

**The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC
CSE**

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Page 01:GS 2: International Relations / Prelims

India has announced the upgrading of its Technical Mission in Kabul to the status of an **Embassy**. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made this declaration during his meeting with Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in New Delhi. This move marks a significant step in re-establishing India's diplomatic presence in Afghanistan after the closure of the embassy in 2021, following the withdrawal of U.S. forces.

India's Kabul mission to be upgraded to embassy

Jaishankar announces this while meeting Taliban's Muttaqi; condemns refugee repatriation by Pak.

Muttaqi welcomes decision; says diplomats will go to Afghan Embassy, may not send Ambassador initially

Jaishankar says India, Afghanistan share growth goals; cross-border terror a common challenge

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India will upgrade its 'technical mission' in Kabul to the status of an embassy, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Friday.

The announcement came during Mr. Jaishankar's meeting with Amir Khan Muttaqi, Foreign Minister of the Taliban administration in Afghanistan, at Hyderabad House. Mr. Jaishankar also raised India's concerns over the forced repatriation of Afghan refugees by Pakistan and described "cross-border terrorism" as a common challenge to both India and Afghanistan.

"India is fully committed to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan. Closer cooperation bet-

ween us contributes to your national development, as well as regional stability and resilience. To enhance that, I am pleased to announce today the upgrading of India's technical mission in Kabul to the status of Embassy of India," said Mr. Jaishankar.

India had shut its embassy in Kabul in 2021 after the U.S.-led forces withdrew from Afghanistan.

In an interaction at the Embassy of Afghanistan, Mr. Muttaqi welcomed the decision and said, "We will send our diplomats to the Embassy of Afghanistan."

He clarified that the Taliban may not send an ambassador at the beginning.

TTP leader killed

Mr. Jaishankar noted that India and Afghanistan share a "common commitment towards growth and



Reaching out: S. Jaishankar with Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in New Delhi on Friday, ANI

prosperity" but cautioned that "these are endangered by the shared threat of cross-border terrorism that both our nations face." He did not name Pakistan but urged Mr. Muttaqi to "coordinate efforts" to counter the threat.

The meeting took place

hours after an explosion in Kabul reportedly killed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leader Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud, a claim later denied by TTP sources.

Mr. Jaishankar thanked Kabul for condemning the terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, which killed 26

Pak. violating Kabul's sovereign territory: Taliban

KABUL

The Taliban regime on Friday accused Pakistan of "violating Kabul's sovereign territory", a day after two explosions were heard. The Taliban have previously accused Islamabad of border strikes, but this is the first time they have alleged an incursion deep into their territory, calling it an "unprecedented act". » **PAGE 12**

people, saying, "We appreciate your sensitivity towards India's security concerns." He also reiterated India's commitment to facilitating travel for Afghan nationals through a new visa module introduced in April 2025, with more medical, business, and stu-

dent visas being issued.

A joint statement issued after the meeting of the officials said that scholarships from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and other organisations are "under active consideration" to enable more Afghan students to study in India.

Mr. Muttaqi had earlier met Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in Dubai on January 8, where the two sides discussed the roadmap for bilateral relations amid evolving regional developments. Since assuming power, the Taliban has established diplomatic ties with several countries, including Russia and China. Mr. Muttaqi arrived in New Delhi from Moscow, where he attended the Moscow Format Dialogue.

Global recognition of the Taliban government –

the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan – has been impeded by concerns over the human rights situation in the country, which did not feature in Mr. Jaishankar's remarks. Highlighting the importance of Mr. Muttaqi's first visit to New Delhi, Mr. Jaishankar said, "...a meeting between us in person has a special value in allowing us to exchange perspectives, identify common interests and forge closer cooperation." The Minister also announced six new health projects for Afghanistan, with details to be shared soon. India will gift 20 ambulances to Afghanistan as a "symbolic step". The visiting side also invited Indian companies to invest in the mining sector of Afghanistan.

'WON'T ALLOW TERRORISTS'
» **PAGE 3**

Static Context (Background)

• India-Afghanistan Relations

- Historically, India and Afghanistan share strong cultural, economic, and strategic ties.
- India has invested in major development projects: **Salma Dam, Parliament building, road networks, electricity projects.**
- Afghanistan is a key part of India's Neighbourhood First Policy and Connect Central Asia Policy.

