



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

27th July 2026



CONTEXT: Despite legal prohibition, manual scavenging continues to claim lives across India.

What is Manual Scavenging?

- It refers to the **manual cleaning, carrying, disposing or handling of human excreta** from **insanitary latrines, open drains, septic tanks or sewers** without adequate protective equipment or mechanised systems.
- B R Ambedkar** traced the origins of manual scavenging to **600 BC**.
 - One of the earliest references is found in the **Narada Samhita**, which lists the removal of human excreta as one of the 15 duties for slaves.

Forms

- Cleaning insanitary latrines
- Sewer cleaning
- Septic tank cleaning
- Open drain cleaning involving human entry

• Violation of Human Dignity

- Violates Article 21 (Right to Life with Dignity).

• Occupational Hazards

- Workers die due to inhalation of toxic gases like hydrogen sulphide and methane.

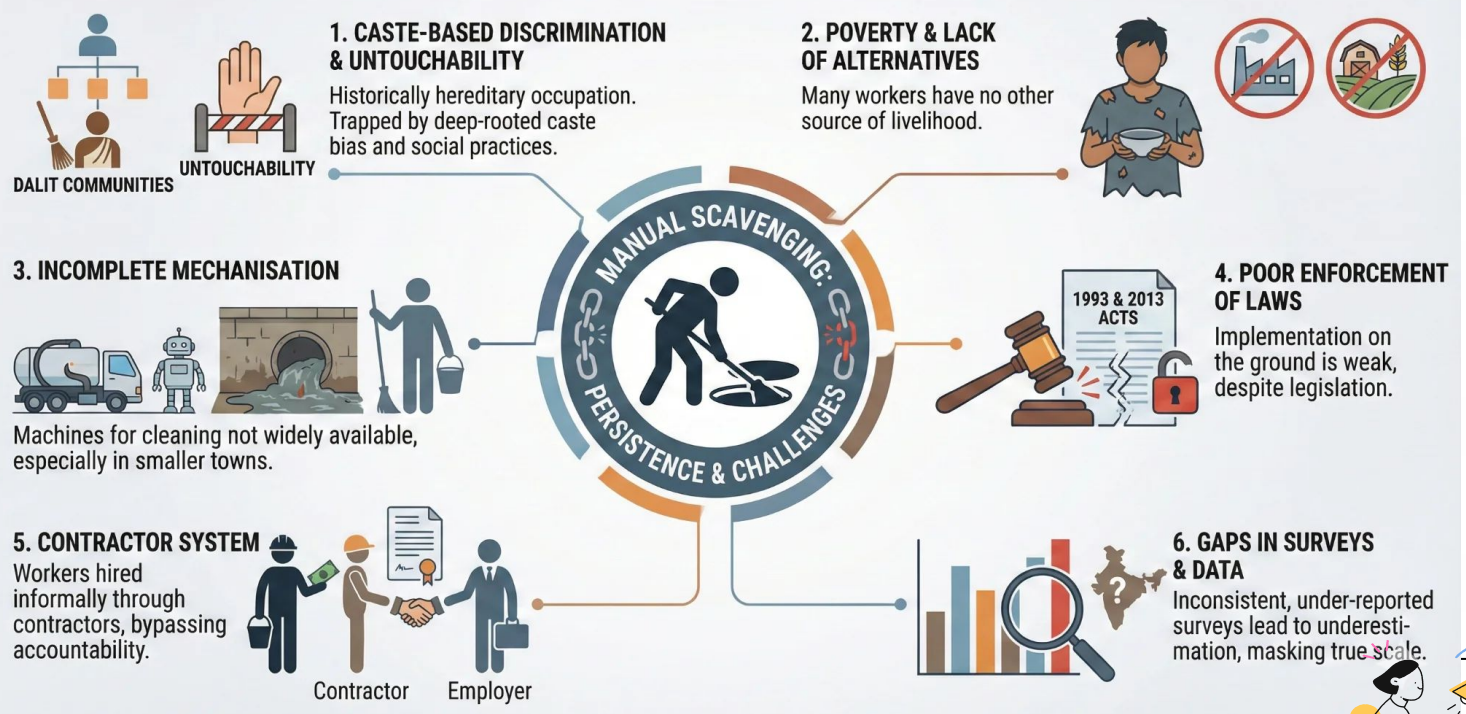
• Social Discrimination

- Reinforces caste-based exclusion and untouchability.

