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THE HINDU
INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Daily News Analysis

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Thursday, 05 Dec , 2024

Edition: International — Table of Contents

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Daily News Analysis

Page 01 : Prelims Fact

India supported a UN General Assembly resolution urging Israel's withdrawal from Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and reaffirmed the two-state solution.

➡ It also backed Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

India backs UN resolution calling on Israel to leave Palestine

Press Trust of India
UNITED NATIONS

India voted in favour of a United Nations General Assembly resolution that called for the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem. The resolution reiterated the call for achieving a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in West Asia.

The draft resolution, "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", tabled by Senegal, was overwhelmingly adopted in the 193-member General Assembly on Tuesday.

India was among the 157 nations that voted in favour, while eight member states – Argentina, Hungary, Israel, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and the United States – voted against it.

Cameroon, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Georgia, Paraguay, Ukraine, and Uruguay abstained.

The resolution called for the "withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem" and for the realisation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination and the right to their independent state.

Through the resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed its support, per international law, for the two-state solution of Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security within recognised borders, based on the pre-1967 borders. It rejected any attempt at demographic change in the Gaza Strip. India also voted in favour of a resolution that demanded that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of June 1967.

Analysis of the news:

➡ India voted in favor of the UN General Assembly resolution for Israel's withdrawal from Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

➡ The resolution emphasized achieving a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in West Asia.

➡ Titled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine," the resolution was tabled by Senegal and adopted by 157 nations.

➡ Eight countries, including the US and Israel, voted against it, while seven abstained.

➡ The resolution reaffirmed support for the two-state solution based on pre-1967 borders.

➡ It highlighted the Palestinian right to self-determination and the creation of an independent state.

➡ India also supported a resolution calling for Israel's withdrawal from the Syrian Golan Heights to the June 1967 borders.

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Page 07: Prelims Fact

A study by NCF-India and BEAG found that agroforestry practices, such as orchards and paddy fields, harm endemic frog species in Maharashtra's Western Ghats.

➡️ It emphasizes the need for frog-friendly agroforestry practices to conserve critical freshwater habitats.

Analysis of the news:

➡️ Researchers from NCF-India and BEAG studied the impact of agroforestry on endemic frogs in Maharashtra's northern Western Ghats.

➡️ The study was conducted in four plateaus: Devi Hasol, Devache Gothane, Gaonkhadi, and Bakale, during the monsoon of 2022.

➡️ Amphibian diversity was lowest in paddy fields, while abundance was least in orchards compared to undisturbed plateaus.

➡️ Endemic frogs like Minervarya cepfi and Minervarya gomantaki were less abundant in modified habitats.

➡️ Minervarya sahyadrensis, a generalist species, was more common in paddy fields.

➡️ Conversion of plateaus into mango and cashew orchards reduces critical frog habitats.

➡️ Researchers recommend frog-friendly agroforestry, retaining water bodies, and providing incentives to landowners.

➡️ The study was funded by On the Edge Conservation, BEAG, The Habitat Trust, and NCF-India.

The Nilphamari narrow-mouthed frog, which is found in the lateritic plateaus of the northern Western Ghats. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Study flags agroforestry threat to frogs

Rahul Karmakar

Researchers have found that agroforestry practices may be harmful to some species of endemic frogs, while a few are less affected by modified habitats. The study was conducted by researchers from the Mysuru-based Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF-India), and the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG).

The study was conducted by Vijayan Jithin and Rohit Naniwadekar of the NCF. The BEAG's researchers were Manali Rane and Aparna Watve. The findings were published in *Ecological Applications*, a journal of the Ecological Society of America.

They studied the amphibian diversity and abundance in the low-elevation lateritic plateau of Maharashtra's northern Western Ghats across orchards, paddy fields, and unmodified stretches during the monsoon season between June and September 2022. Four geographically separated plateaus — Devi Hasol, Devache Gothane, Gaonkhadi, and Bakale — were sampled to capture the spatial variability.

The research team found amphibian diversity was lowest in paddy and abundance was the least in orchards compared to the relatively undisturbed plateaus. Endemic species, including the CEPF burrowing frog (*Minervarya cepfi*) and Goan Fejervarya (*Minervarya gomantaki*), were less abundant in modified habitats, indicating that agroforestry practices may be particularly detrimental to these vulnerable amphibians.

