturbance of Earth's magnetosphere that occurs when there is a very **efficient exchange of energy** from the solar wind into the space environment surrounding Earth.
- **Violent geomagnetic storms are rare**, occurring around once every few decades.
 - The last time charged particles from the Sun blew into the Earth with similar energy and

intensity was in 2003.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The Earth's magnetic field has reversed every few hundred thousand years.
2. When the Earth was created more than 4000 million years ago, there was 54% oxygen and no carbon dioxide.
3. When living organisms originated, they modified the early atmosphere of the Earth.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (c)

Q. Electrically charged particles from space travelling at speeds of several hundred km/sec can severely harm living beings if they reach the surface of the Earth. What prevents them from reaching the surface of the Earth? (2012)

- (a) The Earth's magnetic field diverts them towards its poles
- (b) Ozone layer around the Earth reflects them back to outer space.
- (c) Moisture in the upper layers of atmosphere prevents them from reaching the surface of the Earth
- (d) None of the statements (a), (b) and (c) given above is correct

Ans: (a)

Snow Leopards

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

Recently there was a significant discovery of [snow leopards](#) in the **Kishtwar High Altitude National Park** of Jammu and Kashmir's [Chenab Valley](#) region by a team of scientists.

- This discovery holds importance for snow leopard conservation in India, shedding light on a lesser-known population of this **apex predator**.

Why is the Sighting Significant?

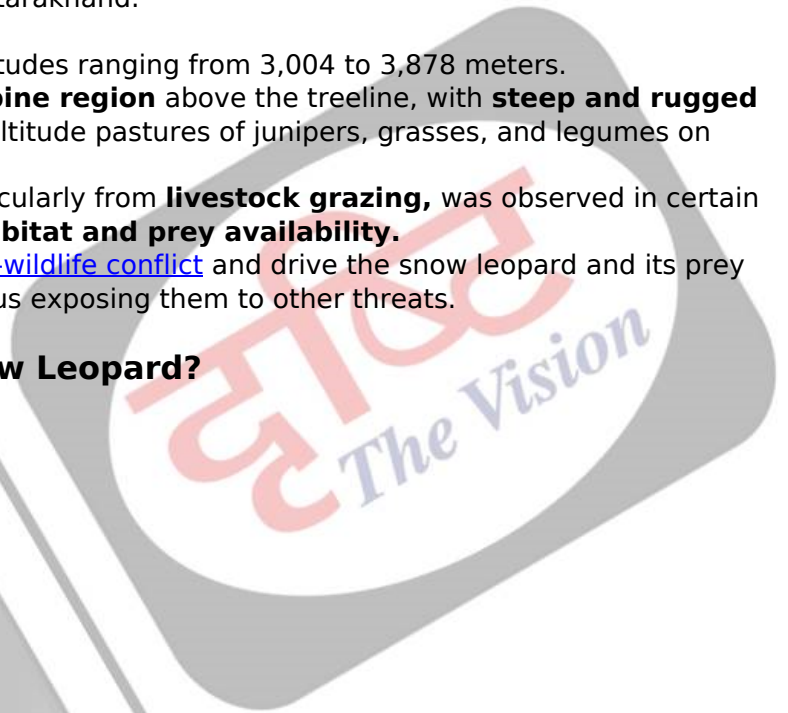
▪ Importance of the Discovery:

- Snow leopards are highlighted as an **apex predator** and a **flagship species** of High Mountain Asia.
- India's role as home to 2% of the global snow leopard range emphasizes the importance of conservation efforts.
 - The **occupancy** and **abundance** of the snow leopard is **poorly known** across its range in India.
- India is home to 718 snow leopards, most of whom live in areas that are not under legal protection.
 - **Population surveys** in the Western Himalayas have been limited to Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

▪ Findings:

- Snow leopards were found at altitudes ranging from 3,004 to 3,878 meters.
 - This is mostly an **arid alpine region** above the treeline, with **steep and rugged terrain** flanked by high-altitude pastures of junipers, grasses, and legumes on rolling hills.
- **Anthropogenic pressure**, particularly from **livestock grazing**, was observed in certain catchments, posing threats to **habitat and prey availability**.
 - This could lead to [human-wildlife conflict](#) and drive the snow leopard and its prey into suboptimal areas, thus exposing them to other threats.