• Embassy vs Technical Mission

- Technical Mission: Limited in scope, focusing on humanitarian aid, technical support, and assistance.
- Embassy: Represents full-fledged diplomatic presence – political dialogue, consular services, development projects, and cultural exchanges.

• Challenges in Afghanistan

- Taliban takeover in 2021 led to instability and uncertainty.
- Cross-border terrorism (especially emanating from Pakistan) is a common concern for both India and Afghanistan.

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Daily News Analysis

Current Context (News Specifics)

- India announced the **upgradation of its Kabul Mission to Embassy status**.
- Taliban Foreign Minister Muttuqi welcomed the move, though he hinted that **an Ambassador may not be sent initially**.
- India raised concerns about **forced repatriation of Afghan refugees by Pakistan**.
- Cross-border terrorism was discussed, particularly the activities of **Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)**.
- India announced:
 - **Six new health projects** for Afghanistan.
 - **20 ambulances** as a symbolic gesture.
 - **Scholarships** for Afghan students under ICCR and other programs.
- Taliban accused Pakistan of **violating Kabul's sovereignty** through cross-border strikes.

Significance

For India

- Re-establishes **strategic presence** in Afghanistan.
- Strengthens regional connectivity projects (Chabahar Port, INSTC).
- Provides a platform to engage the Taliban on counter-terrorism.

For Afghanistan

- Gains continued **humanitarian and development support** from India.
- Scholarships and education opportunities for Afghan students.
- Investment opportunities in the mining sector.

For Regional Geopolitics

- Russia and China are already engaging with Taliban; India's move strengthens its regional role.
- Pakistan may feel uneasy about growing India-Taliban interactions.

Challenges

- Taliban regime lacks **global recognition**.
- Concerns over **human rights and women's rights** persist.
- India must balance **pragmatic engagement** with Taliban while upholding democratic values.

Conclusion

India's decision to upgrade its mission to an Embassy highlights its **pragmatic foreign policy approach**. It ensures India's presence in Afghanistan while addressing shared challenges such as terrorism and instability. This move demonstrates India's intent to safeguard its strategic interests, promote regional stability, and strengthen development cooperation.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques. The term “Technical Mission in Kabul” recently in news, is related to which country?

- (a) Iran
- (b) Afghanistan
- (c) Nepal
- (d) Bangladesh

Ans: (b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Examine the strategic and geopolitical implications of India’s decision to upgrade its Technical Mission in Kabul to an Embassy. (250 Words)

Page 01 :Prelims

The 2024 Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to **María Corina Machado**, a Venezuelan opposition leader, for her struggle to bring **democratic transition** in Venezuela. She has been recognized as a "key unifying figure" who kept the flame of democracy alive amid authoritarian rule under President Nicolás Maduro. This highlights the global importance of democracy, human rights, and political freedoms in authoritarian regimes.

Venezuela's Opposition leader María Machado wins Nobel Peace Prize 'promoting democracy'

Associated Press
OSLO

Venezuelan Opposition leader María Corina Machado won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for her struggle to achieve a democratic transition in the South American nation, winning recognition as a woman "who keeps the flame of democracy burning amid a growing darkness".

The former Opposition presidential candidate is a "key, unifying figure" in the once deeply divided Opposition to President Nicolás Maduro's government, said Jørgen Watne Frydnes, chair of the Norwegian Nobel committee.

Reacting to the honour, Ms. Machado said she was



María Corina Machado is a 'key, unifying figure' in the once deeply divided Opposition to President Nicolás Maduro's government. AFP

confident the Opposition would succeed in securing a peaceful transition to democracy in her country.

"We're not there yet. We're working very hard to achieve it, but I'm sure that we will prevail," she told Kristian Berg Harpviken, the director of the Nobel

Institute and secretary of the Nobel Committee.

Dedicates win to Trump

"I dedicate this prize to the suffering people of Venezuela and to President Trump for his decisive support of our cause!" she later wrote on X.

"This is something that the Venezuelan people deserve," Ms. Machado said in a call with the Norwegian Nobel Institute. "I'm honored not only by this recognition, but I'm honored to be part of what's going on in Venezuela today."

"In the past year, Ms. Machado has been forced to live in hiding," Mr. Frydnes said. "Despite serious threats against her life, she has remained in the country... When authoritarians seize power, it is crucial to recognise courageous defenders of freedom who rise and resist."

Mr. Maduro's government has routinely targeted its real or perceived opponents.