"The conversion of plateaus into agricultural lands is a significant threat to these habitats and the species they support," Jithin, the lead author of the study, said.

"Given the expansion of orchards, we recommend adapting agroforestry

Amphibian diversity was lowest in paddy, and abundance was the least in orchards compared to the undisturbed plateaus

practices to be more frog-friendly. Retaining natural water bodies and adding water sources in orchards, combined with sensitisation and incentives for landowners, could help mitigate habitat loss," he said.

On the other hand, species such as the *Minervarya sahyadrensis* commonly found across South Asia were more prevalent in paddy fields, suggesting shifts in community composition due to habitat changes.

"We cannot say the more generalist species are adapting (to modified habitats) since that needs a longer period in the time scale of evolution. They are spreading into such habitats," Jithin, the lead author, told *The Hindu*.

The lateritic plateaus, formed through volcanic activity millions of years ago, are rich in endemic biodiversity but largely unprotected. Traditional conversion of these plateaus into paddy fields has now given way to blasting and transforming the landscape into mango and cashew orchards.

The study highlights how these conversions reduce critical habitats for frogs, such as rock pools that protect tadpoles and eggs during monsoon dry spells.

"Low-elevation plateaus are home to endemic and threatened species of plants and animals that rely on clean water sources. Their presence indicates the health of aquatic resources, which are the lifeline of local communities. It is necessary to conserve and restore the freshwater habitats to ensure the well-being of all life forms," Watve, also the coordinator of the International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission's Western Ghats Plant Specialist Group, said.

The study was funded by the United Kingdom-based On the Edge Conservation, BEAG, The Habitat Trust, and NCF-India.

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Page 10 :   GS 2 – Governance

The demand for a caste Census has sparked political debates, with proponents advocating for data to ensure proportional representation in government jobs, land, and wealth.

Is the caste Census a useful exercise?

Proponents argue that a caste Census would determine the population sizes of various castes and that these numbers can be used to provide a proportionate share to each caste in government jobs etc. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that the caste Census would be impractical

FULL CONTEXT

Anish Gupta
Shubham Sharma

The demand for a caste Census has become a heated political issue, fuelled by calls from opposition leaders, NGOs, and, more recently, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) also adding itself to the cohort. Proponents argue that such a Census would determine the population sizes of various castes and that these numbers can be used to provide a proportionate share to each caste in government jobs, land, and wealth.

This article discusses how the attempt to collect individual caste data will once again prove to be a futile exercise, and how individual caste-based proportionate reservations is a regressive policy.

Caste Census: a historical background
The exercise of a caste Census in India dates back to the late 19th century when the first detailed caste Census was conducted in 1871-72. It attempted to collect caste-based information and classify various groups, and was conducted across four major regions – the North-Western Provinces (NWP), the Central Provinces (CP), Bengal, and Madras.

There were several arbitrarily constituted "sets" based on a very superficial understanding of caste. In the NWP, for instance, only four sets were officially recorded – Brahmins, Rajputs, Banias, and "other castes of Hindus". Meanwhile, in the CP, groups such as "servants and labourers" and "mendicants and devotees" were arbitrarily included under these sets. Some of Bengal's classifications included beggars, musicians, and cooks, while Madras added "mixed castes" and "outcastes" as distinct categories.

Frustrated with the complexities of understanding caste, W. Chichele Plowden, who prepared the 1881 Census report, termed the whole question of caste 'confusing' and hoped that 'on another occasion no attempt will be made to attempt to obtain information as to the castes and tribes of the population'. However, the same issues persisted in the caste Census of 1931 where 4,147 castes were identified. The officials were surprised to find that caste groups frequently claimed different identities in different regions.

These challenges are not relics of the past but continue to shape the difficulties India faces to conduct a caste Census today. For instance, the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 identified over 46.7 lakh castes/sub-castes with 8.2 crore acknowledged errors. A more recent example is the controversy surrounding the inclusion of 'hijra' and 'kinnar' as categories in the caste list in the Bihar Census (2022).

