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1. EC Extends Deadline for Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls

Key Points

- The Election Commission (EC) has extended the deadline for the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in **five States and one Union Territory**—Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

- The extension period varies from **3 days to 14 days**, but **all draft electoral rolls will be published by end-December** as per the revised schedule.

- **No extension** was granted to West Bengal, Goa, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, and Rajasthan, while **Kerala had already been granted an extension earlier**.

- The EC stated that extensions were provided **only to those States whose Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) formally requested** them. Interestingly, EC data shows **99–100% submission and digitisation** of enumeration forms in most States.

- Originally, December 4 was the last date for submission of enumeration forms, later extended to December 11 for all 12 regions; now **further extensions** have been granted selectively.

- Revised deadlines:
  • **T.N. & Gujarat** – SIR till December 14; draft rolls on December 19
  • **M.P., Chhattisgarh & A&N Islands** – SIR till December 18; draft rolls on December 23
  • **U.P.** – longest extension till December 26; draft rolls on December 31

Important Definitions

- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** A focused and time-bound exercise undertaken by the Election Commission to update and verify the electoral roll, ensuring accuracy of voter data before major elections.

- **Electoral Roll:** An official list of all eligible voters in a constituency, prepared under **Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**.

- **Enumeration Forms:** Forms used to collect voter information for inclusion, correction, or deletion from electoral rolls.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 324:** Grants the Election Commission of India the power of superintendence, direction, and control over preparation of electoral rolls.

- **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1950:** Governs preparation, revision, and maintenance of electoral rolls; provides for **annual and special revisions**.

- **RPA, 1950 Section 21:** Allows EC to order special revisions, including postponements or extensions, depending on administrative needs.

- **RPA, 1951:** Governs conduct of elections; accurate rolls are foundational for free and fair elections.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- Timely revision of electoral rolls is critical to avoid exclusion of eligible voters and prevent duplication or fraudulent entries.

- Extensions often depend on logistical challenges such as floods, festivals, administrative delays, manpower constraints, or digital uploading issues.

- High completion rates despite extension requests may indicate **State-level logistical or verification-related challenges**, not necessarily poor enumeration.

- Accurate electoral rolls are essential for **electoral integrity**, voter inclusion, and maintaining the credibility of Indian democracy.

Conclusion

The EC's selective extension of the SIR deadlines reflects its constitutional mandate to ensure accurate, error-free, and updated electoral rolls ahead of upcoming electoral cycles. By accommodating States' administrative needs while maintaining uniform cut-off dates for draft roll publication, the Commission balances procedural flexibility with electoral readiness.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **Polity & Governance**, particularly topics like **Election Commission**, **electoral reforms**, and **RPA1950/1951**.

- Relevant for **Prelims** (factual deadlines, powers of EC, legal provisions) and **Mains GS-II** (issues of electoral management, federal coordination, voter inclusion).

- Can be used as a contemporary example in answers on **electoral transparency**, **administrative challenges in elections**, and **role of constitutional bodies**.

2. Indian Navy To Commission First Indigenous Diving Support Craft – DSC A20

Key Points

- The Indian Navy will commission **DSC A20**, the first **indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Craft**, on **16Dec2025** at Kochi under the Southern Naval Command, marking a major enhancement in underwater and diving operational capabilities.

- DSC A20 is the **lead vessel in a series of 5 Diving Support Craft** being built by **Titagarh Rail Systems Limited (TRSL), Kolkata**, showcasing industrial participation in defence indigenisation.

- Purpose-built for coastal underwater missions, the craft is equipped with **advanced state-of-the-art diving systems**, enabling efficient underwater inspection, salvage operations, and support tasks.

- The vessel features a **catamaran hull**, providing superior stability, increased deck space, and better seakeeping; it displaces **approximately 390tons** and is built as per **Naval Rules & Regulations of the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS)**.

- Its design underwent **extensive hydrodynamic analysis and model testing** at **NSTL Visakhapatnam**, ensuring reliability and optimal performance of the platform.

- The commissioning strengthens India's maritime self-reliance under **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** and 'Make in India', representing coordinated efforts between the Navy, indigenous shipbuilders, and research institutions.

Important Definitions

- **Diving Support Craft (DSC):** A naval auxiliary vessel designed to support diving operations, underwater inspections, repair tasks, and salvage assistance.

- **Catamaran Hull:** A twin-hulled vessel design that offers higher stability, reduced drag, and improved operational efficiency in coastal waters.

