

CONTENTS

1. World Health Day 2025
2. Women and Men in India 2024
3. India- Sri Lanka Relations
4. IMF-World Bank Report: Strengthening Autonomy of Indian Financial Regulators
5. India's Defence Exports: Growing Potential and Global Footprint

Topic : World Health Day 2025

Relevance : GS Paper 2 Polity and Governance

Source : PIB

Context :

Every year, **World Health Day** is celebrated on **7th April** to raise awareness about pressing health issues across the globe. Initiated by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in **1950**, this observance has evolved into a platform for

mobilising governments and communities toward better health. The 2025 theme, *“Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures,”* places a special emphasis on **maternal and newborn health**, encouraging all nations to work towards **preventing avoidable deaths** and ensuring long-term well-being of women.

“On World Health Day, we express gratitude to all those who work to make our planet healthier. Our Government will continue working to augment health infrastructure and ensure quality healthcare to the people.”

Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

India's Holistic Approach to Strengthening Public Health

India, under the leadership of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**, has aligned with this global vision by continuously improving healthcare infrastructure and promoting equitable access. The progress in India's health sector has been marked by initiatives such as **Ayushman Bharat** and the **National Health Mission (NHM)**, which focus on **universal health coverage, maternal-child health, and digital health transformation**.



Maternal and Child Health: A Transformative Decade

India has made **remarkable progress in maternal and child health** through concerted efforts and schemes:

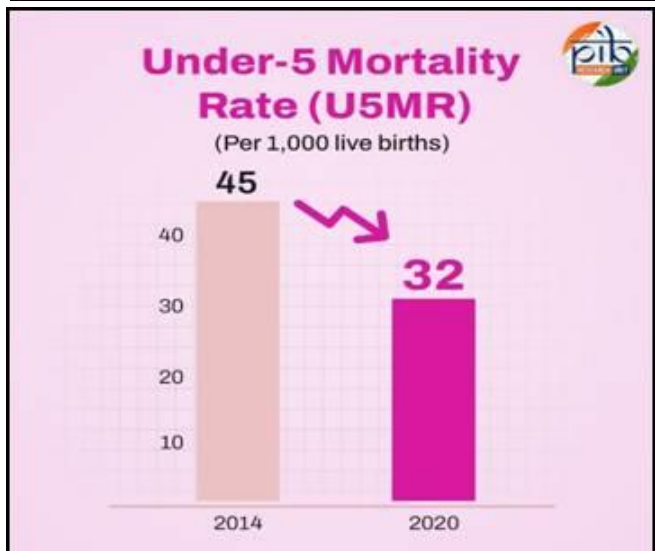
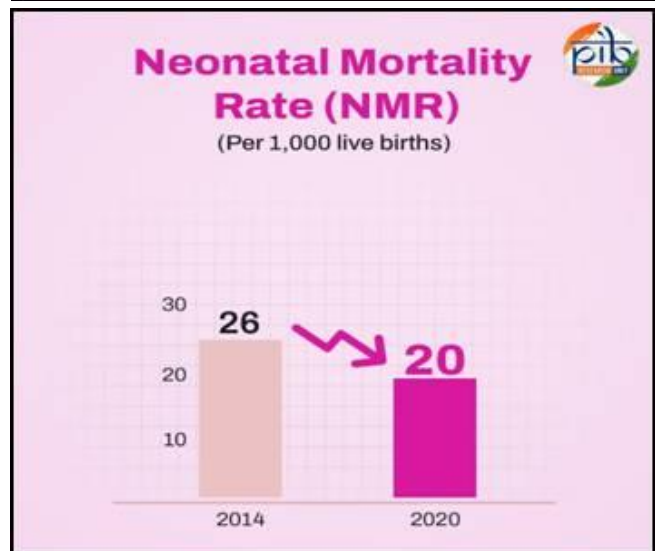
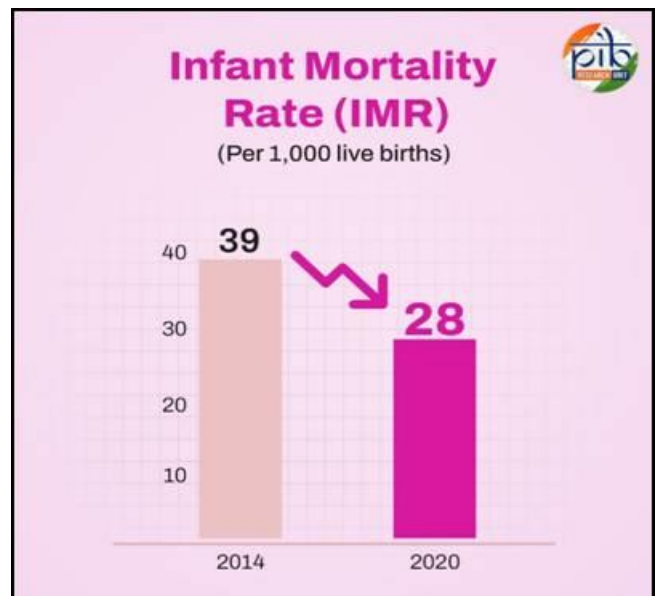
- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** declined from **130 (2014-16)** to **97 (2018-20)** per 1,00,000 live births—an **83% reduction** since 1990, significantly outpacing the global average of 42%.
- **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)** fell from **39 (2014)** to **28 (2020)** per 1,000 live births, while **Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR)** dropped from **26** to **20** in the same timeframe.
- **Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR)** declined from **45 (2014)** to **32 (2020)** per 1,000 live births, marking a **75% reduction** since 1990 compared to the global rate of 58%.

These reductions reflect the success of multiple grassroots-level initiatives and national programs.

Targeted Interventions for Maternal Health

Several key schemes have directly contributed to better maternal health:

- **Maternal Death Surveillance and Response (MDSR)** enables the health system to track and respond to maternal deaths to improve obstetric care.
- **Mother and Child Protection (MCP) Card** and the **Safe Motherhood Booklet** provide critical guidance on nutrition, warning signs, and available government services.
- **Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Portal** digitally monitors pregnant women and newborns to ensure timely and complete care.
- **Anaemia Mukh Bharat (AMB)**, part of the **POSHAN Abhiyan**, promotes screening and treatment of anaemia in pregnant women and adolescents.
- **Birth Waiting Homes (BWH)** and **Outreach Camps** in tribal and remote areas have improved access to safe institutional deliveries.



- **Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND)** integrates maternal-child health services with community awareness at Anganwadi Centres.

Expanding Access to Primary Healthcare Services

India has made significant strides in delivering **comprehensive primary healthcare**:

- Over **1.76 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (Health & Wellness Centres)** are now operational, offering screening, treatment, and wellness services.
- More than **107 crore screenings for hypertension** and **94 crore for diabetes** have been conducted.
- By **February 2025**, over **5 crore wellness sessions**, including yoga and meditation, were conducted at AAMs.
- **17,000+ government health facilities** have been certified under the **National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS)** to promote continuous quality improvement.

India vs Global Progress (1990–2020)

<u>Indicators</u>	<u>India Reduction (%)</u>	<u>Global Reduction (%)</u>
Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)	83%	42%
Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR)	65%	51%
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)	69%	55%
Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR)	75%	58%

Accelerating Digital Health Innovation

The **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** is India's ambitious initiative to create a **unified digital health ecosystem**:

- Over **76 crore Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHA)** have been created.
- Nearly **6 lakh healthcare professionals** and **3.8 lakh health facilities** are verified under ABDM.
- **U-WIN platform** supports universal immunisation by registering **7.9 crore beneficiaries** and tracking over **29 crore vaccine doses**.
- **eSanjeevani**, the National Telemedicine Service, has conducted over **36 crore consultations**, with **2.3 lakh providers**, **1.3 lakh spokes**, and **17,000 hubs** offering services in **130+ specialities**.

Disease Elimination: A National Milestone

India has demonstrated success in controlling and eliminating various diseases:

- **Malaria**: Between 2017–2023, malaria cases dropped by **69%** and deaths by **68%**. India exited WHO's **High Burden to High Impact (HBHI)** group in 2024.
- **Trachoma** was eliminated as a public health problem in 2024.

- **Measles-Rubella** control has improved, with 50 districts reporting no measles and 226 reporting no rubella cases by early 2024.
- **Tuberculosis:** Under the **National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)**, incidence dropped from **237 (2015)** to **195 (2023)** per lakh population; TB deaths fell from **28 to 22** per lakh. Missing TB cases also decreased by **83%**.
- **Kala-azar:** Eliminated as of October 2024, with all endemic blocks achieving fewer than one case per 10,000 population.

Universal Health Coverage Through AB-PMJAY

Under Ayushman Bharat – PM Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY):

- Over **55 crore individuals** in the bottom 40% economic bracket are insured for up to **₹5 lakh per family**.
- As of April 2025, **40 crore Ayushman Cards** have been issued.
- More than **8.5 crore hospital admissions** were authorized, and **31,846 hospitals** (public and private) are empanelled.
- **ASHA and Anganwadi workers** are also now beneficiaries.
- Over **25 lakh senior citizens** enrolled under **Ayushman Vay Vandana Cards**.

Prioritising Mental Health and Rehabilitation

Mental wellness has received increased national focus through **Tele-MANAS**, the **National Tele-Mental Health Programme**:

Key Interventions for

Maternal Health In India



1

Institutional Deliveries on the Rise

- ✓ 88.6% of all births now take place in health institutions (NFHS-5, 2019–21), including among tribal women – a major win under the National Health Mission.