What are the Characteristics of Snow Leopard?



Snow Leopard

Panthera Uncia

Often referred to as the "ghost of the mountains"

HABITAT

- Mountainous regions of **Central and Southern Asia**
- **12** Range Countries
- In India:
 - **Western Himalayas:** Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh
 - **Eastern Himalayas:** Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh

MAJOR SITES

- Hemis National Park, Ladakh
 - **Snow leopard capital of the world**
- Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh
- Gangotri National Park, Uttarakhand
- Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim

PROTECTION STATUS

- **Vulnerable:** IUCN Red List
- **Appendix I:** CITES
- **Schedule I:** Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972

CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme
- Himal Sanrakshak- Community Volunteer Programme
- Project Snow Leopard
- Snow Leopard Conservation Breeding Programme- Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, West Bengal

THREATS

- Human Snow Leopard Conflict
- Climate Change
- Loss of Prey and Habitat
- Poaching



Some Key Facts:

- **Physical Features**
 - Height: 55-65 cm (22 - 26 inches)
 - Length: 90 - 115 cm (36 - 44 inches)
- Its **extra large paws** act like a pair of natural snow shoes preventing the cat from sinking into the snow.
- Its **round, short ears reduce heat loss**, and the wide, short nasal cavity warms the air before it reaches the cat's lungs.
- The cat has **strong, short front limbs** and longer hind limbs helping launch the cat up to 30 feet (10 meters) in one leap.
- Its **extra long tail** helps the cat keep its **balance** and provides **extra warmth** when it's

wrapped around the body.

- **Unlike other big cats, snow leopards can't roar.**
- Despite being called the snow 'leopard', this big cat is **more closely related to the [tiger](#)** than the leopard.

Kishtwar High Altitude National Park

Information	Details
Location	Kishtwar district, Jammu and Kashmir
Region	Forms Chenab Valley region along with Doda and Ramban
Habitat	Potential snow leopard habitat
Connectivity	Connects greater Himalayas of Jammu and Kashmir, trans-Himalayas of Ladakh (via Zaskar), and lesser Himalayas of Himachal Pradesh
Importance	Acts as a corridor connecting snow leopard populations in Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions to the global snow leopard range, enabling gene flow for healthy populations
Altitude Restriction	Protected area inaccessible above 4,300 meters due to rugged terrain and extreme weather
Other Fauna	Home to Siberian ibex, Himalayan musk deer, and wolves

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Which one of the following National Parks lies completely in the temperate alpine zone? (2019)

- (a) Manas National Park
- (b) Namdapha National Park
- (c) Neora Valley National Park
- (d) Valley of Flowers National Park

Ans: (d)

Shrimp Farming in India

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, India refuted the allegations made by a US based [Human Rights](#) Group of abusive conditions at shrimp farms in India. India stated that entire India's shrimp exports are certified by the [Marine Products Export Development Authority \(MPEDA\)](#) and there is no scope for such concerns.

What is the State of Shrimp Farming in India?

