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Mains Manthan

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The empowerment of India's women with bold policies

Why in News?

- Policies and interventions for women empowerment

Syllabus

- GS Paper 2 – Governance & Social Justice

The empowerment of India's women with bold policies

In the context of International Women's Day on March 8, it is pertinent to note that India is making notable strides in empowering women, with government policies playing a crucial role in transforming women's access to sanitation, clean water, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship. These initiatives, paired with broader social and economic changes, are reshaping women's roles in governance, in the workforce, and community leadership across the country.

On sanitation and clean water missions
The journey towards women's empowerment in India took a significant step forward with the launch of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission), an initiative that was aimed not just at building toilets but also at improving the dignity, the safety and the well-being of women across the country. The mission focused on ending open defecation, especially in rural areas, where women faced heightened risks and challenges. According to government data, over 116 million households have benefited from the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), leading to safer, healthier environments and giving women greater freedom and security in their daily lives. In Kourkela, the Maa Tarini Self-Help Group (SHG) took the initiative to address the sanitation needs of leprosy patients, a marginalised group often excluded from such efforts. By constructing community toilets with enhanced water supply, they provided a safer space for women, improved menstrual hygiene, and promoted dignity. The initiative also incorporated composting activities, generating income for the community while supporting sustainable waste management practices.

Building on the SBM's success, the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) was introduced to ensure that every household had access to safe and reliable drinking water. Prior to the mission, only 17% of India's rural households had tap water connections, leading to long hours spent by women fetching water – a task that could have been used for education, work, or other pursuits. With the JJM, over 150 million households now have tap water, helping to lighten the daily burdens that women face.

The benefits extend far beyond convenience. Studies show that access to water has led to a 7.4% increase in women's participation in agriculture and allied work, particularly in States such as Bihar and Jharkhand, where female labour force participation was historically low. Between 2017 and 2023, rural female participation in the workforce jumped from 24.6% to 41.5%, with the JJM cited as a key driver of this positive change. By freeing women from the daily chore of water collection, this initiative



Natasha Jha Bhaskar
is Executive Director at Newland Global Group, Australia's leading corporate advisory firm focused on strengthening India-Australia trade and investment ties. She is also the UN Women Australia and Chief Executive Women Scholar

Government-led policies have transformed women's access to sanitation, clean water, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship; the focus now should be on sustaining the momentum

is unlocking new opportunities for economic independence and helping local economies thrive.

India's efforts in empowering women through targeted policies and initiatives are not just improving daily life. They are also creating a foundation for future progress. With continued focus on accessible resources, financial inclusion, and breaking down social barriers, India is paving the way for a generation of women to lead and succeed in every area of life.

Women-led businesses, financial inclusion
India's economic transformation is increasingly being shaped by women

entrepreneurs and financial inclusion initiatives, reflecting broader shifts in digital access, policy support, and economic empowerment.

Over 73,000 startups with at least one female director have been recognised under the Startup India Initiative, highlighting a growing presence of women in business leadership. Government-backed financing programmes, such as the Stand-Up India Scheme and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, have played a key role in this expansion. The Stand-Up India Scheme has sanctioned over ₹53,609 crore in loans for 236,000 entrepreneurs, while Mudra Yojana has sanctioned ₹32.36 lakh crore for 51.41 crore loans, with 68% of the loans going to women.

The rapid expansion of digital connectivity is also enabling greater financial inclusion. Initiatives such as BharatNet and the Prime Minister Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (GeM) portal, women entrepreneurs now make up 8% of the total seller base, with over 1,00,000 Udyam-verified micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) securing contracts worth ₹46,615 crore. Digital platforms are proving to be game changers for small-scale women entrepreneurs. Reena Kiran, an entrepreneur from Madhya Pradesh, runs the Girja Devi Jan Kalyan Samiti, a self-help group producing clothing, food products, and household goods. By leveraging the GeM portal, her business expanded beyond

local markets, illustrating how technology is bridging the gap between small enterprises and national opportunities. As India's economy continues to grow, women-led businesses are playing an increasingly significant role, not just in entrepreneurship but also in reshaping the country's economic landscape.

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Women's representation in governance

The representation of women in political decision-making has significantly increased over the years. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has witnessed significant reform, i.e., the implementation of a 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies, which will redefine the corridors of power. Today, women are not merely participants. They are key decision-makers, steering the nation toward a more inclusive future.

At the grassroots level, women have become catalysts for growth, constituting approximately 46% of elected representatives in panchayati raj institutions (PRIs), with over 1.4 million women serving in rural governance roles. The impact of this shift transcends mere numbers. With more women in leadership positions, policies have become more attuned to the priorities of families and communities. Areas such as health care, education, and public safety have seen significant improvements, driven by the unique perspectives and solutions that women leaders bring to the table. This evolution in leadership highlights a broader discourse: when women lead, societies thrive. India's commitment to empowering women in governance not only strengthens democracy but also paves the way for sustainable development and social equity.

India has seen significant progress in women's participation across various sectors, from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and sports to governance and entrepreneurship. Today, women make up nearly 43% of STEM graduates, contributing to the country's growing technical workforce. In 2023, Mr. Modi aptly stated at the G-20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment, "When women prosper, the world prospers." By empowering women through entrepreneurship, education, and financial inclusion, we unlock new opportunities for growth, innovation, and societal progress, driving global transformation. Policies supporting women-led businesses, political representation, and skill development continue to shape economic and social progress. The focus now is on sustaining this momentum, ensuring that progress translates into lasting change for future generations.





Key Takeaways from the Article

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM):**
 - ◆ **Objective:** Improve sanitation and women's dignity by ending open defecation.
 - ◆ **Impact:** 116 million households benefited, providing safer and healthier environments for women. Patriarchy and Gendered Spaces:
 - ◆ **Success Story:** Maa Tarini Self-Help Group in Rourkela built toilets for marginalized communities (leprosy patients), improving menstrual hygiene and providing a safer space for women.



