



NHRC and Associated Challenges

For Prelims: [National Human Rights Commission](#), [Supreme Court](#), [Protection of Human Rights Act \(PHRA\), 1993](#), [United Nations \(UN\)](#)

For Mains: Role and Functions of the [National Human Rights Commission \(NHRC\)](#) Emerging Human Rights Challenges.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, **Justice (Retd.) V Ramasubramanian**, a former [Supreme Court judge](#), has been appointed as the **Chairperson** of the [National Human Rights Commission \(NHRC\)](#) by the [President](#) of India.

- The post had been vacant since Justice (Retd.) Arun Kumar Mishra completed his tenure on 1st June 2024.

What is the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)?

▪ About:

- The **NHRC** of India is an **autonomous [statutory body](#)** established to **promote and protect [human rights](#)**.

▪ Establishment:

- It was constituted on **12th October 1993** under the [Protection of Human Rights Act \(PHRA\), 1993](#), which was later amended in 2006 and 2019.
- The Commission was established in conformity with the **Paris Principles**, which are international standards adopted for promoting and protecting human rights.
 - The [Paris Principles](#) are the set of international standards adopted for the **promotion and protection of human rights** in **Paris (October, 1991)** and endorsed by the **General Assembly** of the [United Nations \(UN\)](#) on 20th December, 1993.
 - These principles guide the work of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) across the world.

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NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC)

According to NHRC, Human Rights are the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India

- Watchdog of Human Rights in India
- **Estd:** 1993 (in conformity with Universal Declaration of Human Rights)
- **Act:** Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993

State Human Rights Commissions

- Also constituted under the PHR Act, 1993
- **Appointment of Members:** by Governor
- **Removal of Members:** by President

Human Rights Day: 10 December

Functions

- 🔄 Investigates Complain of human rights violations
- 🔄 *Suo Moto* cognizance of cases
- 🔄 Reviews and recommends human rights implementation
- 🔄 Spreading human rights awareness
- 🔄 Conduct studies, publish reports on human rights issues

Powers

- 🔄 Summon individuals, examine witnesses, and receive evidences
- 🔄 Inspect prisons and other institutions to ensure conditions are humane
- 🔄 Intervene in court proceedings relating to human rights

Members of NHRC

Composition

- 🔄 5 full-time members and 7 deemed members
- 🔄 **Chairperson:** Retired CJI/Judges of the SC
- 🔄 **Administrative Head:** Secretary-General

Tenure

- 🔄 3 years / till age 70 (whichever is earlier)

Appointment

- 🔄 All members appointed by **President** on recommendations of a **6-member** committee (PM, Speaker of LS, Deputy Chairman of RS, Union Home Minister and Leaders of Opposition of both Houses of Parliament)

Removal

- 🔄 President can remove the chairman or any member
- 🔄 **Ground:** Charges of proved misbehaviour or incapacity

Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Status

- NHRC has been accredited '**A**' Status since 1999
- **Retained 'A' Status:** 2006, 2011 and 2017
- **Suspension of 'A' Status:** 2023 and 2024



Drishti IAS

- **Role and Functions:**
 - **Intervention in Court Proceedings:** It **intervenes in court cases** involving allegations of human rights violations, with prior approval from the concerned court.
 - **Review of Safeguards:** It **analyzes constitutional provisions** and existing laws related to **human rights** protection and **proposes measures** for their effective enforcement.
 - **Evaluation of Inhibitors to Human Rights:** It examines factors, including **terrorism**, that hinder the enjoyment of human rights and suggest appropriate remedies.
 - **Study of International Instruments:** It also analyzes **treaties and international conventions on human rights**, offering recommendations for their implementation in the Indian context.
 - **Research and Promotion:** It undertakes research in human rights and encourages its study across disciplines.
 - It also promotes **human rights literacy and awareness** through publications, seminars, media, and other means.
- **Powers of NHRC:** NHRC is vested with powers equivalent to those of a **civil court** as per the **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**. These powers include:
 - Ordering the discovery and production of **documents**.
 - **Receiving evidence** presented through affidavits.

- Requisitioning **public records or certified copies** from any court or office.
- Issuing commissions for the examination of **witnesses or documents**.
- Exercising any **additional powers** prescribed under relevant laws.
- **NHRC Investigation Team:** The NHRC has its own investigation team led by a [Director General of Police](#).
 - It can also utilize the services of Central or State Government officers and **collaborate with NGOs** for investigations.

What are the Challenges Related to NHRC?