Ms. Machado, 58, was

set to run against Mr. Maduro in last year's presidential election, but the government disqualified her.

The crackdown on dissent only increased after the country's National Electoral Council, which is stacked with Maduro loyalists, declared him the winner despite credible evidence to the contrary. The election results announced by the Electoral Council sparked protests to which the government responded with force that ended with more than 20 people dead.

Ms. Machado becomes the 20th woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

(With inputs from AFP)

TRUMP'S QUEST
» PAGE 13

Static Context (Background)

- **Nobel Peace Prize**
 - Established under Alfred Nobel's will (1901).
 - Awarded annually to individuals or organizations for significant contributions to peace, human rights, democracy, or humanitarian efforts.
- **About Venezuela's Political Crisis**
 - Venezuela, once oil-rich, has been facing **economic collapse, political turmoil, hyperinflation, and mass migration**.
 - Nicolás Maduro has ruled since 2013, accused of **electoral manipulation, authoritarianism, and human rights violations**.

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Daily News Analysis

○ Opposition leaders often face persecution,

disqualification, and exile.

- **María Corina Machado**
 - Opposition leader and former presidential candidate.
 - Vocal critic of Maduro's government.
 - Disqualified from running in the 2023 presidential election, despite being a frontrunner.
 - Advocates for **free elections, rule of law, and democratic governance**.

Current Context (News Specifics)

- Machado received the Nobel Peace Prize for **"keeping democracy's flame burning amid darkness"**.
- She has been forced into hiding due to threats but continues her activism.
- She dedicated the prize to the **suffering people of Venezuela** and credited international support.
- The award comes amid growing international condemnation of Maduro's suppression of dissent.
- Venezuela's National Electoral Council, stacked with government loyalists, disqualified her candidacy despite popular support.
- Protests against this decision were violently suppressed, leaving more than 20 dead.

Significance

For Venezuela

- Provides international recognition and legitimacy to the opposition.
- Inspires pro-democracy movements and increases pressure on Maduro's regime.
- Could boost hopes for **fair elections and democratic reforms**.

For the World

- Highlights global concerns over **authoritarianism and erosion of democracy**.
- Strengthens the role of Nobel Prize as a tool of **soft power diplomacy**.
- Sets a precedent for honoring democratic struggles in authoritarian states.

For India (Indirect Relevance in UPSC Context)

- Reinforces India's stance as the **world's largest democracy** supporting democratic values.
- Provides a comparative study point for GS-2 under topics of **democracy, human rights, and international institutions**.

Challenges

- Maduro's government still firmly controls state institutions, military, and judiciary.
- Opposition leaders remain vulnerable to **persecution, arrests, or disqualification**.
- Venezuela's political polarization and economic crisis may delay democratic transition.

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Conclusion

María Corina Machado's Nobel Peace Prize is a symbol of **resistance against authoritarianism and the global recognition of democratic aspirations**. While challenges remain, the award strengthens the voice of Venezuela's opposition and reaffirms the universal relevance of democracy and human rights.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: The Nobel Peace Prize 2024 was awarded to María Corina Machado for her efforts in promoting democracy in which country?

- (a) Chile
- (b) Venezuela
- (c) Cuba
- (d) Colombia

Ans: (b)

Aim, Think & Achieve

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The Environment Ministry's apex committee has granted fresh **environmental clearance** to the **Sawalokote Hydroelectric Project** on the Chenab River in Ramban, Jammu & Kashmir. This is the first major hydropower project on the Indus basin rivers to receive clearance after India's suspension of the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** with Pakistan in April 2023. The decision carries both developmental and strategic significance.

Hydropower project on Chenab gets clearance

The Sawalkote project was first accorded an environmental clearance in 2017; the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan added momentum to the approval process, says official

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

An apex committee of the Environment Ministry has accorded a fresh environmental clearance to the Sawalkote hydroelectric project, proposed to come up on Chenab river in Ramban, Jammu and Kashmir.

Planned as a run-of-the-river project utilising the flow of the Chenab to generate electricity, it is reportedly the first major hydropower project on the Indus rivers to be accorded environmental clearance following India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) on April 23, following the Pahalgam terror attack.

"The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC), after examining the information submitted and detailed deliberations, reiterated its earlier recommendation on the project and recommended the proposal for grant of prior Environmental Clearance to Sawalkote H.E. Project," said the minutes of a meeting conducted on September 26.

