

**DAILY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
ANALYSIS**



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

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1 - Indian Abortion Law:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions

- **Context:**
- The French parliament just passed a bill that would have made abortion rights part of the country's constitution by an overwhelming majority. This means that France is now the only nation where a woman's right to an abortion is expressly guaranteed.
- By clearly declaring that “the law determines the conditions by which the freedom of women to have recourse to an abortion, which is guaranteed,” the adopted bill alters Article 34 of the French Constitution.
- The US Supreme Court's ruling in the Roe v. Wade case, which would invalidate long-standing abortion rights in 2022, brought concerns about the decline of abortion rights around the world to light, prompting the introduction of the bill.
- **Abortion: What Is It?**
- The intentional ending of a pregnancy, usually done within the first 28 weeks of gestation, is known as an abortion. Depending on the stage of pregnancy and the wishes of the person seeking an abortion, it can be accomplished using a variety of medical procedures or drugs.
- Abortion is a hotly contested and divisive issue that frequently involves moral, ethical, legal, and religious issues.
- Abortion rights advocates contend that the ability to choose for one's own body, health, and future constitutes a fundamental reproductive right.
- They highlight how crucial it is for women to have access to safe and legal abortion services in order to support reproductive autonomy, avert unintended pregnancies, and safeguard their health.
- Often referred to as "pro-life," opponents of abortion feel that it is immoral and ought to be completely outlawed or severely restricted.
- They usually contend that a pregnancy cannot be ended without taking a human life, hence breaching the rights of the unborn foetus, and that life begins at conception.
- **Legal Measures Concerning Abortion in India:**
- In India, abortion was illegal up until the 1960s, and violators faced jail time or penalties under Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code.
- In the middle of the 1960s, the Shantilal Shah Committee was established to look into the necessity of abortion laws.

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971 was passed in response to its conclusions, protecting women's health, lowering maternal mortality, and permitting safe and authorised abortions.
- In a positive step for women's reproductive rights, the Supreme Court recognised marital rape as a basis for abortion, even if marital rape is not recognised as a crime.
- Under the MTP Act of 1971, a woman may have an abortion up to 20 weeks into her pregnancy if she consents and one registered medical practitioner (RMP) recommends it. On the other hand, the statute was revised in 2021 and 2002.
- With the consent of two doctors, the MTP Amendment Act, 2021 allows abortions up to 24 weeks gestation in certain situations, such as rape survivors.
- It establishes Medical Boards at the state level to determine whether or not a pregnancy may be ended at 24 weeks if there are significant foetal abnormalities.
- It allows unmarried women—who were formerly the only ones eligible for contraceptive clauses—to have abortions on the basis of their personal preference, regardless of their marital status.
- Depending on the patient's age and mental health, different consent procedures apply to ensure physician supervision.
- Article 21 of the Indian Constitution gives every citizen the right to life and personal liberty. The Indian Supreme Court has construed this freedom to include women's autonomy and choice over their reproductive systems.
- The Supreme Court of India acknowledged women's fundamental freedom to choose their reproductive options as a component of their personal liberty under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution in the 2017 case of Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. the Union of India.

- **What Are the Issues With Abortion?**

- **Unsafe Abortion Cases:**

- According to the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) State of the World Population Report 2022, unsafe abortions are the third greatest cause of maternal mortality in India, with approximately 8 women dying from associated reasons every day.
- Women from low-income families and those without marriages have no choice but to undertake risky or unlawful methods to end unintended pregnancies.

- **Desire for a Boy Child:**

- The practice of selective abortion of female foetuses is most prevalent in regions of East and South Asia, particularly in nations like China, India, and Pakistan, where male offspring are valued more highly than female ones.
- A 2018 report published in the Lancet states that as of 2015, 15.6 million abortions were performed annually in India.

- According to the MTP Act, only medical professionals with obstetrics or gynaecology specialty are permitted to perform abortions.
- However, a 70% shortfall of obstetrician-gynaecologists is reported in rural India in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's 2019–20 report on Rural Health Statistics.
- It is important to work towards removing any needless obstacles or stigma from women's access to safe and legal abortion services.
- This could entail educating people about women's rights under the MTP Act, training healthcare professionals to provide comprehensive reproductive health services, and increasing the availability of abortion services in both urban and rural locations.
- The provision of safe abortion services to women is contingent upon the involvement of medical practitioners.
- Policies should address any ethical or legal concerns that women seeking abortion services may have while also assisting healthcare providers in providing high-quality, nonjudgmental treatment.