- **Non-Binding Recommendations:** The NHRC can **only make recommendations** to the government, which are **not legally binding**. This limits its ability to enforce its decisions and ensure compliance.
 - The Commission has been referred to as a "**toothless tiger**," by **former Chief Justice H.L. Dattu**, who served as its chairperson in 2016, due to its perceived passivity in addressing human rights violations.
- **Jurisdictional Limitations:** The NHRC's jurisdiction is limited to human rights violations committed by **public and private authorities**.
 - It cannot address violations by **private individuals or entities**. It also has **limited jurisdiction over cases related to armed forces**.
- **Lack of Enforcement Power:** The NHRC **does not have the authority to penalize** authorities that fail to implement its recommendations.
- **Resource Constraints:** The NHRC often faces **resource constraints**, including **inadequate funding and staffing**, which hampers its ability to investigate and address human rights violations effectively.
- **Heavy Workload:** The NHRC receives a large number of complaints and petitions, which can overwhelm its capacity to handle cases promptly and thoroughly.
- **Awareness and Accessibility:** Many people are unaware of the NHRC's existence and its mandate, which limits the number of complaints it receives.
 - Additionally, the process of filing complaints can be cumbersome and inaccessible to marginalized communities.
- **Lacking Recognition at Global Stage:** The [Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions \(GANHRI\)](#), a UN-affiliated body based in Geneva, has **deferred the accreditation of India's NHRC**, highlighting concerns regarding its compliance with international standards.
- **Exceptions:** The NHRC **does not consider cases** that are **older than one year, anonymous, pseudonymous, or vague**.
 - It also **excludes frivolous cases** and those **related to service matters**, as they fall outside its jurisdiction or mandate.
 - It is also observed that sometimes **NHRC takes politically influenced cases** and leaves another.

What Measures Should be Taken to Enhance the Effectiveness of the NHRC?

- **Granting Enforcement Powers:** Empowering the NHRC to **enforce its recommendations** would enhance compliance and ensure **greater accountability** in addressing human rights violations.
- **Expanding Investigative Authority:** The NHRC's mandate should be extended to include **violations by private individuals or entities**, especially in the **corporate and healthcare sectors**.
- **Time-bound Investigations:** Introducing **time limits** for the completion of investigations would expedite justice for victims and ensure timely resolutions of complaints.
- **Increasing Financial Autonomy:** Allocating a **dedicated, independent budget** for the NHRC, free from government control, would increase its operational efficiency and reduce external influence.
- **Addressing Emerging Issues:** The NHRC must adapt to emerging human rights challenges such as [digital privacy](#), [artificial intelligence](#), and [environmental rights](#).
 - Establishing **specialized committees or research divisions** within the NHRC to address these issues would enable a proactive response to contemporary challenges.
- **Regular Training and Capacity Building:** Continuous **training and skill development** for

NHRC members and staff would ensure they are well-equipped to handle complex and evolving human rights cases effectively.

- **Institutional Accountability:** India needs to **adopt international standards** and **recognitions from global bodies** like UNHRC.
 - This would ensure that the NHRC's performance is continuously assessed, improving its effectiveness in achieving its mandate.

Various National Commissions Related to Protection of Vulnerable Sections

- **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC):**
 - The **NCSC** was established by Article 338. It consists of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and three other members appointed by the **President**.
- **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST):** The **NCST** was established under Article 338 A.
 - It consists of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and three other members appointed by the **President**.
- **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC):** The **102nd Amendment Act of 2018** elevated the Commission from a statutory body to a **constitutional body** by inserting **Article 338 B**.
 - The Commission consists of a **chairperson, a vice-chairperson** and 3 other members.

Note: The aforementioned trio of Commissions (NCSC, NCST, NCBC) possess the authority equivalent to that of a civil court.

- **National Commission for Women (NCW):** The NCW was set up as a statutory body in 1992 under the **National Commission for Women Act, 1990** to review the Constitutional and Legal safeguards for women.
 - The Commission shall consist of a Chairperson, 5 Members, at least 1 Member from SC and ST and a Member-Secretary nominated by the Central Government.
- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):** The NCPCR has been constituted under the **Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005**.
 - The commission includes a chairperson and 6 members, at least 2 of whom are women.
- **National Commission for Minorities (NCM):** The Minorities Commission was renamed and became a statutory body under the **National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992**.
 - Section 2 (c) of NCM Act, 1992 stipulates that 'Minority' for the purposes of the Act, means a community notified as such by the Central Government.
 - The government recognized **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Jains** as minority communities.
 - The Commission consists of a Chairperson, a Vice- Chairperson, 5 Members.
 - Each Member holds office for a period of 3 years.
- **Office of Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities:** Section 74 of **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** provides for appointment of a Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and two Commissioners to assist the Chief Commissioner at the Centre.

Drishti Mains Question

What are the key limitations in the functioning of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) with respect to enforcing its recommendations? How can these limitations be overcome?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. Other than the Fundamental Rights, which of the following parts of the Constitution of India reflect/reflects the principles and provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)? (2020)

1. Preamble
2. Directive Principles of State Policy
3. Fundamental Duties

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (d)

Q. Consider the following: (2011)

1. Right to education
2. Right to equal access to public service
3. Right to food.

Which of the above is/are Human Right/Human Rights under “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”?