• Health Consequences

- Workers suffer from:
 - Respiratory diseases
 - Skin disorders
 - Eye infections
 - Toxic gas exposure

REASONS FOR THE PERSISTENCE OF MANUAL SCAVENGING IN INDIA



CONTEXT: Despite legal prohibition, manual scavenging continues to claim lives across India.

- **Economic Marginalisation**
 - Low wages and lack of social security trap families in poverty.
- **Gender Dimension**
 - Women have traditionally cleaned dry latrines manually in several regions.

Waste-picking labour profile

This enumeration of sewer and septic tank workers and waste pickers was part of the govt.'s NAMASTE scheme

■ Out of 1.52 lakh profiled waste pickers, 84.5% were from SC, ST, or OBC communities

■ However, in Delhi and Goa, a majority of such workers were from General communities

■ About 48.7% of workers are women, 51.3% are men, and 0.007% are transgender people

■ On Tuesday, the Social Justice Ministry said that 859 people had died due to cleaning of sewers and septic tanks since 2014



Efforts to Eradicate Manual Scavenging

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS

Article 14: Ensures equality before the law.

Article 17: Abolishes untouchability.

Article 21: Guarantees the right to life and personal liberty.

Article 23: Prohibits forced labor.



ERADICATION OF MANUAL SCAVENGING

Strict enforcement of law, rehabilitation of affected persons and promotion of mechanised sanitation systems continue to be the Government's priority.



Prohibited under

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (MS Act, 2013) – in force since 6 December 2013



Zero
Tolerance
Towards the
Inhuman Practice

SC Judgment

- **Safai Karamchari Andolan v. Uoi, 2014**
 - End manual scavenging.
 - Mechanise sewer cleaning.
 - Compensation to families of sewer death victims.

Challenges

- **Incomplete Identification**
 - Many manual scavengers remain unidentified for rehabilitation.
- **Slow Mechanisation**
 - Several municipalities still rely on manual sewer entry.
- **Poor Rehabilitation**
 - Alternative livelihood programmes remain inadequate.
- **Weak Accountability**
 - Low conviction rates despite repeated sewer deaths.
- **Persistence of Caste Discrimination**
 - Social stigma continues even after occupational change.



CONTEXT: Despite legal prohibition, manual scavenging continues to claim lives across India.

INDIA'S INITIATIVES TO CURB MANUAL SCAVENGING



POLICY & INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES



Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge: Promotes safety of sanitation workers, aiming for zero manual scavenging.



Swachhta Abhiyan App: Mobile application for citizens to report insanitary latrines and manual scavenging.



Rashtriya Garima Abhiyan: Campaign for the dignity and rights of sanitation workers, ending untouchability.



National Commission for Safai Karamchari: Statutory body to monitor and evaluate the condition of Safai Karamcharis.



Swachhta Udyami Yojana (SUY): Provides financial assistance to Safai Karamcharis for sanitation-related businesses.



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): Skill development program to recognize and certify existing skills of sanitation workers.



NAMASTE (National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem): Focuses on full mechanisation of sewer and septic tank cleaning operations.



TECHNOLOGICAL INITIATIVES & MECHANISATION



Bandicoot Robot: Autonomously or remotely cleans, inspects, and removes blockages in sewer lines.



Endobot & Swasth AI: Diagnose pipelines to detect and mitigate water contamination, wastage, and sewer overflows.



Robo-Drain System: Automated robotic technology for cleaning underground sewers.



Vacuum Trucks: Use powerful pumps to remove sewage waste without human entry.

→ Towards a Cleaner, Safer, and Dignified Future for All. ←

• National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)

- Ministry of **Social Justice & Empowerment**
- Eliminating deaths due to manual & hazardous cleaning of sewers & septic tanks
- **Capital Subsidy** of ₹5 Lakh/worker: Sanitation related vehicle & mechanised Equipment under Swachhta Udyami Yojana
- **SDG 8** : Decent Work
- **SDG 10** : Reduced Inequalities

Key Components of

NAMASTE Scheme



Profiling of Sewer/Septic Tank Workers (SSWs)



Occupational Safety Training and PPE Kits Distribution



Support for Safety Devices to Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs)



Health Insurance Coverage under Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY



Livelihood Support and Enterprise Development



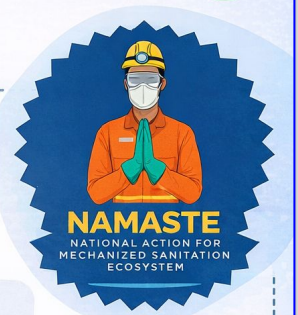
Convergence of MoSJE and MoHUA Programs



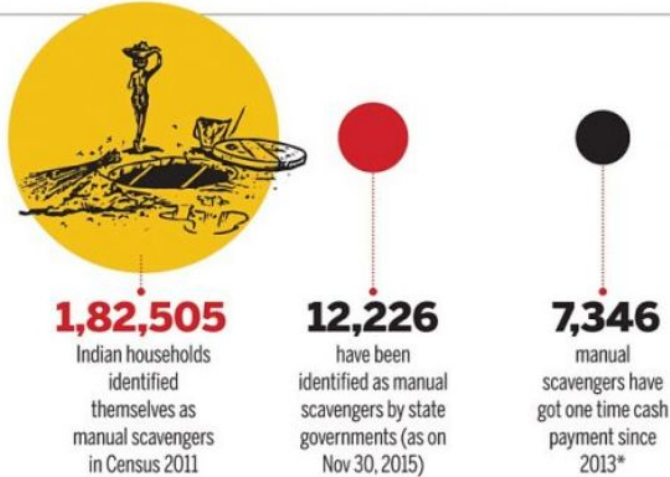
Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Campaign



MIS and Dedicated Website



CONTEXT: Despite legal prohibition, manual scavenging continues to claim lives across India.



Way Forward

- **Complete Mechanisation of Sewer Cleaning**
 - Deploy robotic machines like Bandicoot across all Urban Local Bodies.
- **Strict Enforcement of the 2013 Act**
 - Penal action against agencies employing manual scavengers.
- **Strengthen Rehabilitation**
 - Provide skill training, entrepreneurship support, and credit access.
- **Improve Urban Sanitation Infrastructure**
 - Scientific design of septic tanks and sewer networks.
- **Social Behavioural Change**
 - Campaigns against caste-based occupational discrimination.
- **Universal Safety Standards**
 - Mandatory PPE, gas detectors, oxygen support, and emergency rescue protocols where human entry is unavoidable.

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Ques. Despite legislative prohibition, manual scavenging continues to persist in India. Examine the reasons for its continuance and suggest measures for its complete eradication.

(10 Marks, 150 words)



Rising Trend of Student Suicides

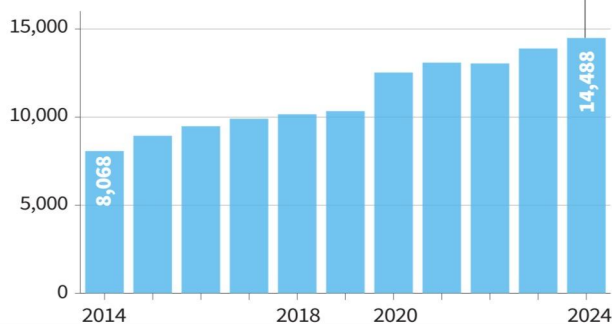
CONTEXT: Recent protests over paper leak have shifted attention from paper leaks alone to deeper systemic issues in India's education system.

Student Suicides in India: Current Scenario

- Over 1.23 lakh student suicides reported between 2014–2024 (NCRB).
- Increased by about 80% during this period.
- >2,000 students die every year due to failure in examinations (~21% of all student suicides).
- >55% of student suicides occur among students below 18 years.

Chart 1: Number of students who died by suicide between 2014 and 2024

The number of students who died by suicide increased by 80% between 2014 and 2024



India's student suicide rate has surpassed overall trend, population growth rate: Report

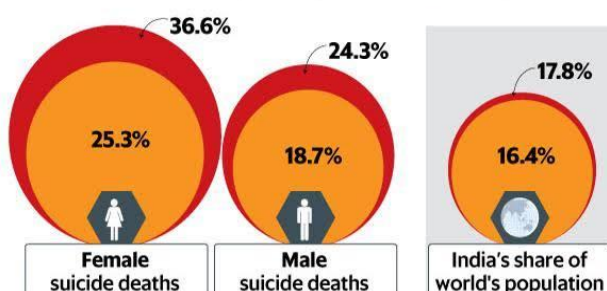
The new report reveals an alarming rise in student suicides in India, highlighting an urgent need for mental health support

Chart 1a

India's growing suicide burden

Suicide deaths in India as a percentage of world

1990 2016



Source: Dandona et al; Lancet, 2018

Impacts of Rising Student Suicides

- **Loss of Human Capital**
 - Young lives with immense potential are lost.
- **Mental Trauma to Families**
 - Parents experience lifelong emotional distress.
- **Demographic Dividend at Risk**
 - Productive youth population is adversely affected.
- **Weakening of Education System**
 - Education becomes associated with fear rather than learning.
- **Economic Burden**
 - Families invest heavily in coaching and repeated attempts.