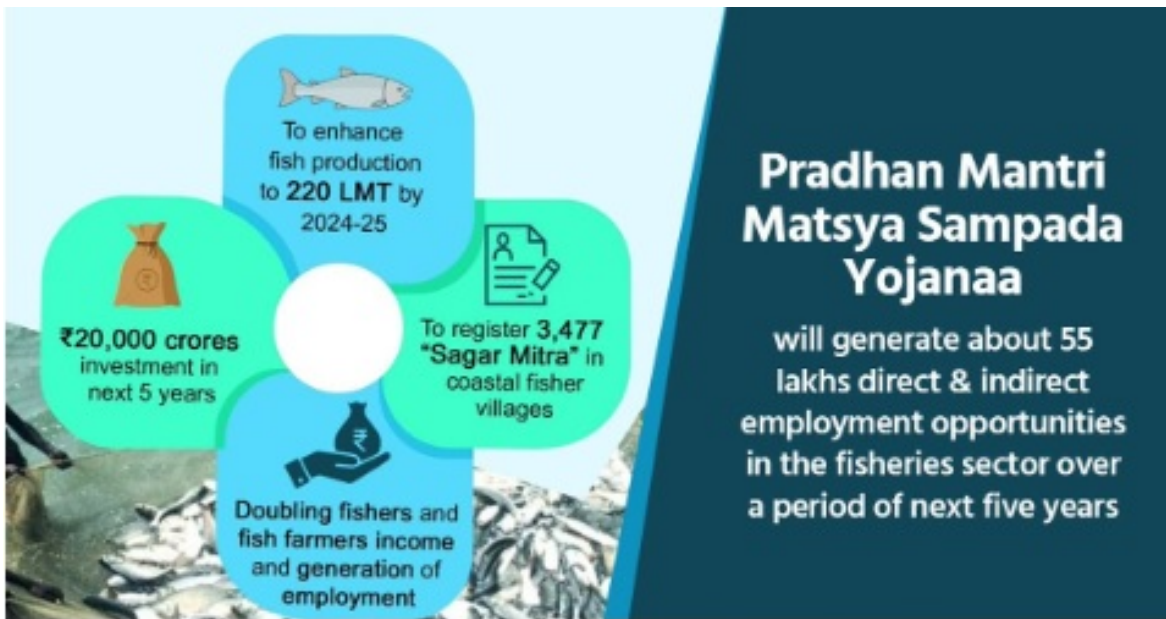
- **About:** A shrimp is a crustacean (a form of shellfish) characterised by a **semi transparent body** flattened from side to side and a flexible abdomen terminating in a fanlike tail.
 - Their close relatives include **crabs, crayfish, and lobsters**. They occur in all oceans, in shallow and deep water, and in freshwater lakes and streams.
- **Shrimp Farming: Shrimp Farming** is about raising shrimp in controlled environments such as ponds, tanks, or raceways for human consumption.
 - They prefer **warm water**, with temperatures between 25-30°C (77-86°F).
 - Preferred soil textures are **clay-loam or sandy-clay loam**, slightly alkaline soil with pH between 6.5 and 8.5 is optimal.
 - A minimum of **5% calcium carbonate** in the soil is beneficial for shrimp farming.
- **Status of Shrimp Farming in India:**
 - **India as Shrimp Exporter:** India is one of the **world's largest shrimp exporters**.
 - In 2022-23, India's **seafood exports** stood at **USD 8.09 billion** or ₹64,000 crore and **shrimps** accounted for a bulk of these exports at **USD 5.6 billion**.
 - India's share of seafood exports in the U.S. market was **40% in 2022-23**, far ahead of rivals like **Thailand, China, Vietnam and Ecuador**.
 - **Shrimp Producing States: Andhra Pradesh** is the largest shrimp producer state in India which accounts for **70%** of India's shrimp output.
 - **West Bengal and Gujarat** are other major players in shrimp farming, with Sundarbans in West Bengal and Kutch in Gujarat being a key producer.
 - **Regulation:**
 - All shrimp units are registered with **MPEDA (Marine Products Export Development Authority)** and [FSSAI \(Food Safety and Standards Authority of India\)](#).
 - They follow a **HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point)** based food safety management system as per the US Code of Federal Regulations.
 - Usage of pharmacologically active substances in aquaculture has been banned since 2002.
 - Also, National regulations and monitoring measures like the **National Residue Control Plan, ELISA screening labs, in-house labs**, and pre-export checks are in place.

What is the Marine Products Export Development Authority?