2

Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)

- ✓ Conditional cash transfer scheme (since 2005) to boost institutional deliveries.
- ✓ 36.77 Lakh women benefited (April–Sept 2024).

3

Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK)

- ✓ Ensures **completely free care** for pregnant women and sick infants – covering delivery (including C-section), transport, diagnostics in public hospitals.

4

Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)

- ✓ Free, quality antenatal care on the 9th of every month since 2016.
- ✓ Over 6 crore women examined as of April 2025.

5

Extended PMSMA Strategy

- ✓ Focus on **high-risk pregnancies** with financial incentives for extra 3 visits + ASHA support till safe delivery.

6

SUMAN (2019)

- ✓ Assures **zero-cost, respectful and quality care** for all women and new borns in public health facilities.
- ✓ 41,519 facilities onboarded as of Dec 2024.

7

LaQshya (2017)

- ✓ Aims to improve labour room and maternity OT quality in public hospitals.
- ✓ 1,106 Labour Rooms and 809 Maternity OTs certified by Dec 2024.



DIGITAL HEALTH MILESTONES – AT A GLANCE

AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIGITAL MISSION

» **76 crore+** Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHA) created under Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).

» **5.95 lakh+** verified healthcare professionals and **3.86 lakh+** verified health facilities registered.

» **52 crore+** health records digitally linked.

U-WIN PORTAL'S STATUS

» **U-WIN** registered **7.9 crore** beneficiaries, enabled **1.32 crore** sessions, and tracked **29.22 crore** vaccine doses.

E-SANJEEVANI TELEMEDICINE STATUS

» E-Sanjeevani provided **36 crore+** teleconsultations; **2.32 lakh+** providers onboarded.

» **1.31 lakh+** spokes and **17,051** hubs operational across **130** specialties under E-Sanjeevani.



06th April 2025

PRAGNYA IAS ACADEMY

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

- Operational in **53 cells** across all **36 States/UTs**, providing **24x7 support in 20 languages**.
- Over **20 lakh calls** handled by April 2025.
- Around **440 Rehabilitation and Halfway Homes** have been established nationwide.

Marching Toward Universal Health and Resilience

India's journey in healthcare transformation highlights its dedication to **inclusive, resilient, and technology-driven public health systems**. Through flagship programs like **Ayushman Bharat, NHM, and digital interventions such as ABDM and eSanjeevani**, the nation is steadily moving toward the goal of **universal health coverage**. Disease elimination successes and mental health support structures further cement India's role as a global model for public health advancement.

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

**Strengthening Health Access
AB-PMJAY Key Highlights**

- ▶ **55+ crore** economically vulnerable Indians (bottom 40%) covered with **₹5 lakh** annual health insurance per family.
- ▶ **40 crore+** Ayushman Cards have been issued as of April 2025.
- ▶ **8.5 crore+** hospital admissions authorised nationwide.
- ▶ **31,846** empanelled hospitals, including **17,434** public and **14,412** private facilities.
- ▶ ASHA and Anganwadi workers are now included as beneficiaries, expanding healthcare coverage at the grassroots
- ▶ **25+ lakh** Ayushman Vay Vandana Cards have been issued, expanding elderly health coverage.

/MIB_India /MIB_Hindi /inbministry /inbministry /mib_india /mib_india /MIB_India

Prelims Practice Question :

Q. With reference to recent health initiatives in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) aims to create a unified digital health ecosystem, including unique health IDs for individuals.
2. eSanjeevani is India's national telemedicine service that offers only specialist-to-specialist consultations.
3. India has eliminated Kala-azar and Trachoma as public health problems.
4. Ayushman Bharat – PMJAY provides a health cover of ₹10 lakh per family per year to the bottom 40% of the population.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

Answer: B. 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

- **Statement 1** is correct: ABDM provides digital health IDs (ABHA) and links patients with healthcare providers and records.
- **Statement 2** is incorrect: eSanjeevani offers both **provider-to-provider (hub and spoke)** and **doctor-to-patient** teleconsultations.
- **Statement 3** is correct: India has eliminated **Kala-azar** and **Trachoma** as public health problems.
- **Statement 4** is incorrect: **PMJAY** offers a **₹5 lakh** health cover per family, not ₹10 lakh.

Mains Model Question:

Q. “India’s commitment to public health has witnessed a transformative shift in the last decade. Discuss how recent government initiatives have strengthened India’s healthcare system, especially in maternal and child health, digital health integration, and disease elimination.” (Answer in 300 words)

India’s healthcare system has undergone a significant transformation over the last decade, marked by a strong commitment to accessibility, affordability, and quality of care. The government has prioritized strengthening the primary healthcare framework and addressing long-standing challenges in maternal and child health, digital health, and disease elimination.

Progress under Mental Health Interventions

- **Tele-MANAS** offers 24x7 multilingual mental health support through **53 cells across 36 States/UTs**
- **Over 20 lakh calls** have been handled, with **₹230+ crores** invested in the National Tele-Mental Health Programme (NTMHP)
- **440+ Rehabilitation/Halfway Homes** are currently functional across India, enhancing community-based mental healthcare

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India

Ayushman Arogya Mandirs & Quality Healthcare: Key Highlights

- **1.76 lakh+** Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (HWCs) active across India, delivering comprehensive primary care.
- **5.06 crore** wellness sessions, including yoga and meditation, held at AAMs as of Feb 2025.
- **107 crore+** hypertension and **94 crore+** diabetes screenings conducted
- **17,000+** public health facilities certified under National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS), ensuring patient-centric, high-quality care.

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India

One of the most remarkable achievements is the progress in maternal and child health. The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) declined from 130 in 2014–16 to 97 in 2018–20, while the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) fell from 39 to 28 per 1,000 live births in the same period. This success is attributed to targeted initiatives like the Reproductive and Child Health Portal, Anaemia Mukta Bharat, and outreach programs such as Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Days. Schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), SUMAN, and LaQshya have ensured increased institutional deliveries and quality obstetric care.

The integration of digital technologies under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission has revolutionized health services. With over 76 crore health IDs created and more than 52 crore health records linked, ABDM has streamlined health data and improved service delivery. eSanjeevani, India's national telemedicine platform, has provided over 36 crore consultations, especially benefiting remote populations with limited access to healthcare.

India has also made commendable strides in disease elimination. Kala-azar and Trachoma have been eliminated as public health concerns, while tuberculosis control has seen a 17.7% reduction in incidence. The malaria burden dropped by 69% between 2017 and 2023. Mental health support has expanded under Tele-MANAS, offering 24x7 multilingual services across states.

Overall, these initiatives reflect a shift toward a resilient, inclusive, and tech-enabled healthcare system. By prioritizing maternal and child health, leveraging digital tools, and focusing on disease eradication, India is making steady progress toward achieving universal health coverage and health equity.

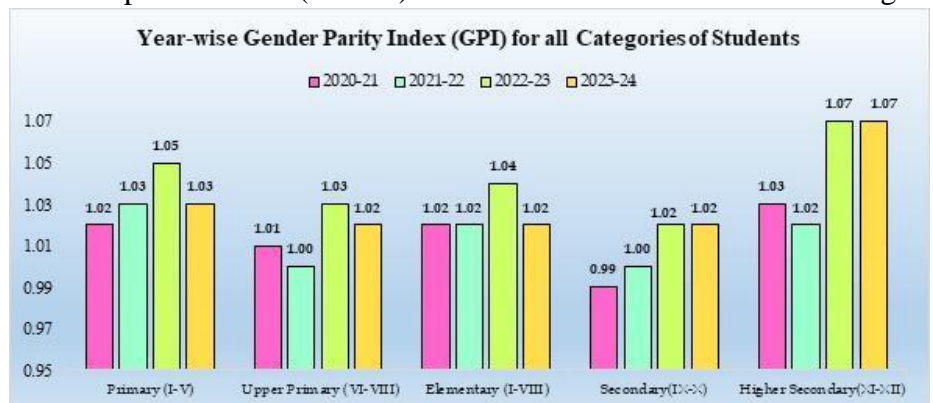
Topic : Women and Men in India 2024

Relevance : GS Paper 2 Polity and Governance

Source : PIB

Context :

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released the 26th edition of its flagship publication, "Women and Men in India 2024: Selected Indicators and Data." This publication is a comprehensive statistical overview of gender-disaggregated data across critical sectors such as education, health, labour force participation, financial inclusion, decision-making, and entrepreneurship.



Drawing from diverse governmental and departmental sources, the report not only captures trends but also offers an evaluative lens for understanding India's journey towards gender equality.