The project was first accorded an environmental clearance by a designated committee in 2017, when it



Earliest project: A view of the Salal Dam on the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir. ANI

was originally being steered by the Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Corporation (JKPDC). However, the JKPDC signed a deal with the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) Ltd. in 2021 to build and commission the project and be effectively in charge of it until 2061.

Despite the designated committee's nod, the Environment Ministry could not clear the project as the JKPDC could not procure a forest clearance - which follows a parallel approval process. In September 2023, the project was first accorded a 'stage 1 forest clearance' as per publicly

available records.

While the process of transferring the project to the NHPC has been on since 2021, a slew of approvals from the Central Electricity Authority and the Central Water Commission were accorded in July 2025. Public hearings, required to be done under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, were done between December 2022 to February 2023.

"The Sawalkote project was already going through various stages of approval. Given its size - though it does not have a storage dam - it will be the largest project of its kind and has always had certain strateg-

ic importance. The suspension of the IWT and the plan to utilise the full potential of the eastern Indus rivers have added momentum to the approval process," a senior official, aware of the approval process of hydroelectric projects, told *The Hindu*, but declined to be identified.

Project cost goes up

From an earlier estimate of about ₹22,000 crore, estimated cost of the project has ballooned to ₹31,380 crore.

It is projected to have an installed power capacity of 1,856 MW and generate about 8,000 million units of electricity annually.

Static Context (Background)

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Daily News Analysis

- **Chenab River**

- Originates in Himachal Pradesh, flows through Jammu & Kashmir before entering Pakistan.
- It is a major tributary of the **Indus River System**.

- **Indus Waters Treaty (1960)**

- Signed between India and Pakistan under World Bank mediation.
- Allocated waters of the **eastern rivers** (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India, and **western rivers** (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) primarily to Pakistan, with limited rights for India.
- India can use western rivers for **non-consumptive purposes** (hydropower, navigation, irrigation within limits).

- **Hydropower in India**

- Renewable energy source, crucial for **energy security** and reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- Important in India's commitments under **Paris Agreement and climate goals**.

Current Context (News Specifics)

- **Project Details:**

- Sawalokote project → **Run-of-the-river project** (no large storage reservoir).
- Proposed installed capacity: **1,856 MW**.
- Estimated cost: **₹31,380 crore** (revised upward from earlier estimate of ₹22,000 crore).
- Expected annual generation: **8,000 million units** of electricity.

- **Institutional Details:**

- Initially under Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Corporation (JKPDC).
- Transferred to National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) in 2021.
- Clearances obtained from **Central Electricity Authority** and **Central Water Commission** by July 2025.
- Forest clearances (Dec 2022 – Feb 2023) under **Forest Rights Act**.

- **Geopolitical Dimension:**

- India suspended participation in the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan in April 2023.
- This move gave additional momentum to push forward hydropower projects on Indus basin rivers.

Significance

For India

- Strengthens **energy security** with clean renewable power.
- Boosts **development in J&K** through jobs, infrastructure, and electricity supply.
- Enhances **strategic leverage** over western rivers vis-à-vis Pakistan.

For Jammu & Kashmir

- Promotes industrial growth and energy access.
- Reduces dependence on fossil fuels in the region.
- Generates employment and boosts local economy.

For Regional Politics

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Daily News Analysis

- opposed Indian projects on Indus basin rivers.
- Reflects India's shift towards **maximizing its rights** under IWT after suspension.
- May raise tensions with Pakistan, which has historically

Challenges

- **Environmental Concerns:** Submergence of land, biodiversity loss, displacement of communities.
- **Financial Costs:** Escalated project cost from ₹22,000 crore → ₹31,380 crore.
- **Geopolitical Risks:** Pakistan may raise objections internationally.
- **Technical Risks:** Being in a seismically active Himalayan region increases risks of landslides, earthquakes.

Conclusion

The Sawalokote Hydropower Project clearance is a landmark decision with **energy, developmental, and strategic implications**. It highlights India's push for renewable power and its evolving stance on the Indus Waters Treaty. However, balancing **development with environmental sustainability and geopolitical stability** will be key to the project's long-term success.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the significance of India's decision to go ahead with the Sawalokote Hydroelectric Project on Chenab River in the context of the Indus Waters Treaty and India's energy security goals. **(250 Words)**

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As India marks the 20th anniversary of the **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005**, a citizens' report reveals a worrying trend: several **State Information Commissions (SICs)** and even the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** are either defunct or severely understaffed. This has resulted in huge pendency, where RTI appeals can take years—sometimes even decades—to be resolved, undermining transparency and accountability in governance.

