



Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) Policy

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution announced key revisions to the [Open Market Sale Scheme \(Domestic\) \(OMSS\(D\)\) policy for 2024-25](#). These changes aim to improve [food security](#) and support [ethanol production](#) in India.

What is the Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) Policy?

- **About:** The OMSS involves the periodic **sale of surplus food grains (wheat and rice)** from the central pool managed by the [Food Corporation of India \(FCI\)](#).
 - The grains are sold to dealers, bulk consumers, and retail chains through e-auctions at prices set by the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**.
 - The scheme helps **curb inflation and stabilize food grain prices** meeting the needs of the [Targeted Public Distribution System \(TPDS\)](#) and **Other Welfare Schemes**.
- **Eligible Buyers:** Wheat is sold to Processors, Atta Chalkis, and Flour Millers, while rice is sold to traders.
 - States can also procure food grains through the OMSS, beyond their [National Food Security Act \(NFSA\), 2013 allocation](#), without participating in auctions.
- **Auction Process:** Bidders can participate through **e-auctions**, with a minimum of 10 metric ton (MT) and a maximum of 100 MT for wheat and a minimum of 10 MT and maximum of 1000 MT for rice.
- **Revisions to the OMSS(D):** The Centre reduced the reserve price of **FCI rice under OMSS by Rs 550 to Rs 2,250** per quintal for **states and ethanol producers to boost sales, support ethanol production, and enhance food security**.

Food Corporation of India (FCI)

- **Establishment:** The FCI is a **statutory body** established under the **Food Corporation's Act, 1964**.
- **Key Roles:**
 - **National Food Security Act (NFSA):** FCI procures grains to fulfill **NFSA, 2013** requirements and distributes them at **Central Issue Prices to economically vulnerable sections**.
 - **Public Distribution System (PDS):** Delivers food grains to State Governments and agencies for distribution through [Fair Price Shops](#).
 - Promotes nutritional security through the [distribution of fortified rice](#).
 - **Market Interventions:** Stabilizes food prices and mitigates inflation through procurement and [OMSS \(Open Market Sale Scheme\)](#).
 - Provides a safety net for farmers by ensuring [Minimum Support Prices \(MSP\)](#).
- **Headquarters:** **Headquartered in New Delhi**, FCI operates through a nationwide network with Zonal, Regional, and District Offices.
- **Reforms By FCI:**
 - **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** Implemented the **"One Nation, One MSP"** policy for transparent farmer payments.
 - **Digital Procurement:** Computerized food grain procurement nationwide for faster and

- transparent operations.
- **Modernized Storage:** Transitioned from traditional storage to scientifically managed depots and silos.
 - **Integrated Supply Chain Management:** Streamlined operations through the ANNA DARPAN portal.
 - **AI-Based Grain Analysis:** Introduced [Automatic Grain Analyzers](#) for transparent procurement.
 - **Digital Quality Labs:** Linked quality control labs with centralized dashboards for real-time data.
 - **Storage and Transit Loss Reduction:** Reduced storage loss from **0.17% in 2013-14 to a net gain of 0.22% by 2023-24** and Cut transit losses from **0.46% to 0.16% over the same period.**
 - **Decentralized Procurement (DCP):** Increased state participation in DCP for both rice and wheat.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive subsidised food grains.
2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (b)

Mitigating and Aggravating Circumstances in Death Penalty

For Prelims: [CBI](#), [Bachan Singh vs. State of Punjab Case, 1980](#), [Supreme Court](#), [Law Commission](#), [Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, 2023](#), [Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023](#), [UAPA, 1967](#), [NDPS Act, 1985](#).

For Mains: Mitigating and aggravating circumstances in death penalty, Evolution of death penalty in India, Role of judiciary and law commission on death penalty.

Why in News?

A Kolkata court sentenced a convict to **life imprisonment** for the **rape and murder** of a doctor at [RG Kar Medical College and Hospital](#), despite the [CBI](#)'s strong argument for the [death penalty](#).

- In [Bachan Singh vs. State of Punjab Case, 1980](#), the [Supreme Court \(SC\)](#) upheld the death penalty **as constitutional** but should be awarded in the "**rarest of rare**" cases after considering both **aggravating and mitigating circumstances**.