- **Aatmanirbharta in Defence:** India's policy focus on self-reliance in defence production by promoting indigenous design, development, and manufacturing.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article246 & Seventh Schedule (Union List Entry2):** Defence and naval forces fall exclusively under the Union Government's legislative domain.

- **Article51A(d):** Fundamental duty to defend the country and render national service, indirectly supporting national security imperatives.

- **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP2020):** Governs indigenous procurement through categories like 'Buy Indian (IDDM)' and 'Make' projects, aligning with platforms such as DSC A20.

- **Naval Act & Naval Regulations:** Provide operational and administrative frameworks for induction and deployment of naval vessels.

Additional UPSC-Relevant Points

- The DSC A20 enhances India's ability in **critical underwater tasks**, vital for harbour security, ship maintenance, underwater search, and submarine support.

- Strengthens **coastal defence architecture**, especially under the Southern Naval Command, which oversees key maritime zones including shipping lanes and naval infrastructure.

- Reflects India's increasing emphasis on **indigenisation of niche naval technologies**, traditionally imported, such as integrated diving suites and high-precision underwater tools.

- Demonstrates collaboration between military, industry (TRSL), and R&D institutions (NSTL–DRDO), a model of **defence ecosystem integration**.

Conclusion

The commissioning of DSC A20 represents a significant step toward strengthening India's underwater operational capabilities and advancing defence indigenisation. It underscores the Navy's commitment to modernising auxiliary platforms essential for maritime security, coastal operations, and underwater mission readiness. The vessel stands as evidence of the maturing indigenous shipbuilding ecosystem and India's strategic push for technological self-reliance.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-III (Security, Defence Technology, Indigenisation, DRDO, Maritime Security)**.

- Useful as a contemporary example in answers related to **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**, naval capability enhancement, coastal security, defence procurement reforms, and public-private R&D collaboration.

- Factual details relevant for **Prelims** (vessel type, features, builders, capabilities) and analytical insights useful in **Mains** for defence indigenisation and maritime strategy questions.

3. Regional Cooperation and Project Facilitation In The North Eastern Region (NER)
Key Points

- The Ministry of DoNER constituted **eight High-Level Task Forces (HLTFs)** on 31Jan2025 to design strategies for key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, sports, handlooms, economic corridors, animal-based protein self-reliance, investment promotion, and infrastructure-connectivity in NER.

- So far **23 HLTF meetings** have been held; each Task Force covers the entire region and is convened by a Chief Minister/Governor, with participation from three other CMs and the DoNER Minister, ensuring **structured inter-state coordination**.

- The **Poorvottar Vikas Setu portal** acts as a unified digital single-window platform for submission, appraisal, monitoring, and fund processing of NER projects, enabling faster inter-ministerial consultation and reducing manual delays.

- The portal strengthens **accountability and convergence**, allowing Ministries and States to track proposal status, address queries, and update progress; it reduces duplication and promotes transparent, timely decision-making.

- Under the **Vibrant Villages Programme**, the Ministry of Home Affairs has identified villages in NER for integrated development focusing on infrastructure, livelihoods, and service delivery improvements.

- Technology-enabled governance tools such as **PM Gati Shakti Portal** assist the DoNER Ministry in project planning—aligning proposals, preventing duplication, and ensuring effective pre-approval and post-completion monitoring.

Important Definitions

- **High-Level Task Force (HLTF):** A multi-stakeholder coordination body formed to recommend sector-specific development strategies across states, ensuring collaborative governance.

- **Single-Window Digital System:** A platform enabling various stakeholders to process proposals through one integrated interface, reducing procedural complexity.

- **Economic Corridor:** A network linking production hubs, markets, and infrastructure nodes to enhance trade, mobility, and regional economic development.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 262 & Inter-State Coordination:** Enables mechanisms for dispute resolution and coordination among States—relevant for regional development cooperation.

- **Article 275(1):** Provides grants-in-aid to States including special assistance for tribal and hilly areas, applicable to several NER States.

- **Sixth Schedule:** Provides for autonomous district councils in parts of Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram—important for decentralised project implementation.

- **North Eastern Council (NEC) Act,1971:** Provides statutory basis for regional planning and coordinated development across NER.

- **Allocation of Business Rules:** Place responsibility of NER development with the Ministry of DoNER.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- Digital platforms are crucial for **transparent, efficient, and convergence-based governance** in geographically remote and diverse regions like NER.

- HLTFs improve **inter-state cooperation**, overcoming administrative fragmentation and ensuring regional-level planning instead of isolated state-level initiatives.