Challenges to access accurate data
Upward caste mobility claim – the reporting of one's caste by respondents can be influenced by the perceived prestige associated with certain social groups and their position within the varna hierarchy. This is evident from changes in caste claims between the 1921 and 1931 Censuses, where some communities that initially reported belonging to lower positions within the varna system in 1921 later reported themselves as belonging to higher categories in 1931 (see Table 1). Another notable observation from these claims is that different members of the same

community, such as Sonar, reported belonging to different social categories – Kshatriya and Rajput in 1921, and Brahmin and Vaishya in 1931, in the same region (see Table 1). These occurrences were noted in colonial Censuses but their implications remain relevant even today.
Downward caste mobility claim – some respondents may claim to belong to a group positioned lower in the social hierarchy, particularly when they are aware of the potential benefits associated with such affiliations. Notably, these downward social group mobility claims are predominantly a post-independence phenomenon due to the advantages associated with reservation policies (such as when some upper castes demand OBC status/ some OBCs demand ST status).
Problem of caste misclassification –

similar-sounding castes and surnames often lead to confusion in caste classification. For example, in Rajasthan, surnames like 'Dhanak', 'Dhankia', and 'Dhanuk' are classified as SC, while 'Dhanka' is listed as ST. Similarly, the surname 'Sen' refers to an upper-caste group in Bengal, whereas 'Sain' is associated with the OBC barber community. Enumerators may mis-record such surnames, inadvertently placing communities in incorrect social categories. Additionally, caste remains a sensitive issue, which may make both respondents and enumerators uncomfortable discussing it directly.

As a result, enumerators might avoid asking about caste explicitly and instead make assumptions based on surnames, further increasing the risk of

The problem with counting caste

The system of reserving positions based on a reserved category's quota is straightforward: the reserved posts are determined by dividing 100 by the percentage of reservation allotted to that reserved category. However, significant flaws emerge when proportional representation formulas are applied to individual castes

Table 1: How caste names changed in different Censuses

Name of Caste	1921 Census claims	1931 Census claims
Kamar (Kumar)	Kshatriya	Brahman
Sonar	Kshatriya/Rajput	Brahman/Vaisya
Sutradar	Vaisya	Brahman
Nai	Thakur	Brahman
Napit	Baidya	Brahman
Rawani (Kahar)	Vaisya	Kshatriya

Note: The change in caste claim was not influenced by reservation policies or any other form of government benefits

Source: Census of India Report, 1931 by J.H. Hutton, Page no. 431

Table 2: Number of vacancies and waiting time for least populated castes based on UPSC's average annual vacancies of 1,000

Census	No. of castes	Assumption about the population distribution across castes	Estimated minimum vacancies required to provide at least one vacancy to least populated caste	Estimated years required to provide at least one vacancy to least populated caste
1931	4,147	All castes with equal population	4,147	5
		Least populated caste's number is 10,000	1,40,845	141
Number of castes listed by different ministries which is used for reservation	6,000	All castes with equal population	6,000	6
		Least populated caste's number is 10,000	1,40,845	141
2011 SECC	46,73,034	All castes with equal population	46,73,034	4,673

Source: Authors' calculation based on the data collected from 1931 census, 2011 SECC, different ministries and UPSC

misclassification.

On proportional representation
Proportional representation in reservations may appear fair at first glance, but upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that it is both impractical and regressive. The system of reserving positions based on a reserved category's quota is straightforward: the reserved posts are determined by dividing 100 by the percentage of reservation allotted to that reserved category. For instance, since the reservation for OBCs is 27%, every 4th position in a sequence of vacancies would go to an OBC candidate (100/27 = 3.7, rounded up to 4). Similarly, an SC candidate would get every 7th position (100/15 = 6.7, rounded to 7), an ST candidate every 14th position (100/7.5 = 13.3, rounded to 14), and an EWS candidate every 10th (100/10 = 10).

However, significant flaws emerge when proportional representation formulas are applied to individual castes. According to different ministries data, there are around 6,000 castes. Assuming India's population is approximately 1.4 billion, the average population per caste would be around 2.3 lakh.