DAILY DATA

INDIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

Approx
142.86
CRÖRE
total population
of India

Of which
68%
working age
population
(those aged 15
to 64 yrs)

Source: State of
World Population
report, 2023

NEWS18
creative

Rising Trend of Student Suicides

CONTEXT: Recent protests over paper leak have shifted attention from paper leaks alone to deeper systemic issues in India's education system.

CAUSES OF RISING STUDENT SUICIDES

Multiple academic, social and psychological pressures are pushing students to the edge.

A. HIGH-STAKES EXAMINATION SYSTEM



NEET, JEE, UPSC and other competitive examinations where lakhs compete for limited seats.

B. ACADEMIC PRESSURE



Long study hours, fear of failure and excessive performance expectations.

C. COACHING CULTURE



Kota (Rajasthan) has witnessed repeated student suicides linked to intense coaching pressure.

D. MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



Depression, anxiety, burnout and loneliness often remain undiagnosed.

E. PARENTAL & SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS



Students often experience pressure to pursue medicine or engineering irrespective of their interests.

F. COMMERCIALISATION OF EDUCATION



Rising dependence on expensive private coaching increases financial and emotional stress on families.

G. FEAR OF FAILURE & SOCIAL STIGMA



Examination failure is often viewed as a personal failure rather than a learning opportunity.

H. LACK OF COUNSELLING SUPPORT



Most schools and coaching institutes lack trained psychological counsellors.



ADDRESSING THESE ROOT CAUSES IS ESSENTIAL TO BUILD A SUPPORTIVE AND EMPATHETIC EDUCATION SYSTEM.



Talk. Listen. Support.
Every life matters.

Structural Issues in India's Education System

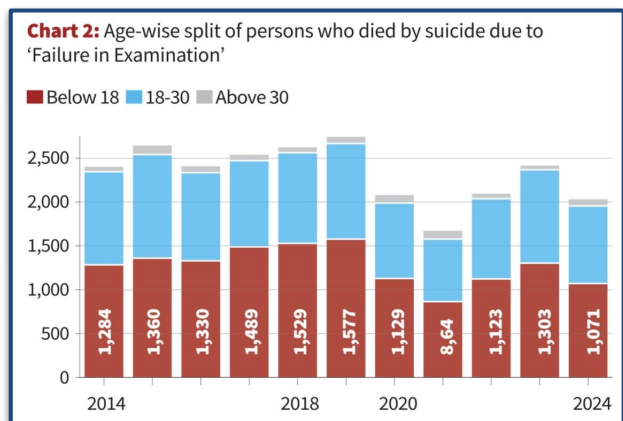
- **Excessive Reliance on One-Time Competitive Exams**
 - Single examination determines future opportunities.
- **Limited Higher Education Capacity**
 - Around 23 lakh candidates register for NEET, but only a fraction secure MBBS seats.
- **Marks-Oriented Learning**
 - Memorization often receives greater importance than conceptual understanding.

- **Unequal Access to Quality Education**
 - Students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds often suffer.
- **Commercialisation of Coaching Industry**
 - Coaching has become a parallel education system worth thousands of crores.



Rising Trend of Student Suicides

CONTEXT: Recent protests over paper leak have shifted attention from paper leaks alone to deeper systemic issues in India's education system.



Government Initiatives to prevent Student Suicides

- **Mental Health Act 2017**
 - Decriminalised the suicide attempts for Individuals with Mental Illness
- **National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022**
 - **KIRAN Helpline** to provide support to people facing anxiety & Stress
- **MANAS Mental Health Helpline (14416)**
 - Psychological support for individuals facing emotional distress.
 - **Tele-MANAS** 24×7 tele-mental health counselling.
- **MANODARPAN Initiative**
 - Mental health support for students, teachers, and parents.

