Daily News Analysis

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Edition: International Table of Contents

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has selected an Indian firm to set up a Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility for the S-400 'Sudarshan Chakra' air defence system.This move gains significance after Operation Sindoor (May 2025), where the S-400 played a critical role in neutralizing Pakistani drones and missiles.

Centre identifies domestic firm for S-400 air defence system maintenance, repair, overhaul

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Defence has identified an Indian firm to establish a maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) facility for the S-400 air defence system in the country.

India now has three S-400 missile systems. Officially named Sudarshan Chakra, the S-400 had played a crucial role in taking down Pakistani drones and missiles fired towards more than 15 Indian cities, in retaliation for Operation Sindoor launched by India in May.

A senior official in the Defence Ministry has confirmed that the plan to establish an MRO facility was in the pipeline for some time but after Operation Sindoor, it was fast-tracked and an Indian firm has been identified for the job. The selection was done after several phases of secur-

Critical support: The S-400 had played a crucial role in taking down Pakistani drones and missiles fired towards Indian cities. AFP

ity clearance and capability testing. Rules of engagement (RoE) have been drafted. Russia's Almaz-Antey, the manufacturer of the S-400 system, will collaborate with an Indian firm to establish the facility in India. A formal announcement will made soon.

'Landmark move'
Another official who was aware of the development said that it is a landmark achievement under India-Russia military technical cooperation. "Now India will be self-reliant in maintaining advance air defence systems and it aligns with the 'Make In India' initiative of the government. It will help to overcome the challenges posed by international sanctions and supply chain disruption," the official said.

India launched Operation Sindoor in the first week of May targeting ter-

ror camps in Pakistan, in response to the attack on tourists in Pahalgam on April 22. On the intervening night of May 7-8, Pakistan attempted to engage more than 15 military targets using drones and missiles in northern and western part of the country. The Integrated Counter UAS Grid and Air Defence systems intercepted and neutralised the ballistic missiles and drones aimed at military installations.

India had earlier placed an order with Russia for five S-400 missile systems, and three have been delivered. Russia confirmed that of the remaining two S-400s, one will be delivered in 2026 and in 2027.

Significance of the Move:

1. Strategic Autonomy and Security Preparedness

- Establishing an MRO facility enhances self-reliance in sustaining advanced defence systems like the S-400.
- It ensures faster turnaround times for repair and maintenance, crucial during high-threat scenarios, as seen during Pakistan's retaliation.

2. Boost to 'Make in India' & Defence Indigenisation

- Collaboration with Russia's Almaz-Antey underlines technology transfer and capacity building in defence manufacturing.
- Strengthens the Defence Industrial Base (DIB) and aligns with Atmanirbhar Bharat objectives.

3. Mitigating Risks from Sanctions and Supply Chain Disruptions

- With increasing geopolitical tensions (e.g., Russia-Ukraine war), dependence on foreign OEMs for spares poses vulnerabilities.
- Indigenous MRO capabilities reduce reliance on volatile global supply chains and circumvent sanctions-related delays.

Geostrategic Context:

Operation Sindoor (May 2025)

- India launched strikes on terror camps in Pakistan in retaliation to the Pahalgam attack (April 22).
- Pakistan responded with a barrage of drones and missiles; S-400 systems played a pivotal defensive role, enhancing their strategic value.

S-400 Deployment Status

- India has received three out of five S-400 units ordered from Russia in a $5.43 billion deal (2018).
- Remaining two units expected by 2026 and 2027, despite logistical challenges due to international sanctions on Russia.

Challenges and Considerations:

- **Technology Transfer Limitations:** Russia may restrict sensitive technical know-how.
- **Maintenance Capability Building:** Training of Indian personnel and infrastructure development will take time.
- **Integration with Other Systems:** Ensuring compatibility with indigenous systems like Akash or foreign systems like MR-SAM.

Way Forward:

1. Expand MRO Scope to include other critical platforms (e.g., Su-30MKI, T-90 tanks).
2. Leverage DPSUs & Private Sector synergy to develop advanced air defence ecosystem.
3. **Diplomatic Balance:** Maintain strategic autonomy while managing ties with the US (CAATSA implications) and Russia.

Tirumal Classes

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Conclusion:

The establishment of an indigenous MRO facility for the S-400 is a landmark step toward building technological sovereignty, ensuring combat readiness, and promoting the Make in India defence vision. It reflects India's intent to move from being a buyer to a strategic co-developer and maintainer of cutting-edge military hardware.

UPSCMainsPractice Question

Ques: Indigenisation of defence technology is critical for India's long-term strategic autonomy. Discuss with reference to the recent establishment of the S-400 MRO facility in India. **(150 Words)**

NITI Aayog, in its report titled "Roadmap for Strengthening State Science and Technology Councils", has recommended the Department of Science and Technology (DST) shift from core grant support to a project-based funding model for State S&T Councils.

NITI Aayog suggests reduced 'core' grant support for State S&T bodies

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The NITI Aayog has recommended that the Department of Science and Technology (DST) cut its 'core grant support' for State Science and Technology (S&T) Councils and pare them down to 'project-based support'. The recommendations are part of a report, "Roadmap for strengthening State Science and Technology Councils", made public on Thursday.

The State S&T Councils are a vital source of funding for scientific research, science popularisation, patent applications, and scientific policy-support activities.

Minuscule source
Since the 1970s, such councils have acted to "decentralise" scientific governance such that States can

NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson Suman Bery with V. K. Saraswat and Jitendra Singh during the release of the report on Thursday. PTI

execute science and research in tune with their specific socio-economic conditions. Funds from the Union government, primarily the DST, are already a minuscule source of revenue. For instance, of the ₹300-crore annual budget in Gujarat's State Science and Technology Council, only ₹1.07 crore came from the Centre. In the case of Kerala's ₹150 crore, the

Centre's contribution was zero. From 2016 to 2022, the DST notes, 28 States and three Union Territories have been supported.

However, the bulk of India's scientific output and productivity was coming from Centrally funded institutions, with the NITI Aayog, in its report, saying that in recent decades, the State S&T Councils have been facing an "uphill

task" of keeping up with rapid changes in the research and development (R&D) landscape. "As evident from some recent reports, a significant part of India's S&T research outcomes come from Central government institutions, and the State-administered institutions are yet to make a meaningful contribution...," the report notes.