- Integration of schemes through Poorvottar Vikas Setu and PM Gati Shakti enhances **evidence-based planning**, reduces resource wastage, and ensures quicker approvals.

- Development of border and tribal villages under Vibrant Villages Programme complements India's **border management and strategic outreach**, especially along the India–China frontier.

Conclusion

The formation of HLTFs and deployment of advanced digital platforms reflect a transformative shift in the governance of NER, focusing on convergence, coordination, accountability, and technological integration. These mechanisms collectively accelerate project execution, strengthen inter-state collaboration, and ensure inclusive regional development aligned with national priorities.

UPSC Relevance

- Highly relevant for **GS-II (Governance, Inter-State Relations, e-Governance, Role of DoNER, NEC)** and **GS-III (Infrastructure, Regional Development, Border Area Development)**.

- Provides case studies for answers on **cooperative federalism**, **technology-enabled governance**, **development challenges of NER**, and **scheme convergence**.

- Useful factual material for **Prelims** on government portals, programmes, and regional development initiatives in NER.

4. India AI Mission & Regional Conclave On Ai For Good Governance

Key Points

- The IndiaAI Mission under MeitY, along with the Government of Gujarat and IIT Gandhinagar, organised a **Regional Pre-Summit on 11Dec2025** at Gandhinagar to prepare for the **India–AI Impact Summit 2026** to be held from 15–20Feb2026 in New Delhi.

- The event brought together **senior policymakers, industry leaders, researchers, and technology experts** to deliberate on AI-driven economic, digital, and governance transformation across India.

- The theme **AI for Good Governance: Empowering India's Digital Future** guided discussions on AI applications in governance, rural and urban development, agriculture, fintech, healthcare, multilingual technologies, and Generative AI.

- The conference featured high-level participation including the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister of Gujarat, senior state officials, and key national leaders from MeitY, NIC, and DST, highlighting strong **political–administrative support** for AI adoption.

- Key technology stakeholders such as Google Cloud, Microsoft, IBM Research, NVIDIA, Oracle, AWS, and the Bhashini team led sessions demonstrating the technological ecosystem needed for scalable and inclusive AI solutions.

- An **Experience Zone** curated by IndiaAI and DST Gujarat showcased real-time AI applications across governance, agriculture, industry, and healthcare, supporting knowledge exchange and adoption readiness.

Important Definitions

- **IndiaAI Mission:** A national programme led by MeitY to develop a robust, trustworthy, and inclusive AI ecosystem through research, innovation, talent development, data governance, and public-sector AI deployment.

- **AI for Good Governance:** Use of artificial intelligence to improve public service delivery, transparency, administrative efficiency, and citizen-centric digital governance.

- **Generative AI:** AI models capable of producing new content such as text, images, and simulations, increasingly used in governance, education, and industry.

- **BHASHINI:** India's national language translation platform enabling multilingual digital access using AI, critical for bridging linguistic divides.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article38:** Ensures the state promotes welfare through social, economic, and political justice; AI-enhanced governance supports realisation of this objective.

- **Article47:** Promotion of public health aligns with AI-driven innovations in healthcare diagnostics, telemedicine, and epidemiological monitoring.

- **Right to Information Act,2005:** AI can strengthen transparency and proactive disclosures.

- **IT Act,2000 & proposed Digital India Act:** Provide the regulatory foundation for digital technologies, cybersecurity, and responsible AI deployment.

- **Data Protection Framework (DPDP Act):** Ensures data privacy and responsible use of personal data when deploying AI systems.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- Conferences like these help shape **national AI standards, ethics frameworks, interoperability norms**, and trusted AI guidelines.

- AI's role in agriculture (precision farming), health (predictive analytics), and governance (grievance redressal, digital inclusion) aligns with national priorities such as **Digital India, Smart Cities Mission, and rural development**.

- Multilingual AI solutions through Bhashini are vital for enabling equitable access in a linguistically diverse country like India.

- The India–AI Impact Summit 2026 is expected to position India as a **global leader in safe, responsible, and inclusive AI development**.

Conclusion

The Regional Pre-Summit on AI for Good Governance marks an important step toward strengthening India's AI ecosystem by bringing policymakers, researchers, and industries onto a unified platform. The insights generated will inform India's AI governance frameworks, accelerate innovation, and ensure that AI-driven transformation remains citizen-centric, inclusive, and aligned with national priorities.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-II (Governance, e-Governance, Policy Initiatives, Digital India)** and **GS-III (Science & Tech, AI, Emerging Technologies, Digital Economy)**.

- Useful for questions on **responsible AI, Digital Public Infrastructure, data governance, language technology (Bhashini)** and India's global AI leadership.