Transformative Impact Of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan



SAVING LIVES

3 Lakh diarrhoeal deaths avoided



ENSURING SAFETY & DIGNITY OF WOMEN

96% women feel safer after getting toilet at home



EARNING MONEY FOR FAMILY

INR 50,000 saved every year on average by a household due to health costs avoided



SAVING ENVIRONMENT

12.70 times less likelihood of groundwater contamination traceable to humans



**8 YEARS OF
SWACHH BHARAT**





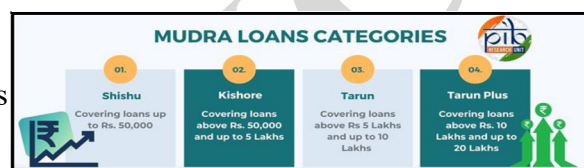
• Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):

- ♦ **Objective:** Provide safe drinking water to every household.
- ♦ **Impact:** Increased rural female workforce participation (**from 24.6% to 41.5%**) by reducing the burden of water collection.
- ♦ **Statistical Impact:** Over 150 million households now have tap water, significantly improving women's quality of life and economic participation.



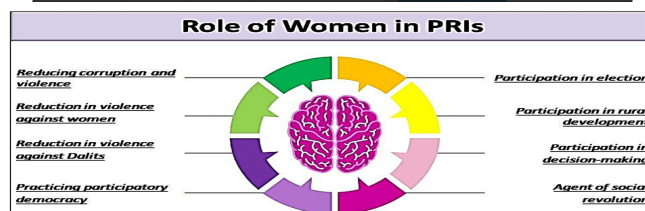
• Women Entrepreneurs and Financial Inclusion:

- ♦ **Startup India Initiative:** Over 73,000 startups with at least one female director.
- ♦ **Financial Schemes:**
- ♦ **Stand-Up India Scheme:** ₹53,609 crore loans for 236,000 entrepreneurs.
- ♦ **Mudra Yojana:** ₹32.36 lakh crore for 51.41 crore loans, with 68% of loans to women.
- ♦ **Digital Connectivity:** Initiatives like BharatNet and PM-WANI expanded digital access, fostering financial inclusion and business opportunities for women.
- ♦ **GeM Portal:** Women entrepreneurs constitute 8% of total sellers, with ₹46,615 crore worth of contracts.



• Women in Governance:

- ♦ **33% Reservation in Legislative Bodies:** Significant increase in women's political participation.
- ♦ **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs):** Women make up 46% of elected representatives at the grassroots level, driving improvements in healthcare, education, and public safety.



• Sectoral Growth:

- ♦ **STEM Participation:** Women make up 43% of STEM graduates.
- ♦ **Global Context:** Prime Minister Modi's statement at the G-20 highlighted the role of women in global prosperity.

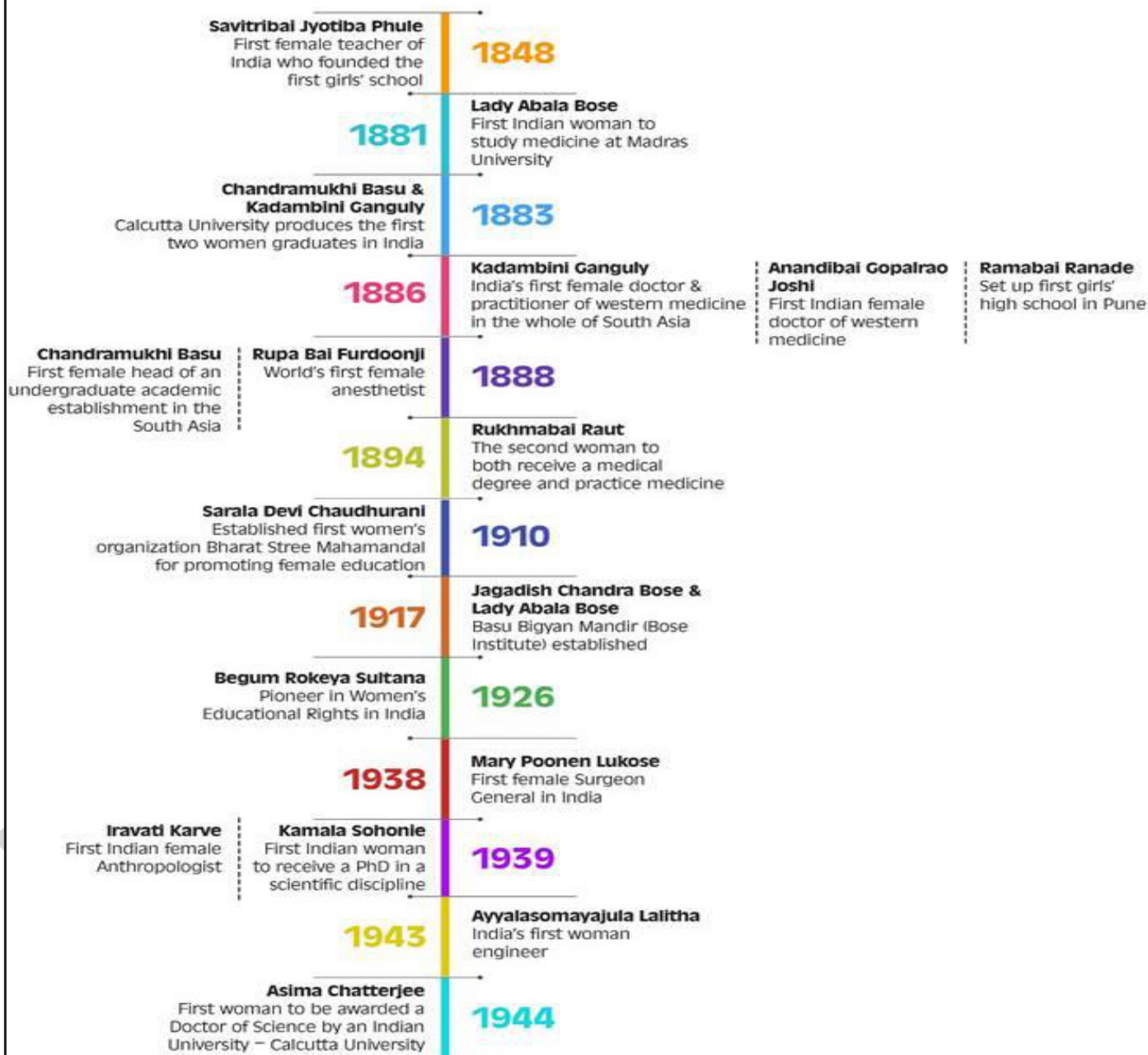




• Conclusion

- ♦ The article emphasizes that **women-led businesses, financial inclusion, and increasing political representation** contribute to India's socio-economic progress.
- ♦ Continued focus **on sustainable progress** to create lasting change for future generations.