Source → The Hindu

2 - Centre Notifies CAA Implementation Rules:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions

- **Context:**
- The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, which was passed by Parliament in December 2019, is now set to go into effect after the Indian government recently published the rules for it.
- A route to Indian citizenship is offered to migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who belong to the following six religious minorities: Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian. This legislation is known as the Citizenship by Acceptance Act of 2019.
- **What are the Government's Regulations Regarding the Citizenship Amendment Act?**
- **Historical Context:** In order to alleviate the situation of refugees, the government has already amended the Citizenship Rules in 2004 and issued notifications in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2018.
- **CAA Rules 2024:** Section 6B of the Citizenship Act of 1955 is the basis for the application process for citizenship under CAA. To be eligible for Indian citizenship, an applicant must provide proof of their nationality, religion, date of entrance into India, and proficiency in one of the Indian languages.

- **Proof of Country of Origin:** A variety of documents, including as birth or educational certificates, identification documents, licences, land records, or any other document demonstrating prior citizenship of the aforementioned nations, are acceptable due to the relaxed requirements.
- **Date of Entry into India:** Applicants may provide up to 20 separate documents as evidence of their entry into the country, such as birth certificates, residency permits, visas, Aadhaar cards, driving licences, government or court letters, and more.

- **Method for Putting Regulations into Practice:**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has tasked the Union government's Census officers and Postal department with handling citizenship applications under the CAA.
- The Intelligence Bureau (IB) and other central security agencies will perform security and background checks.
- Appointed committees under the direction of the Director (Census Operations) in each State will make the final judgements regarding applications.
- Representatives from the State government's Department of Home and Divisional Railway Manager will be among the officials from these committees, along with representatives from the Intelligence Bureau, Post Master General, State or National Informatics Centre, and others.
- A representative from the District Collector's office will be invited to attend committee meetings at the district level, which will be presided over by the Superintendent of the Department of Post.
- **Application Processing:** In order to circumvent state control, citizenship applications will be processed by the District Level Committee (DLC) and Empowered Committee, which were established by the Centre.
- Applications will be received by DLC, and the Empowered Committee, led by the Director (Census Operations), will make the final decision.

- **What is the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019?**

- **Citizenship in India:** Citizenship is the legal status and relationship between an individual and a state that entails specific rights and duties.
- Citizenship in India is listed in the Union List under the Constitution and thus is under the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament.
- The Constitution of India, on 26th January, 1950, established categories of people eligible for Indian citizenship.
- It also granted Parliament the authority to regulate additional aspects of citizenship, such as granting and renunciation.
- Under this authority, Parliament enacted the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The Act specifies that citizenship may be acquired in India through five methods: by birth in India, by descent, through registration, by naturalisation (extended residence in India), and by incorporation of territory into India.
- Children born in India to ambassadors are not eligible for Indian citizenship based solely on their birth in the country.

- About: The Citizenship Act, 1955 was amended in 2019 to grant citizenship to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, or Christian migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan.
- Under the amendment, migrants who entered India on 31st December 2014, and had suffered "religious persecution or fear of religious persecution" in their country of origin would be made eligible for accelerated citizenship.
- It exempts the members of the six communities from any criminal case under Foreigners Act, 1946 and Passport Act, 1920 which specify punishment for entering the country illegally and staying on expired visas and permits.
- Relaxations: Under the Citizenship Act, 1935, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalization is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, as well as for 11 of the previous 14 years.
- The 2019 amendment relaxes the second requirement from 11 years to 6 years as a specific condition for applicants belonging to these six religions, and the aforementioned three countries.
- Exemptions: CAA will not apply to regions mentioned under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which include Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
- Additionally, areas covered by the Inner Line Permit system (ILP) are also exempt from the CAA.
- The concept of Inner Line separates the tribal-majority hills of the Northeast from the plains areas. To enter and stay in these areas, an Inner Line Permit (ILP) is needed.
- Currently, Inner Line Permit regulates visit of all persons, including Indian citizens, to Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland.
- This exclusion is intended to protect the interests of tribal and indigenous communities in the North-Eastern region, ensuring that individuals residing in these areas cannot seek citizenship under the provisions of the CAA, 2019.