The report, which was a result of a two-month consultation with representatives from State Councils, has several findings. The comparative budget analysis of State S&T Councils for 2023-24 and 2024-25, it says, revealed a 17.65% increase in total funding, reflecting growing investment in scientific research and innovation at the State level. However, the disparity in allocations "raised concern" about regional imbalances in S&T development.

About State S&T Councils:

- Established since the 1970s to decentralize scientific governance and enable region-specific innovation.
- Key roles include:
    - Funding scientific research
    - Promoting science literacy
    - Supporting patents
    - Aiding science policy formulation

Key Findings of the Report:

1. **Declining Central Contribution:**
    - Central funding already negligible: e.g., Gujarat (₹1.07 crore of ₹300 crore), Kerala (₹0 out of ₹150 crore).
    - Funding largely borne by State governments themselves.
2. **Low R&D Output from States:**
    - Bulk of India's scientific output comes from Centrally funded institutions (CFIs).
    - State-administered bodies lag in infrastructure, talent retention, and competitive research output.
3. **Inequity in S&T Investment:**
    - While there's a 17.65% increase in combined budget for 2023–25, there exists a wide regional disparity.
    - Richer states like Maharashtra and Gujarat are better positioned, while weaker states fall behind.

Significance of NITI Aayog's Recommendation:

1. Emphasis on Accountability & Performance:

- Project-based funding encourages measurable outcomes, innovation quality, and impact-focused delivery.

2. Resource Optimization:

- Helps in prioritizing high-impact research projects rather than supporting inefficient administrative structures.

3. Push for Competitive Research Culture:

- Promotes inter-State competition to attract DST and private-sector projects.

Concerns & Challenges:

Concern	Explanation
Reduced Autonomy	Project-based funding may lead to over-centralization, contradicting the original goal of decentralizing S&T governance.
Regional Imbalance	States with weaker capacity may struggle to compete for project funds, exacerbating disparities.
Weak Institutional Capacity	Many State S&T Councils lack sufficient human resources, research ecosystems, and strategic vision.
Risk of Bureaucratisation	Project mode could add administrative burden and delays in approval cycles.

Way Forward:

1. **Hybrid Model:**
   o Continue core grants for foundational functions, and link project grants with performance metrics.
2. **Capacity Building:**
   o Provide training, research infrastructure, and talent support to under-performing State Councils.
3. **Incentivize Collaboration:**
   o Encourage State-Central institution tie-ups, public-private partnerships, and shared R&D hubs.
4. **Address Equity:**
   o Special incentives and handholding for low-income or Northeastern States to bridge S&T gaps.

Conclusion:

NITI Aayog's proposal aligns with the goal of making India's S&T ecosystem performance-driven, but it must be balanced with capacity-building efforts to ensure that underdeveloped regions are not left behind. A calibrated approach is essential for inclusive and effective science governance.

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UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following statements about State Science and Technology Councils is/are correct?

1. They were established to decentralize scientific governance in India.

2. Their primary funding comes from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India.

3. They play a role in promoting patent applications and science popularisation.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 1 and 3 only

C. 2 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: B)

Tirumal Classes Quality education	THE HINDU INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878
	Daily News Analysis

Page : 06 :GS 2 : Social Justice

The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in collaboration with UNICEF, has launched TALASH (Tribal Aptitude, Life Skills, and Self-Esteem Hub) — a digital platform aimed at career counselling, life-skills training, and psychometric assessment for students of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS).

Centre, UNICEF to provide career counselling for Eklavya students

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS), which administers over 470 Eklavya schools for tribal students across the country, has started a programme with UNICEF to provide psychometric assessment, career-counselling, and training in life-skills and self-esteem for the 1.38 lakh students enrolled in these schools, the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs said on Thursday.

Called TALASH – which stands for 'Tribal Aptitude, Life Skills, and Self-Esteem Hub' – the programme is an "innovative digital platform designed to equip EMRS [Eklavya Model Residential Schools] students with essential tools for self-discovery and career planning," the Ministry said in a statement. "It promotes

A common aptitude test will be designed for Eklavya students which will result in a "career card" for them. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

self-awareness, helps students make informed career choices, and builds essential life skills."

A common aptitude test will be designed on this platform for students studying across the Eklavya schools, which will result in a "career card" for each student, suggesting the "best career options" each of them is suited for. This will be paired with career-

counselling services and special sections to train them in life-skills, such as "problem solving, communication, and handling emotions".

Mentoring support
There will also be a portal that will give educators the resources to "effectively mentor and support students in their academic and personal journeys",

the Ministry said. So far, over 180 teachers have been trained across 75 Eklavya schools; by the end of the year, the programme is expected to be rolled out in all Eklavya schools.

"TALASH is a testament to our commitment to providing tribal students with opportunities to realise their full potential. Through this initiative, we aim to bridge gaps in education and empower the next generation of tribal leaders," said NESTS Commissioner Ajeet Kumar Srivastava.

NESTS has also signed two memoranda of understanding with Tata Motors and the Ex-Navodayan Foundation (an alumni group of the Jawahar Navodaya Schools) to start coaching programmes for Eklavya school students aiming to crack competitive exams like IIT-JEE and NEET.

Key Features of the TALASH Programme:

- **Psychometric Assessment & Career Card:** A common aptitude test will generate an individual "career card", recommending suitable career paths based on the student's aptitude and interests.
- **Life-Skills & Self-Esteem Training:** Focus on essential life skills such as communication, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and self-awareness to empower tribal youth.
- **Digital Career Counselling Platform**: A unified online platform to assist 1.38 lakh tribal students in career planning and personal development.
- **Educator Empowerment:** A dedicated portal will equip teachers with tools and resources for mentoring students academically and personally. So far, 180 teachers across 75 schools have been trained.
- **Coaching Support for Competitive Exams:** NESTS has signed MoUs with Tata Motors and the Ex-Navodayan Foundation to provide coaching for IIT-JEE, NEET, and other national-level entrance exams.