Milestones of Women in Indian Science





India, Mauritius and a visit to deepen long-standing ties

Why in News?

- ♦ PM Modi visit to Mauritius

Syllabus

- ♦ **GS Paper 2** – International Relations (IR)

India, Mauritius and a visit to deepen long-standing ties

In our current era of geopolitical churn and uncertainty, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mauritius (March 11-12, 2025), will be a celebration of the deep and long-standing ties between the two countries. Mr. Modi had last visited the island country in 2015, but on this occasion, he will be the guest of honour at its Independence Day celebrations on March 12. India-Mauritius relations have enjoyed political consensus, irrespective of the party in power in either country. Mauritius has a new government in power led by Navinchandra Ramgoolam of the Labour Party, whose coalition won a landslide victory in the elections held in November last year. While India-Mauritius relations will continue to be positive and stable, the visit provides an opportunity for Mr. Modi to establish a personal connect with Mr. Ramgoolam and reassure him of India's continuing support to the island's security and prosperity. It was during the latter half of my tenure as India's High Commissioner to Mauritius (1992-97) that Mr. Ramgoolam was Prime Minister. India-Mauritius relations saw significant growth under his leadership and he was particularly sensitive to India's security concerns. I have no doubt that he will prove to be a trusted partner for India and will open new vistas for our cooperation.

The strong link of history

Mr. Ramgoolam's father, Sir Seewosagur Ramgoolam, had led the struggle for his country's independence and was its first Prime Minister. Not many people know that Sir Seewosagur worked closely with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose during Bose's stay in Britain between 1919-21. They were part of the Indian students' movement in London working for Indian independence. Ramgoolam did the proof-reading for Bose's famous work, *The Indian Struggle*, and received an autographed copy in appreciation.



Shyam Saran

is a former Foreign Secretary and was India's High Commissioner in Mauritius (1992-97)

The Indian Prime Minister's forthcoming visit is a reminder that India-Mauritius ties need to remain firm in today's uncertain world

There are strong people-to-people ties between the two countries. Nearly 70% of the population of Mauritius is of Indian origin, being the descendants of Indian indentured labour who were brought by the colonial rulers to work on sugar plantations. About 50% trace their ancestry to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and still speak the Bhojpuri dialect. There are smaller communities of Tamil, Telugu, and Marathi-speaking communities who have preserved their languages and traditional culture. Mauritius appears like a microcosm of India.

However, the country is home to other ethnic groups including African and mixed populations, which create its proud rainbow culture. Though only 2% of the population, the island's French population is wealthy and influential, still owning its large sugar plantations, dominating its banking and financial sector and other commercial business.

The challenge for India's diplomats lies in maintaining links with all segments of the Mauritian population, even while celebrating the kinship and cultural ties that exist with its India-origin population. India has done much to nourish the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Indian-origin population. In 1976, it inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi Institute as a premier institution for promoting Indian languages and culture. The Indian Cultural Centre in Mauritius is the largest of anywhere in the world and is one of the most active. The island hosts the World Hindi Secretariat that is supported by India.

A business gateway

India-Mauritius bilateral trade has expanded rapidly over the past few years, reaching \$554 million in 2022-23. Mauritius is a part of the African Union and has preferential trade agreements with African countries. It is bilingual, with most of its citizens being fluent in English

and French. With its well-developed finance and banking sector and reliable laws and regulations, Mauritius has become a preferred platform for doing business with Africa particularly Francophone Africa. Thanks to a favourable Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India, Mauritius is also a major channel for foreign investment into India. Mauritius has emerged as a successful international financial centre, mainly on the back of the DTAA.

Crucial to India's maritime security

Mauritius is the sentinel of the western Indian Ocean and maritime security cooperation between our two countries is critical to enhancing India's maritime security. The Colombo Security Conclave brings together India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius and Bangladesh to work together to make this ocean space safe and secure. Mauritius is a small island but its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is 2.3 million square kilometres. India has set up a chain of coastal radar stations, redeveloped the Mauritian island of Agaléga to serve as a joint surveillance facility and given Mauritius access to the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram, India, to significantly advance domain awareness in its vast EEZ. India's oceanographic survey ship, *INS Sarvekshak*, has just completed the survey of 25,000 sq.km of Mauritius' ocean territory.

At a time when China's footprint in the Indian Ocean is expanding, India-Mauritius maritime security cooperation has assumed special importance.