To illustrate the challenges of implementing proportional representation at the individual caste level (see Table 2), consider a hypothetical caste ranked last with a population of just 10,000 (0.0007% of the total population). For this caste to secure just one reserved vacancy in an institution, at least 1,40,845 positions would need to be advertised. Using the UPSC as an example, which typically advertises around 1,000 vacancies annually, it would take 141 years for the least populous caste to receive a single vacancy. To make matters worse, if we consider 46.7 lakh castes/subcastes as reported in SECC 2011, the number of vacancies required will be 46,73,034 and the UPSC will take more than 7,000 years to provide the first vacancy to the least populated caste.

Hence, the idea of proportional representation at the level of individual castes proves to be regressive, as it disproportionately excludes the least populous castes from accessing the benefits of reservation.

Anish Gupta teaches economics at the Delhi School of Economics. Shubham Sharma is a Research Associate at the Institute for Educational and Developmental Studies (IEDS), Noida

THE GIST

The exercise of a caste Census in India dates back to the late 19th century when the first detailed caste Census was conducted in 1871-72.

Frustrated with the complexities of understanding caste, W. Chichele Plowden, who prepared the 1881 Census report, termed the whole question of caste 'confusing' and hoped that 'on another occasion no attempt will be made to attempt to obtain information as to the castes and tribes of the population'.

These challenges are not relics of the past but continue to shape the difficulties India faces to conduct a caste Census today.

Difficult task: A teacher collecting details from a woman as part of the caste Census at Kandi in Sangareddy, Telangana on November 18. MOHD ARIF

➡ However, challenges in accurate caste data collection and the flaws in caste-based reservation policies are significant concerns.Some scholars critique this approach as impractical and regressive.
Caste Census: A Political Issue

➡️ The demand for a caste Census has gained momentum, fueled by opposition leaders, NGOs, and even the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

➡️ Proponents argue that a caste Census would provide accurate data on caste populations, which can be used to ensure a proportionate share in government jobs, land, and wealth for each caste.

Historical Background of Caste Census

➡️ The caste Census exercise dates back to the late 19th century, with the first detailed caste Census conducted in 1871-72.

➡️ The 1871 Census collected caste data in regions like North-Western Provinces, Central Provinces, Bengal, and Madras, but the classification of castes was arbitrary and superficial.

➡️ The Census of 1931 identified 4,147 castes, but caste groups often reported different identities across regions.

➡️ These issues persisted in later Census exercises, such as the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011, which recorded over 46.7 lakh castes/sub-castes with 8.2 crore acknowledged errors.

➡️ The controversy continues, as seen in the Bihar Census of 2022, which sparked debates over the inclusion of 'hijra' and 'kinnar' as separate categories.

Challenges in Accessing Accurate Data

➡️ Upward Caste Mobility: Caste claims may be influenced by the perceived prestige of certain groups, leading some communities to claim higher positions in the caste hierarchy for social advantages.

➡️ Downward Caste Mobility: Some respondents may claim lower caste status to gain benefits from reservation policies. This trend is primarily a post-independence phenomenon.

➡️ Caste Misclassification: Similar-sounding castes and surnames can lead to confusion and misclassification. For instance, surnames like 'Dhanak' and 'Dhankia' in Rajasthan are categorized differently as SC and ST, respectively. Misclassification may also arise due to discomfort among enumerators and respondents discussing caste.

The Problem with Proportional Representation in Reservations

➡️ Proportional representation in reservations, though seemingly fair, is impractical and regressive.

➡️ Proportional representation in reservations means that positions are allocated based on the percentage of each reserved group.

➡️ For example, a group with 27% reservation would get every 4th position in a list of vacancies.

➡️ While this seems fair, applying this to individual castes creates problems. Many castes have very few people, making it hard for them to get reserved positions.

➡️ In some cases, it could take hundreds or even thousands of years for a small caste to get a single reserved vacancy.

➡️ This system is flawed and unfair, as it excludes the smallest and least represented groups.

Conclusion

➡️ The article argues that proportional representation based on caste is not only impractical but also regressive.

➡️ It disproportionately excludes the least populous castes from benefiting from reservations.

➡️ The challenges in accurately classifying castes further undermine the feasibility of a caste Census.