- Provides strong contemporary examples for Mains answers on **technology for inclusive development**, **public service delivery reform**, and **innovation-led growth**.

5. NABARD Survey Indicates Strong Revival in Rural Demand & Income Growth

Key Points

- NABARD's eighth **Rural Economic Conditions and Sentiments Survey (RECSS)** (Sept2024–Nov2025) shows a **broad-based revival in rural demand**, with 80% of households reporting higher consumption over the past year, driven by rising real purchasing power.

- Rural incomes have strengthened significantly: **42.2% reported income growth**, only **15.7% saw a decline**, and **75.9% expect higher incomes next year**, indicating unprecedented optimism.

- Rural investment has accelerated, with **29.3% of households increasing capital investment**, reflecting renewed asset creation in both farm and non-farm sectors.

- **Formal credit access reached its highest level**, with 58.3% relying solely on formal sources, though informal lending remains at 20%, highlighting the need for deeper financial inclusion.

- Government welfare transfers contribute around **10% of rural monthly income**, stabilising consumption without creating dependency; for some households, transfers exceed 20% of income.

- Inflation perceptions moderated sharply to **3.77%**, improving real income, reducing loan repayment burdens, and strengthening purchasing power; satisfaction with rural infrastructure—roads, electricity, education, drinking water—has also increased.

Important Definitions

- **RECSS (Rural Economic Conditions and Sentiments Survey):** A high-frequency, bi-monthly nationwide survey by NABARD capturing real-time data on rural consumption, income, inflation perception, credit access, and expectations.

- **Formal Credit:** Loans from regulated institutions such as banks, cooperatives, MFIs; essential for financial inclusion and reduced vulnerability.

- **Capital Investment:** Spending by households on productive assets (farm equipment, livestock, machinery), crucial for long-term income growth and rural diversification.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article38:** Mandates the State to promote economic welfare and reduce inequalities—reflected in improved rural outcomes.

- **Article39(b) & (c):** Ensure equitable distribution of resources and prevent wealth concentration; welfare transfers and access to credit support these goals.

- **Article41:** Directs the State to provide public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness—relevant to rural welfare schemes.

- **NABARD Act,1981:** Provides statutory backing for credit, rural development strategies, and institutional strengthening.

- **FRBM considerations:** Improved rural demand and moderated inflation have implications for fiscal sustainability and targeted welfare spending.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- The survey highlights a **shift towards formalisation** in rural finance and rising household confidence—key indicators of structural transformation.

- Higher consumption share (67.3% of monthly income) reflects strengthening **real purchasing power**, supported by GST rationalisation and moderated inflation.

- Rural optimism indicates potential for **multiplier effects** on agriculture, MSMEs, services, and rural employment.

- Improved infrastructure ratings show the impact of schemes like **PMGSY, Saubhagya, Jal Jeevan Mission, Digital India, PM Kisan**, contributing to long-term resilience.

- Welfare transfers functioning as income stabilisers reinforce the model of **targeted, non-distortionary support**, complementing growth.

Conclusion

NABARD's RECSS findings point to a sustained revival of rural economic fundamentals driven by higher consumption, income growth, better credit access, and improved infrastructure. The synergy of public investment, welfare transfers, and moderating inflation has strengthened rural confidence and contributed to India's broader economic stability. These trends suggest that rural India is entering a phase of **resilient, inclusive, and growth-oriented transformation**.

UPSC Relevance

- Highly relevant for **GS-III (Economy, Inclusive Growth, Rural Development, Inflation, Credit Systems)**.

- Useful for Mains answers on **rural demand revival, credit penetration, welfare economics, rural infrastructure, and consumption-led growth**.

- Provides robust contemporary data for essays on **rural transformation**, **growth with equity**, **welfare vs. empowerment**, and **financial inclusion**.

6. Mega Food Park Projects Under PMKSY
**Key Points**

- The **Mega Food Park Scheme (MFPS)** was implemented by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries from 2008 to 31.03.2021 as a component of **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)**, aimed at creating modern food processing infrastructure.

- The scheme is now **discontinued from 01.04.2021**, except for meeting committed liabilities; no new Mega Food Parks are being approved.

- Execution, ownership, and management of each **Mega Food Park (MFP)** rest with a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** or Implementing Agency, ensuring a public–private partnership–oriented framework.

- As per guidelines, each MFP project had a **30-month timeline** for completion from the date of final approval, enabling time-bound creation of integrated value chains.