- **What are the Concerns Related to the CAA, 2019?**

- Constitutional Challenge: Critics argue that it violates Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees the right to equality before the law and prohibits discrimination based on religion.
- The CAA's provision of granting citizenship based on religion is seen as discriminatory.
- Potential for Disenfranchisement: The CAA is often linked to the National Register of Citizens (NRC), a proposed nationwide exercise to identify illegal immigrants.
- Critics fear that a combination of CAA and a faulty NRC could disenfranchise several citizens who are unable to prove their documentation.
- More than 19.06 lakh people were left out of the final draft of the Assam NRC released in August 2019.
- Impact on Assam Accord: In Assam, there is a specific concern regarding the compatibility of the CAA with the Assam Accord, 1985.
- The Accord established criteria for determining citizenship in Assam, including specific cut-off dates for residency.

- The CAA's provision of a different timeline for granting citizenship could conflict with the provisions of the Assam Accord, leading to legal and political complications.
- **Secularism and Social Cohesion:** The CAA's focus on religion as a criterion for citizenship eligibility has raised broader concerns about its impact on secularism and social cohesion in India.
- Critics argue that privileging certain religious communities over others undermines the secular principles upon which the Indian state was founded and could exacerbate communal tensions.
- **Exclusion of few Religious Communities:** The exclusion of certain religious communities from the CAA and its subsequent rules, such as Sri Lankan Tamils and Tibetan Buddhists, who faced religious persecution in their home countries, raises concerns.
- **Note**
- The Matua community of West Bengal (Hindu refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) , have welcomed the CAA rules. The notification coincides with the birth anniversary of Harichand Thakur, a founder of the Matua sect, born in 1812 in present-day Bangladesh.
- **Way Forward:**
- **Inclusive Refugee Policy:** There is a need to develop a more inclusive refugee policy of India in lines with the UN Refugee Convention that does not discriminate based on religion, ethnicity, or any other arbitrary criteria.
- Also, ensuring that citizenship laws prioritise principles of equality and non-discrimination, providing equal opportunities for all individuals regardless of their background.
- **Documentation Assistance:** Implement measures to assist individuals, particularly marginalised communities, in obtaining necessary documentation to prove their citizenship status.
- Provide support services and resources to help individuals navigate the citizenship verification process, thereby mitigating the risk of statelessness.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Dialogue:** Facilitating meaningful dialogue and consultation with civil society organisations, religious leaders, and communities against it to address grievances and concerns related to the CAA.
- **International Engagement:** Engaging with neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, to address concerns related to religious persecution and human rights violations.
- India should also work towards regional cooperation and diplomatic initiatives aimed at promoting religious freedom and tolerance.
- **Educational and Awareness Campaigns:** Conducting educational and awareness campaigns to disseminate accurate information about citizenship laws and dispel misinformation or misconceptions.
- Promoting public understanding of the principles of equality, secularism, and inclusivity enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

3 - BioCNG Production from Dung:

GS III

Environmental Conservation

- **Context:**

- Banaskantha District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union, Gujarat are converting dung into Bio CNG (compressed natural gas) and fertiliser, supplementing farmers' income. This initiative addresses waste management while creating new revenue streams for dairy farmers.
- The BioCNG outlet on the Deesa-Tharad highway in Gujarat's Banaskantha district is a pioneering initiative, being India's first and only gas-filling station operating on dung sourced from cattle and buffaloes.

- **How are Farmers Harnessing the Value of Dung?**

- An average adult bovine animal discharges 15-20 kg of fresh dung daily, while calves give out 5-10 kg.
- A bovine refers to a domestic animal of the species *Bos taurus* (cattle) or *Bubalus bubalis* (water buffalo).
- Fresh dung contains 80-85% water; one kg weighs hardly 200 grams on drying.
- Fresh dung contains methane along with water, making it essential for biogas production in anaerobic digestion (breaks down biodegradable material without oxygen and produces biogas).
- Methane, a key component of biogas, is produced in the rumen of bovines (the first of four stomach compartments in bovines) during the fermentation of plant material they consume.
- Bacteria-like microbes in the rumen, known as archaea, utilise carbon dioxide and hydrogen produced during carbohydrate fermentation to generate methane.

