

**DAILY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
ANALYSIS**



10 JANUARY 2025

1 – Details of the Information Commission:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions

- **Which aspects of the report stand out the most?**
- **Inequality of Gender in Information Commissions:**
- **The portrayal of women:**
- Women make up just 9% of all Information Commissioners in the nation, which indicates a sizable gender gap.
- **Positions of Leadership:**
- Only five percent of ICs have had a female head, and none of them have a female commissioner at the moment.
- **States Absent Female Commissioners:**
- Twelve ICs, or around 41% of the total, have never had a female commissioner since their founding.
- These states are Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana.
- **Information Commissioners' past:**
- Of the ICs questioned, around 58% had previously served as government officials in retirement.
- A quarter of commissioners have either been judges or solicitors, which adds to the information commissions' varied backgrounds.
- **How Information Commissions Operate:**
- **Rates of Case Disposal:**
- A significant number of information commissions return cases without issuing orders; for example, the Central Information Commission and several State Information Commissions return 41% of appeals and complaints they receive.

- **Minimal Rates of Disposal:**

- Certain commissions have poor disposal rates per commissioner despite having a large number of pending cases, which may indicate inefficiencies in case administration.
- One major problem is the absence of transparent and timely appointments, which results in several Commissions functioning at reduced capacity or without a chief.
- The absence of new appointments has rendered the State Information Commissions of Jharkhand, Telangana, and Tripura inactive, which has negatively impacted their capacity to carry out their mandates.

- **Issues with Transparency:**

- Transparency concerns were raised by the fact that only 8 out of 29 Information Commissions stated that their hearings are open to the public, indicating that the ICs' operations are essentially opaque.

- **The Central and State Information Commission: What is it?**

- The Right to Information Act of 2005 established the Central Information Commission and the State Information Commissions as statutory bodies.

- **Qualifications and the CIC/IC Appointment Process:**

- Candidates need to be well-known in the public eye and possess a wide range of expertise.
- cannot occupy a position of profit or political office.
- The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, one Union Cabinet Minister, and the Prime Minister (Chair) make up the Appointment Committee.

- **Terms and Service Agreement between IC and CIC:**

- Until the age of 65, whichever comes first, CICs and ICs serve five-year terms in office and are not eligible for reappointment.
- Pay for CICs is the same as that of Chief Election Commissioners.
- Election commissioners and ICs make the same salary.
- ICs are eligible for CIC appointments, but their tenure as ICs is only allowed to last for a total of five years.

- **Commission for State Information:**

- Established by the State Government by publication in the Gazette.

- comprises a maximum of ten State Information Commissioners (SIC) appointed by the Governor and one State Chief Information Commissioner (SCIC).
- **SCIC/SIC Eligibility and Appointment Procedure:**
 - The same requirements that apply to Central Commissioner appointments also apply to SCIC/SIC appointments.
 - The Chief Minister will serve as the chair of the Appointments Committee. A Cabinet Minister nominated by the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly are among the other members.
 - The SCIC will receive the same pay as an Election Commissioner. The salary of the SIC will be the same as that of the Chief Secretary of the State Government.
- **Powers and Functions of Information Commissions:**
 - Duty to receive complaints regarding information requests and non-compliance.
 - Power to order inquiry based on reasonable grounds.
 - Authority akin to a Civil Court for summoning persons, requiring evidence, etc.
 - Ensures compliance with decisions, including penalties for non-compliance.
 - The Central Information Commission can exercise powers and perform functions autonomously without being subjected to directions by any other authority.
 - The headquarters of the Central Information Commission is in Delhi, with the authority to establish offices in other places in India with the Central Government's prior approval.
- **The Way Ahead:**
 - Ensure fair, transparent, and inclusive selection processes for commissioners, with due representation to women and marginalised groups.
 - Provide adequate resources and infrastructure to improve case disposal rates and efficiency, adhering to norms prescribed by the RTI Act and Supreme Court.
 - Timely and transparent appointments, widely advertised vacancies, and revival of defunct commissions to fill vacancies and ensure each IC is headed by a chief commissioner.
 - Enhance transparency and accountability by publishing annual reports, disclosing budgets and expenditures, and making hearings open for public attendance.