- The scheme promoted **private investment**, facilitated infrastructure such as cold chains, primary processing centres, and logistics, and generated significant employment in the food processing sector.

- Annexured data (not provided in text) includes project cost, government financial assistance, releases, private investment mobilised, and employment generated across approved MFPs.

Important Definitions

- **Mega Food Park (MFP):** A cluster-based food processing infrastructure project integrating farm production to the market through collection centres, primary processing units, and central processing facilities.

- **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV):** A legally registered corporate entity created specifically to implement and operate a mega infrastructure project; ensures accountability and coordinated investment.

Mega Food Park Model: An Illustration

- **PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana):** A central sector scheme aimed at modernising food processing through infrastructure creation, reducing wastage, and enhancing farmers' income.
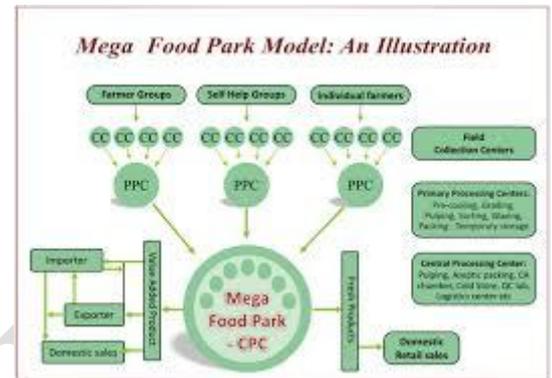
Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Entry52, Union List:** Regulation of industries by the Union—relevant for centrally administered schemes in food processing.

- **Entry33, Concurrent List:** Trade, commerce, production, and supply of foodstuffs—enabling joint Centre–State responsibility in food processing infrastructure.

- **Article38 & Article39(b):** Mandate equitable distribution of resources and welfare-led economic growth, supported by value-chain development initiatives.

- **Food Safety and Standards Act,2006:** Provides the regulatory framework for quality and safety aspects in processed food, relevant to MFP operations.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- MFPs support **Doubling Farmers' Income** through value addition, reduced post-harvest losses, and improved market linkages.

- They enable **cluster-based development** similar to industrial corridors, promoting rural entrepreneurship and Agri-MSMEs.

- The discontinuation of MFPS reflects a policy shift toward **more targeted and flexible infrastructure schemes under PMKSY**, such as food processing clusters, cold chain development, and operation green initiatives.

- Mega Food Parks demonstrate Centre–State–private collaboration, an important example of **cooperative and competitive federalism**.

Conclusion

The Mega Food Park Scheme under PMKSY played a pivotal role in accelerating India's food processing ecosystem by creating integrated infrastructure, mobilising private investment, and generating employment. Although discontinued in 2021, its legacy continues through ongoing committed projects and newer schemes targeting efficiency, value addition, and farmer-centric growth.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-III (Agriculture, Food Processing, Supply Chain Management, Farmer Welfare Policies)**.

- Useful for Mains answers on **value chain development, post-harvest infrastructure, PPP models in agriculture, and rural industrialisation**.

- Frequently asked in **Prelims** regarding PMKSY components, SPV role, timelines, and objectives of Mega Food Parks.

7. Implementation Of Swachh Bharat MISSION – URBAN (SBM-U 2.0)
Key Points

- Under **SBM-U 2.0**, central funds are released to States/UTs based on approved action plans covering toilet construction, used water management, solid waste management, IEC & behaviour change, and capacity building. Plans are approved by **SLTC** and finally by the **National Advisory and Review Committee (NARC)** before fund release.

- With the rollout of **SNA-Sparsh (Oct2024)**, Central Share funds are transferred through an integrated digital framework linking **PFMS, State IFMIS, and RBI's e-Kuber**, ensuring real-time, bill-based fund disbursal; States/UTs have raised claims of ₹811.36Cr so far in FY2025.

- Financial accountability is monitored through **CAG audits** and **Utilization Certificates (UCs)**. Of ₹6876Cr released under SBM-U 2.0, UCs for ₹2029.09Cr have been submitted. No separate audit is conducted solely for urban sanitation.

- A total of **152 towns** (NCAP cities and ULBs with >5 lakh population) are eligible for central assistance to procure **Mechanized Road Sweepers (MRS)**. Action plans from 113 cities for **580 sweepers** costing ₹323Cr (₹96Cr central share) have already been approved.

- SBM-U 2.0 aims at **Garbage-Free Cities** through 100% door-to-door collection, segregation, and scientific waste management along with **remediation of legacy dumpsites** and compliance with Solid Waste Management Rules.