Understanding the Gender Landscape in India

This year's report reflects significant progress in various domains:

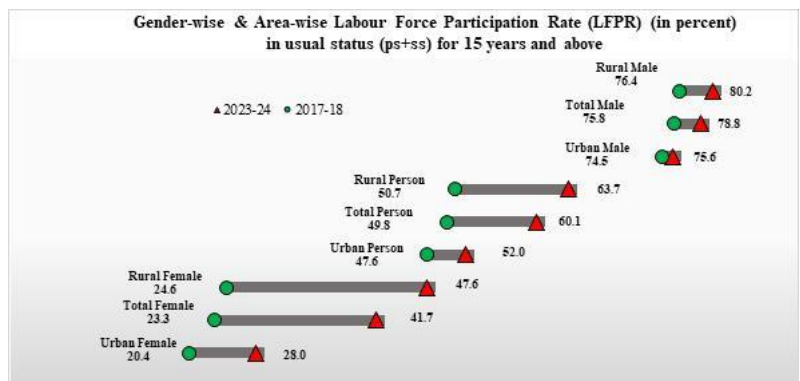
- **Education:** The Gender Parity Index (GPI) at primary and higher secondary levels remains consistently high, showing near parity in enrolment. This is a positive indication of increasing access

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

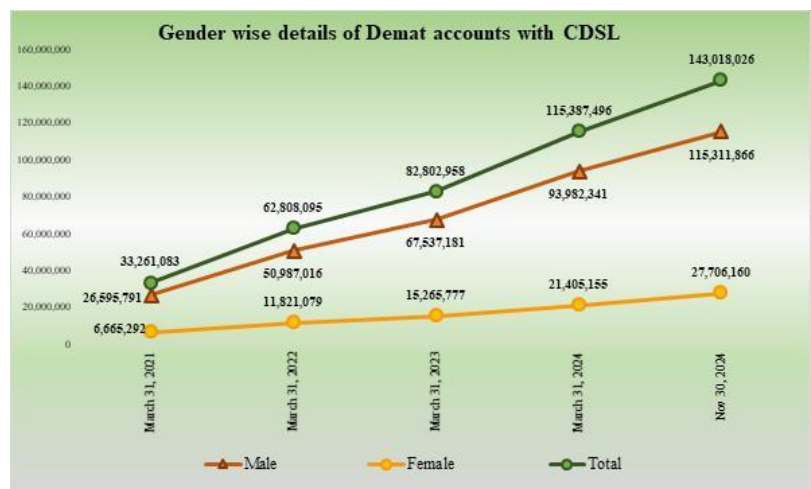
to education for girls. Although fluctuations were observed at upper primary and elementary levels, parity has largely been sustained.

- **Labour Force Participation:**

Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for individuals aged 15 years and above has shown a notable improvement, rising from 49.8% in 2017-18 to 60.1% in 2023-24. This suggests better integration of women into the workforce, supported by multiple policies like MUDRA loans, Stand Up India, and increased opportunities in the gig and informal sectors.



- **Financial Inclusion:** Women now own 39.2% of all bank accounts and contribute 39.7% of total deposits, with higher participation in rural areas. This marks a significant rise in financial literacy and autonomy, encouraged through Jan Dhan Yojana and other targeted financial literacy programs.



- **Stock Market Participation:**

Between 2021 and 2024, female ownership of DEMAT accounts quadrupled, growing from 6.67 million to 27.71 million. Though still outnumbered by male investors, this trend reflects growing confidence in financial instruments among women.

- **Entrepreneurship:** A steady increase in female-headed proprietary establishments and women-led startups (from 1,943 in 2017 to 17,405 in 2024) points to a dynamic shift in female entrepreneurial leadership, backed by policy support such as Startup India and Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP).
- **Political Participation:** From 1952 to 2024, the number of electors surged from 173.2 million to 978 million, with female turnout reaching 65.8% in 2024. For the first time, female voter turnout surpassed male turnout, reflecting increasing political awareness and agency.

How Government Enabled this Progress

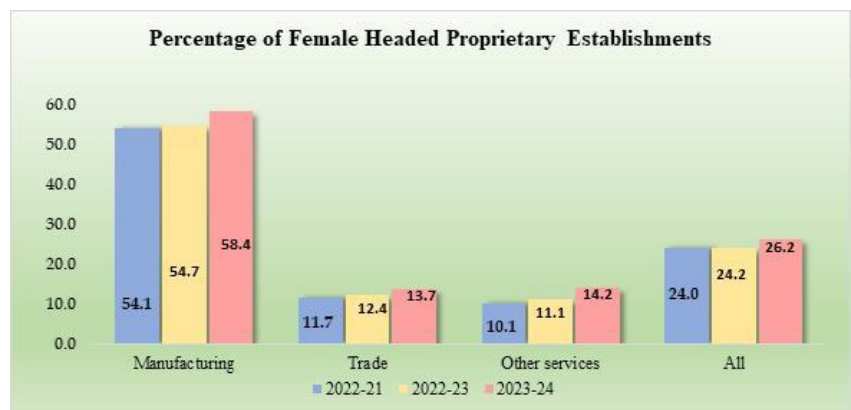
The government has undertaken a multi-dimensional and data-driven approach to foster gender equality. Key enablers include:

- **Gender-Disaggregated Data Collection:** Institutions like MoSPI, NFHS, and Census have ensured the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data. This facilitates better policy design, monitoring, and evaluation.

- **Gender Budgeting:** Introduced in 2005-06, gender budgeting has been a crucial tool where ministries allocate specific funds for women-centric programs. Over 30 ministries now publish Gender Budget Statements, ensuring that fiscal policies cater to gender needs.
- **Mission Shakti & Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** These flagship programs focus on the holistic empowerment of women through education, protection, and skill development.
- **Digital Initiatives:** Schemes like PMGDISHA (Digital Literacy) and e-SHRAM (for unorganized workers) have improved women's access to digital tools and platforms, further integrating them into the economic mainstream.
- **Legislative and Social Reforms:** Laws addressing workplace safety (POSH Act), equal remuneration, and increased maternity benefits have contributed to safer, more inclusive work environments.

Addressing the Gender Gap

Despite progress, disparities remain in areas such as wage equality, representation in STEM and leadership roles, and informal sector vulnerabilities. The gender gap in economic participation, while reducing, still requires targeted efforts such as skilling initiatives, gender-neutral job creation, and flexible employment frameworks.



Moreover, the gender gap is not uniform—it is influenced by caste, region, age, and socio-economic status. Therefore, intersectionality must guide future interventions.

Prelims Practice Question

Q. With reference to the publication "*Women and Men in India 2024*" released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), consider the following statements:

1. The Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in usual status for ages 15 years and above has shown a decline from 2017-18 to 2023-24.
2. The number of DEMAT accounts held by women increased more than fourfold between 2021 and 2024.
3. Female voter turnout in the 2024 general elections was lower than male turnout.
4. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) at the higher secondary level remains consistently low in comparison to primary education.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, and 4

Answer: A. 2 only

Explanation:

- **Statement 1** is incorrect: Female LFPR has improved from **49.8% in 2017-18** to **60.1% in 2023-24**.
- **Statement 2** is correct: Female DEMAT accounts increased from **6.67 million in 2021** to **27.71 million in 2024**, which is more than four times.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect: In **2024**, **female voter turnout surpassed male turnout**, indicating a positive shift.
- **Statement 4** is incorrect: The GPI at both **primary and higher secondary levels remains consistently high**, reflecting strong female enrolment.

Mains Model Question:

Q. The 2024 edition of “Women and Men in India” offers key insights into gender-based development indicators. Discuss how the Indian government has facilitated improvements in gender equality across economic, social, and political domains. Also, examine the role of gender budgeting and other targeted initiatives in this process.

The “Women and Men in India 2024” report by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation presents a data-driven reflection of India's gender landscape, revealing notable progress in several areas of gender equality. This progress is largely a result of sustained governmental efforts across multiple sectors, underpinned by policy interventions, gender budgeting, and empowerment schemes.

In the economic domain, the female labour force participation rate has increased from 49.8% in 2017-18 to 60.1% in 2023-24, signalling improved inclusion of women in the workforce. This is reinforced by the growing share of women in banking, with 39.2% of all bank accounts and 39.7% of deposits belonging to women. Moreover, the rise in female DEMAT accounts and female-headed proprietary establishments underscores a shift toward greater financial independence and entrepreneurship.

In education, consistently high Gender Parity Index (GPI) at primary and higher secondary levels demonstrates increasing access to schooling for girls, although some fluctuations persist at the upper primary level.

Politically, female voter turnout has not only remained high but surpassed male turnout in 2024, reflecting enhanced political agency and awareness among women.

Government initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Stand-Up India, and Skill India, along with sector-specific reservations, have played a key role. Gender budgeting, institutionalized since 2005-06, has become a central strategy in integrating gender perspectives into planning and resource allocation. It ensures targeted spending on women-centric schemes across ministries, thereby addressing structural inequalities.

Overall, while challenges remain in areas like wage disparity and representation in leadership roles, the trends highlighted in the 2024 report reflect a concerted national push toward inclusive and gender-sensitive development.

Topic : India- Sri Lanka Relations

Relevance : GS Paper 2 Polity and International Relations

Source : The Hindu

Context :

India and Sri Lanka share a deep-rooted relationship based on civilizational ties, geographical proximity, cultural affinity, religious bonds, and strong people-to-people connections. This multi-dimensional relationship has evolved over the decades, shaped by changing regional dynamics and global developments. The latest visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Sri Lanka in 2025 marks a strategic consolidation of bilateral ties through cooperation in defence, energy, digital development, and cultural diplomacy.

Historical and Strategic Background

India has consistently played a pivotal role in Sri Lanka's peace and development.