- **Biogas Production Process:**

- Fresh raw dung is mixed with water in equal quantities to form a slurry. The slurry undergoes anaerobic digestion in a sealed vessel reactor over 35 days.
- The digestion involves four successive stages: hydrolysis (break-down of organic matter into simple molecules), acidogenesis (their conversion into volatile fatty acids), acetogenesis (production of acetic acid, CO₂ and hydrogen) and methanogenesis (biogas generation).
- Biogas digesters reduce methane emissions from animal waste, which can help mitigate greenhouse gas impact.
- A single cow can emit between 150 to 260 pounds of methane per year. With over 1.5 billion cattle raised globally for meat and milk production, the industry is responsible for an estimated 14.5% of global human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Biogas Purification and Compression:**

- Raw biogas is purified to remove CO₂, H₂S, and moisture through various processes.
- The purified biogas, compressed to 96-97% methane, is stored and farmers sell it as BioCNG at Rs 72/kg.

- **Utilization of Slurry for Fertilizer Production:**

- After biogas production, the slurry undergoes dewatering in a solid-liquid separator.
- The separated solid residue is decomposed aerobically and sold as PROM (phosphate-rich organic manure) by incorporating rock phosphate and phosphate-solubilizing bacteria.
- Alternatively, the decomposed solid residue can be used for compost production by adding neem and castor cake, sugarcane press mud, and microbial consortia.
- The liquid part is reused for mixing in the digester or sold as liquid-fermented organic manure.

- **Scalability and Replicability:**

- The BioCNG model is replicable and scalable, utilising dung from district member unions.
- Gujarat's Kaira Union's decentralised model involves installing Flexi Biogas plants, targeting 10,000 installations.
- Individual farmers benefit from smaller Flexi plants for personal use and potentially generate additional income.
- Whether through large-scale BioCNG plants or smaller decentralized models, the potential for additional income from dung utilization is growing.

- Biogas is a renewable energy source that's produced when organic matter breaks down in the absence of oxygen. This process is called anaerobic digestion.
- Biogas is also known as renewable natural gas (RNG) or biomethane. It's made up of mostly methane (CH₄) and carbon dioxide (CO₂).

- **What are the Key Challenges that Need to be Addressed?**

- Ensuring a consistent supply and quality of organic feedstock for animals.
- Implementing effective waste segregation and collection systems.
- Individual farmers and smaller cooperatives might lack the knowledge and resources for proper maintenance and monitoring of BioCNG plants.
- Training programs and readily available technical support and establishing standardised operating procedures and quality control measures are crucial.
- Access to financing options like subsidies, grants, or low-interest loans can help overcome initial capital barriers for setting up BioCNG plants.

- Technical challenges, such as a lack of skilled labour and infrastructure, can be addressed through public-private partnerships, technology transfer, and capacity-building programs.
- BioCNG needs to be stored and distributed efficiently to reach end-users, whether for cooking, heating, or electricity generation.
- Proper storage systems, such as gas holders or cylinders, are required to ensure a consistent supply of BioCNG.
- Overcoming the misconception that dung gas is unhygienic and unsafe is essential for widespread adoption.
- Educational outreach and showcasing the hygienic process are key to promoting decentralised biogas models among rural farmers.
- **What are India's Initiatives Related to Biogas?**
- Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation" (SATAT) Scheme
- GOBARdhan
- **National Biogas Programme:**
- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is supporting the installation of biogas plants and its use as a source of alternative fuels for cooking purposes in the country, including rural areas, under the National Biogas Programme.
- Under this scheme, MNRE is providing Central Financial Assistance (CFA) for setting up of biogas plants, ranging from Rs. 9800/- to Rs. 70,400/- per biogas plant based on the size of the plant (1-25 cubic meter/day plant capacity).