- Urban India generates **1,62,468 TPD** of municipal solid waste, of which **1,30,484 TPD (80.31%)** is processed today—up from 16% in 2014. A total of **7783 waste processing facilities** have been established nationwide.

- Of **2478 identified legacy dumpsites**, 1096 have been fully remediated; **15.20Cr MT (61%)** waste has been treated and **7903.47 acres (52%)** land reclaimed.

Important Definitions

- **SNA-Sparsh:** A real-time, digital fund transfer mechanism ensuring direct, transparent, and claim-based release of central funds to States under Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

- **Legacy Waste Dumpsites:** Old, accumulated waste disposal areas that require bioremediation, biomining, and safe disposal to reclaim land and prevent environmental hazards.

- **Material Recovery Facility (MRF):** A waste sorting centre where dry waste is segregated for recycling, reducing landfill pressure.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article243W & 12th Schedule:** Assign ULBs responsibility for sanitation, solid waste management, and public health.

- **Article47:** Directs the State to improve public health—SBM contributes directly to fulfilling this duty.

- **Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules,2000 & SWM Rules,2016:** Provide legal framework for waste segregation, collection, transportation, treatment, and landfill management.

- **CAG's constitutional mandate (Article149):** Ensures financial accountability of government expenditure, including SBM allocations.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- SBM-U 2.0 exemplifies **technology-enabled governance**, using portals such as **Swachhattam** for monitoring, and digital fund management via SNA-Sparsh.

- Rapid rise in waste-processing capacity demonstrates the success of **cluster-based infrastructure**, Waste-to-Energy projects, and composting initiatives.

- Dumpsite remediation contributes to climate gains by reducing methane emissions and creating urban green spaces.

- Mechanization in sanitation (e.g., MRS procurement) reduces manual scavenging risks and enhances efficiency.

Conclusion

SBM-U 2.0 represents a major shift toward scientific waste management, digital transparency, and institutional accountability. With strong progress in waste processing, fund monitoring, and remediation of dumpsites, urban sanitation infrastructure is becoming more sustainable, technology-driven, and citizen-centric. The mission continues to strengthen ULB capacities while advancing India toward cleaner and healthier cities.

UPSC Relevance

- Relevant for **GS-II (Urban Governance, Devolution to ULBs)** and **GS-III (Environment, Waste Management, Pollution Control)**.

- Provides robust data for Mains answers on **urbanisation challenges**, **municipal finance**, **scientific waste management**, and **public health infrastructure**.

- Useful for Prelims questions on SBM-U components, SNA-Sparsh mechanism, waste processing statistics, and institutional bodies like SLTC and NARC.

8. Schemes For Employment of Women & Promotion of Workforce Facilities

Key Points

- As per **PLFS 2023–24**, India's Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for population aged 15+ is **60.1%**, while the Unemployment Rate (UR) stands at **3.2%**, reflecting improving labour market conditions.

- The Government adopts a **multi-pronged, life-cycle approach** to enhance women's educational, economic, social, and political empowerment—transitioning from women's development to **women-led development**.

- On **21Nov2025**, the four **Labour Codes** (Code on Wages 2019; Industrial Relations Code 2020; Code on Social Security 2020; Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020) were implemented, rationalising 29 laws and enhancing women's labour rights and workplace safety.

- Key provisions include paid maternity benefits, creche facilities, anti-discrimination in wages, greater flexibility in women's working hours (including mining work with consent), and proportionate representation in grievance redressal committees.

- Government initiatives such as the **National Career Service (NCS) portal**, **Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme / PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana**, and several employment-generation programmes aim to enhance female employability and provide job-matching services.

- The **SHe-Box portal** under the MWCD strengthens workplace safety by providing an online platform to report grievances under the **SH Act,2013**, ensuring protection against sexual harassment.

Important Definitions

- **LFPR (Labour Force Participation Rate):** Percentage of population (15+ years) either working or actively seeking work; a key indicator of women's economic inclusion.

- **Labour Codes:** Consolidated legal framework merging 29 labour laws into four codes to simplify compliance, enhance worker welfare, and promote ease of doing business.

- **SHe-Box:** An online grievance redressal mechanism for reporting sexual harassment at workplace, integrating provisions of the SH Act,2013.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article14 & Article15(1)(3):** Ensure equality and permit special provisions for women.

- **Article16:** Guarantees equal opportunity in public employment.

- **Article39(a),(d),(e):** Directive Principles ensuring adequate livelihood, equal pay for equal work, and protection of workers' health.