Significance of the Initiative:

1. Empowerment of Marginalised Students :TALASH bridges critical gaps in career awareness, life-skills training, and self-esteem building, which are often lacking in tribal communities due to socio-economic disadvantages.

2. Alignment with NEP 2020 : The programme upholds the spirit of the National Education Policy, which emphasizes holistic development, skill building, and counselling support for students.

3. Inclusive Governance in Education : By focusing on tribal youth, the initiative addresses regional and social disparities in access to quality education and career guidance.

4. Digital Transformation of Tribal Education: Use of digital platforms ensures scalability and accessibility, especially across the 470+ EMRS institutions operating in remote tribal areas.

5. Promoting Equity in Competitive Exams : Through coaching partnerships, the scheme fosters level playing fields for tribal students aspiring for professional courses and prestigious institutions like IITs and AIIMS.

Challenges to Consider:

- **Digital Divide:** Implementation depends on infrastructure readiness, such as internet connectivity and digital literacy in remote tribal regions.
- **Teacher Training:** Quality mentoring depends on the effective training and motivation of school staff.

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Psychometric and career tools must be designed to respect tribal contexts and local aspirations.
- **Monitoring Outcomes:** Long-term success requires a robust monitoring and feedback mechanism to track career outcomes and engagement levels.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen Local Contextualisation**: Ensure that counselling tools are aligned with local languages, occupations, and tribal cultural identities.
- **Expand Public-Private Partnerships**: Collaborate with more industry and academic partners to offer diverse career pathways.
- **Institutional Capacity Building:** Upskill EMRS staff in counselling psychology, digital pedagogy, and student mentorship.
- **Sustainable Funding & Evaluation:** Allocate continuous financial and policy support with measurable performance indicators.

Conclusion:

The TALASH programme is a landmark intervention in inclusive education policy for tribal students. It represents a shift from rote learning to student-centric, skill-based education, aligning with broader national goals of equity, empowerment, and employability. For India to become a knowledge-driven economy, it must ensure that its most marginalised youth are equipped with the tools to dream, decide, and deliver — TALASH is a vital step in that direction.

UPSCMains Practice Question
Ques:Empowering tribal youth through digital tools is essential for inclusive development." In the context of the TALASH initiative for Eklavya students, critically evaluate this statement. (250 Words)

Page 07 :GS 2: Social Justice

India continues to grapple with a high burden of tuberculosis (TB), with 800–900 deaths per day. In an effort to reduce TB mortality and improve service delivery, Dr.SoumyaSwaminathan, Principal Advisor to the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP), has proposed conducting TB death audits, modeled on successful maternal mortality audits, as part of the country's strategy to eliminate TB.

'TB death audits, like maternal mortality model, can aid elimination'

Soumya Swaminathan emphasises the need to prioritise reducing TB deaths and prevalence and incidence of the disease, stating that finding gaps, addressing them, and having an ambitious plan need to be focused on; our short-term focus, in the next National Strategic Plan, is to reduce TB mortality, she adds

Maitri Porecha

A detailed dissection of every tuberculosis-related death at the district level or a 'TB death audit,' much like the public health approach adopted by the Centre to reduce maternal deaths, will prove to be useful towards meeting India's TB elimination goals, Soumya Swaminathan, Principal Advisor for the National TB Elimination Programme in India told The Hindu.

"Like COVID, TB is also a pandemic, but it has been around for a very long time. It affects the poor and vulnerable in every country. Even one dengue death gets picked up immediately by the media, and gets reported. Still, 800 to 900 people die every day of TB in the country, but the news of a TB death hardly ever makes it to the newspaper," she said.

Dr. Swaminathan noted that among the challenges facing National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) is the further reduction in TB mortality rates to meet the End TB and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets. From an estimated 35 deaths per 1,00,000 population in 2015, India has brought down this rate to 22 per 1,00,000 according to the latest official data. "However, we still have case fatality rates ranging from 5% to 10% in different states. These rates are higher for drug-resistant TB. These deaths are mostly happening in the economically-productive age group of 25 to 55 years," she said.

TB Death Audit

India has significantly reduced its maternal mortality rate (MMR) by expanding the scope for institutional delivery, better antenatal and postnatal care and by undertaking district-wise maternal death audits which are headed by the district collectors. "Everyone has to sit and explain why that [maternal] death happened and how it could have been prevented. Can we adopt a similar approach for TB," asked Dr. Swaminathan. "The District Collector should be aware of how many TB deaths occur, and non-programme partners should be engaged in audits of randomly selected cases. These could be community medicine departments of nearby medical colleges or public health institutes. It should not be the TB programme itself that does the death audits. TB deaths should be presented, analysed along with reasons, and the discussions could lead to improvements in service delivery" she added. The deaths are most likely caused by a combination of complications due to TB, along with social and economic risk factors.

Citing an example, Dr. Swaminathan said that National Institute of TB and Respiratory Diseases runs a 'difficult to treat,' virtual TB clinic (using the ECHO platform), where cases are presented and discussed every month, for the benefit of doctors and nurses across the country. The case of a 19-year-old belonging to a poor migrant family who succumbed to TB in Delhi was presented. Her father had previously died of TB and her sister had also contracted the infection. "They worked as house maids and had initially sought treatment with private doctors. By the time she got admitted, she had extensive bilateral TB and was in respiratory failure. The fact that a 19-year-old girl died of drug sensitive TB points to the need for every patient to be notified and followed up by the TB programme. Any number of such cases are occurring every day. Are we paying attention and trying to improve the system?"

Tamil Nadu model

Tamil Nadu's Kasanoi Erappila Thittam (TN-KET) meaning 'TB death free project,' was jointly started by the Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE) and the State government for all aged 15 years and older with drug-susceptible TB notified by public facilities. The fact that a 19-year-old girl died of drug sensitive TB notified by public facilities, with a goal to reduce deaths by 30% in this group.