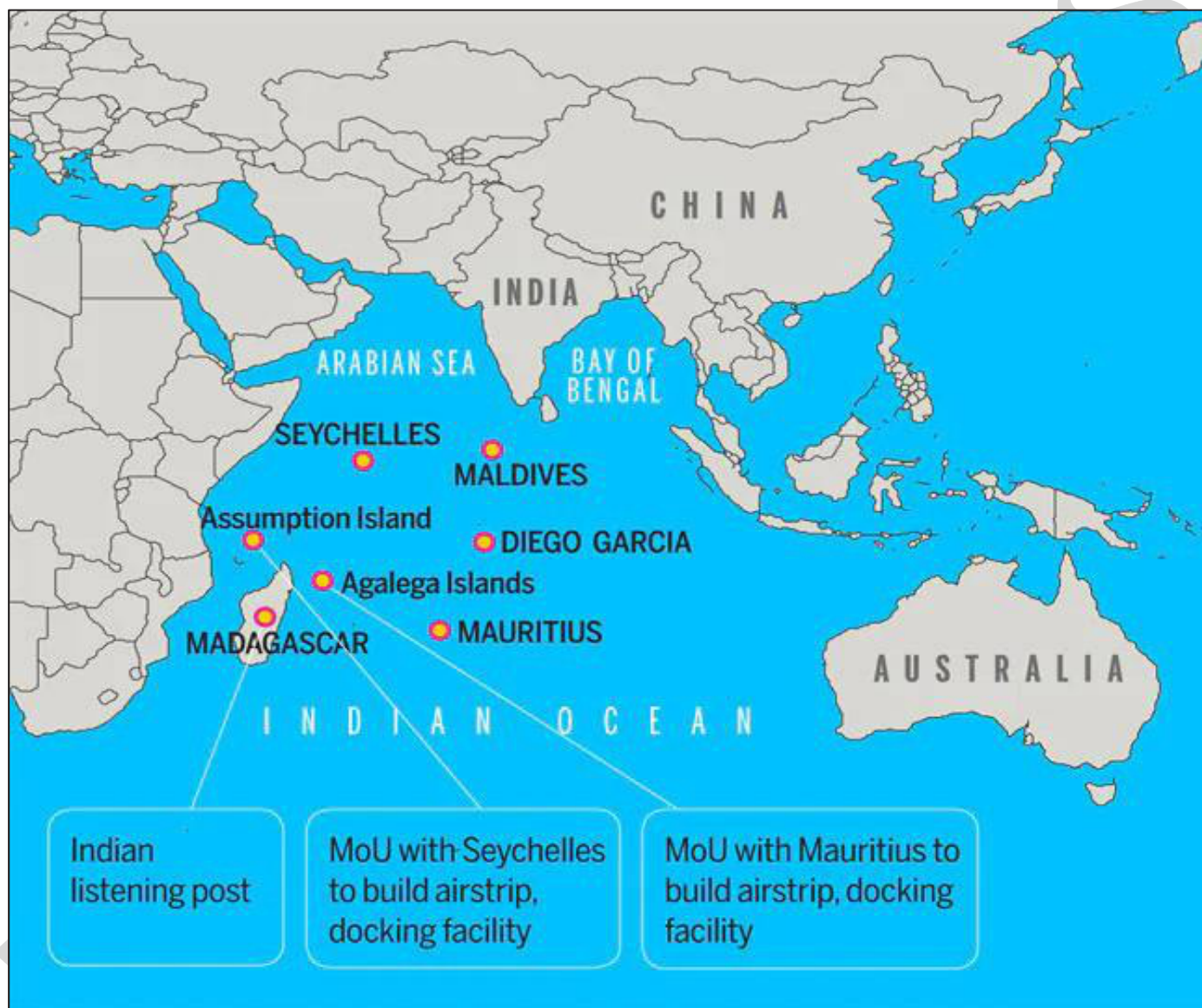
Beyond the ceremonial honours bestowed upon him, Mr. Modi will have much substance to discuss with his Mauritian counterpart. India-Mauritius relations must remain a strong and stable anchor in an uncertain and potentially risky world.





Key Takeaways from the Article

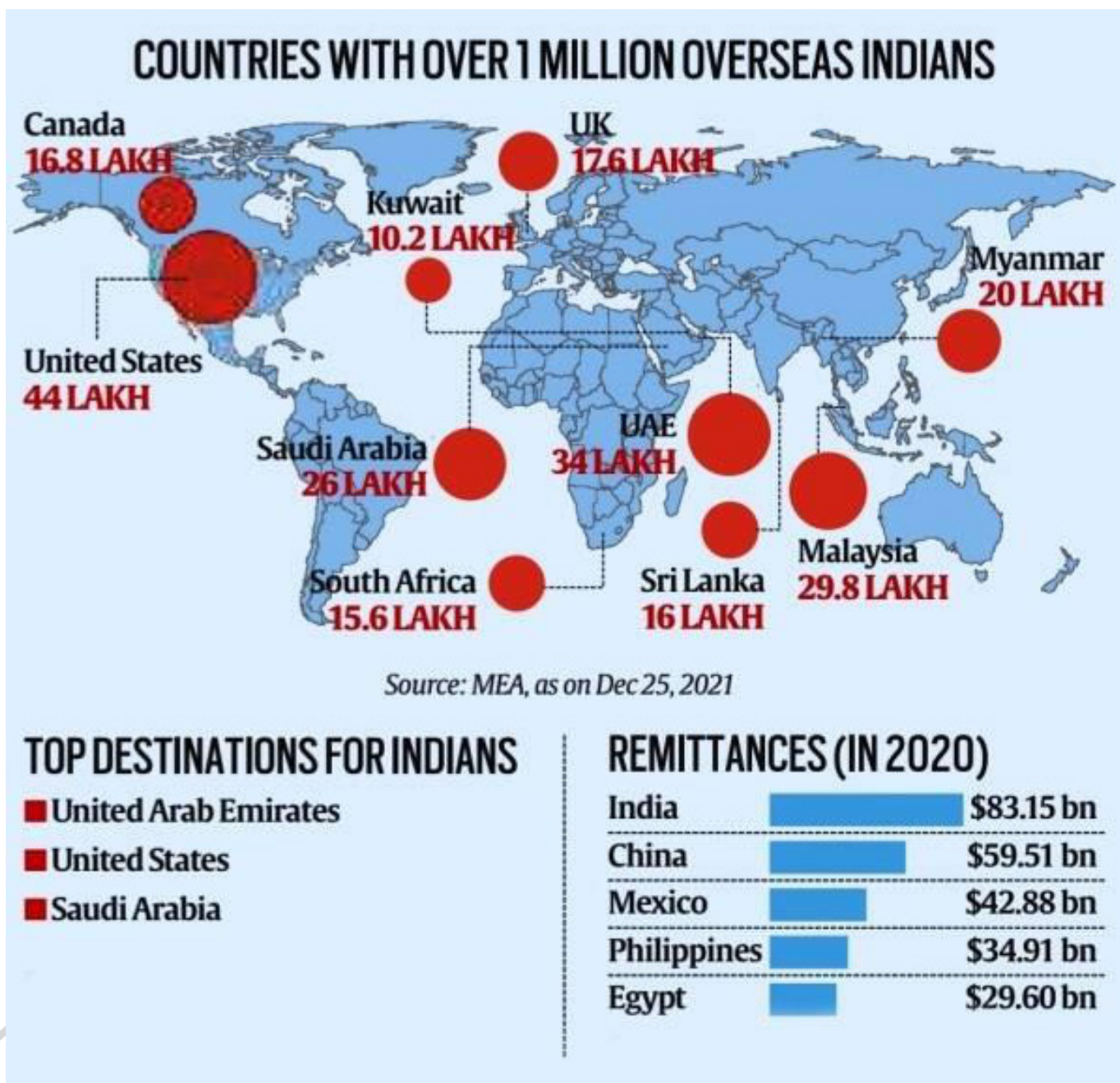
- **Prime Minister Modi's Visit to Mauritius (March 11-12, 2025):**
 - ♦ **Purpose:** Celebration of the long-standing **India-Mauritius ties** and a personal connection with the new Prime Minister of Mauritius, **Navinchandra Ramgoolam**.
 - ♦ **Significance:** Modi will be the guest of honour at **Mauritius' Independence Day** celebrations, marking the continuation of strong bilateral relations.