6 State-level RTI panels are defunct; appeals can take years to be heard: report

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

As the 20th anniversary of the Right to Information Act, 2005 approaches, many State Information Commissions (SICs) and the Central Information Commission (CIC) are either paralysed or so understaffed that hearings could take years to happen, according to a report by a citizens' group working to promote transparency in government functioning.

The SICs and the CIC hear appeals and complaints when citizens are dissatisfied with the result of an RTI application. There were over 2.4 lakh appeals in 2024.

The latest edition of the Satark Nagrik Sangathan

(SNS)'s annual assessment shows that six SICs – Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Goa, Tripura and Madhya Pradesh – were defunct for varying periods of time between July 1, 2024 to October 7, 2025 as no new Commissioners were appointed upon the incumbents demitting office."

The SICs of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar are functioning without a full strength of Commissioners.

Meanwhile, the Central Information Commission, which hears appeals against RTI responses to Union government organisations, is functioning with only two Information Commissioners, with nine va-

cancies, including for the Chief Information Commissioner, and hearings can take over a year to come up.

The backlog is mounting, with Commissions only able to dispose of 1.8 lakh cases in a year with 2.4 lakh appeals. In some States, the current speed of hearings taking place is far slower: the SNS's report "shows that the Telangana SIC would take an estimated 29 years and two months – a matter filed on July 1, 2025 would be disposed [of] in the year 2054."

Over 4 lakh appeals and complaints were pending as of June, with Maharashtra (95,340), Karnataka (47,825) and Tamil Nadu (41,059) with the largest outstanding backlog.

Daily News Analysis

Static Context (Background)

- **RTI Act, 2005:**
 - Landmark legislation empowering citizens to seek information from public authorities.
 - Established **Information Commissions** at the Central and State levels.
 - Objective: Ensure transparency, accountability, and reduce corruption.
- **Central Information Commission (CIC):**
 - Hears appeals and complaints against Union government departments.
 - Headed by Chief Information Commissioner + Information Commissioners.
- **State Information Commissions (SICs):**
 - Deal with state-level RTI complaints and appeals.
 - Headed by State Chief Information Commissioner + State Information Commissioners.
- **Legal Safeguards:**
 - Commissioners appointed by President (CIC) / Governor (SICs).
 - Fixed tenure and independence to ensure impartial functioning.

Current Context (News Specifics)

- **Defunct SICs:** Six states — **Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Goa, Tripura, and Madhya Pradesh** — had completely defunct SICs between July 2024 and October 2025 due to no new appointments.
- **Partially Functioning SICs:** Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Bihar — operating without full strength of commissioners.
- **CIC Situation:** Currently functioning with only **two commissioners** out of the mandated strength of 10.
- **Case Backlog:**
 - 2.4 lakh appeals filed in 2024.
 - Commissions can only dispose of 1.8 lakh cases annually → pendency increasing.
 - Example: Telangana SIC may take **29 years** to resolve an appeal filed in 2025.
- **State-level Pendency (June 2025):**
 - Maharashtra: 95,340
 - Karnataka: 47,825
 - Tamil Nadu: 41,059

Significance

For Governance

- RTI ensures **citizens' right to know** → vital for democratic accountability.
- Weak functioning of Commissions erodes **trust in institutions**.

For Citizens

- Delayed appeals reduce **effectiveness of RTI** as an anti-corruption tool.
- Citizens' grievances remain unaddressed, affecting access to welfare rights.

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Daily News Analysis

For Transparency and Democracy

- Non-functional SICs undermine **good governance** principles.
- Violates spirit of **Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of Speech & Expression**, as right to information is linked to free expression.

Challenges

- **Vacancies and Understaffing:** Lack of timely appointments.
- **Huge Pendency:** Lakhs of cases pending, disposal rate very low.
- **Institutional Weakness:** Limited autonomy, budgetary constraints.
- **Political Resistance:** Governments reluctant to strengthen RTI enforcement.

Conclusion

The RTI Act was a **watershed reform in Indian democracy**, but its effectiveness is being undermined by non-functional Commissions and mounting pendency. For RTI to remain a meaningful tool, **timely appointments, adequate staffing, digitisation of processes, and strengthening of institutional autonomy** are essential. The health of the RTI regime directly reflects the **strength of Indian democracy and transparency in governance**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques :Which of the following statements is correct regarding the Right to Information Act, 2005?