- **Civil War and Peacebuilding:** India supported the Sri Lankan government and Tamil community during the civil war period through diplomatic and humanitarian means.
- **Disaster Relief:** India extended significant assistance during the 2004 tsunami and other crises.
- **Economic Crisis Aid:** In 2022–23, India provided over \$4 billion in aid and credit lines during Sri Lanka's worst financial crisis.

India and Sri Lanka sign 7 MoUs, enhance ties in defence, energy

Agreements signed during Modi's visit cover defence, energy, digitisation, health; interest rates on loans to Sri Lanka cut; \$100 million of loans converted into grants; island nation expresses gratitude to India for support in its economic recovery

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

India and Sri Lanka inked seven MoUs – including one on defence cooperation – during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the island nation on Saturday, even as Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake reaffirmed his government's commitment to ensuring that Sri Lankan territory is not used to undermine India's security or regional stability.

"We believe that we have shared security interests. The security of both countries is interconnected and co-dependent. I am grateful to President Dissanayake for his sensitivity towards India's interests," Mr. Modi said in his address following the signing of the MoUs at the Presidential Secretariat.

Expanding cooperation
The MoUs signed were on the topics of energy sector cooperation – including energy grid connection and developing Trincomalee as an energy hub in partnership with the United Arab Emirates, digitisation efforts, health, and multi-sectoral assistance to Sri Lanka's Eastern Province, taking off on discussions held during President Dissanayake's visit to



Strengthening cooperation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with President Anura Kumara Dissanayake ahead of a bilateral meeting at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo. AFP

New Delhi in December 2024. Briefing the media later, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri described the defence sector MoU as an

"umbrella agreement" that provided a framework to pursue ongoing defence sector cooperation in a more "structured" manner.

During the ceremony, the leaders virtually launched a cold storage plant in the central Dumbulla district, and a solar power plant in the eastern Trincomalee district.

Further, India has decided to reduce the interest rates on loans extended to Sri Lanka to support the country's external debt

treatment, Mr. Modi said, adding that loans totalling over \$100 million have been converted to grants.

'Global leader'
"We have witnessed India's remarkable rise and success. We sincerely applaud the way India has positioned itself not only as a regional power, but also as a global leader," Mr. Dissanayake said. He later thanked India for its "unwavering commitment and support" to Sri Lanka's economic recovery and through its debt restructuring process.

The historic Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 remains the only instrument to achieve a political solution for the Tamils of the island, and India's "legitimate involvement" will be important to reach this goal, Sri Lanka's Tamil parties told Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday.

Mr. Modi, who is in the island nation on a state visit, held talks with different

'Bottom-trawling ban must end fisheries conflict'

COLOMBO
Sri Lanka's Tamil political leaders on Saturday urged India to ban bottom trawling in order to resolve the fisheries conflict affecting the fishermen of northern Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu, India. Tamil Nadu's general secretary M.A. Sumanthiran recalled the 2016 agreement between India and Sri Lanka to "expedite the transition towards ending the practice of bottom trawling at the surface".

» PAGE 7

Tamil parties call for India's continued role

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

The historic Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 remains the only instrument to achieve a political solution for the Tamils of the island, and India's "legitimate involvement" will be important to reach this goal, Sri Lanka's Tamil parties told Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday.

Mr. Modi, who is in the island nation on a state visit, held talks with different

groups of Opposition politicians on Saturday afternoon.

He met with a delegation of leaders and representatives from Tamil parties of the north and east, including the Jankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK), All Ceylon Tamil Congress, People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam, and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation.

» PAGE 7

- **Policy Framework:** India's 'Neighbourhood First' and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrines have guided its regional approach.

Highlights of 2025 Visit and Signed MoUs

The 2025 visit by PM Modi marked a watershed moment in bilateral relations with the signing of seven MoUs.

- **Defence Cooperation:** An umbrella agreement was signed for structured defence engagement covering training, maritime security, and equipment support.
- **Energy Partnership:** Plans for energy grid connectivity and the development of Trincomalee as an energy hub, in partnership with the UAE, were formalised.
- **Development Assistance:** Agreements were signed on health, digitisation, and infrastructure in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province.
- **Loan Restructuring:** India converted \$100 million of loans into grants and reduced interest rates on remaining loans to ease Sri Lanka's debt burden.
- **Green Energy Projects:** Inauguration of a solar plant in Trincomalee and cold storage facilities in Dambulla under Indian assistance.

Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

India's cultural diplomacy remains central to strengthening ties with Sri Lanka.

- **Buddhist Connect:** India announced the gifting of relics of Lord Buddha from Gujarat to Sri Lanka for the Vesak festival.
- **Temple Restoration:** India will support the renovation of the Thirukoneswaram temple, Mahabodhi temple in Anuradhapura, and Sita Eliya temple.
- **People-to-People Bonds:** These initiatives deepen religious, spiritual, and emotional ties between citizens of both nations.

Political and Economic Support

India's role in stabilising Sri Lanka's economy has been internationally acknowledged.

DEL-HYD-B'LORE-PUNE-TPT

India, Sri Lanka sign 7 MoUs, enhance ties

Mr. Dissanayake conferred the 'Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana' title on Mr. Modi, saying that it was "a symbol of the enduring friendship and unwavering, multifaceted support that he has consistently extended to Sri Lanka and its people." Sri Lanka, like India, "firmly believes" in the potential of South Asia to rise and shine on the world stage and the two countries must strive to achieve that goal together, the leftist Sri Lankan leader observed.

In his statement, Mr. Modi announced that relics of the Buddha, found in 1960 in the Aravali region in Gujarat, would be sent to Sri Lanka for an exposition during the Vesak festivities – commemorating the birth, enlightenment and the death of the Buddha – in May this year. India would also support the renovation of the Thirukoneswaram temple in Trincomalee and the construction of the sacred city in the Anuradhapura Mahabodhi temple complex, and the Sita Eliya temple in Nuwara Eliya, he said.

Earlier on Saturday, the Prime Minister received the guard of honour at Colombo's Independence Square and a ceremonial welcome at the Presidential Secretariat, where he held bilateral discussions with Mr. Dissanayake.

Tamil parties call for India's continued role

They discussed the pending political solution and other concerns of Tamils, including an ongoing land grab by state agencies, amid a growing perception that India's interest in the Tamil question may be waning in the wake of growing geopolitical challenges.

"We told the Prime Minister that the Tamil question is yet to be resolved and that it has been acknowledged that the 13th Amendment [a constitutional amendment ensuring a measure of power devolution] does not meet the ideals of the Accord. As a friendly, close neighbour, we urged India to encourage the Sri Lankan government to take steps towards meaningful devolution," ITAK general secretary M.A. Sumanthiran told *The Hindu*. "We told him that our party was called the Federal Party and has pushed for a federal structure in governance."

The delegation also sought India's intervention in ensuring the conduct of the Provincial Council elections, as "part of the process of achieving meaningful power devolution". In his address earlier on Saturday, Mr. Modi said he had discussed reconstruction and reconciliation with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake. "He apprised me of his inclusive approach. We hope that the Sri Lankan government will meet the aspirations of the Tamil people and fulfil its commitment towards fully implementing the Constitution of Sri Lanka, and conducting Provincial Council elections," Mr. Modi said.

Sri Lanka's Tamil political leaders urge India to ban bottom-trawling

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Tamil political leaders on Saturday urged India to ban bottom trawling in order to decisively resolve the fisheries conflict affecting the fishermen of northern Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu.

Raising the long-running tussle for resources in the Palk Bay, the Sri Lankan Tamil politicians highlighted its devastating impact on war-affected Tamil fishermen in Sri Lanka's Northern Province and the marine ecosystem of the Palk Bay.

During a meeting, Indian Tamil Arasu Katchi general secretary M.A. Sumanthiran recalled the agreement reached by the Governments of India and Sri Lanka in 2016, to "expedite the transition towards ending the practice of bottom trawling at the ear-



Deep issue: Fishing trawlers, which were detained in Sri Lankan ports, being brought to Rameswaram fishing jetty, L. BALACHANDAR

liest". Mr. Sumanthiran, who was part of the Sri Lankan delegation to the Ministerial-level talks in New Delhi in November 2016, said, "We told PM Modi that we appreciate the initiatives taken by the Indian government to promote deep-sea fishing, but pointed to the problem of bottom trawling persisting till date."

Sri Lanka banned bottom trawling in 2017, fol-

lowing a private member's Bill moved by Mr. Sumanthiran, a former MP of Jaffna. India currently follows a seasonal ban on fishing along its east coast, for nearly two months every year between mid-April and mid-June, to allow for fish breeding.

The message from the Sri Lankan politicians assumes greater significance ahead of Mr. Modi's visit to Rameswaram, from where

a sizeable number of bottom trawlers originate and are periodically seized by the Sri Lankan Navy, on charges of illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters.

Both Mr. Modi and Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake mentioned their discussion about the fisheries conflict in their statements on Saturday morning. While Mr. Modi said the leaders had agreed on a "humane approach", he emphasised the need for immediate release of the Indian fishermen and their boats.

Mr. Disanayake, who underscored the need for a "cooperative approach for a sustainable solution", said that "recognising the serious environmental damage caused by bottom trawling... we called for decisive measures to halt this activity and to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing."

- **Debt Restructuring Leadership:** India became the first country to formally support Sri Lanka's debt restructuring by taking a proactive stance in international forums.
- **Recognition by Sri Lanka:** President Dissanayake conferred the *Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana* title on PM Modi, recognizing India's unwavering support.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Sri Lanka reaffirmed that its territory will not be used against India's security, indicating a shared security vision.