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UPSC Mains PYQ : 2020

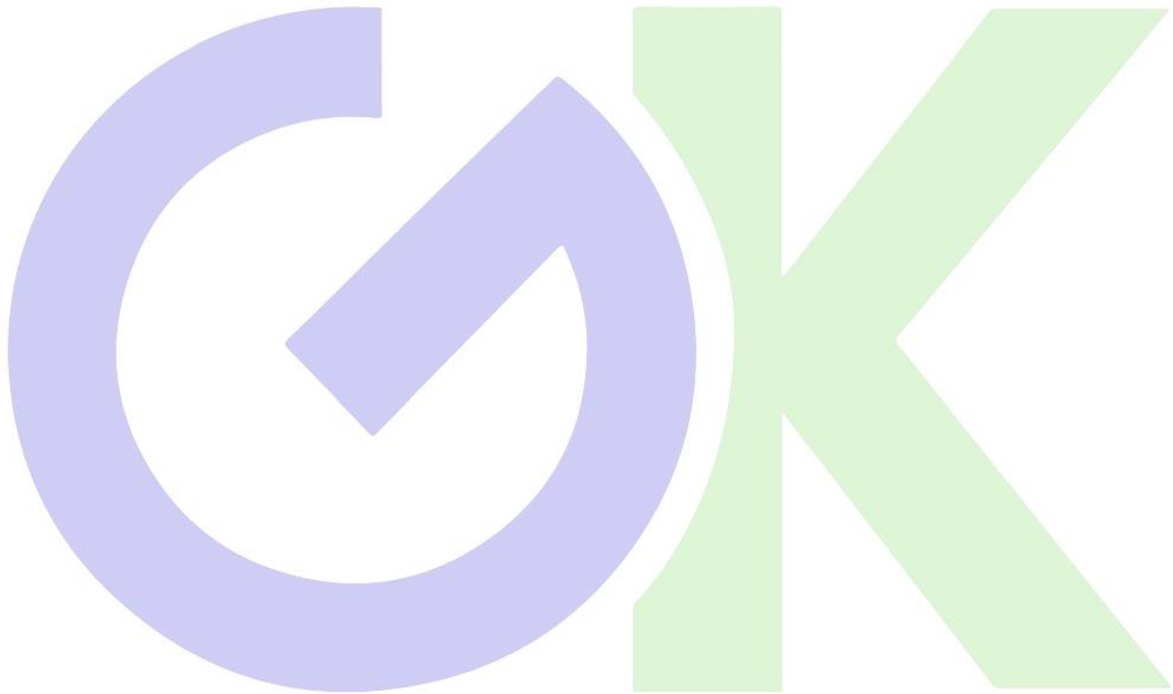**Ques : Has caste lost its relevance in understanding the multi-cultural Indian Society? Elaborate your answer with illustrations. (150 words/10m)**