- **Article42:** Mandates humane working conditions and maternity relief—reinforced through extended maternity benefits.

- **SH Act,2013:** Provides statutory protection for women against sexual harassment at workplace.

- **Equal Remuneration Act (now subsumed in Labour Codes):** Ensures non-discrimination in wages and employment conditions.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- Allowing women to work at night with safeguards expands sectors traditionally male-dominated, such as mining, logistics, and manufacturing.

- Creche facilities and flexible work arrangements support women's workforce retention, reducing career breaks.

- Employment schemes under various ministries—Skill India, PMKVY, Startup India, MUDRA—indirectly enhance women's entrepreneurship and employability.

- Digital tools (NCS Portal, SHe-Box) reflect the Government's push for **technology-enabled labour governance**.

Conclusion

The Government's combined policy framework—including Labour Codes, digital platforms, safety mechanisms, and employment-linked incentives—reflects a comprehensive effort to increase women's participation in the workforce. These measures strengthen women's economic agency, ensure safe and equitable workplaces, and support India's broader transition toward women-led national development.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-I (Women empowerment)**, **GS-II (Labour laws, Social Justice, Government Schemes)**, and **GS-III (Employment, Skill Development)**.

- Useful case studies for answers on **female LFPR**, workplace safety, labour reforms, maternity benefits, and gender-inclusive economic growth.

- Likely topics for Prelims include **Labour Codes**, **SHe-Box**, **NCS Portal**, and provisions supporting women's employment.

9. NITI Aayog Report On "DEEPENING THE CORPORATE BOND MARKET IN INDIA"

Key Points

- NITI Aayog released a comprehensive report on **11Dec2025** outlining a reform roadmap to deepen India's corporate bond market, essential for mobilising **long-term, low-cost capital** needed for India's Viksit Bharat vision.

- The report stresses that a robust bond market is critical for **diversifying funding sources beyond banks**, improving liquidity, enabling better risk-sharing, and supporting infrastructure, MSMEs, green finance, and emerging sectors.

- Despite growth over the past decade, the corporate bond market remains constrained by **shallow depth, concentrated investor base, low secondary-market activity**, and limited access for mid-sized firms.

- The report recommends reforms across **legal and regulatory frameworks**, improved market infrastructure, higher transparency, broader investor participation (insurance, pension, retail), and expanded product offerings such as **credit-enhanced bonds, long-tenor instruments, sustainability-linked bonds**, and repo facilities for better liquidity.

- It highlights the potential of **digital innovations**—tokenised bonds, integrated data systems, and digital platforms—to modernise issuance, trading, and settlement.

- NITI Aayog emphasised that a deeper corporate bond market will reduce over-reliance on bank credit, ensure **efficient capital allocation**, and enable India to mobilise private finance for long-term development priorities.

Important Definitions

REPORT ON

DEEPENING THE CORPORATE BOND MARKET IN INDIA

NITI Aayog

DECEMBER 2025

- **Corporate Bond Market:** A segment of the financial market where companies raise debt by issuing bonds to investors, providing long-term capital at market-based interest rates.

- **Market Depth:** The ability of a market to absorb large buy/sell orders without significant price changes; an indicator of liquidity and efficiency.

- **Credit Enhancement:** Measures that improve a bond's credit profile (e.g., guarantees, partial risk coverage) enabling lower-rated issuers to access markets.
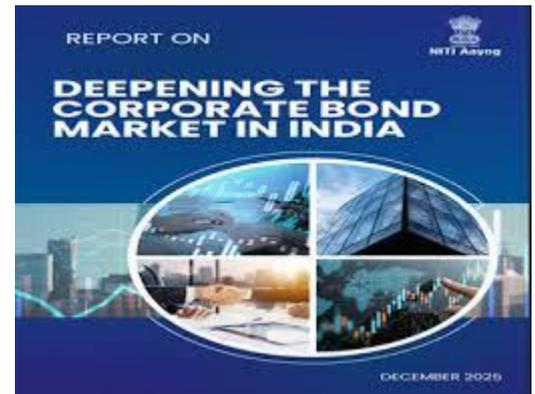
Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article301–307 (Freedom of Trade & Commerce):** Facilitate free movement of financial capital across India.

- **Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act,1956 & SEBI Act,1992:** Provide regulatory oversight for bond issuance, trading, and investor protection.

- **RBI's regulatory powers** over NBFIs and corporate debt markets ensure stability and systemic risk management.

- **FRBM Framework:** Encourages disciplined fiscal management, increasing the need for private capital mobilisation through bond markets.