What are Aggravating and Mitigating Circumstances?

- **About: Aggravating (increasing) and mitigating (reducing)** circumstances are factors courts consider when deciding the **severity of a sentence**, especially in the death penalty.
 - Aggravating circumstances could **tilt the court towards the death penalty**, while mitigating circumstances could **lead it away from the death penalty**.
- **Guiding Factors:** The SC did **not** provide **specific aggravating and mitigating circumstances** for determining when the death penalty should be applied but provided a **non-exhaustive list** of guiding factors.
 - **Aggravating Circumstances:**
 - If the murder is **pre-planned, calculated**, and involves **extreme brutality**.
 - If the murder involves **"exceptional depravity"**
 - If the accused is found guilty of murdering a **public servant, police officer, or armed forces** member while on duty or for performing their lawful duties.
 - **Mitigating Circumstances:**
 - Whether the accused was experiencing **extreme mental or emotional disturbance** at the time of the offence.
 - Age of the accused; they would not be given death if they are **very young or very old**.
 - Probability of the accused posing a **continued threat to society**.
 - Probability of **reforming** the accused.
 - If the accused was acting on the **directions of another person**.
 - If the accused believed their actions were **morally justified**.
 - If the accused **suffers mentally** and is unable to appreciate the criminality of their actions.

How Aggravating and Mitigating Circumstances Evolved After the Bachan Singh Case?

- **Age of the Accused:** In cases like [Ramnaresh vs. State of Chhattisgarh Case, 2012](#) and [Ramesh vs. State of Rajasthan Case, 2011](#), SC considered the **accused's age (below 30)** a strong **mitigating factor**, believing in their potential for reform.
 - In [Shankar Kisanrao Khade vs. State of Maharashtra Case, 2013](#), the SC highlighted the **subjective nature** of sentencing by **distinguishing cases where age was a mitigating factor**.
 - The **262nd Law Commission Report 2015** noted that age as a mitigating factor has been used **very inconsistently**.
 - **Nature of the Offence:** In [Machhi Singh vs. State of Punjab Case, 1983](#), the SC held that death could be given in cases where the **"collective conscience"** of society is so **shocked** that the judiciary is expected to **impose the death penalty**.
 - It marked a shift toward emphasizing the **nature of the crime over the circumstances** of the criminal and the possibility of reform.
 - **Possibility of Reform:** In [Santosh Bariyar vs State of Maharashtra Case, 2009](#), the SC stated that the court must provide **clear evidence** explaining why the **convict is unfit for reform or rehabilitation**.
 - The **262nd Law Commission Report 2015** called the evidence requirement in Bariyar **"essential" for objectivity** in sentencing.

- **Stage of the Trial:** In *Bachan Singh*, the SC ruled that courts must hold a **separate trial after conviction** to allow a **“real, effective and meaningful hearing”** on why the death sentence should not be imposed.
 - In *Dattaraya vs. State of Maharashtra Case, 2020*, the court ruled that the **lack of a proper hearing** was a valid reason to **commute the death sentence to life imprisonment**.

What is the Death Penalty?

- **About:** The death penalty, also referred to as **capital punishment**, is the **most severe** form of punishment in the Indian judicial system as it **cannot be reversed** after execution like other kinds of punishment.
 - It involves the **state's execution of an individual** as a penalty for serious offenses.
- **Legal Framework:** The death penalty in India is governed by provisions in the **Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, 2023, Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023**, and other special laws.
 - The BNS prescribes the death penalty for crimes such as **rape causing death (Section 66), gang rape of minors (Section 70(2)), serial rape (Section 71)**, and others.
 - Offenses punishable by death include **murder (Section 302), terrorism (UAPA, 1967), and certain drug trafficking offenses under the NDPS Act, 1985**.

What are SC Rulings on the Death Penalty?

- *Jagmohan Singh Case, 1972:* The SC **upheld** the constitutionality of **capital punishment**, ruling that it could be **imposed if due process was followed** and constitutional provisions were not violated.
- *Shatrughan Chauhan Case, 2014:* The SC ruled that **prolonged delays in execution** of the death penalty could be a valid ground for **commuting the sentence to life imprisonment**.
- *Manoj vs State of Maharashtra Case, 2022:* The SC mandated a **thorough investigation** into the convict's mitigating circumstances and emphasized a balanced approach to sentencing, considering both **aggravating and mitigating factors**.
- *Suo Motu Writ on Death Penalty, 2022:* In a **suo motu writ**, the SC referred the issue of granting the convict a **“meaningful opportunity”** to argue against the death sentence to a larger five-judge bench for a fair hearing.