1. It provides for the establishment of Central and State Information Commissions.
2. Commissioners are appointed by the President and Governors, respectively.
3. It is a statutory right under Article 32 of the Constitution.

Options:

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

Ans: (a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques:"The Right to Information Act was a milestone in ensuring transparency, but its implementation is facing serious challenges due to vacancies and pendency in Information Commissions. Critically discuss." **(150 Words)**

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Page 06 :GS 2: Governance

The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** released its **2023 Crime Report**, highlighting emerging crime patterns in India. While overall **murder cases decreased (-2.8%)**, there has been a worrying **28.8% increase in crimes against Scheduled Tribes (STs)** and a **31.2% increase in cybercrimes**. These trends raise concerns regarding governance, law enforcement, and social justice in vulnerable communities.

Static Context (Background)

- **NCRB**
 - Established in **1986**, under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - Collects, analyzes, and publishes crime data (IPC + Special & Local Laws).
 - Publishes annual reports on **Crime in India, Accidental Deaths, Suicides, and Prison Statistics**.
- **Relevance of NCRB Data**
 - Used by policymakers, law enforcement, judiciary, and researchers.
 - Helps identify crime hotspots and emerging threats.
 - Caveat: Crime data often depends on **reporting levels** (under-reporting/over-reporting affects accuracy).
- **Legal Frameworks**
 - **POCSO Act, 2012** – Protection of Children from Sexual Offences.
 - **IT Act, 2000** + amendments – Cybercrime.
 - **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989** – Protects vulnerable communities.

Current Context (News Specifics – NCRB 2023 Findings)

- **Overall Trends**
 - Murder cases: ↓ 2.8%.
 - Crimes against women: ↑ 0.4% (but dowry-related crimes ↑ 14.9%).
 - Crimes against children: ↑ 9.2% (1,77,335 cases; in 96% of cases offender was known to victim).
- **Crimes against Scheduled Tribes (STs)**
 - ↑ 28.8% in 2023.
 - Major spike due to **ethnic violence in Manipur** (cases rose from 1 in 2022 to 3,399 in 2023).
 - High crime rates also reported in **Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan**, reflecting tribal vulnerability.
- **Cybercrime**
 - ↑ 31.2% in 2023.
 - Mostly related to **financial frauds & sexual exploitation**.
 - Driven by deeper **internet penetration** and **digital financial use**.
 - Policing challenges: Ubiquitous nature of internet, anonymity of criminals, cross-border issues.

Crime patterns

The 2023 NCRB report shows rise in cybercrime and crimes against tribals

The National Crime Records Bureau's annual reports on crime and prison statistics have to be read with a strong caveat – most of the numbers cannot be compared between States because they are largely dependent upon the registration/reporting of crimes in the first place. However, certain national trends and sharp year-on-year changes within States can still reveal meaningful patterns that could demand policy intervention. The recent NCRB report for 2023 – delayed by a year – points to a worrying trend of postponed surveys, reports and even the Census under the current Union Government. But there are also three telling numbers: the 2.8% decrease in murder cases across the country; a staggering 28.8% surge in crimes against Scheduled Tribes (ST), and a 31.2% increase in cyber crimes. While the decrease in murder cases will come as a relief to law enforcement – most of the cases pertain to disputes, personal vendetta or enmity and "gain" – the other two numbers are alarming. The steep rise in crimes against STs is largely due to the ethnic violence in Manipur, with the registered numbers jumping from just one in 2022 to 3,399 in 2023 – which a more effective government could have mitigated. Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan also recorded significantly high crime rates against tribals suggesting their vulnerability in the central Indian States. This is not a new phenomenon; previous NCRB reports have highlighted higher crime rates in regions with significant tribal populations.

With greater Internet penetration across the country, there has been an increase in cybercrime, particularly related to financial fraud and sexual exploitation. Anecdotally, it is evident that these numbers must have gone up even further in the last two years with the greater use of digital financial instruments in daily transactions and investment. While policing has tried to keep up with the growing menace of cybercrime, with specialised cells, the ubiquitousness and deepening spread of digital crimes require more sophistication and dedication by the police to tackle them. Crimes against children rose by 9.2% in 2023 – with the offender known to the victim in 96% of the cases. While the increase could be a function of improved reporting across States, the high number (1,77,335 cases) suggests that States must work on a war footing to sensitise children about these crimes and inappropriate behaviour by adults. A subset of these crimes could also include the application of the POCSO Act in the case of consensual adolescent relationships and this is an area that needs to be carefully handled by the prosecuting and policing agencies. Reported crimes against women registered a modest increase of 0.4%, but this masks a 14.9% spike in dowry-related crimes, pointing to a persistent societal problem.