Additional UPSC-Relevant Points

- Strengthening the bond market is essential for financing India's estimated multi-trillion-dollar infrastructure needs and transition to a **green economy**.

- Deep corporate bond markets enable pension funds and insurance companies to deploy long-term savings efficiently.

- Improving secondary-market liquidity is crucial—repo markets, market-making norms, and transparent trading platforms are major enablers.

- International comparisons (US, Japan, EU) illustrate India's relative underperformance and scope for institutional reforms.

Conclusion

The NITI Aayog report provides a forward-looking blueprint to transform India's corporate bond market into a resilient, inclusive, and globally competitive segment of the financial system. Deepening this market is vital for meeting India's long-term development financing needs, strengthening financial stability, and supporting structural transformation across sectors—crucial pillars of the Viksit Bharat @2047 agenda.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-III (Indian Economy, Capital Markets, Financial Sector Reforms, Infrastructure Financing)**.

- Useful for Mains answers on **bank-dominated credit structure, need for corporate bond market deepening, financial diversification, green finance, and long-term capital mobilisation**.

- Prelims-relevant concepts include **corporate bonds, SEBI regulations, credit enhancement, repo in corporate debt, and tokenised securities**.

10. KARNATAKA SOCIAL BOYCOTT (PREVENTION, PROHIBITION AND REDRESSAL) BILL 2025

Key Points

- Karnataka has tabled the **Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill 2025** to criminalise and prevent acts of social boycott by individuals, groups, or caste panchayats.

- The Bill aims to curb discriminatory practices that deny individuals or families their social, economic, religious, and community rights, thereby strengthening social justice and constitutional equality.

- **Punishment:** Social boycott is made a criminal offence punishable with **imprisonment up to 3 years**, or **fine up to ₹1 lakh**, or both.

- The Bill specifies **20 forms of social boycott**, including refusal to engage in business or employment, denial of access to services or contract opportunities, blocking access to facilities, preventing participation in community or religious events, and any form of social ostracism.

- Provisions include the appointment of a **Social Boycott Prohibition Officer**, mechanisms for **victim compensation**, and procedures to handle complaints and ensure timely redressal.

- The legislation seeks to dismantle parallel extra-constitutional bodies such as **caste panchayats**, which often impose unlawful, coercive, and discriminatory sanctions on individuals.

Important Definitions

- **Social Boycott:** Any action that restricts a person or group from participating in social, economic, religious, or community life due to caste, community norms, personal choices, or other grounds.

- **Caste Panchayat:** An informal, caste-based body that enforces traditional norms and imposes punitive measures; such bodies operate outside the constitutional framework.

- **Ostracism:** Exclusion or expulsion from social interactions or community life, often used as a coercive tool to regulate behaviour.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article14:** Guarantees equality before law; social boycott violates equality and justice principles.

- **Article15(1) & 15(2):** Prohibit discrimination on grounds of caste, religion, sex, etc.; the Bill reinforces these protections.

- **Article17:** Abolishes untouchability; social boycott is a modern form of discrimination resembling untouchability practices.

- **Article21:** Protects dignity and personal liberty; social boycott undermines both.

- **Article38 & 46:** Direct the State to promote social justice and protect weaker sections from exploitation.

- **Comparison:** Similar legislation exists in Maharashtra—**Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott Act 2016**, indicating a growing trend towards regulating caste-based coercion.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- The Bill aligns with national efforts to combat caste discrimination, honour-based coercion, and parallel justice systems.

- Social boycotts often impact access to livelihoods, public goods, education, and community participation—core aspects of human development.

- Criminalising social boycott strengthens **rule of law**, preventing vigilante decision-making by informal institutions.

- The Bill contributes to broader debates on **social reform, caste dynamics, decentralised justice systems**, and State intervention in community practices.

Conclusion

The Karnataka Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill 2025 represents a significant step towards eliminating discriminatory, coercive, and unconstitutional practices imposed by collective community bodies. By criminalising social boycott and empowering victims with redressal mechanisms, the Bill fortifies constitutional rights, promotes dignity, and reinforces the principle of an egalitarian society.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-II (Social Justice, Vulnerable Sections, Government Policies, Constitutional Safeguards)** and **GS-I (Indian Society, Caste, Social Empowerment)**.

- Useful for questions on **caste-based discrimination, extra-constitutional bodies, equality jurisprudence, State interventions in social practices**, and comparative legislation (e.g., Maharashtra's law).

- Highlights contemporary legislative trends relevant for **Prelims**, especially protection laws, penal provisions, and State-level social reform initiatives.