- **Historical and Cultural Ties:**
 - ♦ **Strong People-to-People Link:** Nearly 70% of Mauritius' population is of Indian origin, primarily from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The shared history and culture are central to the bilateral relationship.



- ♦ **Cultural Institutions:** The Mahatma Gandhi Institute and Indian Cultural Centre in Mauritius serve to promote Indian languages and culture, highlighting the strong cultural bond.



- **Economic Ties and Trade Relations:**
 - ♦ **Bilateral Trade:** India-Mauritius trade reached \$554 million in 2022-23, with Mauritius acting as a gateway to Africa, especially Francophone nations.
 - ♦ **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA):** Mauritius is a key conduit for foreign investment into India due to favorable tax agreements.



- **Maritime Security Cooperation:**

- ◆ **Strategic Importance:** Mauritius is crucial for India's maritime security, with its 2.3 million square kilometers of **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** and proximity to critical Indian Ocean trade routes.
- ◆ **Joint Initiatives:** India and Mauritius have set up coastal radar stations, surveillance facilities on **Agaléga Island**, and a shared **Information Fusion Centre in India**.





- ♦ **Regional Cooperation:** Mauritius is a key partner in the **Colombo Security Conclave**, comprising **India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, and Bangladesh** for enhancing maritime security in the Indian Ocean.

In real time

The Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram is the single-point centre linking all coastal radar chain networks along the 7,500-km Indian coastline and in some neighbouring countries

- The IFC tracks and monitors 75,000 - 1.5 lakh shipping vessels in real time round-the-clock

- The IFC actively interacts with the maritime community and has already built linkages with 18 countries and 15 multinational and maritime security centres



- The major centres with which regular exchange of maritime security information is being undertaken include Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre, Maritime Security Centre- Horn of Africa, Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery, Information Fusion Centre-Singapore, and International Maritime Bureau-Piracy Reporting Centre

COLOMBO SECURITY CONCLAVE (CSC)

Regional security grouping initially formed in 2011 as a trilateral Indian Ocean maritime security grouping of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives

MEMBERS

India
Sri Lanka
Maldives
Mauritius

OBSERVERS

Bangladesh
Seychelles





Way Forward

- ♦ To expand trade relations, to access African markets and attract more investment into India, particularly through the DTAA and its financial sector.
- ♦ To bolster India-Mauritius joint maritime surveillance operations, increasing presence in Mauritius' vast EEZ, and ensuring regional maritime security through technology-sharing and joint initiatives.
- ♦ To deepen collaboration within the Colombo Security Conclave and similar regional organizations to enhance collective security and address common threats in the Indian Ocean.
- ♦ To continue to nurture cultural ties through educational exchanges, cultural programs, and collaboration in Indian diaspora initiatives.

Closing the gender gap in the higher judiciary

Why in News?

- ♦ Judicial Reforms and Gender Equality

Syllabus

- ♦ GS Paper 2 – Indian Constitution, Polity & Social Justice

Closing the gender gap in the higher judiciary

Women in law have seen great progress over the last 100 years in India. The first woman lawyer, Cornelia Sorabji, was entitled to practice in 1924. Since then, the number of women lawyers has increased, several women have been designated Senior Advocates, and there have been many women judges in the lower judiciary.

Inequality at the top
However, there remains a glass ceiling for women in the higher judiciary. The share of women judges in the High Courts is only 14.27% (109 out of 764). In eight High Courts, the number of woman judges is limited to just one. The High Courts of Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, and Tripura have no woman judge. The Allahabad High Court, which is the largest High Court in the country with 79 judges at present, has only three women judges (2%). Not only is there a disproportionately low number of women judges in the High Courts, but they are also appointed later than men. The average age of appointment of men is 51.8 years, but for women it is 53 years. Thus, women judges do not reach positions of seniority. Out of 25 High Courts, only the Gujarat High Court has a woman Chief Justice.

The numbers for the Supreme Court are much worse, with only two women judges serving at present – Justice B.V. Nagarathna and Justice Bela Trivedi. With Justice Bela Trivedi due to retire in June 2025, the top Court will be left with just one woman judge. The last woman judge appointed to the Supreme Court was in 2021. Since then, 28 judges have been appointed to the Supreme Court, and not a single of them is a woman. Over the last 75 years, the Supreme Court has elevated nine men from the Bar directly to the Supreme Court, but only one woman has been elevated directly from the Bar to the Court.

Many justifications are given for not appointing women. It is said that there are not enough eligible



Jayna Kothari
Senior Advocate,
Supreme Court of
India

women candidates, not enough women with seniority, or that women do not want to become judges. All of this is merely top dressing, when the underlying factor is one of deep inequality, to borrow the analogy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. One of the main causes for the exclusion of women from the higher judiciary is deep-rooted and systemic inequality, where women are seen as inferior within the legal profession. Women lawyers nominated for judgeship face heightened scrutiny. Far from compromising on merit, women are almost always required to prove merit more than men.

We also have the collegium system of appointments, which is opaque and non-transparent. There are no clearly stated criteria for eligibility or merit and there is no transparency in the process. This also works against women. The collegiums almost always comprise men and little or no effort is taken to get names of meritorious women lawyers for elevation. This is not the only hurdle. Even when names of women are recommended by the collegium, women are disproportionately not confirmed by the government. Since 2020, nine women's names were recommended by the collegium for appointment to the High Courts, but were not confirmed. Of these, five were the only names to be rejected.

This year, as we celebrate International Women's Day and 75 years of the Supreme Court, we need a transformation of our courts. Constitutional courts have to be gender equal in the true sense, where women are working, serving and leading in equal measure, especially on the Bench.

Steps towards equality
Women's representation in the judiciary is key to ensuring that courts represent their citizens and hand down sound judgments. Having an equal number of women on the Bench will enhance the legitimacy of courts and give a

signal that our judiciary is inclusive and representative of the people whose lives they affect.