Despite cooperation, certain challenges need attention.

- **Fishermen Disputes:** Maritime boundary violations and fishermen arrests remain contentious.
- **Geopolitical Balance:** Sri Lanka's balancing act between India and China continues to influence strategic calculations.
- **Tamil Issue:** India continues to advocate for the rights and reconciliation of Sri Lankan Tamils.

Way Forward:

- Continued focus on sustainable development, infrastructure, renewable energy, and digital cooperation.
- Deepening regional cooperation through BIMSTEC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

Prelims Practice Question

Q. With reference to India–Sri Lanka relations, consider the following statements:

1. India and Sri Lanka have signed an MoU for energy grid connectivity and development of Trincomalee as an energy hub.
2. India was the first country to support Sri Lanka's debt restructuring process during its economic crisis.
3. The *Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana* title was conferred upon the Indian President in recognition of bilateral ties.
4. India supported the renovation of Buddhist and Hindu religious sites in Sri Lanka as part of cultural diplomacy.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 4 only
- B. 1, 3 and 4 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer: A. 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct** – India signed an MoU for energy grid connectivity and development of Trincomalee as an energy hub.
- **Statement 2 is correct** – India was indeed the first country to formally support Sri Lanka's debt restructuring.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect** – The *Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana* title was conferred upon **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, not the President of India.
- **Statement 4 is correct** – India supported the renovation of religious sites like the Thirukoneswaram temple and Mahabodhi complex as part of cultural diplomacy.

Mains Model Question:

Q. Examine the evolution of India–Sri Lanka relations in the 21st century, focusing on strategic, economic, and cultural dimensions. How has India's role been pivotal in Sri Lanka's recent recovery and regional integration? (Answer in 300 words)

India–Sri Lanka relations have significantly evolved in the 21st century, shaped by shared civilizational heritage, geographic proximity, and strategic interests. From historical ties rooted in Buddhism and Tamil cultural links to modern-day cooperation, the partnership has grown multifaceted. Economically, India has remained a vital partner, being one of Sri Lanka's largest trading partners and a key investor. Strategic cooperation has deepened, particularly in maritime security and defence, with recent agreements formalising structured frameworks for collaboration. Energy cooperation, including plans for grid connectivity and the development of Trincomalee as an energy hub, showcases India's commitment to building regional resilience.

Bridge this deficit between India and Sri Lanka

The announcement by Sri Lanka's President Ranil Wickremesinghe, recently about a proposal to establish land connectivity with India has come some time soon. Twenty years ago, in Chennai, Mr. Wickremesinghe, then Prime Minister, while delivering a lecture, floated the idea of building a bridge linking Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu with Talaimannar in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. This was part of his larger vision of regional economic integration, encompassing his country and the southern States of India and aimed at generating more opportunities for economic growth.

He has been discussing the concept of economic integration on many an occasion and at several international fora. But, whenever groups and parties claiming to represent the interests of Sinhalese Buddhists expressed their opposition to the proposal on the ground that this would not benefit Sri Lanka, the talk of having expanded physical connectivity would die down. In December 2015, when India's Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari informed the Lok Sabha that the Asian Development Bank was willing to fund the bridge project of \$24,000 crore, Sri Lanka's response was muted followed by sharp criticism from the project opponents.

However, to the credit of Mr. Wickremesinghe and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the idea of land connectivity was not abandoned. It found a mention in a joint statement issued in July after the two leaders met in New Delhi. The document even stated that "a feasibility study for such connectivity will be conducted at an early date."

As a follow up, Mr. Wickremesinghe, who is also Finance Minister, in his broadcast on November 13, referred to the project of land connectivity and said "we expect to utilize Colombo port to meet the supply needs of south west India and Trincomalee port to meet the supply needs of south east India".

The case of a power grid
But, the relationship between the two countries in the area of infrastructure development should



T. Ramakrishnan

have been much deeper than what it is. For example, the idea of connecting the electricity networks of the two countries was floated even in 1970.

Over 13 years have lapsed since the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on the bilateral grid, but not even one unit of electricity has been transmitted. In the case of Bangladesh, India has been exporting at least 7,000 million units (MU) annually for the last couple of years. About a month ago, Mr. Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina jointly commissioned, in virtual mode, the second unit of the Rampal Maitree Power Project (660 megawatt), apart from launching two other infrastructure projects. In fact, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh had inked memoranda of understanding with India in the same year (2010) for collaboration in the power sector.

It is not that no energy projects are being taken up by the former, as there are certain projects underway involving Indian participation in the energy sector, particularly renewable energy. Besides, the island nation needed time to recover from the protracted civil war of 25 years. Yet, the progress of the transmission network project, envisaging the transfer of 1,000 MW and the establishment of a High Voltage Direct Current overhead link between Madurai (India) and New Habarana (Sri Lanka), does not reflect well on the two countries. Had the facility been in place in 2022, Sri Lanka would not have suffered power cuts and blackouts then. A day may come when India will be able to source cheaper power from Sri Lanka. The two countries should be focused to ensure that the deadline of 2030 is met.

On trade

Energy is not the only area where progress has been tardy. The India Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement was signed in December 1998, yet the two countries have not yet been able to go beyond it despite holding talks for years on entering into an economic and technology cooperation agreement. After a break of five years, negotiations resumed a few weeks ago.

Notwithstanding several constraints, even now, bilateral economic ties seem to be on better footing with India regaining its position last year as the largest source of imports and accounting for about 26% of total imports of Sri Lanka, though certain portions of imports were through credit lines offered by India in the wake of the economic crisis. In the area of tourism, which is a major source of revenue for Sri Lanka, India remained the largest single country of tourist arrivals, with its share being 17% of the overall number of arrivals. But, the potential is much higher and the underperformance of Sri Lanka is telling, going by India's bilateral trade in 2021 with its southern neighbour and Bangladesh, whose recent economic growth has been impressive. The size of the former was \$5.45 billion in 2021 whereas that of the latter was \$18.44 billion.

A start has been made
Sri Lanka, which has a long track record of the incumbent government ensuring the smooth transition of power to its successor after electoral defeat, should not be bogged down in the baggage of history. The presence of anti-Indian nationalist forces in the political class is nothing unique to this country. Still, Bangladesh has shown the way to have a mutually-beneficial economic relationship.

In fact, with respect to Sri Lanka, the momentum generated by certain developments in the last one year (resumption of air services between Chennai and Jaffna, the launch of passenger ferry services between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai and a joint venture agreement among India's National Dairy Development Board, the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation and Cargills of Sri Lanka for self-sufficiency in the dairy sector) should be sustained and improved upon. There is every reason why Sri Lanka, once viewed as a high standard of living and stable economy, should be keen on making this a reality.

ramakrishnan.g@theindia.co.in

India's timely support during Sri Lanka's economic crisis was pivotal. As the first responder, India provided over \$4 billion in aid, including credit lines, fuel, and food assistance, demonstrating neighbourhood-first diplomacy in action. The recent decision to reduce interest rates on Indian loans and convert over \$100 million into grants reflects India's understanding of Sri Lanka's developmental needs and its own role as a responsible regional power. Furthermore, India's advocacy for Sri Lanka's debt restructuring on global platforms ensured Colombo received wider support.

Overall, the trajectory of India–Sri Lanka ties reveals a blend of realpolitik and civilisational diplomacy. India’s assistance during economic hardship, emphasis on strategic convergence, and cultural engagement underline its pivotal role in ensuring Sri Lanka’s stability, while also promoting peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region.

Topic : IMF-World Bank Report: Strengthening Autonomy of Indian Financial Regulators

Relevance : GS Paper 3 Economy

Source : The Hindu

Context :

A recent joint report by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and the **World Bank**, based on the Financial Sector Assessment Programme (FSAP) of India, raised critical concerns regarding the **limited autonomy of Indian financial regulators**, particularly the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)**.

Key Observations from the Report:

- **Governmental Control:** Current Indian laws enable the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to influence appointments and dismissals of top regulators and even overturn their decisions. For instance, in 2019, the government reversed the RBI’s order to cancel the license of a cooperative bank.
- **Limited Powers of Regulators:**
 - The **RBI lacks authority** to compel public sector bank (PSB) mergers, pre-approve or remove board members, or supersede bank boards.

Boost financial regulators’ autonomy: IMF-World Bank

Current laws allow govt. to control senior managements and boards of regulators, says IMF-World Bank report; it suggests transfer of appellate authority power from MoF to an independent agency

Ashley Coutinho
MUMBAI

The power and independence of financial regulators needs to be strengthened with legislative and institutional changes, a global report based on a recent assessment of the Indian financial system said.