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

Ans: (d)

Mains:

Q. Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analysing their structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures. (2021)

Hydrothermal Vents in Indian Ocean

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

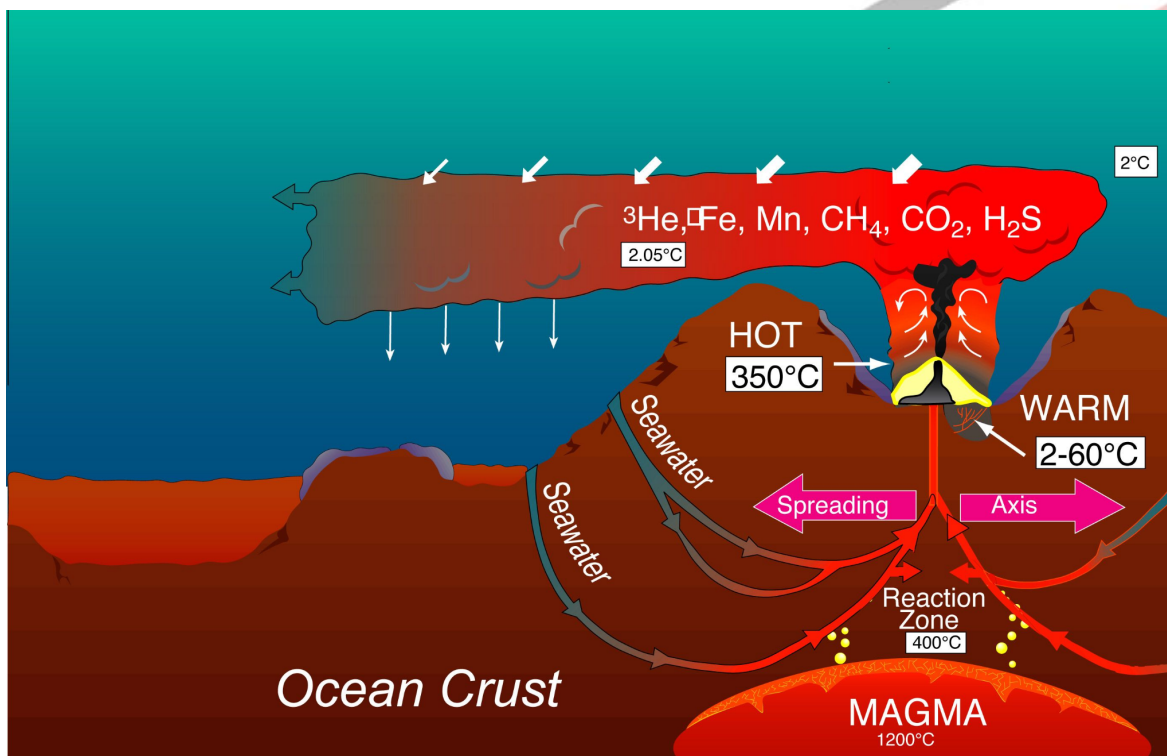
[India's Deep Ocean Mission](#) recently achieved a milestone by **imaging an active hydrothermal vent** 4,500 meters below the [Indian Ocean's surface](#).

- This breakthrough enhances India's mineral exploration and deep-sea research, offering significant potential for the [Samudrayaan mission](#) and future exploration efforts.

What are Hydrothermal Vents?

- **Definition:** Hydrothermal vents are **underwater hot springs** found near the [tectonic plates](#), where **hot water and minerals** from beneath the Earth's crust are expelled into the ocean.
 - Hydrothermal vents were first discovered in 1977 near the **Galapagos Islands, Ecuador**.

- **Formation Process:** Seawater percolates down through **fissures** (cracks that form when tectonic plates spread apart) in the ocean crust near **tectonic plates** that are either moving apart (**spreading ridges**) or moving towards one another (**subduction zones**).
 - The **cold seabed water (about 2°C)** comes into contact with **hot magma**, getting heated up to high temperatures (**370°C**).
 - The heated seawater reemerges from the ocean floor as **hydrothermal fluids**, forming the vents.
 - The seawater at hydrothermal vents can reach over 700°F but does not boil due to the **high pressure at the depths**.
- **Types of Hydrothermal Vents:**
 - **Black Smokers:** These vents emit **particle-laden fluids**, primarily **iron sulfides**, which form **black chimney-like structures**.
 - **White Smokers:** These vents emit fluids containing **barium, calcium, and silicon**, forming **white chimneys**.
- **Significance:** The deposits from hydrothermal venting are rich in **copper, zinc, gold, silver, platinum, iron, cobalt, nickel**, and other valuable minerals and metals.
 - Hydrothermal Vents create ecosystems where **chemosynthetic organisms** (organisms that rely on chemicals rather than sunlight for energy) thrive.
 - Hydrothermal vents, active for up to **30,000 years**, support long-term exploration and resource use.



Other Geothermal Features Similar to Hydrothermal Vents

- **Hot Springs:** Like hydrothermal vents, **hot springs on land** are areas where heated groundwater (heated by geothermal heat from **Earth's interior**) emerges at the surface.
 - In volcanic areas, water comes into contact with **hot rock heated by magma**, producing **superheated water**.
 - In non-volcanic areas, the **temperature of rocks increases with depth (Geothermal Gradient)**. Water percolates deep enough to come into contact with hot rocks, circulating to the **surface and forming hot springs**.
 - **Example:** Manikaran (Himachal Pradesh), Gaurikund (Uttarakhand)
- **Geysers:** These are geothermal features that periodically **eject water and steam due to underground heating**.