According to NIE data, during April - June 2022, 14,961 TB patients were notified out of which 11599 (78%) were triaged. It was found that of these 1509 (13%) were at high risk of severe illness. Of these 48% were severely undernourished, another 50% had respiratory insufficiency, and 29% were unable to stand without support. Of the 1509 patients, 1128 (75%) were assessed at a nodal inpatient care facility. Of these 993 were confirmed as severely ill, and 909 (92%) were admitted. Of those admitted 4% patients succumbed to their illness. As a result of implementing TN-KET, Tamil

> The District Collector should be aware of how many TB deaths occur, and non-programme partners should be engaged in audits of randomly selected cases. These could be community medicine departments of nearby medical colleges or public health institutes
>
> **SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN**
> Principal Advisor for the NTEP

Nadu now routinely captures BMI data for all adults with TB (notified from public facilities).

In the southern States, people have co-morbidities such as diabetes, alcoholism and in the north, there is severe malnutrition and severe anaemia, Dr. Swaminathan observed. In any case, every TB patient must be clinically evaluated for co-morbidities and risk factors and these should be treated too.

Dr. Swaminathan pressed on the need to prioritise reducing TB deaths, along with reducing prevalence, and incidence of the disease. "China has a death rate of 3 per 1,00,000 from TB, while India has a death rate of 22 per 1,00,000. We need to find gaps, address them and have an ambitious plan," she said.

"Our short-term focus, in the next National Strategic Plan, is to reduce TB mortality. Incidence reduction will take time, whatever we do, because we don't have a highly efficacious vaccine. Unless we start finding everyone and treating

them, we will not have a rapid incidence reduction," she adds.

Dr. Swaminathan said that the National TB prevalence Survey and State-specific Prevalence Surveys in Gujarat, Rajasthan reveal that sub-clinical TB accounts for 40% to 50% of cases. "Which means, you will not pick them up with symptom screening and our national programme was entirely based on symptom screening. So, we were straightaway missing half of the active TB in population," she said.

According to her, the solution is to have widespread use of X-ray backed up by an AI algorithm. "The hand-held X-ray technology with AI is green lighted by the World Health Organization (WHO), STOP TB Partnership and ICMR. In fact, six government hospitals in Mumbai applied X-ray screening and their case notifications went up by 10% to 12%," she stated.

Upfront molecular testing until last year in India was 30%. The 100-day TB elimination campaign aimed at strengthening diagnostics and linkage to treatment, as well as efforts by CTD to expand upfront molecular testing should pay dividends this year, she added. Upfront molecular testing involves offering tests which can pick up TB as well as drug-resistance to TB bacteria leading to accurate treatment, which improves chances of the patient's recovery. Screening of household contacts should be made convenient as they cannot be expected to spend days in going and getting themselves screened. This can happen now with the highly portable handheld X-ray devices which many States have started using.

The crucial role of nutrition

She also emphasised on providing good nutrition to TB patients and their families. "The RATIONS trials led by Anurag Bhargava in Jharkhand among a population with BMI as low as 16 and 17 has demonstrated that almost 50% secondary household cases could be prevented just by providing good nutritional support. We don't yet have a vaccine with 50% efficacy so if we give adequate calories and protein, it acts like natural protector from bacteria."

Commenting on the Nikshay Mitra Programme floated by the Centre for nutrition support to TB patients, Dr. Swaminathan said that while the goal was laudable, its success depends on volunteers coming forward to donate nutrition support and this may not be uniform across all geographies. "Also, the ability to deliver it [nutritional support] may be limited in remote areas," she emphasised. The government's move to double the amount meted out under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) — (an earlier amount of ₹500 per month provided to TB patients during treatment, has now been increased to ₹1000) would go a long way towards meeting the patients nutritional needs, and more research is needed in ways to improve the family's nutritional status, wherever needed.

(porechamaitri.m@thehindu.co.in)

THE GIST

▼ Dr. Swaminathan noted that among the challenges facing National TB Elimination Programme is the further reduction in TB mortality rates to meet the End TB and Sustainable Development Goals targets

▼ Every TB patient must be clinically evaluated for co-morbidities — such as diabetes, alcoholism, severe anaemia, and risk factors — and these should be treated

▼ She also emphasised the importance of providing good nutrition to TB patients and their families, citing the RATIONS trials led by Anurag Bhargava in Jharkhand

Public awareness: Students conduct a rally to raise awareness on TB, a contagious disease that is treatable and preventable, and yet continues to kill millions each year, in Hyderabad. FILE PHOTO

Key Issues Highlighted:

1. Persistently High TB Mortality:

Tirumal Classes

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- India's TB mortality rate has reduced from 35 per 1 lakh (2015) to 22 per 1 lakh (latest data), but remains far above countries like China (3 per 1 lakh).
- TB mortality is high among working-age adults (25–55) and drug-resistant TB is a significant contributor.

2. Need for Death Audits:

- Drawing parallels with maternal death audits, Dr.Swaminathan suggests district-level TB death reviews to identify preventable factors and improve outcomes.
- Local institutions (e.g., medical colleges) can participate in independent audits, ensuring accountability beyond the programme machinery.

Successful Models Cited:

1. Tamil Nadu's TN-KET Initiative:

- TN-KET (KasanoiErappilaThittam) aims to reduce TB deaths by 30% among drug-susceptible patients.
- High-risk patients (e.g., undernourished, respiratory distress) are triaged and referred to nodal inpatient care.
- The programme demonstrated a significant reduction in deaths and introduced routine BMI tracking for TB patients.

2. Virtual TB Clinics:

- NITRD's virtual clinics under the ECHO platform highlight real-world gaps in early detection, treatment delays, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in TB deaths.

Major Challenges:

- **Delayed diagnosis:** Subclinical TB (40–50% of total cases) escapes symptom-based screening.
- **Inadequate diagnostics:** Only 30% upfront molecular testing until 2023.
- **Underreported deaths:** Unlike other diseases, TB deaths rarely receive media or administrative attention.
- **Nutritional insecurity:** Malnutrition remains a key driver of TB mortality, especially in tribal and poor households.

Emerging Solutions:

1. Handheld X-ray with AI:

- Portable X-rays, supported by AI algorithms, offer faster and broader screening — e.g., Mumbai saw a 10–12% rise in case notifications.

2. Upfront Molecular Testing:

- The 100-day TB Elimination Campaign has accelerated diagnostics through CBNAAT and TrueNat, enabling early drug-resistance detection.