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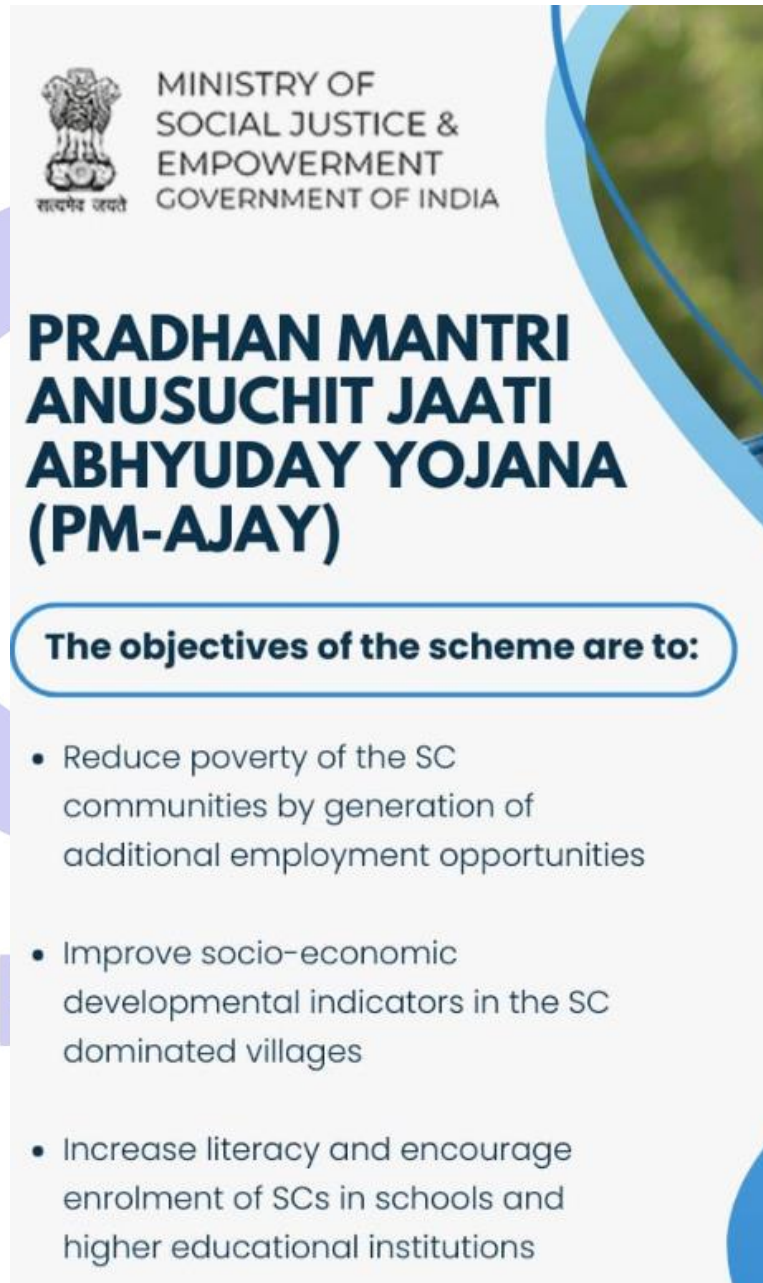
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In News : Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY) Scheme

Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched in 2021-22 to uplift Scheduled Caste (SC) communities.

➡ It focuses on improving socio-economic indicators, reducing poverty, and promoting education through infrastructure and residential facilities.

MINISTRY OF
SOCIAL JUSTICE &
EMPOWERMENT
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

PRADHAN MANTRI ANUSUCHIT JAATI ABHYUDAY YOJANA (PM-AJAY)

The objectives of the scheme are to:

- Reduce poverty of the SC communities by generation of additional employment opportunities

- Improve socio-economic developmental indicators in the SC dominated villages

- Increase literacy and encourage enrolment of SCs in schools and higher educational institutions

Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY)

➡ Launch Year: PM-AJAY is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented since 2021-22.

➡ Ministry: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

➡ **Components:**

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- o Adarsh Gram: Focus on improving socio-economic indicators in SC-dominated villages.
- o Grants-in-Aid: Support for district/state-level projects for the socio-economic betterment of Scheduled Caste (SC) communities.
- o Hostel Component: Provision of residential facilities to promote education for SC students.

→ Objectives:
- o Infrastructure Development: Ensure adequate infrastructure and essential services in SC-dominated villages.
- o Poverty Reduction: Generate employment opportunities through skill development and income-generating initiatives.
- o Educational Support: Encourage SC student enrolment in schools and higher education by providing residential facilities, particularly in aspirational districts and SC-dominated blocks.

Achievements (2021-2024):

→ Hostel Component:
- o Hostels Sanctioned: 46 hostels.
- o Beneficiaries: 5,185 SC students.
- o Funding Released: ₹126.30 crores.

The scheme aims to empower SC communities by addressing socio-economic challenges and promoting education through targeted interventions.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Discuss the constitutional provisions and safeguards available for the protection and empowerment of Scheduled Castes in India. How effective are they in addressing historical discrimination? (250 Words /15 marks)

In News : Boilers Bill, 2024

The Rajya Sabha passed the Boilers Bill, 2024, through a voice vote, replacing the outdated Boilers Act, 1923.

➡️ The legislation aims to modernize regulations on boiler safety, ensure protection against explosions, and create a uniform framework for registration and operation across India.

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

Parliament Pulse

➡️ **Boilers (Amendment) Bill, 2024 passed in Rajya Sabha**

To provide for the **regulation of boilers**, **safety of life** & **property** of persons from the danger of explosions of steam-boilers

To provide for **uniformity in registration** & **inspection** during manufacture, erection, & use of boilers in India

➡️ **Analysis of News:**

Key Provisions

➡️ Safety Measures: Focuses on the safety of workers and property by mandating qualified personnel for boiler repairs and maintenance.