- **Geysers** require large amounts of groundwater to fill underground cavities in volcanic areas. When heated by **nearby magma, the water flashes into steam**, causing an eruption of hot water and steam.
- **Example: Yellowstone National Park (US).**
- **Fumaroles:** These are openings in the Earth's crust where volcanic gases and steam are released.
 - Fumaroles occur when **magma passes through the water table**, heating the water and causing steam to rise, carrying volcanic gases like **hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) to the surface.**
 - Often found near "**dying volcanoes**" where magma deep underground has solidified and cooled.
 - **Example: Barren Island (Andaman and Nicobar Islands)**
- **Mudpots:** These are the bubbling pools of mud that form in geothermal areas.
 - Formed when limited geothermal water mixes with mud and clay.
 - **Example: Yellowstone National Park (US)**





Ministry of Earth Sciences
Government of India

DEEP OCEAN MISSION

EXPLORING THE DEEP OCEAN - THE FINAL FRONTIER ON PLANET EARTH

Oceans are the key to sustenance of life on our planet. They are the driving force for monsoons, flywheel of climate, vital source of natural resources and act as a trigger for ocean hazards. Oceans contribute immensely to "Blue Economy" through sectors such as Fisheries, Renewable Energy, Oil & Gas, Minerals, Shipping, Tourism, etc.

The lives and livelihoods of about 350 million population living along the 7500 km long coastline of India are intricately linked to the Oceans. Climate change and anthropogenic impacts are threatening ocean health and biodiversity. Yet, 95% of the deep ocean remains unexplored.

India's Deep Ocean Mission will contribute to our understanding of the oceans, realising our "Blue Economy" vision and managing our Oceans sustainably. Being undertaken at a cost of ₹4077 Crore over the next 5 years, the Mission will be spearheaded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences in synergy with other Central Ministries, National Institutions, Universities and Industry.

Technologies for Autonomous Underwater Vehicles and Deep Sea Mining

Manned submersible capable of diving up to 6000 m to the bottom of the ocean.

Mining tools to explore 300 MMT of valuable metal deposits in a 75,000 square kilometre area in the Indian Ocean sea bed.



Deep Ocean Survey and Exploration

Construction of a state-of-the-art research vessel to explore hydrothermal deposits in mid-ocean ridges for precious metals like Copper, Zinc, Aluminum, Silver, and Platinum, etc.



Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services

Accurate future projection of sea level change and extreme events like cyclones, storm surges and waves to safeguard our coastal population, economy and infrastructure.

A suite of state-of-the-art ocean models and an improved network of ocean observations based on deep sea gliders, deep Argos, etc.



Exploration and Conservation of Deep Sea Biodiversity

Inventorization of deep sea fauna and flora including microbes.

Products of Industrial importance from the deep-sea microbes.



Carnivorous Sponges

Advanced marine station for Ocean Biology

Translate research in ocean biology and engineering into industrial application and product development through establishment of on-site business incubator facilities.



Energy and freshwater from the Ocean

Engineering capabilities to scale up offshore Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) powered energy generation and desalination plant for clean energy and fresh water.

Read more: [Underwater Structures in the Indian Ocean](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following: (2013)

1. Electromagnetic radiation
2. Geothermal energy
3. Gravitational force
4. Plate movements
5. Rotation of the earth
6. Revolution of the earth

Which of the above are responsible for bringing dynamic changes on the surface of the earth?

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
(b) 1, 3, 5 and 6 only
(c) 2, 4, 5 and 6 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Ans: (d)

Explanation:

- The Earth's surface is dynamic. The Earth's surface is being continuously subjected to by external forces (exogenic forces) originating above the earth's surface, mainly induced by the energy of the Sun and by internal forces (endogenic forces) from within the earth.
- Endogenic Processes
 - The energy emanating from within the earth is the main force behind endogenic geomorphic processes.
 - This energy is mostly generated by radioactivity, release of electromagnetic energy, rotational and tidal friction and primordial heat from the origin of the Earth.
 - This energy is due to geothermal gradients and heat flow from within the earth.
 - Endogenic process has induced volcanism and associated geothermal phenomena like geysers, hot water springs, etc.; earthquakes; plate movements resulting in the creation of different landforms (mountains, hills, plateaus, etc.) and water bodies (sea, ocean, lake, etc.).
- Exogenic Processes
 - The exogenic processes derive their energy from atmosphere determined by the ultimate energy from the Sun, e.g., weathering and erosion.
 - Temperature and precipitation are the two important climatic elements that control various processes.
- Seasonal and diurnal variation on Earth is due to revolution and rotation of Earth respectively.
- **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

Extradition Request for Sheikh Hasina

Source: HT

Recently, India had received a **note verbale (unsigned diplomatic correspondence)** from Bangladesh to **extradite** former Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina**.

- Sheikh Hasina is accused of **mass killings** during **student protests** for which Bangladesh's interim government wants her to **face trial**.
- Hasina could be brought back under the **India-Bangladesh extradition treaty of 2013, amended in 2016**.