Daily News Analysis

Significance

For Governance

- Reflects **law-and-order challenges** in managing ethnic violence (e.g., Manipur).
- Indicates **institutional gaps** in handling cybercrime.

For Vulnerable Groups

- Scheduled Tribes remain highly exposed to **atrocities, displacement, and violence**.
- Children and women remain vulnerable despite existing laws like **POCSO** and **Dowry Prohibition Act**.

For Policymaking

- Emphasizes need for **specialized cybercrime units**, forensic capacity, and awareness campaigns.
- Highlights importance of **community-based protection mechanisms** for tribals.

Challenges

- **Underreporting & Delayed Data:** NCRB 2023 report was delayed by 1 year.
- **Policing Capacity:** States lack adequate digital policing skills.
- **Judicial Delays:** Huge pendency of criminal cases in courts.
- **Social Issues:** Persistent dowry deaths, caste-based violence, and gender crimes.

Conclusion

The NCRB 2023 report is a **mirror of India's social realities**. While murders are declining, the **sharp rise in cybercrime and crimes against tribals** calls for urgent reforms in policing, justice delivery, and social protection. Strengthening institutional capacity, improving digital policing, and ensuring **inclusive governance for vulnerable groups** must be a top priority to maintain law and order and uphold justice.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: "The NCRB 2023 data reveals an alarming rise in crimes against Scheduled Tribes and cybercrimes. Discuss the underlying causes and suggest measures for strengthening India's criminal justice system in this context." **(150 Words)**

Page : 06 Editorial Analysis

The real need is a holistic demographic mission

The announcement on August 15, 2025, of a demographic mission, has become a topic of controversy in social and political circles. While the stated mission was limited to monitoring undocumented immigration from Bangladesh and its implied demographics in India's border regions, a holistic demographic mission seems to be the need as the nation is at the demographic crossroads. The most populous nation, with a large youth demography, undoubtedly becomes a matter of global envy and local pride. The demographics have never assumed significance in policy circles except for its relevance in population control. Demographic diversity is a blessing in disguise to sustain India's population well into the next century. Reading India's demographics may not essentially be limited to the country per se but has to be in relative terms with other global regions.

Need for a broader scope

A demography mission requires examining the kind of demographic transformation that has taken place over the last two decades. Demographic imaginations relating to the three demographic components of fertility, mortality and migration are quite limiting but have broader implications towards regional distribution of the age-sex composition of population and households. The agenda of a demography mission should not necessarily be limited to reading the future of demography but in recognition of emerging population features in terms of capabilities such as education, health and livelihood features alongside the evolving institutions in response to the migration transition. From a human capability standpoint, a demography mission needs to address the



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A true demography mission needs to examine India's various transformations

imbalanced infrastructure to generate human capabilities across regions. Consider the case of education and skill capabilities or a 'dream India' emerging as a skill capital in the world – the educational infrastructure remains skewed across regions and is not in keeping with middle class aspirations. This results in inequities with the affluent being able to achieve things as against the less affluent failing to do so.

Issue of migration

While there have been major advances on the fertility and mortality fronts, migration seems to be a major population balancer across regions. Hence, policies need to be in place to make the choice of migration equal for everyone. But then the political discourse on migration is quite adverse within India. Despite the constitutional guarantee of a free mobility of individuals across all States, migrant identity is often threatened on various grounds. First, this is not a stated identity but rather a constructed one. Therefore, the protection of such an identity should ideally rest with the state rather than the individual.

Another complexity is the home and host attribute which needs to have an equal stake apart from the individual who is a migrant. The current political discourse on this subject is on disenfranchising migrants from their right to voting at home as they do not qualify to be the 'usual resident of the place'.

The same right could perhaps be bestowed on them by the host place, where they are equally disenfranchised. This raises a question on whether migrants face a constant battle of belonging. Resolving this puzzle that internal migrants confront should be the agenda of a demographic mission which should strive to

restore migrant rights.