Source → The Hindu

2 – About Children's Safety in Digital Environments:

GS II

Social Issues

- **What Difficulties Do Kids Face in Digital Environments?**
- **Cyberbullying:**
- Cyberbullying is when someone, especially a peer, is harassed, threatened, degraded, or harmed using internet means.
- Abusive communications, gossip, cruel comments, revealing private or embarrassing images or videos, impersonating someone, or barring someone from online communities.
- Adverse consequences on kids' social skills, academic achievement, mental health, and self-esteem. Suicide, self-harm, despair, anxiety, and loneliness can also result from it.
- **Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation:**
- It is the practice of using internet platforms to expose minors to or involve them in sexual content or activities for the pleasure or financial gain of the perpetrator.
- Creating, sharing, or gaining access to content that depicts child sexual abuse; sextortion; child grooming; kid begging; livestreaming; or any combination of these.
- **Impacts:**
- can create pain and harm that lasts a lifetime, as well as disastrous impacts on a child's physical, psychological, and emotional well-being.
- **Data security and privacy:**
- Children's right to privacy and data protection refers to their ability to manage how their personal data is gathered, utilised, shared, and retained by third parties, particularly when it comes to the internet.
- Tech corporations, advertisers, hackers, and other third parties may violate it by gathering, using, or selling children's data without the children's knowledge or consent for nefarious or commercial ends.

- Can have negative effects on kids, like fraud, identity theft, targeted marketing, discrimination, manipulation, or exposure to unsuitable or hazardous contacts or content.
- **Digital citizenship and literacy:**
- Children's capacity and duty to utilise digital platforms in an ethical, safe, and effective manner as well as their participation in the online community as knowledgeable, engaged citizens is known as digital literacy and citizenship.
- The spread of false information, hate speech, and confusion on the internet might pose a threat to it since it can mislead, confuse, or hurt kids while also undermining their morals and sense of trust.
- Lack of access to, affordability of, or quality of digital platforms and technologies can impede digital literacy and lead to inequities and digital divides among children.
- **Virtual reality (VR) and the metaverse:**
- The metaverse is a virtual environment that enables lifelike online experiences through the use of augmented reality, virtual reality, and other cutting-edge technology.
- Economic exploitation through frauds and exploitation by cyber predators. Cyberbullying and online discrimination based on users' identities are encouraged by the prevalence of harassment and discrimination in virtual spaces.
- There are many privacy violations since users' security and personal information are compromised by data mining and surveillance.
- **Adverse effects of the metaverse:**
- Virtual worlds may expose children to violent or graphic information, which could cause desensitisation or emotional discomfort.
- Children's emotional wellbeing may be impacted by repeated exposure to such content, which might desensitise them to violence or other improper behaviours.
- **Unsettling Data Regarding Online Child Safety:**
- In thirty nations, over one-third of youth report experiencing cyberbullying; of them, one in five miss school as a result.
- In 25 nations, 80% of minors say they feel threatened with sexual abuse or exploitation online.
- According to the WeProtect Global Alliance, 54% of people who routinely used the internet as children and are currently between the ages of 18 and 20 had experienced at least one instance of online sexual harm.

- **What Steps Can Be Taken to Protect Kids Online?**

- **Avoidance:**

- By teaching kids about online manners and empathy, encouraging them to report incidences, offering assistance to the victims, and holding offenders accountable, cyberbullying can be stopped and dealt with.
- Educating kids about internet safety, digital citizenship, and ethical VR use.
- Teaching kids how to access, assess, produce, and share online content, as well as how to interact and communicate online and respect and protect others and themselves, helps improve their digital literacy and citizenship.

- **The role of tech companies:**

- Based on the emphasis on "safety by design" (SBD) during recent Congressional hearings, tech companies should take a leading role in protecting children's online safety.
- SBD centres the design and development of online goods and services around user rights and safety. It focuses on how tech firms might reduce online threats by foreseeing, identifying, and averting online hazards before they happen.
- When it comes to children's data in the metaverse and other virtual settings, UNICEF advises digital companies to adhere to the strictest data protection regulations already in place.