- **Exceptions to the treaty:**
 - **Article 6:** Extradition may be **refused** if the offence of which it is requested is an **offence of a political character**.
 - **Article 8:** A person may **not be extradited** if the accusation against him or her is **not "made in good faith in the interests of justice"**.
- **2016 Amendments:** Objective was to **simplify and hasten** the extradition process
 - **Article 10 (3):** It **removed** the need for **evidence** from the country requesting extradition.
 - **Competent Court:** Only an **arrest warrant** from a **competent court** is enough for extradition. Hasina faces multiple arrest warrants in Bangladesh.
- The treaty enabled India to extradite **ULFA leader Anup Chetia in 2015**.

Rocky ties: Rising India-B'desh tensions

A timeline of major controversies since Bangladesh's ex-PM Sheikh Hasina fled the country

<p>AUGUST</p> <p>Sheikh Hasina steps down and flees to India amid protests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Marks beginning of tensions between interim government and India ● Muhammad Yunus becomes interim government head 	<p>DECEMBER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bangladesh summons Indian high commissioner Pranay Verma, the first time in recent years a senior Indian diplomat was summoned ● Protests over treatment of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das ● Yunus raises concerns about Hasina making statements from India, claims they "create tension" ● Yunus seeks India's help to clear "dark clouds" over bilateral ties 
<p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>Diplomatic tensions over minority protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interim govt dismisses Indian concerns about Hindu minority persecution ● Yunus claims Indian media is exaggerating reports of violence ● India formally calls on Bangladesh to protect minorities 	

Read More: [Extradition](#)

US Territorial Acquisitions and Interest in Greenland

Source: [DTE](#)

Recently, US President-elect Donald Trump has expressed interest in buying [Greenland](#), highlighting ongoing US ambitions in strategically important regions like the [Arctic](#).

- This move reflects the US's long history of territorial acquisitions, crucial to its growth as a global power.
- **Territorial Acquisitions by the US:**
 - **Louisiana Purchase (1803):** The US acquired 828,000 square miles of land from France for USD 15 million, doubling its size and securing control of the **Mississippi River**.
 - **The Gadsden Purchase (1853):** A 30,000 square-mile region in Arizona and New Mexico

was bought to facilitate a **southern transcontinental railroad**.

- **The Alaska Purchase (1867):** The US purchased nearly 600,000 square miles from Russia for USD 7.2 million.
 - Initially seen as a **strategic acquisition** with low immediate value, it gained importance after the **Klondike Gold Rush, 1896 (gold was discovered in the Klondike)** and became vital to US influence in the Asia-Pacific region.



- **Key Facts About Greenland:** It is the **world's largest island**, is located in the **North Atlantic Ocean** and is a territory of **Denmark**.
 - Greenland features major mountain ranges like the **Watkins Range and Stauning Alps**, and rivers such as Borglum, and Majorqaq.
 - Greenland has been a **mining nation since the late 1700s**, extracting **coal and later mining gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, graphite, and marble**.

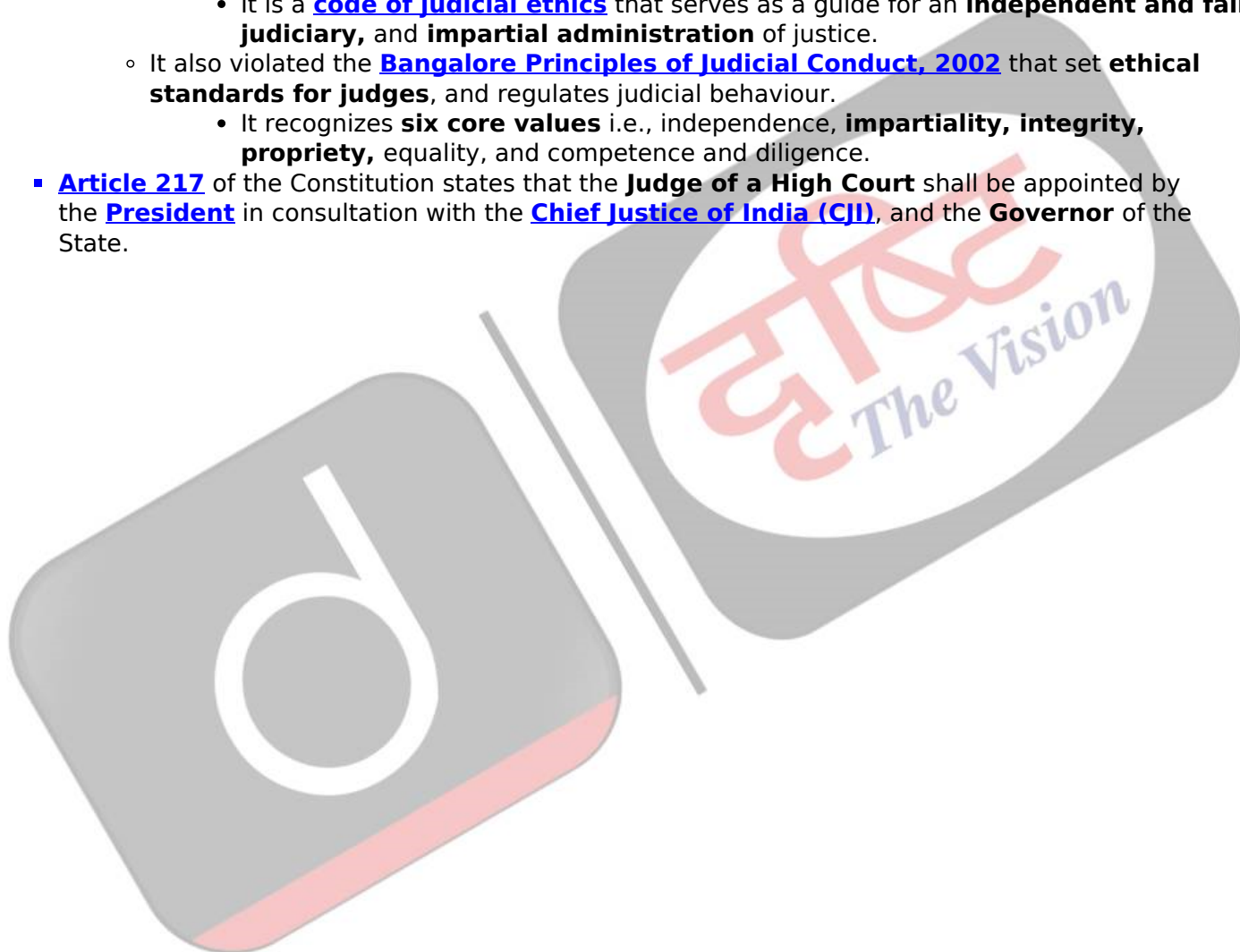
Read more: [World's Northernmost Island](#)