3. Enhanced Nutritional Support:

- RATIONS Trial in Jharkhand shows that proper nutrition can reduce household TB transmission by 50%.
- DBT increased from ₹500 to ₹1,000/month aims to improve caloric and protein intake during treatment.

4. Community Engagement:

- NikshayMitra Programme encourages voluntary nutritional support, though effectiveness varies by geography and infrastructure.

Way Forward:

1. **Institutionalize TB Death Audits:** Make audits mandatory and independent, similar to MMR audits under NHM.
2. **Expand Access to Digital Screening Tools:** Scale up AI-enabled X-ray diagnostics in rural and high-burden areas.
3. **Integrate Co-morbidity Screening:** Routine assessment of diabetes, anaemia, malnutrition to ensure holistic TB care.
4. **Nutrition as First-Line Defence:** Invest in targeted food and cash transfers, especially in tribal and low-BMI populations.
5. **Strengthen Public-Private Coordination:** Address delayed referrals and underreporting in private sector TB care.

Conclusion:

India's fight against TB requires a shift in focus — from just reducing incidence to preventing deaths. TB death audits, like those used in maternal health, can transform the approach to accountability and system responsiveness. Paired with robust diagnostics, nutritional support, and decentralised community care, such innovations are critical if India hopes to meet its TB elimination target by 2025 and SDG 3.3 by 2030.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Despite being preventable and treatable, tuberculosis remains a leading cause of mortality in India. In this context, critically examine the role of TB death audits in achieving the National TB Elimination Programme's goals. **(150 Words)**

Tirumal Classes | Quality education

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The Supreme Court, on July 10, directed the Election Commission (EC) to accept Aadhaar, Voter ID, and Ration Cards for Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. This intervention has reignited national focus on the legal status of the right to vote, accuracy of electoral rolls, and democratic inclusion vs. electoral integrity.

The need to safeguard the right to vote

What did the Supreme Court say about electoral rolls revision in Bihar? Is the right to vote a fundamental right in India? Can electoral roll errors invalidate an election? How can India balance electoral vigilance with the inclusion of genuine voters?

LETTER & SPIRIT

Kartikey Singh:

The story so far:

On July 10, the Supreme Court directed the Election Commission (EC) to consider Aadhaar cards, voter ID cards, and ration cards as acceptable documents for the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar. It has listed the batch of petitions challenging the EC's decision for further hearing on July 28. The court's remark – that the question of 'right to vote' goes to the very root of the functioning of our republic – has cast a spotlight on the foundational processes and genesis of India's 'universal adult suffrage' (UAS). India's constitutional promise of the 'right to vote' differs significantly from that of many Western democracies. Reflecting the flawed belief, espoused by thinkers like J.S. Mill, that voting should be reserved for the "enlightened" and denied to the "ignorant," countries like the U.K. initially restricted the franchise to male property owners. Universal male suffrage emerged only in 1918, and women were granted the right to vote a decade later in 1928. In the U.S., although the 15th and 19th Amendments extended voting rights to African Americans (1870) and women (1920), systemic barriers such as poll taxes and literacy tests continued to disenfranchise many for decades thereafter.

How was universal adult suffrage made real in India?

In sharp contrast, far from gradualism and the 'privileged class' criteria, India's choice of immediate, universal inclusion ensured 'democratic equality' from the outset, bypassing the prolonged and often violent struggles seen elsewhere. Article 326 of the Constitution granted every adult citizen the right to vote, regardless of gender, caste, religion, education, or property, at a time when most of the world moved cautiously. Initially set at 21 years of age, this threshold was lowered to 18 by the 61st Constitutional Amendment in 1989. This commitment to a robust, inclusive democracy found further constitutional reinforcement in a series of Supreme Court judgments, notably starting with *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* (1973), which established democracy as part of the 'basic structure' doctrine. For this ideal to function meaningfully, people should be able to freely decide the fate of their government, an unassailable right that shapes governance and never be compromised.

This inclusive vision was operationalised through two key laws: the Representation of the People Act, 1950, which governs the preparation and revision of electoral rolls; and the 1951 Act, which regulates election conduct, candidature, and electoral offences. The EC has repeatedly introduced administrative innovations to realise this 'constitutional promise'. Notably, the then Chief Election Commissioner Sukumar Sen, faced with the task of enrolling 173 million largely illiterate voters, turned a logistical hurdle into a democratic breakthrough by introducing election symbols, making UAS practically accessible.

In India, EC has a great responsibility to reach the last citizen, wherever they may be, to actualise their 'right to elect'. As Winston Churchill once said, "At the bottom of all tributes paid to democracy is the little man, walking into a little booth, with a little pencil, making a little cross on a little bit of paper..." His words

remain a timeless reminder that the health of any democracy ultimately rests on the sanctity of the 'right to vote'.

Is voting a fundamental right in India?

The legal status of the 'right to vote' in India has long been debated. Although Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and K.T. Shah proposed including it in the Constitution's fundamental rights part, the Constituent Assembly's Advisory Committee ultimately rejected the idea. Importantly, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in *Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India* (2006) held that the 'right to vote' is a statutory right under Section 62 of the RPA, 1951, and not a fundamental or constitutional right.

Later in 2016, though a two-judge bench in *Rajbala v. State of Haryana* described the 'right to vote' as a constitutional right, the larger bench ruling in *Kuldip Nayar* prevails. Again, in *Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India* (2023), the top court declined to pronounce on the issue, noting that it had already been settled by the five-judge Bench in the Kuldip Nayar judgment. However, in his dissent, Justice Ajay Rastogi asserted that the 'right to vote' is an expression of Article 19(1)(a) and reflects the essence of Article 21. Yet, as this view remains a minority opinion, the 'right to elect' continues to be recognised as a statutory right under prevailing law.

Nevertheless, even though it is not a fundamental right, courts have regarded the right to vote as an inseparable part of democracy, anchoring their reasoning in the idea that it enables citizens to shape governance, making it a "democratic imperative" vital to the Indian republic's survival. As philosopher John Dewey said, democracy is not just a form of government, but a social and personal ideal.

Why does electoral roll accuracy matter?