First, the collegium could frame a transparent process and provide clear criteria for appointment. This must include a process for lawyers to express interest in being considered for appointment, such as through applications. There must be clear criteria based on the highest standards of excellence and integrity, and a specified time frame during which the recommendations be made.

Second, there has to be a focus on gender diversity while making appointments. Diversity and merit are not contradictory; rather, in a pluralistic society such as ours, diversity makes the judiciary more representative, thus fostering impartiality and enhancing the moral legitimacy of the institution. There is, at present, a clear consideration of State-wise representation of judges, as well as of caste and religion. Gender diversity also needs to be taken into account to ensure that at least one-third of our higher judiciary, if not half, is composed of women.

This will mandate the appointment of a competent, independent, and impartial judiciary capable of upholding constitutionalism and the rule of law in the country, through a process that ensures selections solely based on merit and encourages diversity in the range of persons appointed, so as to enhance public confidence in the institution. Most importantly, gender balance needs to be a stated objective of the judiciary in making appointments.

Justice Indira Banerjee, a former judge of the Supreme Court, famously said in one of her interviews that she did not want any fanfare when she was appointed just because she was a woman. We have to ensure that women's appointments to the Supreme Court and High Courts are so normalised that it does not seem out of the ordinary at all.



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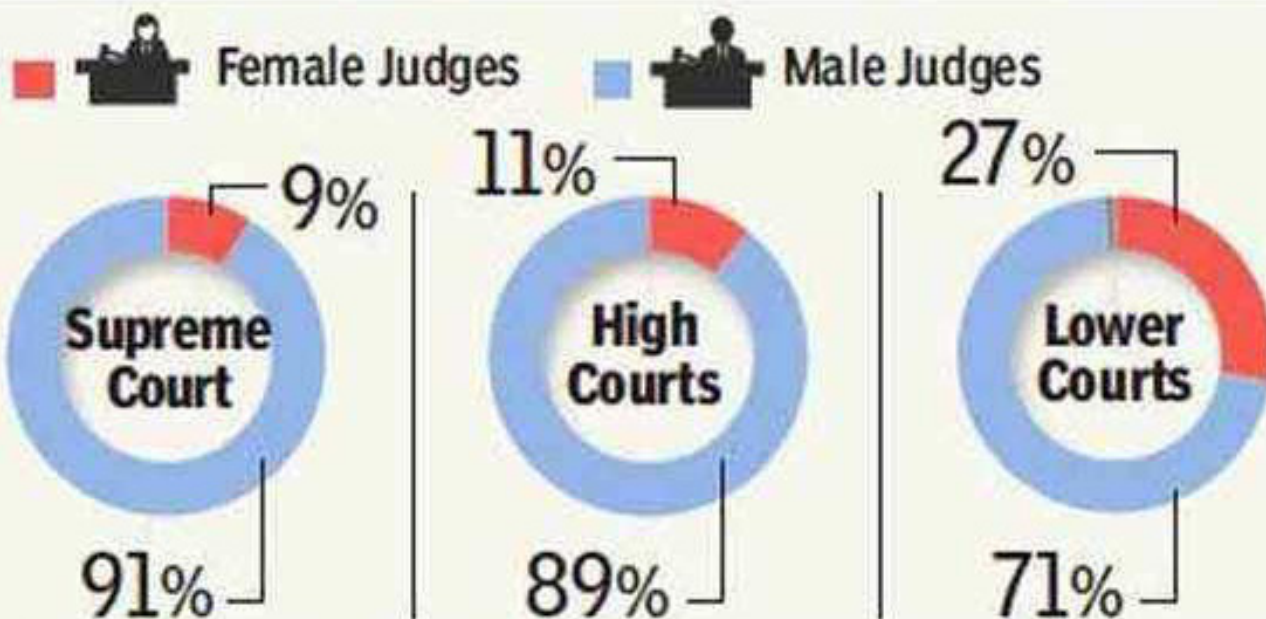




Key Takeaways from the Article

- **Current Gender Representation in the Judiciary:**
 - ♦ **High Courts:** Women constitute only 14.27% of judges (109 out of 764). Eight High Courts have one or no woman judges (e.g., Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Tripura).
 - ♦ **Supreme Court:** Only two women judges currently serve, and the number has remained low despite several appointments since 2021 (28 new male appointments).
 - ♦ **Age Disparity:** The average age for male appointments is 51.8 years, while for women it is 53, which delays their rise to senior positions.

GENDER IMBALANCE IN JUDICIARY



- In SC out of 25, male judges are 22 and only 3 female judges
- In 24 high courts, 605 male judges and 72 female judges out of a total working strength of 677
- Out of 16,660 judges in lower courts, 12,023 are male and 4,487 female. 150 cases were unknown

Source: Data from Vidhi's study on gender in judiciary



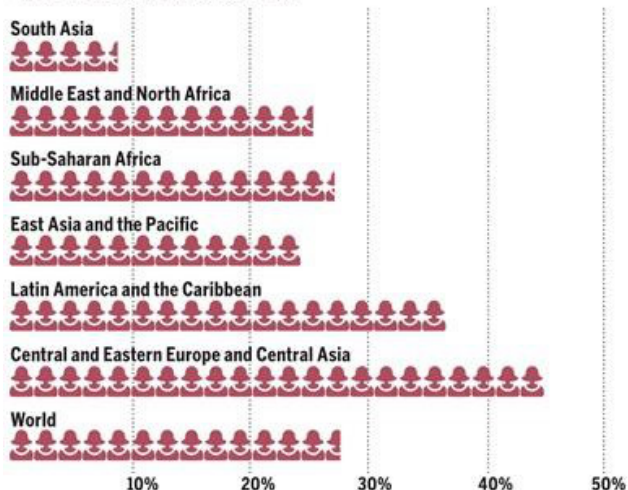


- **Systemic Inequality and Challenges:**

- ♦ **Barriers to Women's Appointment:** Reasons cited for low women representation include a lack of senior women lawyers, societal perceptions, and the notion that women may not want to pursue judicial careers.
- ♦ **Collegium System:** Lack of transparency in the collegium system, which is predominantly maledominated, often fails to recommend women candidates despite merit.
- ♦ **Rejection of Women Candidates:** Several women's names recommended by the collegium for High Court appointments were rejected or not confirmed by the government, highlighting systemic bias.
- ♦ **Need for Transformation:**
- ♦ **A gender-equal judiciary** is critical for upholding constitutional values and ensuring that the judiciary reflects the population it serves.
- ♦ Women judges contribute to a more **inclusive and impartial judiciary** and enhance its moral legitimacy.