Collegium Assesses High Court Candidates

[Source: HT](#)

Recently, the [Supreme Court collegium](#) conducted interactions with candidates being considered for [high court judgeship](#), going “over and above” the standard screening process.

- **The standard screening process** includes **assessing judicial work**, **IB inputs**, **the chief minister's views** via the [governor](#), and the **Department of Justice's observations**.
- The move came after **controversial remarks on religion** by a judge of **Allahabad high court** at an event that sparked widespread **criticism**.
 - It was alleged that his comments **breached** the [Restatement of Values of Judicial Life adopted by the Supreme Court in 1997](#).
 - It is a [code of judicial ethics](#) that serves as a guide for an **independent and fair judiciary**, and **impartial administration** of justice.
 - It also violated the [Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct, 2002](#) that set **ethical standards for judges**, and regulates judicial behaviour.
 - It recognizes **six core values** i.e., independence, **impartiality, integrity, propriety**, equality, and competence and diligence.
- [Article 217](#) of the Constitution states that the **Judge of a High Court** shall be appointed by the [President](#) in consultation with the [Chief Justice of India \(CJI\)](#), and the **Governor** of the State.





Collegium System



- System of appointment and transfer of judges
- Evolved through judgments of the Supreme Court, and not by an Act of Parliament

Constitutional Provisions Related to Appointment of Judges

- **Articles 124 (2) and 217**- Appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts
 - **President makes appointments after consulting with "such judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts"** as s/he may deem necessary.
- But the Constitution **does not lay down any process** for making these appointments.

Evolution of the System

First Judges Case (1981)

- SC held that in the appointment of a judge of the SC or the HC, the word **"consultation"** in Article **124 (2)** and in Article **217** of the Constitution does not mean "concurrence"
- Gave the **executive primacy** over the judiciary in judicial appointments

Second Judges Case (1993)

- SC overruled the First Judges Case
- Gave birth to the **Collegium System (Primacy to the Judiciary)**
- Collegium included the Chief Justice of India and the **2** most senior judges of the SC

Third Judges Case (1998)

- SC expanded the Collegium to include the CJI and the **4** most-senior judges of the court after the CJI

Current Structure



Supreme Court Collegium: CJI and the **4** senior-most judges of the SC



High Court Collegium: CJI and **2** senior most judges of the SC

Criticism

- Opaqueness
- Scope for Nepotism
- Exclusion of Executive
- No Predetermined Procedure of Appointment

National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)

- It was an **attempt to replace the Collegium System**. It prescribed the procedure to be followed by the Commission to appoint judges
- NJAC was established by the **99th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2014**
- But the **NJAC Act was termed unconstitutional** and was struck down, citing it as having affected the independence of the judiciary



Read More: [Restatement of Values of Judicial Life](#)

Sri Lankan President's India Visit

For Prelims: [India's Neighbourhood First policy](#), [SAGAR Vision](#), [SAARC](#), [Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme \(IDEAS\)](#), [Mitra Shakti](#), [SLINEX](#), [Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre](#), [Illegal Fishing](#), [Indian Ocean](#), [Katchatheevu Island](#), [Afanasy Nikitin Seamount](#), [BIMSTEC](#)

For Mains: Significance of India-Sri Lanka Relations for India's Strategic Interests and India's Neighbourhood First Policy.

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the new **Sri Lankan President** was on his first visit to India focusing on enhancing **trade, energy, and maritime cooperation**.