Current laws allow the government to control senior managements and boards of regulators, the IMF-World Bank report said. The Ministry of Finance (MoF) is the appellate authority for the RBI and has the power to over-



Wings clipped: RBI has limited power to compel PSB mergers, pre-approve/sack board members and supersede boards. REUTERS

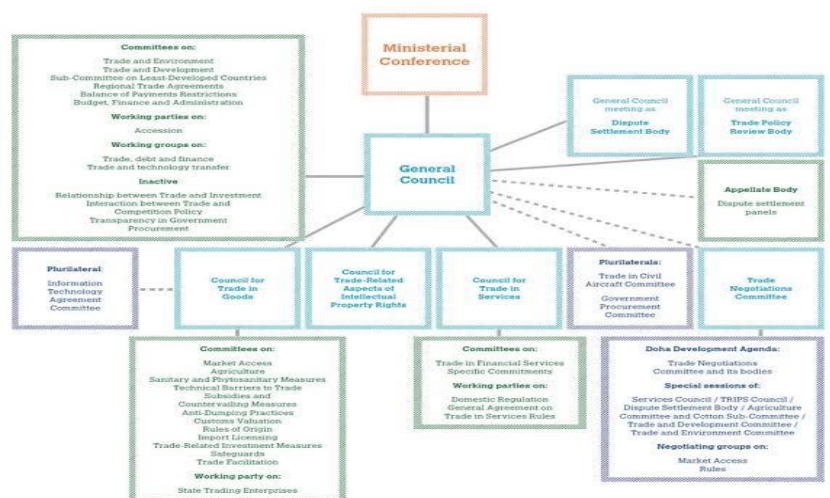
turn the latter’s supervisory decisions. In 2019, the government overturned the RBI’s decision to revoke the licence of a small urban cooperative bank.

“While the RBI has taken steps to strengthen corporate governance, it has limited power to compel PSB mergers, pre-approve and remove board

members, and supersede the boards. State-owned banks and some insurers are governed by statutes, limiting regulators’ powers over them,” said the report based on the work of the Financial Sector Assessment Programme mission that visited India last year.

The IMF recommended transferring the appellate authority power from MoF to an independent agency. Similarly, IRDAI should have power to take critical supervisory actions against the dominant State-owned life insurer.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)



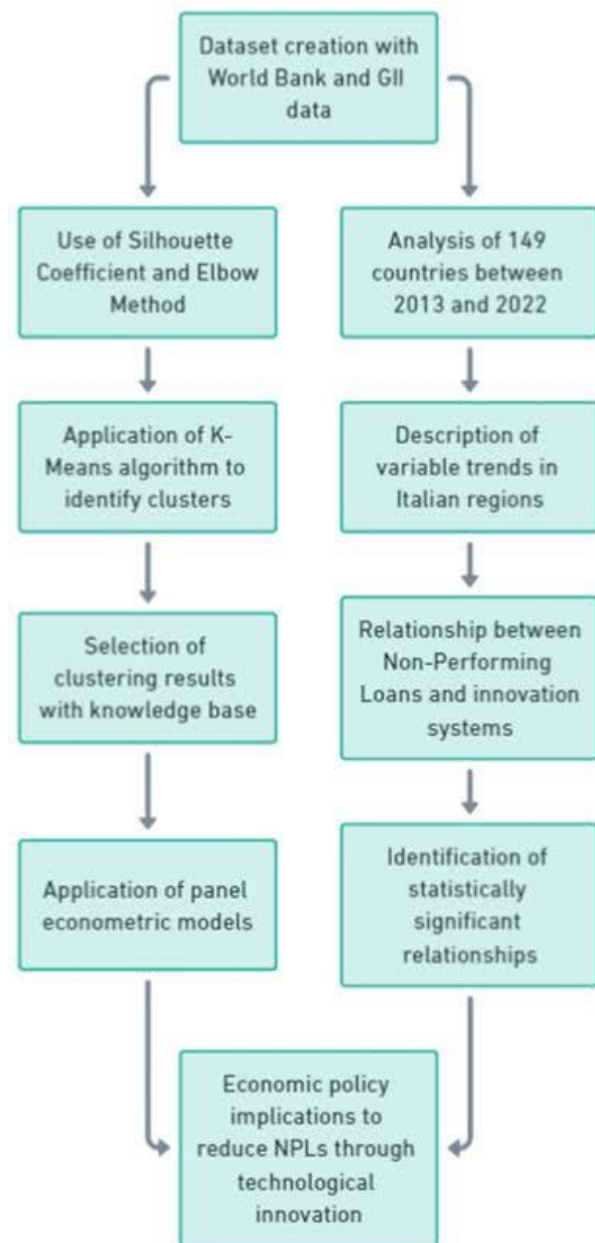
PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

- IRDAI does not have supervisory power over dominant state-owned insurers like LIC in critical decision-making areas.
- **Suggested Reform:** The IMF-World Bank recommend transferring the **appellate authority** from the Ministry of Finance to an **independent regulatory tribunal** to ensure objective oversight and strengthen institutional independence.

About the IMF and World Bank

Structure and Purpose:

- **IMF (International Monetary Fund):**
 - **Established:** 1944 (Bretton Woods Conference)
 - **Headquarters:** Washington, D.C.
 - **Members:** 190 countries
 - **Structure:** Governed by a **Board of Governors**, an **Executive Board**, and a **Managing Director**.
 - **Key Functions:**
 - Promote global monetary cooperation
 - Provide short-term financial assistance for balance of payments support
 - Conduct surveillance and macroeconomic analysis
- **World Bank Group:**
 - **Established:** 1944
 - **Institutions:**
 - IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development)
 - IDA (International Development Association)
 - IFC, MIGA, ICSID (for private sector and investment guarantee)
 - **Structure:** Each institution has a **Board of Governors**, **Executive Directors**, and a **President**
 - **Mandate:** Long-term development, poverty reduction, and infrastructure financing

**Role of IMF & World Bank in India's Development**

India has been an important partner for both institutions since independence.

IMF and India:

- **1991 Economic Crisis Support:**
The IMF played a crucial role by providing balance of payments support, triggering liberalisation reforms.
- **Policy Surveillance:**
IMF regularly conducts **Article IV Consultations** with India, giving recommendations on fiscal deficit, inflation, and financial sector health.



World Bank and India:

- **India as Largest Borrower:**
India is among the top borrowers from the World Bank, with assistance in infrastructure, health, education, and sanitation.
- **Major Projects Supported:**
 - **Swachh Bharat Mission:** Sanitation and waste management.
 - **Namami Gange:** River Ganga rejuvenation.
 - **National Rural Livelihoods Mission**
 - **Smart Cities Programme**
 - **COVID-19 Support:** Over \$2 billion in aid for emergency response and vaccination infrastructure.



Significance of Strengthening Regulatory Independence

- **Why it Matters:**
Regulatory autonomy is essential for safeguarding financial stability, avoiding political influence, and building investor confidence.
- **Current Challenges:**
The dual control of public sector banks and insurers creates **conflict of interest** and limits **prompt corrective action** by regulators like RBI or IRDAI.
- **Future Prospects**
 - Establishing **independent appellate bodies**
 - Providing full functional autonomy to regulators over appointments and governance decisions
 - Amending statutory laws that prevent proactive regulation of PSBs and public sector insurers

The IMF-World Bank's recommendations are timely, especially as India aims to become a global financial powerhouse. Addressing the institutional gaps in financial regulation will enhance **governance**, ensure **efficient crisis management**, and improve the **credibility of India's financial system**. These reforms, aligned with global best practices, will support India's journey toward **sustainable and inclusive growth**.



Prelims Practice Questions :

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the IMF-World Bank's recent assessment of India's financial regulatory framework:

1. The Ministry of Finance currently has the authority to overturn supervisory decisions made by the Reserve Bank of India.
2. The IMF has recommended that the appellate authority over financial regulators should be transferred from the Ministry of Finance to an independent agency.
3. IRDAI currently possesses full power to take critical supervisory action over all public and private insurance companies, including LIC.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A. 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

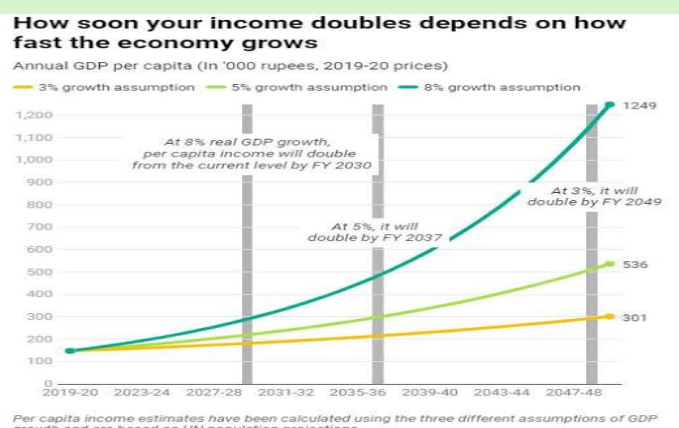
- Statement 1 is correct: The Ministry of Finance can currently overturn RBI decisions, as seen in a 2019 case involving a cooperative bank.
- Statement 2 is correct: The IMF recommended transferring this appellate authority to an independent agency.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: IRDAI lacks full supervisory powers over some state-owned insurers like LIC.

Mains Model Question:

Discuss the significance of the IMF and World Bank in India's economic development. How do recent recommendations from these institutions reflect upon India's financial regulatory framework?

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have played a pivotal role in India's economic development, particularly since the economic liberalization of 1991. Both institutions have provided critical financial assistance, policy guidance, and structural reforms, especially during times of economic crisis. The IMF supports macroeconomic stability through financial aid and policy advice, while the World Bank focuses on long-term development projects in sectors such as infrastructure, education, and health.