- **About:** It is a **nodal agency** for the holistic development of the **seafood industry in India** and the realisation of its export potential.
 - It was established in **1972** under Marine Products Export Development Authority Act (MPEDA), 1972.
 - It functions under the **Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- **Objectives:** It envisages the development of **seafood production, processing, marketing, and exports** in India.
 - The Government of India recommends new standards for fishing vessels, storage premises, processing plants, and conveyances based on the recommendations of MPEDA.
- **Functioning:** The MPEDA enrolls exporters, lays down quality standards, liaisons with importers to boost exports and conducts **capacity-building programmes** like training, awareness campaigns for relevant stakeholders to increase production and productivity.
- **Headquarters:** in **Kochi, Kerala**.

What are the Government Initiatives Related to Seafood Exports?

- [Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana \(PMMSY\)](#): It was launched in 2020 for providing support in **quality shrimp production, species diversification, promotion of export-oriented species**, branding, standards and certification, training and capacity building, creation of post harvest infrastructure through this flagship scheme.



- [Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund](#): Launched in 2018, FIDF provides loans to address infrastructure and modernization needs in both marine and inland fisheries.
- **Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Fisheries scheme**: It provides adequate and timely credit support to fisheries farmers for their working capital requirements.
 - New cardholders can obtain credit up to **Rs. 2 lakhs** with interest subvention.
 - Existing KCC holders can access an increased credit limit of Rs. 3 lakhs.
 - The lending rate for KCC loans is **7%**, including 2% interest subvention per annum by the Government of India.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. Under the Kisan Credit Card scheme, short-term credit support is given to farmers for which of the following purposes? (2020)

1. Working capital for maintenance of farm assets
2. Purchase of combine harvesters, tractors and mini trucks
3. Consumption requirements of farm households
4. Post-harvest expenses
5. Construction of family house and setting up of village cold storage facility

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 5 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q. Defining the blue revolution, explain the problems and strategies for pisciculture development in India. (2018)

UN Body Defers NHRC Accreditation

[Source: TH](#)

The [Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions \(GANHRI\)](#), which is based in Geneva and affiliated with the [United Nations \(UN\)](#), has postponed granting accreditation to the **National Human Rights Commission of India (NHRC)** for the second consecutive year.

- The decision could impact India's voting rights at the [Human Rights Council](#) and certain **UNGA** bodies.
- **GANHRI** gives **A-status** to institutions that meet certain criteria for independence and effectiveness in protecting human rights.
 - The **NHRC** has been accredited 'A' Status since the beginning of the accreditation process for NHRIs in 1999, which it retained in 2006, 2011 and in 2017 also after the deferment.
 - However, in 2023 and 2024, India's NHRC had its A-status suspended for two consecutive years.
- The GANHRI latest report is still awaited. However, its previous report (2023 report) had cited a number of reasons for recommending the deferral. These included:
 - **Composition:** Lack of transparency in appointing members to the NHRC,
 - **Appointment of police officers** to oversee human rights investigations
 - **Lack of gender and minority representation** on the member panel.
 - NHRC has also failed to create conditions required to be "able to operate independent of government interference".

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UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register

[Source: PIB](#)

Recently, the **Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra, and Sahṛdayāloka-Locana** have been included in '[UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register](#)'.

- '**Sahṛdayaloka-Locana**', '**Panchatantra**', and '**Ramcharitmanas**' were authored by **Acharya Anandvardhan, Pt. Vishnu Sharma, and Goswami Tulsidas**, respectively.
- The [Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts \(IGNCA\)](#) played a vital role in securing the historic moment during the **10th meeting of the Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP)**.
 - This marks the first time IGNCA has submitted nominations to the Regional Register **since its inception in 2008**.
- The **Memory of the World (MoW) Program** is a **global initiative** launched by **UNESCO in 1992** to safeguard important documentary heritage.

- In the **Asia Pacific region**, a specific branch called the Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (**MOWCAP**) **was established in 1998**.
 - MOWCAP **covers 43 countries**, representing one of UNESCO's five regional programs.