- **Governmental Obligations:**

- To stop violations of children's rights in digital areas, regulatory frameworks such as the Child Abuse Prevention and Investigation Unit should be periodically evaluated and adjusted.
- Create creative programmes, such as a child internet safety toolkit, to assist parents, teachers, and other concerned people in shielding kids from online threats.
- Use your regulatory authority to stop offensive internet behaviour and content that affects minors.
- Shared Accountability:
- Realise that online kid protection should be governed by the same laws that apply in the real world.
- Stress how crucial it is for governments, organisations, and tech corporations to work together to protect children's online safety.

Source → The Hindu

3 – Details of Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill 2024:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions

- **Which provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Bill, 2024 are the most important ones?**
- For a considerable amount of time, the foundation of India's environmental laws ensuring sustainable management of water resources has been the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
- The latest change aims to fix a few issues and update regulatory frameworks to meet modern requirements.
- Due to the comparable provisions found in both the Air Act and the Water Act, amendments to the latter are also required.
- **Principal Modified Clauses:**
 - Decriminalisation of Minor crimes: Its main goal is to reduce the threat of jail time associated with infractions pertaining to technical or procedural errors by decriminalising minor crimes involving water contamination.
 - The goal is to promote compliance without unduly burdening stakeholders by making sure that sanctions are commensurate with the seriousness of the crimes.
 - Exemption for Specific Industrial Plants: The revised bill gives the central government the authority to exclude particular types of industrial plants from some legal requirements, as those listed in Section 25 concerning the creation of new outlets and discharges.
 - By eliminating needless burdens on regulatory agencies and streamlining regulatory procedures and surveillance efforts, this clause aims to increase efficiency.
 - Enhanced Regulatory Oversight: It presents policies to improve state-by-state uniformity and regulatory oversight.
 - It gives the federal government the power to establish rules for State Pollution Control Board chairman nominations and to give orders on the approval, denial, or cancellation of industry-related consents.
 - It offers specific requirements in terms of education, work history, and protocols to guarantee equitable selection of chairpersons.

- Opponents contend that the law violates the federalism principle and aims to centralise all powers. They contend as well that it is difficult to address an issue like the environment without feeling a certain level of intense fear.
 - Concerns regarding the possible impact on transparency in addressing water contamination issues are voiced by certain commentators.
 - They contend that easing some restrictions could jeopardise industry and regulatory agency accountability, resulting in reduced environmental management openness.
- What distinguishing characteristics of the 1974 Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act are there?**
- Its enactment aims to prevent and regulate water contamination while preserving or regaining the water's wholesomeness.
 - In accordance with Sections 3 and 4 of the Act, respectively, the Central and State Pollution Control Boards have been established.
 - Established in September 1974, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is a legislative body that was created by the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1974.
 - Additionally, the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981 gave the CPCB the authority and duties that it currently possesses.
 - It collaborates with the State Pollution Control Boards and other organisations while operating under the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
 - Prior Amendments: The Act was revised in 1978 and 1988 to remove some ambiguities and provide the Pollution Control Board additional authority. Important responsibilities for local governments and industry include:
 - Any industry or municipal body that releases trade or household effluent into water, streams, wells, sewers, or land must first obtain approval from the State Pollution Control Board.
 - Following receipt of the application, the State Board may either grant approval subject to particular terms and deadlines or deny consent with a written explanation.
 - Industries that discharged trade or effluent waste prior to the Act's enactment are subject to similar regulations.

Source → The Hindu

4 – Details of the Indian Oil Market 2030 Report by IEA:

GS II

International Issues

- **Which aspects of the report stand out the most?**
- **India's Predominance in Growing Oil Demand:**
 - Between now and 2030, India is expected to drive the greatest increase in the world's oil demand, overtaking China by 2027.
 - By 2023, India's oil consumption is expected to increase by over 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd). This rise accounts for more than one-third of the 3.2 million bpd spike in world demand predicted by 2030.
 - India's total oil consumption is expected to reach 6.64 million barrels per day in 2030, up from 5.48 million barrels per day in 2023.
 - Strong increase in the country's economy, population, and demographics are some of the causes driving this rise.
- **Increase in Fuel Requirements:**
 - With almost half of the increase in the country's demand and more than one-sixth of the growth in oil demand worldwide through 2030 coming from diesel/gasoil, it is clear that this is the single largest driver of oil demand growth in India.
 - The demand for jet-kerosene is expected to rise rapidly, on average 5.9% annually, although from a lower starting point than in other nations.
 - The electrification of India's car fleet is expected to prevent a more significant increase in the country's fuel consumption, which is expected to climb by 0.7% on average.
 - Because more Indian cars are becoming electrified, the country's petrol consumption is expected to increase somewhat. The demand for LPG is anticipated to rise as a result of manufacturing facility investments.
- **Imports of crude oil:**
 - The country's falling domestic output and strong growth in oil demand are expected to cause India's crude oil imports to increase by more than a quarter to 5.8 million barrels per day by 2030. Currently, more than 85% of India's oil needs are met by imports.
 - After the United States and China, India is currently the third-largest user of crude oil. According to figures from the oil ministry, domestic use is about 5 mb/d.