Source → The Hindu

4 - National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation Limited:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions

- **Context:**

- Recently, the Union Minister for Cooperation inaugurated the National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation Limited (NUCFDC), an umbrella organisation for urban cooperative banks (UCB).
- NUCFDC has received Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s approval to function as a non-banking finance company and a self-regulatory organisation for the urban cooperative banking sector.

- **What are Urban Cooperative Banks?**

- About: Cooperative banks are financial institutions that are owned and operated by their members, who are also the bank's customers.
- In order to support the financial needs of a community such as a village or a specific community, people come together to pool resources and provide banking services such as loans.
- In India, they are registered under the Cooperative Societies Act of the State concerned or the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.
- Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) refers to primary cooperative banks located in urban and semi-urban areas.

- **History:**

- The urban cooperative banking movement in India originated at the end of the 19th century, influenced by successful cooperative experiments in Britain and Germany.
- The "Anyonya Sahakari Mandali" in the princely State of Baroda is believed to be the earliest mutual aid society in India.
- Also, the first urban cooperative credit society was registered in Canjeevaram (Kanjivaram) in the erstwhile Madras province in October, 1904.
- Regulator: The Reserve Bank regulates the banking functions of Urban Cooperative Banks under the provisions of Sections 22 and 23 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- Also, State Cooperative Banks, District Central Cooperative Banks and Urban Cooperative Banks, which are registered with Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation are insured.

- **Four Tier Structure:**

- In 2021 RBI appointed N. S. Vishwanathan committee that suggested a 4-tier structure for the UCBs.
- Tier 1 with all unit UCBs and salary earner's UCBs (irrespective of deposit size) and all other UCBs having deposits up to Rs 100 crore.
- Tier 2 with UCBs of deposits between Rs 100 crore and Rs 1,000 crore,
- Tier 3 with UCBs of deposits between Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 10,000 crore, and
- Tier 4 with UCBs of deposits more than Rs 10,000 crore.
- Minimum Capital and RWA: Tier 1 UCBs operating in a single district should have a minimum net worth of ₹2 crore. For all other UCBs the minimum net worth should be ₹5 crore.
- Tier 1 UCBs have to maintain a minimum capital to risk weighted assets ratio of 9% of Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs) on an ongoing basis.
- Tier 2 to 4 UCBs have to maintain a minimum capital to risk weighted assets of 12% of RWAs on an ongoing basis.
- UCBs with a minimum net worth of Rs.500 million and maintaining Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio of 9% and above are eligible to apply for voluntary transition to Small Finance Banks.
- Current Status: Currently, there are 1,514 UCBs in India, accounting for 11% of the total credit to agriculture. The total deposit base of UCBs stands at ₹5.26 trillion.
- NABARD is entrusted with the responsibility for conduct of statutory inspections of State Cooperative Banks, District Central Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- The regulatory powers continue to be vested with the Reserve Bank of India.

- **What are the Major Issues Related to the UCBs?**

- High Non-performing Assets: Non-performing assets (NPAs) remain a significant concern for UCBs (2.10%). Poor credit appraisal practices, inadequate risk management frameworks, and exposure to vulnerable sectors contribute to high levels of NPAs, impacting profitability and stability.
- Limited Technology Adoption: Limited technological infrastructure and digital capabilities hinder UCBs' ability to offer modern banking services and compete with larger commercial banks.
- Inadequate investment in technology leads to inefficiencies, operational risks, and difficulties in meeting evolving customer expectations.
- Fraud and Mismanagement: Instances of fraud, embezzlement, and mismanagement have been reported in several UCBs (like Urban Co-operative Bank, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh), eroding depositor confidence and tarnishing the sector's reputation.
- In the financial year 2022-23, RBI cancelled licences of 8 cooperative banks.

- **Way Forward:**

- **Transparency and Accountability:** UCBs need to embrace greater transparency in their operations and financial reporting to rebuild public trust. This includes regular audits and clear communication with members.
- **Proactive Credit Risk Management:** Implementing robust credit risk management practices to identify, assess, and monitor credit risks associated with lending activities.
- This involves conducting thorough credit assessments of borrowers, including comprehensive analysis of their financials, repayment capacity, and credit history.
- Additionally, establishing clear credit policies, risk grading systems, and early warning indicators can help UCBs detect potential NPAs at an early stage and take timely corrective actions to prevent defaults.

Source → The Hindu



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