➡️ Decriminalization: Reduces penalties for non-critical offences, retaining criminal penalties only for four major offences involving serious risks to life and property.

➡️ MSME Sector Benefits: Simplifies compliance and reduces the regulatory burden, aiding micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that extensively use boilers.

Implications

➡️ The new bill is expected to enhance industrial safety, reduce administrative hurdles, and promote ease of doing business while ensuring accountability in cases of severe negligence or accidents.

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Page : 09 Editorial Analysis

India's strategic focus on West Africa

Last month, on his way to Brazil to participate in the G-20 Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a strategic halt in Nigeria. During his first two terms, Mr. Modi travelled to 10 African countries, including Uganda, where he delivered a historic speech outlining India's vision of Africa. However, his visit to Nigeria is significant as it marks the first African visit of the Prime Minister in his third term. This visit is also the first by an Indian Prime Minister to Nigeria in 17 years.

The importance accorded to India by Nigeria was evident from the very moment Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu welcomed Mr. Modi at Abuja airport. Later, the Indian Prime Minister was conferred Nigeria's second-highest national award, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger. He became the only second foreign dignitary to receive the distinction since 1969, after Queen Elizabeth II, underlining India's rising global stature and the trust and recognition Mr. Modi has gained for his commitment to the Global South.

India-Nigeria ties

Nigeria is both the largest economy and the largest democracy in Africa. Nigeria is also a regional hegemon in West Africa and plays an important role at the African Union level. It is regarded as a democratic role model and has, in the past, used its clout to mediate disputes on the African continent. Strengthening India's ties with Nigeria would undoubtedly have effects far beyond the nation's borders.

In his conversation with President Tinubu, Mr. Modi reiterated the high priority India accords to its strategic partnership with Nigeria and expressed interest in boosting ties in areas such as defence, energy, technology, trade, health, and education. With terrorism,

Harsh V Pant

Vice President for Studies at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

Samir Bhattacharya

Associate Fellow, Africa, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

Despite growing Chinese interest in financing and building infrastructure, India remains one of Nigeria's important partners

separatism, piracy, and drug trafficking as major challenges for Nigeria, Mr. Modi underscored the continuing salience of strong cooperation on security issues. This encompasses the purchase of Indian weapons and cooperation in the counterterrorism operations against the Islamist groups, particularly Boko Haram.

Mr. Modi's trip is also a follow-up to an Indian defence industry delegation's visit to Lagos earlier this year. Mr. Tinubu had expressed interest in buying arms from India during that visit. India is emerging as a key defence supplier to Africa, with sales to Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tanzania, and Mozambique.

In over six decades of close partnership between India and Nigeria, India has also emerged as a development partner of Nigeria on two fronts – offering developmental assistance through concessional loans ($100 million) and capacity-building training programmes – shaping this partnership in a distinctive 'India Way'.

Nigeria's China connection

Nigeria currently has over 200 Chinese companies. It is China's largest export market and its second-largest trading partner in Africa. On the other hand, China is Nigeria's third-largest export market. China has funded over $47 billion for 22 large-size infrastructural projects across the country. As of March 31, 2020, Chinese loans to Nigeria totalled $3.121 billion, or 11.28% of Nigeria's $27.67 billion in external debt. Earlier, Nigeria had undertaken several significant infrastructure projects using Chinese money, such as the National Public Security Communications System project and the Abuja Light Rail project, and planned terminal expansions at four major airports.

In 2023, China funded the Lekki Deep Sea Port. The port, one of the largest in West Africa, will relieve cargo congestion, which costs billions of dollars in annual revenue and is expected to

generate over 170,000 new jobs. It is anticipated that the port will boost Nigeria's struggling economy.

The Chinese technology giant Huawei has a significant presence in Nigeria. Since 2019, Huawei has trained 2,000 Nigerian youths and 1,000 federal civil servants across Ministries, departments, and agencies, and it plans to continue training government employees in cybersecurity strategy. Huawei has deployed over 27,500 mobile phone towers and up to 10,000 kilometres of fibre optic cable in Nigeria. It has also signed a contract with the Federal government to install an electronic surveillance system at the country's land borders.