International Monetary Fund	World Bank
Oversee the international monetary systems and promotes international monetary cooperation.	Seeks to promote economic development and structural reforms in developing countries.
Promote exchange stability and orderly exchange relations among its members.	Assists developing countries by providing long-term financing of development projects and programmes.
Assists members in temporary BOP difficulties by providing them with the opportunity to correct maladjustments in their BOP.	Provides special finance assistance to the poorest developing countries through the IDA.
Supplements the reserves of its members by allocating SDBs if there is a long-term global need.	Stimulates private enterprise in developing countries through its affiliate, the International Finance Corporation.
Draw its financial resources principally from the quota subscriptions of its members.	Acquires most of its financial resources by borrowing on the international bond market.



Structurally, the IMF is governed by a Board of Governors, mainly composed of finance ministers or central bank governors of member countries, with the Executive Board overseeing daily operations. The World Bank Group consists of five institutions, with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA) being most relevant to India. Both are governed by their respective boards and provide loans, grants, and expertise to developing countries.

India has been a beneficiary of various World Bank projects ranging from rural development to renewable energy. These initiatives have not only boosted infrastructure but also supported human capital development. The IMF has offered crucial support through its consultations and reports that guide macroeconomic policies.

The recent IMF-World Bank assessment underscores the need for enhanced autonomy and accountability of Indian financial regulators. The report highlights issues such as government control over regulatory appointments and the Ministry of Finance's appellate authority over the RBI's decisions. It also notes limited regulatory powers over public sector banks and insurers due to statutory constraints. These recommendations aim to insulate regulatory institutions from political influence and strengthen their ability to act independently in supervising the financial system. Implementing such reforms would align India's financial oversight mechanisms with global best practices, bolstering investor confidence and ensuring long-term economic resilience.

Topic : India’s Defence Exports: Growing Potential and Global Footprint

Relevance : GS Paper 3 Defence and Economy

Source : Hindustan Times

Context :

India has been actively working to transform its defence sector from being a major importer to becoming a global exporter. In recent years, significant policy reforms and institutional mechanisms have bolstered this shift, showcasing India’s intent to emerge as a major defence manufacturing and exporting nation.

Strategic Export Controls and Regulatory Framework

India’s defence exports are governed under a stringent and internationally compliant export control regime. The **Handbook on India’s Strategic Trade Control Systems**, issued by the DGFT, guides this framework.

- The primary objective is to prevent the proliferation of **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)** and military technologies to unauthorized users.
- India maintains a **“Harmonised List”** of dual-use and military items, including software and technologies.
- Export of these items is either prohibited or permitted under **specific authorisation**, unless exempted.

SCOMET List and Licensing System

- India’s export licensing is managed through the **SCOMET list**, especially **Category 6**, which pertains to **Munitions List items**.
- Licences for these are issued by the **Department of Defence Production (DDP)** under the Ministry of Defence.

What is the protocol for defence exports?

What are the rules laid down in the Handbook on India’s Strategic Trade Control Systems? Why is there a harmonised list on export control of dual-use and military items, including software and technologies? What is the primary objective of strategic export controls on defence equipment?

Dinakar Peri

The story so far:

India’s robust legal and regulatory framework on strategic trade continues to guide overseas commercial ventures by its companies, the Ministry of External Affairs said last week. It was responding to a U.S. media report it termed “factually incorrect and misleading”, which claimed that Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) supplied items sourced from a British firm to Russia.

What did the MEA say?

The MEA said the Indian entity mentioned in the report has scrupulously followed all its international obligations on strategic trade controls and end-user commitments. It observed that the report had tried to “frame issues and distort facts to suit a ‘political narrative’”. This is not the first time such an allegation has been made. There have been similar allegations in the last couple of years, since the beginning of the Ukraine war in 2022.

Why is the regulation important?

The primary objective of strategic trade controls/export controls is to prevent the

proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems, as well as the uncontrolled transfer of conventional arms/military items, states the Handbook on India’s Strategic Trade Control Systems released by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. “Accordingly, India maintains a harmonised list on export control of dual-use and military items, including software and technologies, having potential civilian/industrial applications as well as military and WMD use. It is restricted/permitted under an export authorisation or licence (unless specifically exempted), except for certain items that are prohibited,” it states.

Effective export controls are critical as India looks to significantly expand its defence exports with a current target of reaching ₹50,000 crore by 2025. On April 1, the Defence Ministry announced that defence exports have hit a new high of ₹23,622 crore for FY 2024-25, a growth of ₹2,539 crore or 12.04% over the previous financial year. The government, in the last few years, has taken a series of steps to boost exports by simplifying licensing requirements. As reported by *The Hindu*, defence sources had stressed that in the initial days of the Gaza offensive, Israel had requested artillery shells but India took a policy decision not to supply them; it similarly decided to stay neutral between Russia and Ukraine and took a stand to not supply “kinetic equipment” to either of them.

How does the licensing system work?

India is a member-signatory to international conventions on disarmament and non-proliferation such as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). India is also a member of major multilateral export control regimes – the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Arrangement on munitions and military items, and the Australia Group on biological and chemical items. In line with this, India maintains a list of items controlled for export under the Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies

(SCOMET) list. There are eight categories under the SCOMET list and the Department of Defence Production (DDP) issues authorisation for export of Munitions List items covered in Category 6.

According to a December 2024 report, the Defence Secretary informed the Parliamentary standing committee, “I will tell you very briefly that we are exporting to more than 100 countries and most of them are done by our PSUs. But now the private sector is also coming forward. The major platforms we have done are Dornier 228 aircraft, 155 mm advanced towed artillery gun, Brahmos missile, Akash missiles, radar simulator, Pinaka rockets etc. There are many things, but most of the exports are PSU-driven.”

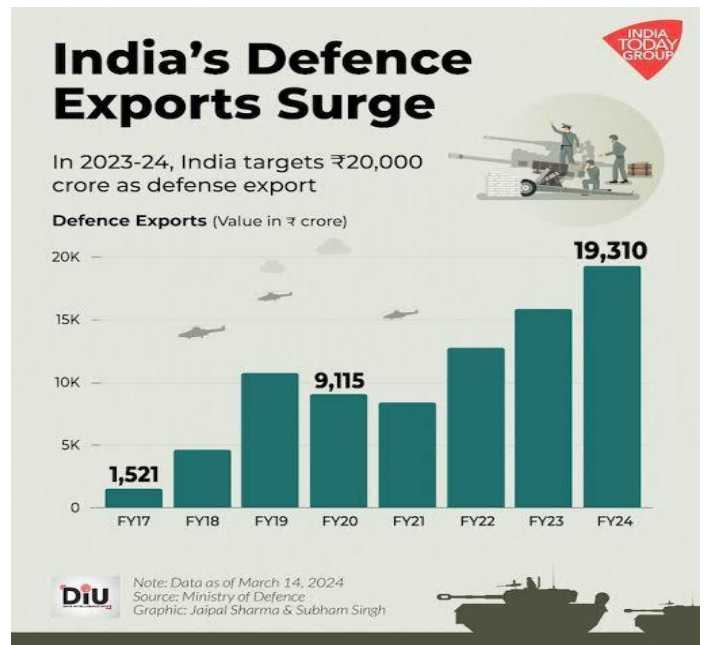
What are the steps taken to boost exports?

Various policy measures have been adopted to ease the approval/certifications for Indian firms for defence production while maintaining effective controls. The Defence Products List requiring industrial licences has been rationalised and the manufacture of most of the parts or components does not require an industrial licence. A Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy has also been formulated. The DDP issues the authorisation for export of items on the Munitions List. In a written reply to Parliament in February 2023, the Defence Ministry stated that, “These equipment are exported to different countries all over the world. Names of the countries with whom contracts have been signed and negotiations held cannot be divulged due to strategic reasons.”

The Defence Ministry further informed the standing committee that the standard operating procedures for export have been streamlined, an Export Promotion Cell has been set up and DPSUs have been assigned geographical areas for marketing. A Defence Export Promotion Scheme was launched in 2018 to promote Make in India products. A complete end-to-end online portal for receiving and processing export authorisation permission has been developed. The applications submitted on this portal are digitally signed and the authorisation is also issued digitally, improving the pace, according to the Defence Ministry. “The requirement of government signed End User Certification in cases of providing engineering services transfer of technology related to Munitions List to Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) countries has been dispensed with,” the Defence Ministry said.



Large model of a Brahmos missile on display at Aero India 2025, at the Velupillai Air Force Station in Bengaluru, on February 12, 2025.



- India is a member of major global non-proliferation regimes:
 - Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)
 - Wassenaar Arrangement
 - Australia Group
 - Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions (BWC & CWC)

Policy Initiatives to Promote Exports

India has initiated multiple reforms to make defence exports seamless and globally competitive:

- Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP)** aimed at creating a robust defence manufacturing ecosystem.
- Export Promotion Cell** under the DDP for faster clearances and support.
- Digitised export authorisation portal** to reduce red tape.
- Geographical responsibility assigned** to DPSUs for targeted global marketing.