- **Investing in the Refining Industry:**

- To keep up with the growing domestic oil demand, Indian oil corporations are making significant investments in the refining industry.
- More than any other nation in the world save China, 1 mb/d of additional refinery distillation capacity will be built during the next seven years.
- There are now a number of significant projects being considered that could increase capacity above the 6.8 mb/d capacity that is currently anticipated.

- **Part in the World Oil Markets:**

- India is expected to continue being one of the major exporters of petroleum for transportation to markets in the Atlantic Basin and Asia.
- Since 2022, India has played a more significant part in the global swing supply chain as the decline in Russian product shipments to European markets has strengthened the attraction of Asian diesel and jet fuel towards the west.
- With 1.2 million barrels per day of refinery product exports, India ranked sixth in the world in 2023 and fourth in terms of middle distillates exported worldwide.
- Given the constant increase in domestic demand, it is anticipated that new refining capacity will increase product supply to global markets to 1.4 mb/d by the middle of the decade, before slipping lower to 1.2 mb/d by 2030.

- **Biofuels as a means of decarbonising:**

- Additionally, biofuels are anticipated to be crucial to India's efforts to decarbonise its transportation industry.
- India has tripled its domestic ethanol production over the past five years, making it the world's third-largest producer and consumer of the fuel.
- Due to the nation's plentiful feedstocks, strong political backing, and efficient policy execution, its 12% ethanol blending rate ranks among the highest globally.
- India's deadline to double the countrywide ethanol blend in petrol to 20% by Q4 2026 has been advanced by five years.
- One of the many obstacles to achieving 20% ethanol blending in such a short amount of time is the quickly growing supply of feedstock.

- **Energy Transition Efforts:**

- Decarbonising the transportation sector is expected to be significantly aided by increased use of electric vehicles.
- It is projected that in the years 2023–2030, the combination of new electric vehicles and energy efficiency upgrades will prevent an additional 480 kb/d of oil consumption.
- In other words, if these increases weren't made, India's oil consumption by 2030 would have increased significantly from the current estimate of 1.68 mb/d.

- **Problems:**

- The lack of new finds is projected to keep domestic crude oil production from rising over the medium term, despite efforts to draw in international upstream investment.
- India increased its imports of crude oil by 36% to 4.6 mb/d over the previous ten years in order to meet growing refinery demand, making it the second-largest net importer of crude oil in the world as of 2023.
- By 2030, imports of crude oil would increase to 5.8 million barrels per day due to increased refining processing, which will have a significant impact on India's supply security.

- **Suggestions:**

- India now has seven days' worth of Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) holdings, or 66 days' worth of net import cover.
- The stockpiles of IEA member nations cover 90 days' worth of demand.
- India is classified as an associate member of the organisation rather than a full member.
- Through the implementation and reinforcement of the SPR Programmes and the improvement of oil industry readiness, India must increase its ability to respond to potential interruptions in the oil supply.
- Strategic petroleum reserves lessen the disruption to energy supplies caused by calamities like wars.

- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves: What Are They?**

- Strategic petroleum reserves, or SPRs, are crude oil inventories kept by nations to guarantee a steady supply of crude oil even in the event of supply disruptions or geopolitical unpredictability.
- These subterranean storage facilities are essential to preserving a constant supply of energy resources for the expansion and development of the country.
- Currently, 5.33 million tonnes of strategic crude oil are stored in India.
- Under the second phase of the nation's strategic petroleum reserves programme, more strategic reserves will be constructed, with a total capacity to hold 6.5 million tonnes of crude oil.

Source → The Hindu