- Discussions with Indian leaders emphasized **Tamil aspirations, economic recovery**, and countering **Chinese influence**, reinforcing [India's Neighbourhood First policy](#) and [SAGAR Vision](#).

What are the Outcomes of the Recent Visit?

- **Economic and Trade Agreements:** Proposed **Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreements (ETCAs)** aim to integrate services and technology into trade relations was also discussed during the President's visit to India.
 - India has agreed to **promote Indian Rupee (INR)-Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR) trade settlements** and undertake capacity-building programs, including the **training of 1,500 Sri Lankan civil servants**.
- **Energy Partnership:** India agreed to supply **LNG to Sri Lanka** to address immediate energy needs, while both nations announced an **energy pipeline with the UAE** to enhance regional energy security.
 - **Renewable energy projects** like offshore wind power and grid interconnection were prioritized, alongside developing **Trincomalee** as an energy hub.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Resumption of **ferry services** and continued development of **Kankesanthurai port, housing**, and **digital infrastructure** under India's "**Neighborhood First**" policy.
- **Regional Security Cooperation:** Both countries committed to deepening **security cooperation**, particularly in maritime security.
- **Financial Support:** India's financial support, including USD 4 billion for food, fuel, and medicines, was crucial in stabilizing Sri Lanka's economy during its crisis.
- **Bilateral Cooperation in Global Forums:** Sri Lanka sought India's support in its bid to join the [BRICS group](#) and in matters related to the [United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf](#).

What are Areas of Cooperation Between India and Sri Lanka?

- **Economic Cooperation:** India is Sri Lanka's largest trade partner in [SAARC](#), with bilateral trade reaching **USD 5.5 billion** in FY 2023-24.
 - India exports essential goods while Sri Lanka benefits from the **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement**.
- **Development Assistance:** India has extended Development Assistance to Sri Lanka through **Lines of Credit (LOCs)** under the [Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme \(IDEAS\)](#).
 - As of 2023, over **USD 2 billion** in **Lines of Credits (LOCs)** have been provided to Sri Lanka, supporting key sectors such as **railways, hospitals, infrastructure, and power transmission**.
 - India's **LOCs**, including projects like the [Jaffna Cultural Center](#) and [Suwa Seriya ambulance services](#), strengthen Sri Lanka's **socio-economic framework** and improve infrastructure and livelihoods.
- **Energy Collaboration:** Renewable energy projects, including **hybrid systems in Jaffna**, reflect India's push for [energy security](#) in the region.
- **Defence and Security:** Defence ties include joint **military exercises (Mitra Shakti)** and **naval drills (SLINEX)**.
 - The installation of a [Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre](#) demonstrates India's commitment to bolstering Sri Lanka's maritime capabilities.
 - Additionally, India has supported **Sri Lanka's counterterrorism** and environmental [disaster management](#) efforts .
- **Cultural and Educational Exchange:** The **historical and cultural** ties between the nations are reinforced through scholarship programs, **restoration of Buddhist temples**, and the sharing of Indian technologies in governance and education .
- **Maritime Cooperation:** Shared concerns over [illegal fishing](#) and **sustainable resource management** in the [Indian Ocean](#) have driven collaborations.
 - **Joint patrols** and **sustainable fishing initiatives** are critical to protecting marine biodiversity and livelihoods .



SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) Vision

Launched in 2015 for regional security, sustainable growth, and cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region