TABLE 2

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM



Source: UN Women, 2011-2012 Progress of the World's Women (New York: UN Women, 2011).

WOMEN JUDGES IN THE COUNTRY

TOI

SUBORDINATE COURTS

States	Total Judges	Women Judges	% of women judges	Reservation for women
Bihar	1,002	99	9.88	35
Jharkhand	448	62	13.83	05
Gujarat	1,111	177	16	Nil
J&K	219	43	19.65	Nil
UP	1,728	376	21.75	20
MP	1,240	319	25.72	Nil
Himachal	147	39	26.55	Nil
Maharashtra	2,025	596	29.43	Nil
Delhi	489	170	34.76	Nil
All India	16,443	4,704	28.60	—

Note: The percentage of women judges are of the total strength of judges in subordinate courts. Reservation for women judges range from 5% to 35%; not all states have provided quota in the subordinate courts. No quota in HCs and SC.

- **Steps for Ensuring Gender Equality in Judiciary:**

- ♦ **Transparent Collegium Process:** A more transparent process with clear criteria for appointments and timelines, allowing women lawyers to apply and be considered for judicial posts.
- ♦ **Focus on Gender Diversity:** Gender diversity should be prioritized alongside state-wise, caste, and religious representation. At least one-third of judicial appointments should be for women.
- ♦ **Normalizing Women's Appointments:** Women's appointments to the Supreme Court and High Courts should be normalized, ensuring they are seen as a standard practice and not a novelty.





Madhav National Park

- ◆ Location: Madhav National Park is located in Shivpuri district in the Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh.
- ◆ Recent Development: The Centre officially declared Madhav National Park as the 58th Tiger Reserve in India, making it the 9th tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh.
- ◆ Home to tigers, leopards, Nilgai, and Chinkara (*Gazella bennettii*) and Chousingha (*Tetracerus quadricornis*) and Deers (Chital, Sambar and Barking Deer).

Madhav National Park in M.P. becomes India's 58th Tiger Reserve, to get more big cats soon

The Hindu Bureau
BHOPAL

The Centre declared the Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh as the country's 58th tiger reserve on Sunday, with Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav making the announcement.

The newly added tiger reserve is also the ninth from the State to get the recognition.

Mr. Yadav posted on X, "58th roar and counting! Thrilled to announce that the country has added the 58th Tiger Reserve to its tally with the latest entrant being Madhya Pradesh's Madhav Tiger Reserve. This is Madhya Pradesh's 9th Tiger Reserve."



Conservation counts: The reserve has five tigers at present, including two cubs that were born recently. ANI

Located in Shivpuri district in the Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh, the reserve has a population of five tigers at present, including two cubs born recently.

Three tigers, including two females, were introduced to the Madhav National Park in 2023 as part of the tiger reintroduction project in the State.

Madhya Pradesh Chief

Minister Mohan Yadav could soon release two more tigers into the reserve.

'Great strides'

"With historic emphasis laid on restoring the ecological diversity on planet Earth by PM Shri Narendra Modi ji, India continues to make great strides in environmental protection and wildlife conservation. I congratulate all wildlife lovers and conservationists. The development is a testament to the relentless efforts of our forest officials who are selflessly working towards the cause," the Union Minister said in his post.

Applauding the move, Mr. Modi said India was

blessed with wildlife diversity and a culture that celebrated wildlife.

"Amazing news for wildlife lovers! India is blessed with wildlife diversity and a culture that celebrates wildlife. We will always be at the forefront of protecting animals and contributing to a sustainable planet," he said on X.

The Chief Minister also thanked the Prime Minister for the development.

"Heartfelt thanks to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for your visionary leadership in designating Madhav National Park as India's 58th and MP's 9th Tiger Reserve! Madhya Pradesh is proud to lead wildlife conservation and protect our biodiversity," he wrote.

Other National Parks in Madhya Pradesh

- ◆ Bandhavgarh NP,
- ◆ Kanha NP,
- ◆ Pench (Priyadarshini) NP,
- ◆ Panna NP,
- ◆ Mandla Plant Fossils NP,
- ◆ Sanjay NP,
- ◆ Satpura NP,





- ♦ Hills - ?
- ♦ 2 Lakes - ?
- ♦ River - ?
- ♦ PVTG Tribe - ?

Prelims Practice Question

Question: Madhav National Park, located in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh, is a significant wildlife reserve. Which of the following statements regarding Madhav National Park is/are correct?

1. Madhav National Park has been recently declared as the 58th Tiger Reserve in India.
2. The park is home to a wide range of species such as Chital, Sambar, and Barking Deer.
3. The park is situated in the Satpura Range and is known for its dense forest ecosystems.
4. Madhav National Park is home to the Sindh Sahariya Tribe.
5. Madhav Sagar and Sakhya Sagar are two prominent lakes within the park.

Select the correct answer from the options below:

- (A) 1, 2, 4, and 5 only
- (B) 1, 2, 3, and 4 only
- (C) 2, 4, and 5 only
- (D) 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

Question: Satkosia Tiger Reserve, known for its rich biodiversity and conservation efforts, is located in which state of India?

- (A) Odisha
- (B) Madhya Pradesh
- (C) West Bengal
- (D) Chhattisgarh

Ad-hoc judges

- **Ad hoc judges** are temporary judges appointed to a court to address specific needs such as reducing case backlogs or filling gaps when permanent judges are unavailable.
- **Article 224A** of the Indian Constitution allows the **Chief Justice of a High Court**, with the **President's approval** (along with the consent of the retired judge), to appoint retired High Court judges to serve temporarily.
- In the **Lok Prahari vs. Union of India Case (2021)**, the Supreme Court ruled that recommendations for appointing retired judges must go through the **Supreme Court's Collegium**.





Centre awaits prospective names from High Courts to be appointed ad hoc judges

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Over a month after the Supreme Court cleared the decks to appoint ad hoc judges in High Courts to deal with the rising pendency of cases, the government is yet to receive proposals from respective High Courts naming candidates.

Considering a backlog of over 18 lakh criminal cases, the Supreme Court on January 30 allowed the High Courts to appoint ad hoc judges, not exceeding 10% of the court's total sanctioned strength.