What is the Law Commission Stand on Death Penalty?

- **35th Report, 1967:** In 1967, the Law Commission's 35th Report **strongly supported the death penalty**.
- **187th Report, 2003:** In 2003, the Law Commission's 187th Report acknowledged the **procedural flaws** in sentencing though it did not advocate abolition.
- **262nd Report, 2015:** In 2015, the Law Commission's 262nd Report called for **doing away with the death penalty** for all crimes **except terrorism** and related offences.

Status of the Death Penalty Around the World

- As of **2022, 55 countries** had the **death penalty**, with **9 reserving** it for the most serious crimes like **multiple killings or war crimes**.
- **The United States and Japan** are the **only advanced industrial democracies** that still practice capital punishment.
- As of 2022, **112 countries** have completely abolished the death penalty, up from **48 in 1991**.
 - In **2022, Kazakhstan, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone**, and the Central African Republic abolished the death penalty, while **Equatorial Guinea** and Zambia limited it to the most serious crimes.
- The **five countries** responsible for **91%** of these executions were **China, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan**, and the **United States**.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's rulings on the death penalty have evolved to **incorporate both the severity of crimes and the possibility of reform**, with significant focus on fairness in sentencing. The Court has emphasized a **balanced approach**, considering **both aggravating and mitigating factors**, and has advocated for procedural safeguards to prevent arbitrary applications.

Drishti Mains Question:

Analyze the evolution of the Supreme Court's stance on the death penalty in India.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Mains

Q. Instances of the President's delay in commuting death sentences has come under public debate as denial of justice. Should there be a time limit specified for the President to accept/reject such petitions? Analyse. **(2014)**