Free and fair elections rest on accurate electoral rolls, under the RPA, 1950. Inaccuracies – such as mass omissions, ineligible inclusions, duplicates, or incorrect entries – undermine the "one person, one vote" principle by enabling impersonation, disenfranchisement, or dilution of votes, ultimately distorting the people's mandate. Therefore, the EC is empowered under Section 21 of the 1950 Act to prepare and revise these rolls to ensure integrity.

While discrepancies may arise, courts have consistently held that only

substantial and systemic errors that demonstrably "materially affected" the election outcome can compromise the sanctity of the electoral roll. Minor mistakes or isolated disenfranchisement are insufficient. Allegations like those in Bihar warrant scrutiny, but it must also be noted that purification of rolls is necessary because just as the exclusion of an eligible voter undermines democracy, so does the inclusion of an ineligible name. Therefore, rather than disrupting or delaying the exercise, efforts should focus on helping improve the process. The Supreme Court's suggestion to include more accepted documents helps safeguard every genuine elector's right to be represented.

While the right to inclusion or objection in electoral rolls is conferred on individuals, not political parties, the court in *Lakshmi Charan Sen v. A.K.M. Hassan Uzzaman* (1985) observed that in a largely illiterate and politically unaware electorate, parties should take steps to ensure eligible voters are included and ineligible ones are removed. Given India's party-based Parliamentary system, such vigilance will help to preserve 'electoral integrity'.

Who qualifies as an ordinary resident?

The EC under Article 324 serves as the constitutional guardian of elections, with powers of superintendence, direction, and control. A key duty is preparing accurate electoral rolls, guided by Section 19 of the RPA, 1950, which mandates that any citizen aged 18 or above, "ordinarily resident" in a constituency and not disqualified, is entitled to be registered. "Ordinary resident" implies a genuine, continuous presence, not a temporary stay. For example, a student living in a hostel may not qualify if their permanent home and intent to return lie elsewhere. Mere temporary absence from one's place of ordinary residence does not negate one's status as an ordinary resident of that location. This criterion prevents fraudulent registrations and ensures voters maintain real ties to their constituencies, preserving representative accountability.

Interestingly, the Manmohan Singh case (1991) exemplifies judicial scrutiny on this front. His election from Assam was challenged for lack of "ordinary residence," leading the court to clarify that ordinary residence means habitual, regular, and genuine presence, not a temporary or casual stay at a nominal address. Beyond ordinary voters, India's

electoral system accommodates those unable to vote conventionally. Under Rule 18 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, 'postal ballots' are available to service voters like armed forces personnel, paramilitary, armed State police posted outside, and government staff abroad, and voters on election duty. Overseas electors – Indian citizens living abroad without foreign citizenship – can register under Section 20A of the RPA, 1950. However, they must vote in person, as they are currently ineligible for postal or proxy voting.

One of the most contentious issues regarding the SIR exercise in Bihar is the debate on 'citizenship verification'. In *Lal Babu Hussein v. ERO* (1995), the court quashed two EC directives (1992 and 1994) allowing District Collectors and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to identify and delete alleged foreigners from voter rolls. The Supreme Court noted that the poll body guidelines put the "onus of proof of citizenship" on the person involved, even disregarding that several persons were voters in previous elections.

The court ruled that EROs must give due weight to past electoral rolls, conduct full inquiries, and follow quasi-judicial procedures, ensuring natural justice and adherence to the Citizenship Act and Constitution. These safeguards must guide the current exercise as well. Moreover, allegations or vague suspicions cannot justify the exclusion of individuals from citizenship or voter lists without credible evidence and due process, according to the judgments in *Lal Babu* and *Md. Rahim Ali* (2024).

What is next?

The Bihar SIR controversy and broader electoral reform debates highlight a core democratic truth: India's democracy depends on electoral rolls that are accurate, inclusive, and accessible. As the Supreme Court prepares to resume hearings on July 28, the EC must complete the exercise with a careful balance between genuine vigilance and inclusion to uphold the fairness of the process.

Public awareness should empower voters to verify and update their entries, making them active custodians of electoral integrity. Safeguarding the vote is not merely a statutory obligation; it is a shared democratic responsibility, requiring vigilant institutions, informed citizens, and forward-looking legal reforms.

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THE GIST

▼ The Supreme Court, while hearing challenges to the special intensive revision in Bihar, suggested that the Election Commission consider Aadhaar, voter ID, and ration card as acceptable documents, a move aimed at improving access and reducing wrongful exclusions.

▼ The Election Commission, under Article 324, is empowered to revise electoral rolls under Section 21 of the RPA, 1960 – but this process must balance vigilance with inclusion, and follow due process to avoid wrongful disenfranchisement.

▼ The right to vote in India is a statutory right, not a fundamental one, but it is treated as a 'democratic imperative' essential to the survival of the Indian republic.

A Booth Level Officer checks documents during special investigation revision of electoral rolls, at Kamalpur Village, in Bihar. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Key Legal and Constitutional Dimensions:

1. Is the Right to Vote a Fundamental Right?

- As per KuldipNayar v. Union of India (2006), the right to vote is a statutory right, not a fundamental or constitutional right.
- Governed by Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, not directly protected under Article 14 or 19.
- However, it is seen as essential to democracy, which is part of the Basic Structure (KesavanandaBharati case, 1973).
- Dissenting views (e.g., Justice Ajay Rastogi in AnoopBaranwal case, 2023) connect voting rights to Article 19(1)(a) and Article 21, though these remain minority opinions.

2. India's Inclusive Legacy of Universal Adult Suffrage (UAS):

- India adopted UAS at independence, unlike Western democracies which progressed gradually (e.g., UK - 1928 for women, US - 1965 for African Americans).
- Article 326 granted voting rights to all citizens aged 21+ (lowered to 18 by the 61st Constitutional Amendment, 1989), regardless of caste, gender, or property.

3. Electoral Roll Accuracy and Legal Safeguards:

- **Errors in electoral rolls can:**
  - Disenfranchise genuine voters
  - Enable impersonation
  - Undermine "one person, one vote" principle
- As per RPA, 1950 (Section 21), EC is empowered to prepare, revise, and purify rolls.
- But mass exclusion or verification without due process can violate natural justice.
  - E.g., Lal Babu Hussein v. ERO (1995): Quashed EC directives that presumed voters to be foreigners without credible evidence or fair inquiry.
  - Reiterated in Md. Rahim Ali (2024).