Article 224A of the Constitution allows the appointment of retired judges as ad hoc judges in High Courts to help deal with pendency.

Sources said the Union Law Ministry is yet to receive any recommendation



from respective High Court collegiums for appointing ad hoc judges.

The procedure for appointing ad hoc judges follows a similar path as regular judges, except the President does not sign a warrant of appointment but gives assent.

Bench eases conditions

In a judgment on April 20, 2021, on the appointment of ad hoc judges in the High Courts, the top court had imposed certain con-

ditions. However, later a special Supreme Court Bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant had relaxed certain conditions and kept some in abeyance.

The Bench said each High Court should keep the appointment to two to five ad hoc judges and not exceed 10% of the total sanctioned strength. "The ad hoc judges will sit in a Bench presided over by a sitting judge of the High Court and decide pending criminal appeals," said the top court's order.

The court kept certain conditions in abeyance, such as the requirement that vacancies should not exceed 20% of the sanctioned strength.

Article 224A of the Constitution deals with the appointment of ad hoc judges in High Courts.





- **Tenure:** Ad-hoc judges typically serve for two to three years, with the number ranging from two to five based on the backlog and vacancies in the High Court.
- **Role and Duties:** Ad-hoc judges may hear cases over five years old and are prohibited from other legal work, such as advisory, arbitration, or client representation.
- **Emoluments and Allowances:** Ad-hoc judges will receive emoluments and allowances equivalent to a permanent judge of that High Court, excluding pension.
- **Previous Appointments:**
 - ♦ Justice Suraj Bhan to Madhya Pradesh HC in 1972 for one year to hear election petitions,
 - ♦ Justice P. Venugopal to Madras HC in 1982, with a one-year renewal in 1983,
 - ♦ Justice O.P. Srivastava went to Allahabad HC in 2007 to hear the Ayodhya title suit.

Prelims Practice Question

Question: In the context of the Indian judiciary, Ad hoc Judges are appointed under specific circumstances. Which of the following statements regarding Ad hoc Judges is/are correct?

1. Ad hoc judges are appointed by the President of India to temporarily fill vacancies in the Supreme Court and High Courts.
2. Ad hoc judges can serve in any court without being a permanent member of the judiciary.
3. Ad hoc judges are appointed under Article 224A of the Constitution of India for High Courts.
4. The appointment of ad hoc judges is permanent and can only be revoked by a presidential order.

Select the correct answer from the options below:

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

Ethnic groups in Assam

- ♦ **Koch-Rajbongshi** - Assam (India) and northern West Bengal.
- ♦ **Adivasis** - Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and the Northeastern states including Assam.
- ♦ **Ahoms** - Assam
- ♦ **Chutias** - Assam
- ♦ **Mataks** - Assam
- ♦ **Morans** - Assam

Ethnic group renews ST status call before Shah's visit to Assam

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Ahead of Home Minister Amit Shah's three-day visit to Assam on March 14, the Koch-Rajbongshis have refreshed their demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

One of the largest communities living mostly in areas straddling western Assam and northern West Bengal, the Koch-Rajbongshis are one of six ethnic groups seeking ST status for decades. The others are Adivasis, Ahoms, Chutias, Mataks, and Morans.

On Saturday evening, leaders of the Koch-Rajbongshi Sanmilita Joutha Mancha submitted a 15-point memorandum to the Bharatiya Janata Party's As-

sam unit president Dilip Saikia highlighting their demands.

The ST status for the community topped the list of demands followed by the "re-establishment of the historic Kamatapur State" and the creation of a Chilarai Regiment in the armed forces in honour of the community's legendary warrior.

The Mancha, an umbrella body comprising 12 organisations of the Koch-Rajbongshi community, urged the BJP to facilitate a tripartite meeting with Central and State governments by April 30, 2025, warning of protests if their demands are ignored.

The ST demand has been a major issue for almost three decades now.





Rear Fuselage for Tejas Aircraft

- ♦ The delivery of the **rear fuselage** for the **LCA Tejas Mk1A** by Alpha Tocol Engineering Services Private Ltd. to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL).
- ♦ This is the **first time** a major aircraft component has been produced by an Indian private sector company and handed over to HAL for integration into the aircraft.

First rear fuselage for LCA Mk1A manufactured by Indian private sector handed over to HAL

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a first, the rear fuselage for the light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk1A, manufactured by Alpha Tocol Engineering Services Private Ltd., a private sector enterprise, was handed over to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) here on Sunday.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who was present, termed the handing over a milestone in the historic journey of India's defence manufacturing sector.

"The ceremony is a testimony to India's progress towards *aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance) in defence, and the government's commitment towards enhanced public-private



Major milestone: Rajnath Singh with Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh and HAL Chairman and MD D. K. Sunil in Bengaluru. PTI

partnership," Mr. Singh said.

A fuselage is part of the main body of the aircraft, which holds the pilot, passengers and cargo, while the rear fuselage supports the tail section and its associated components.

HAL had placed orders

with various Indian private companies, including Larsen & Toubro Ltd., Alpha Tocol Engineering Services Private Ltd., Tata Advanced Systems Ltd., VEM Technologies Private Ltd., and Lakshmi Machine Works (LMW) Ltd. for supplying major modules for a

contract involving 83 LCA Mk1A. HAL has already manufactured 12 LCA Mk1A rear fuselages, which are on the aircraft in the manufacturing line.

With this supply, a major structure module produced by an Indian private partner will be integrated into the LCA Mk1A aircraft, enabling HAL to meet additional delivery commitments for the Indian Air Force from 2025-26 onwards.

Minister visits IAM

Mr. Singh visited the Institute of Aerospace Medicine (IAM). He was briefed about the IAM's unique role in pilot training, medical evaluation, and aeromedical research.

He also inspected the dynamic flight simulator,

high performance human centrifuge used for high-G training of fighter pilots, and the spatial disorientation simulator for training the pilots of the Armed Forces to avert the risk of spatial disorientation in flight.

He also launched the 'Indian Council of Medical Research Extramural Research Project: Centre for Advanced Research'.

"From the defence perspective, space has emerged as a major domain in warfare. As we are touching new heights in space, we need to explore more possibilities in aerospace medicine. There is a need for increased R&D as research in any high-end complex technology provides benefits to many fields," Mr. Singh said.