- **National Education Policy 2020**
 - Focus on experiential learning and reducing rote learning.
 - Flexible academic credit routine.
- **PM SHRI Schools**
 - Promoting holistic education and student well-being.
- **UGC Guidelines**
 - Mandatory counselling centres in universities

Best Practices & Case Studies

-  Case Study: **Kota** Guidelines
 - Introduction of counselling services, stress-relief measures in coaching institutes.
-  Case Study: **Finland's** Education Model
 - Focuses on learning outcomes, minimal examination stress, and strong student support systems.



Rising Trend of Student Suicides

CONTEXT: Recent protests over paper leak have shifted attention from paper leaks alone to deeper systemic issues in India's education system.



CHALLENGES

Why Student Mental Well-being Remains a Concern



A

SOCIAL STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH



Students hesitate to seek counselling.



B

SHORTAGE OF COUNSELLORS

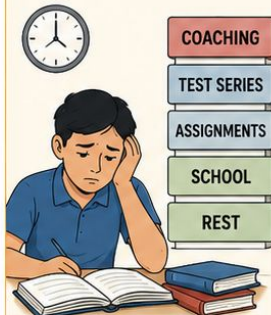


Most schools lack full-time psychologists.



C

COACHING-CENTRIC EDUCATION

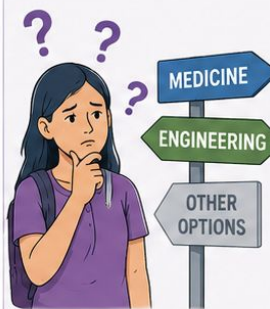


Students spend more time in coaching than in schools.



D

LIMITED CAREER AWARENESS



Overemphasis on medicine and engineering.



E

WEAK INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT



Few mechanisms to identify students at risk.



Addressing these challenges is key to building a mentally healthy and supportive learning environment.



Way Forward

- **From Marks-Centric to Learning-Centric Education**
 - Greater emphasis on continuous assessment and concepts.
- **Expand Mental Health Support**
 - Mandatory counsellors in schools, colleges, and coaching institutes.
- **Reform Competitive Examination System**
 - Multiple attempts and diversified evaluation methods.
- **Regulate Coaching Institutes**
 - Guidelines, including limits on class hours, counselling, and student welfare measures.

- **Career Diversification**
 - Promote vocational education and multiple career pathways beyond medicine and engineering.
- **Build a Supportive Ecosystem**
 - Awareness programmes for parents, teachers, and peers to identify early signs of stress.