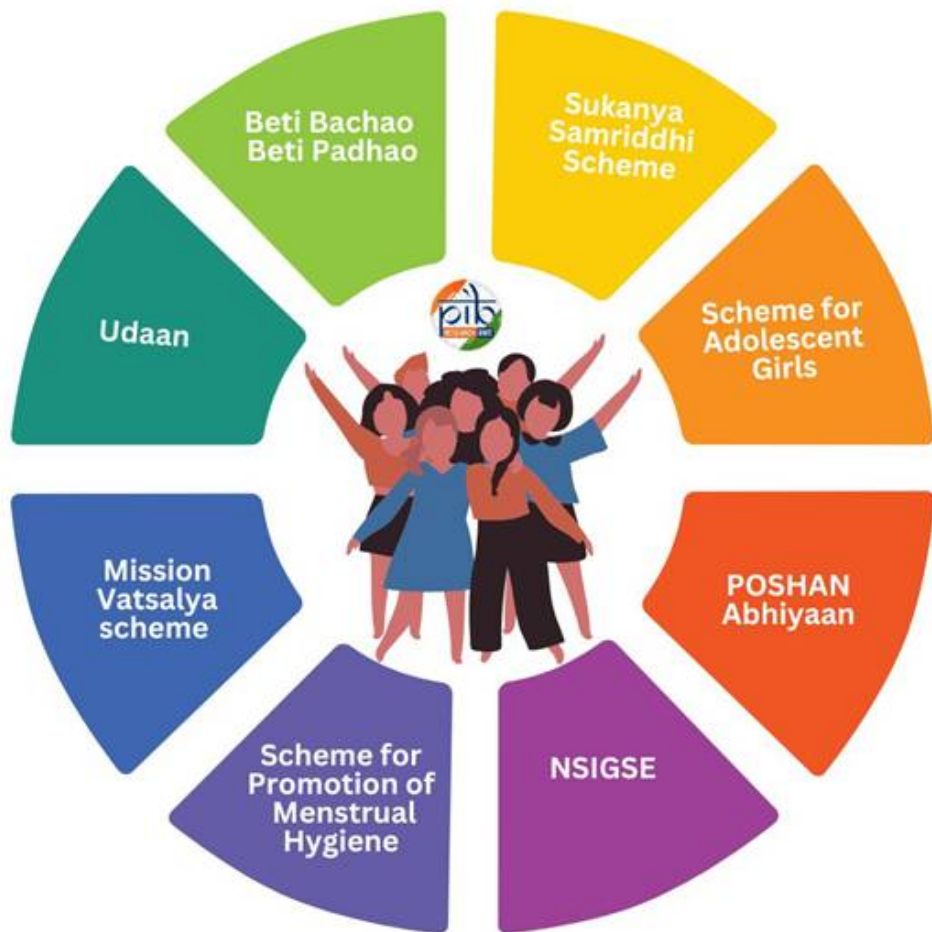
National Girl Child Day 2025

Source: ET

National Girl Child Day is observed annually on **24th January** aimed at promoting the **rights, empowerment, and potential** of girls across India.

- **Theme: "Empowering Girls for a Bright Future"** emphasizes **equal opportunities** for girls in **education, healthcare, and personal growth**.
- **Celebrating 10 Years of BBBP:** The 2025 celebrations, marking the **10th** anniversary of the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme**, will run from 22nd January to 8th March 2025, concluding on **International Women's Day**.
 - BBBP was started in **2008** by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** to combat **critical issues** such as **child marriage** and **female foeticide**.
- **Initiatives for Girl Child Development:**

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- **Measures to Empower Girl Child:** [Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006](#), [POCSO Act, 2012](#), [Mission Vatsalya](#) etc.

Read More: [10th Anniversary of BBBP and Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana](#)

DRDO's Scramjet Test Boosts Hypersonic Missile Development

[Source: PIB](#)

The [Defence Research and Development Organisation \(DRDO\)](#) has successfully conducted a [Supersonic Combustion Ramjet \(Scramjet\) engine ground test](#), advancing [India's hypersonic missile tech](#).

- **Scramjet Engine:** A **scramjet engine (Air-breathing engines)** is an advanced **ramjet** that uses **supersonic airflow** for **combustion**, enabling faster speeds. It uses **liquid hydrogen** and **liquid oxygen** for thrust, offering better **fuel efficiency**.
 - Unlike a turbojet engine, **ramjets** and **scramjets** have **no moving parts**, consisting only of an **inlet**, **combustor** (with fuel injector and flame holder), and a **nozzle**.
 - Scramjets are key to hypersonic vehicles to handle **airflows at speeds above the speed of sound**, offer maneuverability, and strategic advantage.
- **Achievements of DRDO:** Ground test achieved **stable combustion** in the scramjet engine, and developed **indigenous endothermic scramjet fuel** for improved cooling and ignition.
 - A **Thermal Barrier Coating** was also developed to withstand extreme temperatures.

- **Hypersonic Missiles:** Traveling at speeds greater than **Mach 5 (over 5,400 km/h)**, bypass air defences with high-speed, high-impact strikes.
- **Global Race for Hypersonic Missiles:** The US, Russia, and China are advancing hypersonic tech.
 - In 2021, China tested a **nuclear-capable hypersonic glide vehicle** that circled the globe before speeding towards its target.





Headquartered in New Delhi, DRDO was established in 1958 from the amalgamation of the then already functioning Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) of the Indian Army and the Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP) with the Defence Science Organisation (DSO).

DRDO, Defense Research & Development Organisation, is an R&D wing of the Ministry of Defence. Its vision is to empower India with cutting-edge defence technologies. Its mission is to achieve *self-reliance in critical defence* technologies and systems while equipping the armed forces with state-of-the-art weapon systems per the three forces' requirements.



BALASYA MULAM VIGYANAM

DRDO is India's largest research organisation with the motto 'Balasya Mulam Vigyanam'—the source of strength is science—drives the nation in peace and war. Its first project for the Indian military was surface-to-air missiles (SAM), known as Project Indigo.

DRDO's pursuit of *self-reliance* and successful indigenous development led to the production of *strategic* systems and platforms such as the Agni and Prithvi series of missiles- light combat aircraft, Tejas- multi-barrel rocket launcher, Pinaka- air defence system, and Akash- a wide range of radars and electronic warfare systems.



Read more: [Defence Research and Development Organisation](#), [Air Breathing Engines](#)

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