China is also active in Nigeria's mining sector. Last February, Kaduna selected China's Ming Xin Mineral Separation Nig Ltd. to build the nation's first lithium-processing plant. It aims to produce batteries for electric vehicles. Yet, five months ago, the Nigerian government rejected Tesla's proposal to buy raw lithium from the country. Meanwhile, China Sinoma International Engineering and Nigeria's Dangote Industries Limited also signed a contract to construct a cement plant with six million tonnes per year in Itori, Ogun state.

Despite growing Chinese interest in financing and building infrastructure, India remains one of Nigeria's key partners. Trade between India and Nigeria has declined from $14.95 billion in 2021-22 to $7.89 billion in 2023-24, primarily due to India's increasing oil imports from Russia. India and Nigeria, however, continue cooperating on multiple issues. As leaders of the Global South, an enhanced bilateral relationship between India and Nigeria should also auger well for the larger Global South.

Mr. Modi's visit to Nigeria has brought the country into the spotlight, but much more sustained effort will be required to convert the goodwill into concrete deliverable outcomes.

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GS Paper 02 : International Relations

PYQ: (UPSC CSE (M) GS-1 2014): How does India see its place in the economic space of rising natural resource rich Africa? (150 words/10m)

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Examine the significance of India's strategic partnership with Nigeria in the context of countering China's influence in Africa. Discuss how such partnerships align with India's Global South vision. (150 Words /10 marks)

Context :

➡ Prime Minister Modi's recent visit to Nigeria, the first by an Indian PM in 17 years, highlights India's strategic engagement with Africa.

➡ Strengthening ties with Nigeria, Africa's largest democracy and economy, reinforces India's role in the Global South.

➡ This visit also counters China's growing economic influence in Nigeria and Africa.

Significance of the Visit

➡ Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stop in Nigeria en route to Brazil for the G-20 Summit marks his first visit to Africa in his third term.

➡ This visit is historically significant, being the first by an Indian Prime Minister to Nigeria in 17 years.

➡ Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu welcomed Mr. Modi at Abuja airport and honored him with Nigeria's second-highest national award, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger.

India-Nigeria Relations

➡ Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and democracy, as well as a regional hegemon in West Africa.

➡ The country plays a crucial role in the African Union and serves as a democratic role model, mediating disputes across the continent.

➡ Strengthened ties with Nigeria have broader implications for Africa, given its leadership status.

Strategic Areas of Cooperation

➡ The Prime Minister's visit emphasized strengthening partnerships in defense, energy, technology, trade, health, and education.

➡ Key security concerns include terrorism, separatism, piracy, and drug trafficking.

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- India is aiding Nigeria in counterterrorism efforts, including combatting Boko Haram.
- Nigeria has shown interest in purchasing Indian arms, reinforcing defense ties.
- The Prime Minister's visit followed an earlier trip by an Indian defense industry delegation to Lagos, showcasing India's growing role as a defense supplier in Africa.

Developmental Partnership

- India has extended developmental assistance to Nigeria through concessional loans worth $100 million and capacity-building training programs.
- This partnership is distinctively shaped in what is termed the 'India Way.'

Nigeria's Ties with China

- Nigeria hosts over 200 Chinese companies and is China's largest export market in Africa.
- Trade ties are substantial, with China funding 22 major infrastructure projects worth $47 billion in Nigeria.
- Examples include the Lekki Deep Sea Port and Abuja Light Rail project.
- Chinese loans total $3.121 billion, representing 11.28% of Nigeria's external debt.
- Huawei, a leading Chinese tech firm, has trained thousands of Nigerian youth and civil servants while expanding telecommunications infrastructure.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Despite China's dominant presence, India maintains strong ties with Nigeria.
- Bilateral trade between India and Nigeria has decreased from $14.95 billion in 2021-22 to $7.89 billion in 2023-24 due to India's growing oil imports from Russia.
- However, both countries continue to collaborate as leaders of the Global South.

Conclusion

- Prime Minister Modi's visit underscores Nigeria's significance in India's foreign policy.
- Sustained efforts are needed to transform diplomatic goodwill into tangible outcomes, bolstering bilateral ties and benefiting the Global South.

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