Rising Trend of Student Suicides

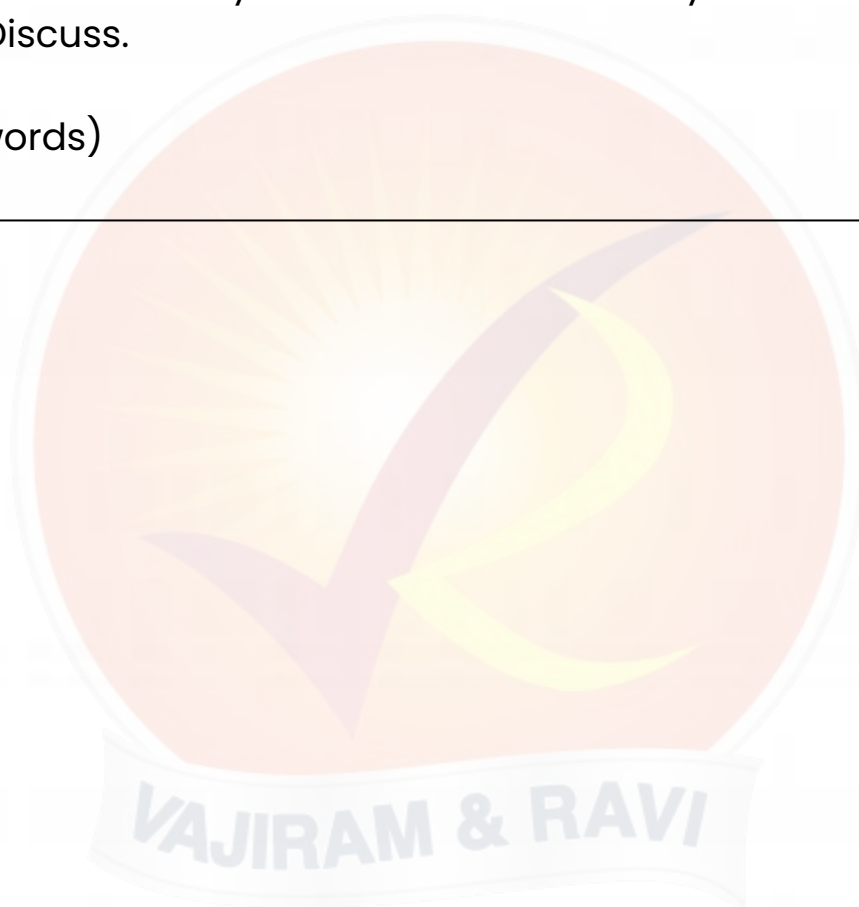


CONTEXT: Recent protests over paper leak have shifted attention from paper leaks alone to deeper systemic issues in India's education system.

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Ques. "The rising trend of student suicides in India reflects deeper structural problems in the education system rather than merely individual mental health issues." Discuss.

(10 marks, 150 words)



Newspaper: The Hindu; Page Number: 12

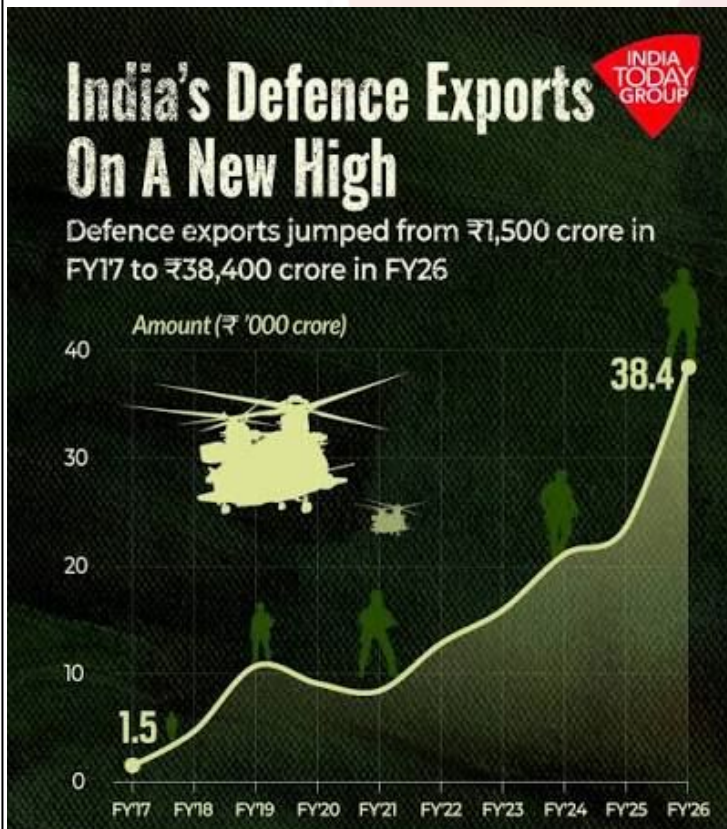
India scaling new heights in defence production: PM

India's Defence Production:

- Record defence production: **₹1.78 lakh cr.** (FY 26).
- 15.6% annual growth** over FY 25 (₹1.54 lakh cr).
- 110% growth since FY 21 (₹84,643 cr).
- Nearly **4-fold increase** from ₹43,746 cr in **FY 14**.
- Record defence **exports: ₹38,424 cr** in **FY 26**.

India's Defence Production:

- DPSUs & PSUs:** Contribute **76%** of total defence production.
- Private** sector: Contributes 24% (₹42,000 cr) – highest-ever share.
- Reflects **success of:**
 - Aatmanirbhar Bharat** and
 - Defence indigenisation.
- Strengthens strategic autonomy, technological self-reliance, and export competitiveness.