4. The Concept of 'Ordinary Resident':

- Section 19, RPA, 1950: A person must be "ordinarily resident" in a constituency to register.
- Courts (e.g., Manmohan Singh case, 1991) clarified it means habitual, regular presence, not a temporary or casual stay.
- Prevents fraudulent registrations and maintains voter-constituency accountability.

5. Postal and Overseas Voting:

- Postal Ballots available for service voters, government officials abroad, and voters on election duty (under Rule 18 of Conduct of Election Rules, 1961).
- Overseas electors can register but must vote in person — no postal/proxy voting allowed yet.

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6. Electoral Vigilance vs. Inclusion:

- The Bihar SIR exercise raised concerns over citizenship verification, possibly excluding genuine voters.
- While purification is needed, it must:
  - Follow due process
  - Use credible evidence
  - Avoid politically motivated purges
- The SC's direction to accept multiple ID documents aims to protect genuine voters' inclusion.

7. Role of Political Parties and Citizens:

- Though the right to be enrolled lies with the individual, the Lakshmi Charan Sen case (1985) held that parties should also ensure voter inclusion/exclusion.
- A party-based electoral system necessitates that political stakeholders uphold voter integrity.

Implications and Way Forward:

1. Electoral Reforms Needed:

- Legal clarity on voting as a constitutional or fundamental right.
- Legislative amendments to streamline registration and deletion procedures.
- Transparent, tech-enabled and citizen-friendly voter verification systems.

2. Enhance Public Awareness:

- Empowering voters to check and update their entries proactively.
- Civil society and media can play a watchdog role.

3. Uphold Natural Justice in Roll Purification:

- Ensure non-arbitrary removals, with scope for appeal and redressal.
- Avoid coercive verifications that shift burden of proof of citizenship unfairly on the individual.

4. Strengthen EC's Autonomy & Accountability:

- EC under Article 324 must maintain electoral integrity, but with checks to prevent executive overreach or community-level bias.

Conclusion:

India's democratic promise rests on the integrity, inclusiveness, and accessibility of its electoral rolls. While technological and procedural vigilance is essential, it must not come at the cost of disenfranchising genuine citizens. The right to vote, though statutory, is a democratic imperative, and safeguarding it is not merely the EC's job — it is a shared constitutional duty of the state, institutions, political parties, and voters themselves.

UPSC MainsPractice Question

Ques: Despite not being a fundamental right, the right to vote is essential to Indian democracy. Discuss with reference to relevant constitutional provisions and Supreme Court judgments. **(150 Words)**

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Aiding India's progress with choice, control and capital

With the world's population having crossed the eight billion mark, looking at the macros is all but natural. However, there has to be an equal focus on the micro-vulnerable groups, key populations and individuals on the fringes. We must endeavour to ensure that the promise of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICDP) is kept, and that every person gets the right to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health, free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

This year, the United Nations has announced its theme for World Population Day as "Empowering young people to create the families they want in a fair and hopeful world". It highlights the ICDP's special focus on youth, by affirming their right to accurate information, education and services in order to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. It also reflects a simple but pressing need: of bringing youth to the centre when envisioning the future, ensuring their freedom of choice and opportunities.

Home to the largest youth population

UNICEF reports there being 371 million youth in the age group of 15 to 29 years in India, making it the world's largest youth population. This is a number that stretches existing resources and systems. But with the right investments in education, skills and also access to health, nutrition, and family planning services, it can become a powerful driver of national progress. Unleashing this youth potential in India could boost its GDP by up to $1 trillion by 2030, unlocking a demographic divide as projected by the World Bank and NITI Aayog, while significantly reducing unemployment and improving social outcomes.

India has made significant strides with initiatives such as '*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*' and the National Adolescent Health Programme, reducing child marriage and adolescent fertility rates. Yet, there is still room to do more as a nation in order to address persistent challenges such as limited reproductive autonomy, socio-cultural barriers and gender inequality. These continue to restrict many young people (especially young women) from realising their true potential.

For instance, the prevalence of child marriages in India has reduced by half since 2006, but is still reported at 23.3% (National Family Health Survey-5, 2019-21). Further, teenage childbearing among women in the age group of 15 to 19 years was pegged at 7% nationally. But in some States, the rate was reported to be more than double, highlighting stark regional disparities (National Family Health Survey-5). In addition, the recently published State of World Population Report 2025 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) underscores the lack of reproductive autonomy

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With the right investments in education, skills and access to health, nutrition and family planning services, India's youth population can boost national progress

and the crisis of fertility aspirations, particularly among women. More than a third of Indian adults (36%) face unintended pregnancies, while another 30% reported unmet reproductive goals, i.e., an inability to exercise their choice about the number of children they have. Almost 23% of Indian adults faced both.

Issue of child marriage

The need is for a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy which includes education, contraception access, nutrition, mental health support and community empowerment to tackle the root causes rather than addressing symptoms.

UNICEF reports that each additional year of secondary education can reduce the likelihood of child marriage by up to 6%. Project Udaan (implemented by IPE Global in Rajasthan between 2017 and 2022), used this as its basis; it became an example of how a streamlined, 360° approach can drive meaningful change for young people.

The initiative addressed the challenge of early marriages and teenage pregnancies by keeping girls in secondary school through the strategic use of government scholarship schemes, improving their awareness of sexual and reproductive health, and improving access to modern contraceptives for young women, which helped bolster the voice and reproductive agency of girls and women. The initiative led to almost 30,000 child marriages being prevented and nearly 15,000 teenage pregnancies being averted, while also ensuring an education and a bright future for these girls.

Similarly, the Advika programme, launched by the Government of Odisha in partnership with UNICEF-UNFPA in 2019-20, has made strides in preventing child marriage through strategies which include strengthening state systems, fostering awareness about child protection issues, and empowering adolescents through education, skill development and leadership training. Its youth-focused approach has enabled about 11,000 villages to be declared child marriage-free; in 2022, nearly 950 child marriages were stopped.