On longevity

The changing demography also poses other puzzles such as growing longevity and the provisioning of social security. There is sincere engagement on this issue to redefine ageing and economically productive years of life, where the young and the old equally remain productive as long as they remain healthy and active. The other implication of social security protection being the sole responsibility of the state needs a relook as well, with employers preparing employees to remain financially secure for their non-earning years of life. The entire scene of provisioning of social security needs a rethink with there being extended years of life.

Recognition of changing demographics is perhaps necessary in all possible planning, policy making, evaluation and monitoring. While there are plethora of indicators being made available to celebrate progress and achievements, one wonders whether they are able to account for changing demographics. When it comes to allocation and provisioning too, demographics should dictate the priorities. Unfortunately, the per capita hangover continues to prevail which ignores the composition of the population in the denominator. A demography mission's foundation lies in the demographic sensitisation of a whole lot of intellectual discourse on mainstreaming, marginalisation and inclusion. Demography is not a mere discipline to offer a retrospective and prospective dimension of population. It is the foundation to build the future of humanity with a suitable alteration in strategies in keeping with the evolving global order.

GS. Paper 1–Social issues

UPSC Mains Practice Question: "India is at a demographic crossroads. Discuss the need for a holistic demographic mission in India, focusing on migration, ageing, and regional disparities." (150 Words)

Context :

On **August 15, 2025**, India announced a new **demographic mission**, focusing mainly on monitoring undocumented immigration from Bangladesh and border regions. However, experts argue that India requires a **holistic demographic mission** that goes beyond population control to address broader challenges of **fertility, mortality, migration, ageing, and regional disparities**. As the world's most populous nation, India's demographic patterns are central to both national policy and global discussions.

Static Context (Background)

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- **Demography:** The study of population structure, including **fertility, mortality, and migration trends**.
- **India's Demographic Dividend:**
 - India has the world's largest youth population (~65% below 35 years).
 - The **working-age population (15–64 years)** is expected to peak by 2041.
 - Harnessing this requires **employment, education, health, and social security**.
- **Key Challenges:**
 - Population ageing (rise in elderly population).
 - Internal migration and regional demographic imbalances.
 - Skill gaps and unequal infrastructure development.

Current Context (Key Issues from the Article)

1. Need for Broader Scope

- Demography is not just about population size but also **age distribution, regional variations, and capabilities** (education, skills, health).
- Policies must reflect regional inequalities in demographic transition.

2. Migration

- Migration is emerging as a **major demographic driver** across regions.
- Issues:
 - Migrant identity → often threatened despite constitutional right to mobility.
 - Political discourse disenfranchises migrants (e.g., voting rights, "usual resident" condition).
 - Host regions often marginalize migrants socially and economically.
- A demographic mission must include **migrant protection and integration**.

3. Longevity & Ageing

- Rising life expectancy creates challenges for **social security and pension systems**.
- Current model relies heavily on state support; needs a **shared model with employers** preparing employees for retirement.
- Longer productive years of life → redefine **economic contribution of elderly**.

4. Policy Implications

- Demographics must be factored into **planning, policy making, monitoring, and evaluation**.
- Need for **demographic sensitisation** → mainstreaming issues of inclusion, marginalisation, and diversity.

Significance

For India

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Daily News Analysis

- Helps in **reaping demographic dividend** by focusing on youth skills and employment.
- Addresses **internal inequalities** (regional migration, infrastructure gaps).
- Ensures **sustainable social security** as ageing population grows.

For Governance

- Provides holistic framework linking **health, education, employment, and migration** policies.
- Avoids fragmented, short-term political approaches to population issues.

For Global Context

- India, as the **world's most populous nation**, can be a **model for demographic governance**.
- Its demographic policies impact **labour markets, global migration, and economic trends**.

Challenges

- **Political Sensitivities:** Migration and population debates are often politicised.
- **Implementation Gaps:** Weak state-level capacities in demographic planning.
- **Social Inequalities:** Regional disparities in fertility, education, and healthcare.
- **Institutional Weakness:** Absence of a central coordinating demographic authority.

Conclusion

India stands at a **demographic crossroads**. A narrow focus on **immigration control or population size** will be insufficient. A **holistic demographic mission** must address fertility, mortality, migration, ageing, and regional disparities. It should integrate **education, skills, health, livelihood, and social security** into policy frameworks, ensuring that India's demographic diversity becomes a true strength rather than a challenge.