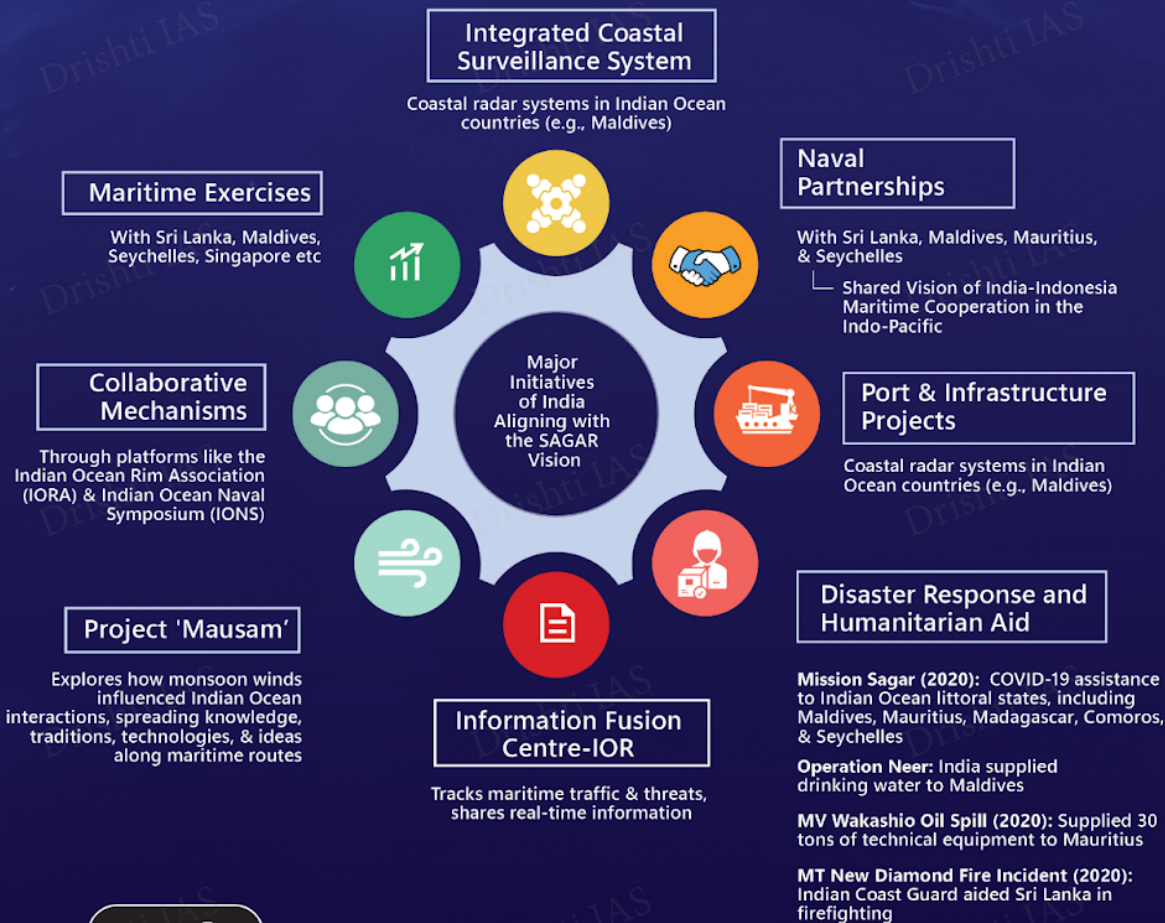
Core Principles

- Trust, respect for maritime norms, regional sensitivity, peaceful dispute resolution, & cooperation
- Aligns with India's Act East Policy & Neighbourhood First policy

Significance of IOR for India

- **Economic Vitality:** 95% of India's trade by volume & 68% of trade by value
- **Strategic Leverage:** Controls key maritime chokepoints (e.g. Strait of Malacca), boosting trade security
- **Defense Shield:** Enhances naval security against piracy & threats
- **Regional Influence:** Strengthens India's role in South Asia and Indo-Pacific

Major Initiatives of India Aligning with the SAGAR Vision



What are Challenges of Cooperation Between India and Sri Lanka?

- **Fishing Disputes:** Indian fishermen's use of [bottom trawling](#) sometimes in **Sri Lankan waters** and in surrounding areas has escalated tensions, causing **arrests, fines**, and friction in both **coastal communities** and **bilateral diplomacy**.
- **Katchatheevu Island Dispute:** The ownership and use of [Katchatheevu Island](#) remain contentious, with disputes over enforcement of agreements allowing Indian fishing and pilgrimage rights, straining bilateral relations.
- **Ethnic and Political Issues:** India's support for the Tamil population in Sri Lanka has been met with resistance from certain political factions.
 - The delay in implementing the [13th Amendment](#) to devolve power to Tamil-majority areas has been a longstanding grievance .
- **Geopolitical Rivalries:** China's increasing influence in Sri Lanka, especially in infrastructure projects like the [Hambantota Port](#), challenges India's strategic interests. India views Chinese-backed projects as threats to its regional security .
- **Maritime Boundary Issues:**The dispute over the [Afanasy Nikitin Seamount](#) highlights overlapping claims in international waters, with both nations using international legal mechanisms, potentially leading to diplomatic friction.





Way Forward

- **Enhancing Dialogue:** Strengthening diplomatic engagements to address core issues like fishing rights, Tamil reconciliation, and maritime disputes is crucial.
 - Regular dialogue through bilateral and regional forums like [BIMSTEC](#) can provide a platform for solutions.
- **Economic Integration:** Expanding **trade agreements** and **infrastructure linkages**, such as **ferry services** and **pipeline projects**, will boost **economic interdependence**.
 - Collaborative initiatives like the proposed **undersea energy cable** can enhance shared benefits.
- **Fisheries Management:** Promoting **sustainable fishing practices** through **joint initiatives**, **capacity-building programs**, and **alternative livelihoods** for fishermen can

resolve conflict and will also protect **marine ecosystems**.

- **Leveraging Development Assistance:** India should continue its role as a key **development partner**, focusing on **renewable energy, education, and digital governance**.
 - **Green debt swaps** can align **economic recovery** with sustainability goals.
- **Balancing Geopolitics:** India must **counterbalance Chinese influence** through strategic **investments** and **diplomatic outreach**.
 - This will ensure that its assistance aligns with Sri Lanka's **long-term interests**.

Drishti Mains Question:

What are the key areas of economic cooperation and the main challenges in maritime cooperation between India and Sri Lanka?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2020)

1. The value of Indo-Sri Lanka trade has consistently increased in the last decade.
2. "Textile and textile articles" constitute an important item of trade between India and Bangladesh.
3. In the last five years, Nepal has been the largest trading partner of India in South Asia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q. In respect of India — Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. (2013)