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Economy & Agriculture

Newspaper: The Indian Express; Page Number: 1

GI Tag

- A Geographical Indication (GI tag) is a **sign** used on products with a **specific geographical origin**, possessing unique qualities or reputation due to that origin.
- It serves as an **intellectual property right (IPR)**, attributing a product's quality, reputation, or other characteristic to its geographical origin.
- Who Can Apply?
 - Association of persons
 - Producers' organizations
 - Statutory authorities
 - Organizations representing the interests of producers
- **Products Eligible:**
 - Agricultural products
 - Natural products
 - Handicrafts
 - Manufactured goods (at least one stage of production or processing must occur in the specified geographical area).
- **Benefits:**
 - Prevents unauthorized use.
 - Protects traditional knowledge and local producers.
 - Enhances exports and rural livelihoods.
 - Preserves cultural heritage.
- **India's First GI Tag:**
 - **Darjeeling Tea (2004-05)**

GI Tag

Indicates
geographical origin

Collective rights

Region specific

Trademark

Identifies a
brand/company

Exclusive right of an
individual/company

Not linked to any
geography

Exam Traps

- GI is governed by the Patents Act, 1970 → WRONG
- GI registration is valid for 20 years → WRONG
- Any individual producer can apply for a GI in their personal capacity → WRONG
- GI protects only agricultural products → WRONG
- India's GI Registry is located in New Delhi → WRONG



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Economy & Agriculture

Newspaper: The Indian Express; **Page Number:** 1

Geographical Indication tags

India



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Economics

Newspaper: The Indian Express; Page Number: 13

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)

- The apex policy-making body for direct taxes in India.
- **Statutory** authority under **Central Boards of Revenue Act, 1963**
- Functions under the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**
- Headquarters - New Delhi
- Composition:
 - Headed by a Chairman.
 - Assisted by 6 members responsible for various functional areas.
- **Taxes Administered:**
 - Income Tax, Corporate Tax
 - LTCG/STCG
 - Securities Transaction Tax (STT)
 - Equalisation Levy (policy/administrative role as applicable)

News Simplified

- The guidance aims to help Reporting Crypto-Asset Service Providers (RCASPs) comply with **Income-tax Act, 2025** and the Income-tax Rules, 2026.
- Under the framework, **crypto service providers** will be required to collect, verify and report information on specified crypto transactions to tax authorities (**curb tax evasion** and improve **tax transparency**).
- The CBDT clarified that the guidance does not legalise or regulate crypto-assets.

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)

- **Major Functions:**
 - Formulates **policies**.
 - Administers the Income-tax Act, 1961 and other direct tax laws.
 - Issues circulars, notifications and clarifications.
 - Supervises the Income Tax Department.
 - Tackles **tax evasion**
 - Promotes voluntary tax compliance.
 - Negotiates **DTAAs** with other countries.

DIRECT TAX

- **Burden:** Same person bears it (non-transferable)
- **Nature:** Progressive (Higher income = Higher rate)
- **Authority:** CBDT
- **Examples:** Income Tax, Corporate Tax

INDIRECT TAX

- **Burden:** Sellers collect, consumers pay
- **Transferability:** Shifted to end consumer
- **Nature:** Regressive (uniform rate)
- **Authority:** CBIC

Exam Traps

- CBDT administers GST → WRONG
- CBDT was established under the Income-tax Act, 1961 → WRONG
- CBDT functions under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs → WRONG
- CBDT is responsible for Customs administration → WRONG
- CBDT is a constitutional body → WRONG