Key Defence Products Exported

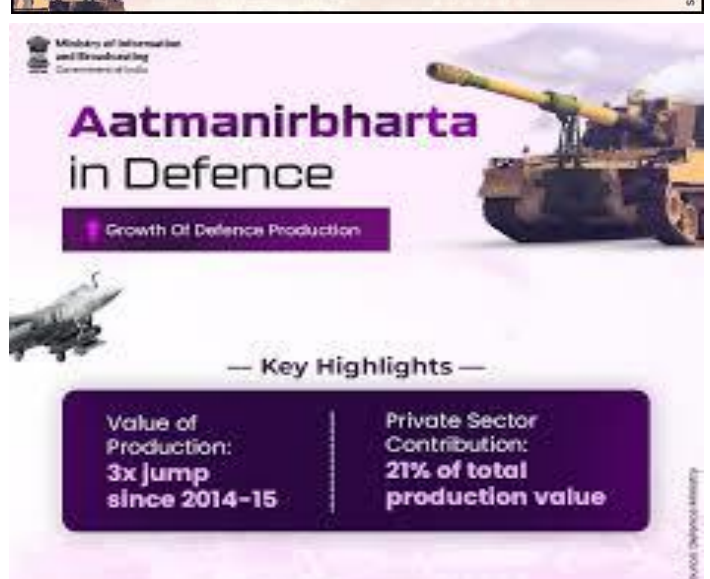
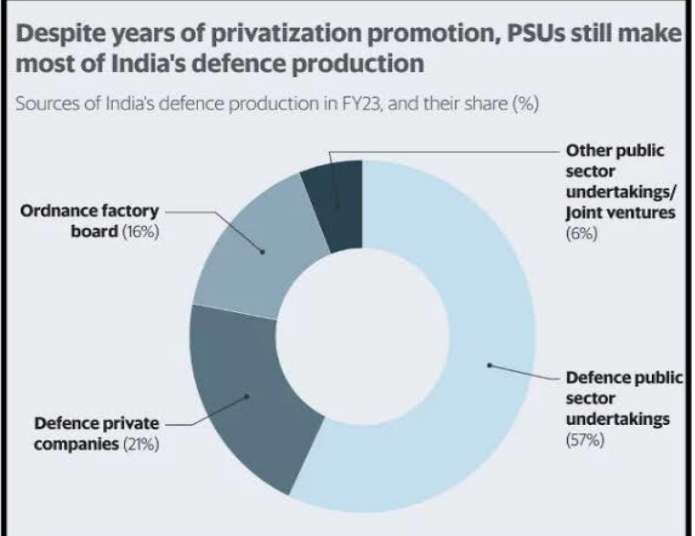
India's defence exports now include a wide range of indigenous platforms and systems:

- BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile
- Akash Surface-to-Air Missile System
- Pinaka Rocket Launcher System
- Dornier 228 Aircraft
- Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)
- Lightweight Torpedoes, Surveillance Radars, Simulators

Defence Export Performance: Data Highlights

- FY 2024-25:** Defence exports reached ₹23,622 crore, a 12.04% increase over the previous year.

DEL-HYD-B'LORE-PUNE-TPT



PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

- Export destinations now include **over 100 countries**.
- **Target by 2029: ₹50,000 crore** in defence exports.
- Share of **private sector** in defence exports has also seen significant growth alongside PSUs.

Comparing Imports and Exports in the Defence Sector

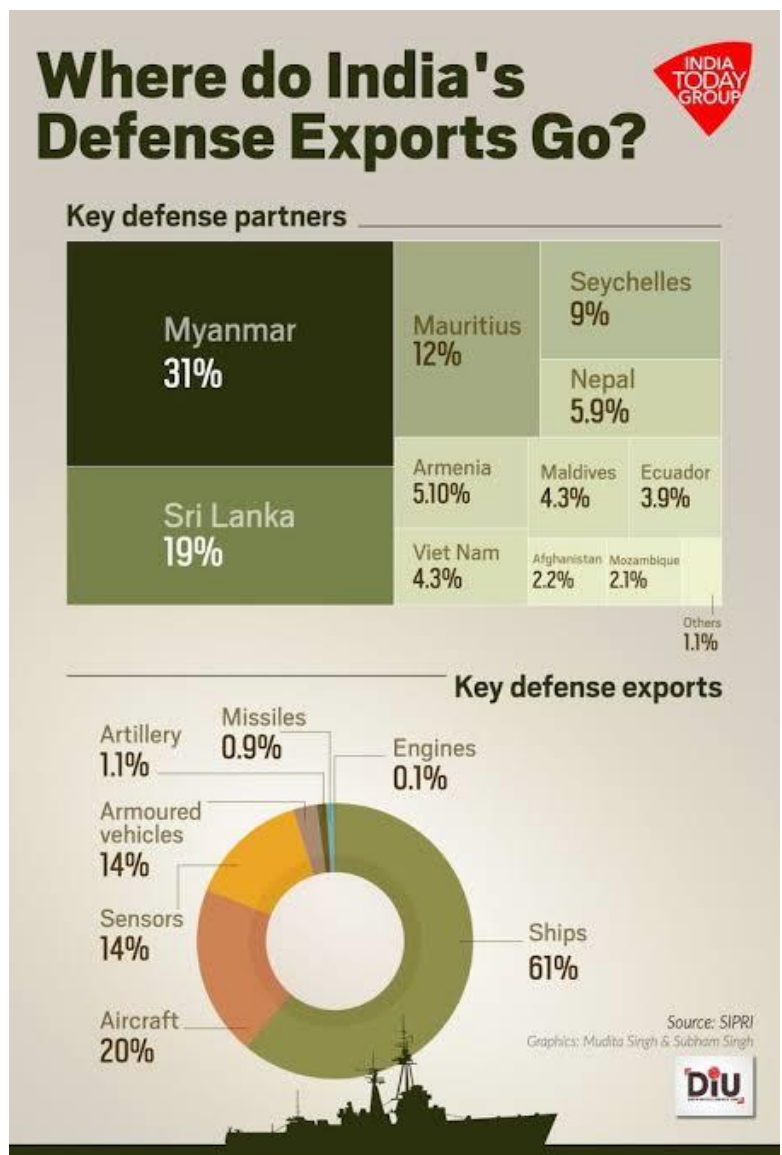
Despite growing exports, India remains a top arms importer globally.

- **India's import share (SIPRI 2023 report): 9.8% of global arms imports (2018–2022)**.
- Major imports include fighter aircraft, submarines, UAVs, and air defence systems.
- The wide **import-export gap** highlights India's previous dependency, though **indigenisation efforts** are reducing this gradually.

Atmanirbhar Bharat and Strategic Autonomy

- With initiatives like **Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence, Indigenisation Lists, and FDI policy liberalisation**, India aims to reduce imports and boost domestic production.
- The focus on **dual-use technologies, global collaborations, and Make in India** are expected to close the gap between imports and exports.
- Strategic neutrality in geopolitical conflicts (Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Gaza) has further underscored India's **principled export control stance**.

India's defence exports are witnessing a significant transformation, driven by a strong regulatory framework, ambitious policy roadmap, and increasing industry participation. While challenges in import dependence persist, the trend reflects a positive and strategic shift towards making India a global defence exporter.



Prelims Practice Question

Q. With reference to India's defence exports and strategic trade control, consider the following statements:

1. India is a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Wassenaar Arrangement.
2. The SCOMET list maintained by India includes only nuclear-related items.
3. The Department of Defence Production (DDP) is responsible for issuing export authorisation for items on the Munitions List.
4. India's defence exports have surpassed ₹50,000 crore in FY 2024–25.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A.** 1 and 3 only
B. 2 and 4 only
C. 1, 3 and 4 only
D. 1, 2 and 3 only

Answer: A

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: India is a member of MTCR and Wassenaar Arrangement.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The SCOMET list includes not only nuclear items but also dual-use items, including military technologies.
- Statement 3 is correct: The Department of Defence Production (DDP) issues authorisation for Munitions List items.
- Statement 4 is incorrect: As of FY 2024–25, India's defence exports stood at ₹23,622 crore, not ₹50,000 crore (which is the target by 2029).

Mains Model Question:

Q. Discuss the evolution of India's defence export policy in recent years. How is India balancing its strategic autonomy while expanding defence exports under a robust regulatory framework?

India's defence export policy has seen a paradigm shift over the past decade, reflecting the government's emphasis on self-reliance, global engagement, and economic diplomacy. From a traditionally import-dependent defence sector, India has moved towards becoming an emerging exporter of military platforms, weapons, and technology. The Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) was introduced to provide a focused roadmap for achieving a defence export target of ₹50,000 crore by 2029. The growth is visible, with defence exports reaching ₹23,622 crore in FY 2024–25, a 12% rise from the previous year.

To ensure strategic responsibility, India has put in place an effective export control regime. The SCOMET list, maintained under the DGFT, outlines dual-use items, technologies, and military goods requiring authorisation. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade, along with the Department of Defence Production, governs this regulatory framework. India is also a signatory to major multilateral export control regimes like MTCR, Wassenaar Arrangement, and Australia Group, reflecting its commitment to non-proliferation and responsible defence trade.

India balances strategic autonomy by aligning its exports with geopolitical neutrality and regional stability. For example, during the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, India refrained from supplying kinetic military equipment to involved nations, showcasing a mature stance in foreign policy. Simultaneously, it promotes Make in India by encouraging private sector participation and streamlining licensing norms. The creation of digital platforms for export authorisation, simplification of end-user certification, and setting up Export Promotion Cells further catalyse this shift.

India's defence export journey underlines the dual objective of becoming a global supplier of defence equipment while upholding international obligations and national security interests. It showcases how policy-driven transformation can balance ambition with accountability in a sensitive domain like defence.