Addressing child marriage and early pregnancy is essential, but true empowerment means going further – equipping adolescents, especially girls, with the skills, the education and the opportunities they need to lead independent and meaningful lives, while also fostering enabling environments that support their agency, voice and participation in decisions that affect them. This includes the timing of their marriage, reproductive freedom (whether or not to have children, the age at which they have the first child, the number of children they wish to have), or how they choose to live meaningful lives on

their own terms. At the heart of this empowerment lies economic independence. When economically empowered, women gain the resources, the confidence and the voice to shape their futures and contribute meaningfully to society.

To address the issues surrounding women's economic empowerment and the low female labour force participation, Project Manzil is being implemented by IPE Global in collaboration with the Government of Rajasthan in six selected districts (2019-25). The programme which utilises a human-centred design approach, understands the aspirations of young women, then aligns skill training with these aspirations, and enables them to have unhindered access to dignified employment opportunities at gender-friendly workplaces. As with all effective programmes, this has been complemented with addressing harmful social norms through consistent behaviour change communication strategies. The project has made families prosperous and has also transformed communities. For instance, it helped 28,000 young women (ages 18 to 21 years) to complete skill training at government skill training centres – 16,000 were employed, making them the first generation of women from their communities to enter skilled professions. Empowered by financial stability, these young women exude better negotiation power to delay or get married.

Accelerating progress

The State of World Population 2025 report aptly focuses on rights-based, multi-sector investments and underscores that progress hinges on expanding universal access to contraception, safe abortion, maternal health and infertility care, and also in removing structural barriers such as education, housing, childcare and workplace flexibility. It also emphasises that investing in girls' education, life-skills development, conditional cash transfers, community mobilisation and health services delivers measurable gains. Programmes such as Udaan, Advika and Manzil showcase how these investments can be brought to life and improve the future of youth everywhere.

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, has rightly called for this World Population Day to celebrate the potential and the promise the largest-ever generation of youth holds. It is important to remember that they are entitled to shape their futures by making informed choices about their health, families, careers and lives. India stands at a defining moment on its development journey, and its success will depend on how well it can understand the aspirations of its youth, amplifying the voices of young women, and helping unlock opportunities for them.

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Paper 01 IndianSociety

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Discuss the role of reproductive rights and education in achieving gender equity and sustainable development in India. (150 words)

Context :

On World Population Day 2025, the United Nations emphasized empowering youth to build families of their choosing in a fair and hopeful world, spotlighting the unfinished agenda of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). India, home to the world's largest youth population (371 million aged 15–29), stands at a demographic crossroads — where investing in the agency, health, education, and economic empowerment of young people, especially girls, can catalyze a demographic dividend.

Key Themes and Issues:

1. Youth-Centric Development and the Demographic Dividend:

- India has a youth bulge that can become an engine of economic growth, with estimates suggesting a $1 trillion GDP boost by 2030 if harnessed effectively.
- However, gaps in healthcare, education, nutrition, and reproductive rights can derail this potential.

2. Persisting Challenges in Reproductive Autonomy:

- 23.3% of women still face child marriage (NFHS-5).
- 7% of women aged 15–19 are already mothers; some states report double this figure.
- According to UNFPA's State of World Population Report 2025:
  - 36% of Indian adults face unintended pregnancies.
  - 30% have unmet reproductive goals.
  - 23% face both issues, showing lack of reproductive choice.

3. Need for Rights-Based, Multi-Sectoral Approach:

- Real empowerment needs choice, control, and capital — i.e., informed decision-making, bodily autonomy, and economic independence.
- Solutions must be comprehensive, not piecemeal — combining education, contraception access, health, nutrition, mental well-being, and community engagement.

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Flagship Interventions Showcased:

A. Project Udaan (Rajasthan):

- Implemented by IPE Global (2017–2022).
- Tackled early marriage and teen pregnancies by:
    o Enhancing secondary education access.
    o Promoting reproductive health awareness.
    o Linking girls to government scholarships and contraceptive services.
- Outcome: 30,000 child marriages prevented, 15,000 teenage pregnancies averted.

B. Advika Programme (Odisha):

- Joint effort of UNICEF-UNFPA and the Odisha government (2019–20).
- Focused on child marriage prevention, leadership training, education, and skill development.
- Outcome: 11,000 villages declared child marriage-free, 950 child marriages stopped in 2022.

C. Project Manzil (Rajasthan):

- Addresses low female labour force participation (FLFP).
- Based on human-centered design — matching skill training with girls' aspirations.
- Outcome: 28,000 young women trained; 16,000 placed in skilled jobs, many becoming first-generation earners.
- Helped delay marriages and enhanced negotiation power within families.

Insights from Global Reports and Recommendations:

UNFPA's 2025 Report Emphasizes:

- Expanding access to contraception, maternal care, abortion, and infertility treatment.
- Removing structural barriers: education gaps, workplace inflexibility, poor housing, lack of childcare.
- Boosting investment in:
    o Life-skills training
    o Cash transfers
    o Community engagement
    o Youth-friendly health services

Broader Implications for India's Development:

1. Interlinkages Between Population Policy and Economic Growth:

- Women's empowerment, especially in education and economic participation, is a determinant of fertility choices, health outcomes, and poverty reduction.
- Better reproductive autonomy leads to:
  - Delayed pregnancies
  - Smaller, healthier families
  - Greater labor force participation

2. Role of Behavioural Change and Community Norms:

- Shifting patriarchal social norms is key — through communication, role models, and peer support.
- Projects like Udaan and Manzil demonstrate how localized, community-informed approaches outperform top-down models.

3. Role of Governance and Policy Coordination:

- National and state programmes like BetiBachaoBetiPadhao, RKSK, and POSHAN Abhiyan need convergence and accountability to ensure delivery.
- Emphasis on data-backed policy design, impact evaluation, and community feedback is critical.

Conclusion:

India's path to inclusive and sustainable growth depends on ensuring freedom, dignity, and opportunity for its youth, especially girls and young women. This means investing in education, reproductive health, skill development, and ensuring economic agency. Empowering youth with choice, control, and capital not only upholds individual rights but also fuels national prosperity. As India leads the world in youth population, how it treats its young today will define the country's tomorrow.