[Read more...](#)

UNGA Resolution for Palestine's UN Membership Bid

[Source: TH](#)

The [United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\)](#) voted in favour of the resolution granting new "**rights and privileges**" to **Palestine** and called on the [Security Council](#) to reconsider its request to become the **194th member of the United Nations**.

- The resolution "determines" that the state of Palestine is **qualified for membership** and recommends the Security Council reconsider its **request "favourably."**
 - The resolution grants Palestine the **right to speak on all issues, propose agenda items, and participate in UN and international conferences**, but explicitly states that Palestine does not have the **right to vote in the General Assembly**.
- **India voted in favour of the UN resolution recommending Palestine for full UN membership.**
 - Despite **opposition from the US**, the resolution received **143 votes in favour**, signalling a global push for Palestine's status upgrade within the UN.
- Palestinian first delivered the application for UN membership in 2011, which failed to garner the required support in the Security Council.
 - Subsequently, the General Assembly upgraded **Palestine's status to a non-member observer state in 2012**, allowing participation in international organisations like the [International Criminal Court](#).
 - The renewed push for full Palestinian membership in the UN comes as the war in Gaza has put the more than 75-year-old [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#) at centre stage.

How a State becomes a member of United Nations



[Read more...](#)

SBI Becomes First TCM Member at IIBX

[Source: TOI](#)

[State Bank of India \(SBI\)](#) announced that it has become the **first bank to become a Trading cum Clearing (TCM) Member** at [India International Bullion Exchange \(IIBX\)](#).

- It enables SBI's IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) to trade on the IIBX platform as the [RBI allowed IBUs to act as trading members and clearing members at IIBX as Special Category Clients \(SCCs\)](#) for importing gold through the bullion exchange.
 - This move is expected to **increase trading volumes for gold and silver** at the IIBX, bringing transparency and efficiency to India's Bullion Market.
- IIBX regulated by the [International Financial Services Centers Authority \(IFSCA\)](#) is India's first bullion exchange established in [GIFT -City IFSC](#).
 - A **bullion market is where traders trade in precious metals** like gold and silver, with exchanges taking place directly between buyers and sellers and in the futures market (auction market).
 - The versatile uses of silver and gold, especially in industrial applications, influence their prices. Bullions are considered a **safe bet against inflation and a haven for investment**.
- TCM is a member who **can trade on their own account and on behalf of their clients, and also clear and settle trades executed** by themselves and other trading members who opt to use their clearing services.

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Silk Cotton Tree Under Threat

[Source: TH](#)



Silk Cotton trees (*Bombax ceiba L.*) are under threat in Rajasthan due to overuse in tribal religious traditions, particularly in **Holika-dahan rituals**.

- It is also called **Semal**, or the **Indian Kapok tree**, or **Shalmali** in Sanskrit.
 - Tribals see the act of burning as a virtuous ritual by mythological Holika and Prahlad.
 - In 2009, around 1,500-2,000 trees were cut, debarked, and ignited during Holi in the Udaipur district in that year.
- It is mainly found in **moist deciduous** and **semi-evergreen forests**, also in the plains.
 - In India, this species is commonly found in Andaman & Nicobar Island, Assam, Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- This tree is of high medicinal value; its roots and flowers are used for their **stimulating, astringent** and **hemostatic properties**, as an **aphrodisiac, to stop diarrhoea, strengthen the heart, induce vomiting, soothe inflammation, treat dysentery, and lower fever**.
 - It also has **antibacterial and antiviral properties**, provides **pain relief, protects the liver, acts as antioxidants, and lowers blood sugar levels**.
 - It is also used in [agroforestry](#) for livestock feed. The wood is strong, elastic and durable for **ship building**.
- The **Kathodi tribe** of Rajasthan uses **wood for musical instruments** such as the Dholak and Tambura and the **Bhils** use it to make kitchen spoons.

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