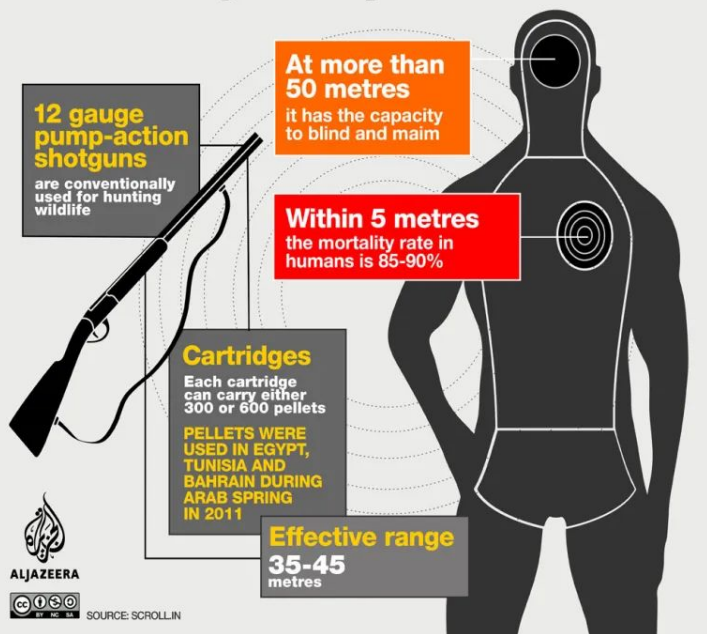
SYLLABUS: Prelims: Security

Newspaper: The Indian Express; Page Number: 1

Pellet Guns

- Pump-action shotguns that **fire hundreds of small metal pellets** (usually lead or alloy) in a single cartridge.
- Primary Use:
 - **Less-lethal crowd-control** weapon.
- Used By in India:
 - Mainly by the CRPF and
 - For riot control.
- Purpose:
 - Crowd dispersal.
- **Concerns:**
 - Can cause serious eye injuries, blindness, permanent disability, and even death in some cases.
 - Their use has been controversial (J&K)

Anatomy of a pellet wound



Pellet Guns

- **Human Rights Concerns:**
 - Criticized by organizations such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for causing disproportionate injuries.
- **Alternatives:**
 - Water cannons
 - Tear gas
 - Rubber bullets
 - Pepper balls
 - Stun grenades
 - Negotiation and de-escalation measures
- **Legal Position:**
 - No specific law to bans.
 - Their deployment is governed by SOPs and operational guidelines issued by security agencies.

Exam Traps

- Pellet guns fire a single high-speed bullet → WRONG
- Pellet guns are classified as lethal firearms in all circumstances → WRONG
- Pellet guns are used only by the Indian Army → WRONG
- Pellet guns are banned in India → WRONG
- Pellet guns cannot cause permanent blindness → WRONG



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Places in News

Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page Number:** 1



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Places in News

Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page Number:** 1



Exam Traps

- The Black Sea is connected directly to the Atlantic Ocean → WRONG
- Bosphorus connects the Black Sea directly to the Mediterranean Sea → WRONG
- The Black Sea is bordered by Greece → WRONG
- The Nile River drains into the Black Sea → WRONG
- The Black Sea is a freshwater lake → WRONG



Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the legal and strategic frameworks for mental health in India:

1. The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 strikes down Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code, thereby completely decriminalising all attempts to commit suicide for every Indian citizen.
2. The National Suicide Prevention Strategy 2022 penalises individuals failing to register on the MANAS network.

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

Answer: d

Q2. 'X' was addressing a seminar on the commercialisation of rural crafts. 'X' stated that once a product like 'Darjeeling Tea' or 'Banarasi Saree' receives a GI tag, any farmer or weaver residing within that respective state can legally use the tag to export their goods. 'Y' pointed out that residing in the state is insufficient; the producer must be located strictly within the demarcated geographical territory and must be registered as an 'Authorised User' with the GI Registry.

Based on the above information, select the correct conclusion from the options given below:

- a) The view of only 'Y' is correct.
- b) The view of 'Y' on the requirement for 'Authorised User' registration is incorrect.
- c) The views of both 'X' and 'Y' are correct.
- d) 'X' is correct in the interpretation of the territorial scope of GI tags.

Answer: a

Q3. Regarding the recent context of pellet guns in the media, which of the following represents a legally and tactically sound understanding of their use?

1. Authorising immediate point-blank pellet gun fire, as they are considered non-lethal at 3 meters.
2. Dispersing the crowd by firing pellets at a targeted distance of exactly 60 meters carries the assumption that it eliminates disability concerns.

3. Deploying them perennially carries the risk of serious eye injuries and permanent maiming, regardless of distance.

Select the answer using the codes given below.

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

Answer: d

Q4. Match the following information regarding CBDT in List I with List II:

List I	List II
A. Parent Ministry	1. Statutory Body
B. Originating Legal Framework	2. Customs and Goods & Services Tax
C. Nature of the Authority	3. Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963
D. Excluded Jurisdiction	4. Ministry of Finance

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) A-4, B-3, C-1, D-2
- b) A-4, B-1, C-3, D-2
- c) A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4
- d) A-4, B-3, C-2, D-1

Answer: a

Q5. Identify the geographic feature 'X' based on the following information:

1. It is a shallow, highly productive body of water that acts as a northern extension of the Black Sea.
2. It is connected to the main Black Sea basin exclusively via the narrow Kerch Strait.
3. Its salinity is remarkably low, often freezing during severe winters, largely due to the massive freshwater influx from the Don and Kuban rivers.

Select the answer using the codes given below.

- a) Sea of Marmara
- b) Gulf of Odessa
- c) Sea of Azov
- d) Caspian Sea

Answer: c





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