

Today's Prelims Topics

TALASH

Context

TALASH is a new initiative by NESTS and UNICEF to boost life skills, career guidance, and self-esteem among tribal students in EMRSs across India.

TALASH Initiative

- **Launched By:**
 - National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS), under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
 - In collaboration with **UNICEF India**.
- **Full Form: TALASH:** *Tribal Aptitude, Life Skills and Self-Esteem Hub*.
- **Objective:**
 - Holistic development of tribal students in **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)**.
 - Enhance self-awareness, career clarity, and life skills among tribal youth.
- **Significance:**
 - First national-level program **specifically for tribal students** in India.
 - Targets over **1,38,336 students** in EMRSs across **28 States and 8 Union Territories**.
 - Promotes **inclusive and equitable education**.

Key Features of the TALASH Platform:

1. Psychometric Assessments:

- Based on NCERT's '**TAMANA**' initiative.
- Students take a **common aptitude test** to assess their interests and strengths.
- Provides **Career Cards** recommending suitable career paths.

2. Career Counselling Support:

- Helps students align **career aspirations with their aptitude**.
- Encourages informed and confident decision-making.

3. Life Skills & Self-Esteem Modules:

- Focus on:
 - Emotional regulation
 - Problem-solving skills
 - Communication and interpersonal skills
- Aims to build **resilience and self-confidence**.

4. Teacher Training & E-Learning Portal:

- Specialized digital resources and training for EMRS teachers.
- Supports teachers in **mentoring students effectively** both academically and personally.

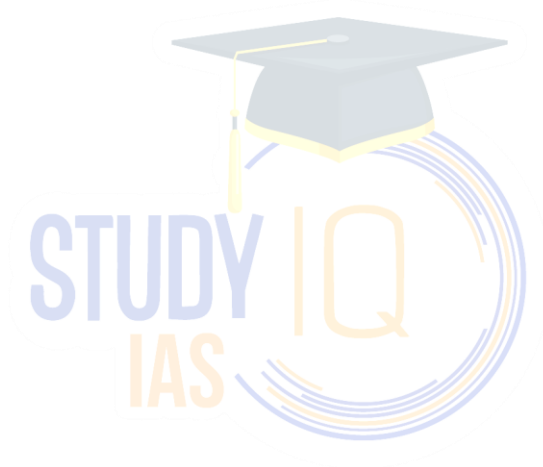
Why It Matters?

- Promotes **21st-century skills** among tribal students.
- Encourages **self-discovery, career readiness, and mental well-being**.
- Acts as a model for future education initiatives targeting **underserved communities**.

About EMRS:

- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools** are fully residential schools for **tribal students (STs)**.
- Established by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** to provide **quality education** from **Class VI to XII**.
- Over **470 EMRSs** exist across India, serving over **1.38 lakh students**.

Source: [TheHindu](#)



Directives for efficient and effective management of litigation

Context

The Centre has issued a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** titled "*Directive for Efficient and Effective Management of Litigation by the Government of India*" to reduce **unnecessary government litigation** and streamline legal processes as part of its **Viksit Bharat 2047 vision**.

Purpose & Vision

- Establish an **integrated, coordinated litigation management system** across Government of India ministries/departments.
- Reduce repetitive, resource-heavy litigation by improving internal legal processes.

Underlying Challenges Identified

- **High case load** including service, pension, land acquisition, contractual, and fundamental rights disputes.
- **Lack of legal capacity**: most departments lack dedicated legal cells; officials handling cases often lack legal training.
- **Recurring litigation** due to narrow rule interpretation, improper procedures, ambiguous policies, and failure to implement judgments.

Key Directives Issued

1. **Set up Legal Cells/Litigation Units** in every ministry/department.
2. **Standardise SOPs** covering litigation handling, periodic review, avoidance of contempt, and compliance with orders.
3. **Mandatory case reviews**, especially on recurring and high-stakes litigation.
4. **Promote legal training** for departmental officials to boost in-house expertise.
5. **Enhance coordination**: inter-departmental monitoring, judgment compliance, and use of feedback loops.
6. **Data-driven approach**: use case-tracking tools like LIMBS to analyse litigation patterns and inform policy reform

Source: [Swarajyamag](#)

Agricultural Monitoring and Event Detection (AMED)

Context

Google has launched the **Agricultural Monitoring and Event Detection (AMED) API**, a tool that offers detailed insights into crop conditions and agricultural activities across India.

Agricultural Monitoring and Event Detection (AMED) API

- **About the API**
 - AMED is an **AI-based open-source API** developed by **Google**.
 - Designed to offer **field-level crop monitoring** and detect **agricultural events** across India.
- **Key Features**
 - Provides data on:
 - **Type of crop** on each field
 - **Crop season** and **field size**
 - **Historical agricultural activity** from the **past 3 years**
 - Helps monitor **soil, water, climate conditions**, and **growth patterns** specific to each crop.
- **Technology Used**
 - Combines **satellite imagery** with **artificial intelligence**.
 - Builds on Google's earlier **Agricultural Landscape Understanding (ALU) Research API**.
- **Benefits & Applications**
 - Enhances **farm-level decision-making** and crop management.
 - Assists in predicting **crop yield** and planning inputs accordingly.
 - Can address **location-specific crop requirements** for better productivity.
- **Access & Updates**
 - API is being shared with **agriculture startups** to encourage **innovation** in the agri-tech ecosystem.
 - Data is **updated every two weeks**, allowing for **real-time, field-level monitoring**.

Source: [TheHindu](#)

International maize and wheat improvement center (CIMMYT)

Context

CIMMYT is reaching out to the **Indian government and private sector** for funding support after the **shutdown of USAID** (United States Agency for International Development) funding from July 1, 2025.

- USAID was CIMMYT's **largest donor** in 2024, contributing **\$83 million** of its \$211 million total revenue.

Background & Legacy

- Founded by **Norman Borlaug**, CIMMYT led India's **Green Revolution** with high-yielding wheat varieties like **Lerma Rojo 64A, Sonora 63, and Sonora 64**.
- These varieties helped India achieve **food self-sufficiency** in the 1960s and 70s.

India's Contribution & Benefit:

- India has been a **major beneficiary** of CIMMYT's wheat breeding programs.
- Over **50% of wheat cultivated in India now** comes from varieties released **after 2019**—developed through **collaboration between CIMMYT and Indian institutions** like the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Recent Achievements:

- In 2024, Indian farmers grew wheat on around **32 million hectares**, with **CIMMYT-derived varieties** accounting for more than 60%.
- Example: **DBW 303**, the "fastest wheat variety in South Asia" achieved **over 8 tonnes/hectare** grain yield.

Key Collaborations:

- CIMMYT and India jointly run the **Borlaug Institute for South Asia (BISA)**, formed in 2011.
- CIMMYT works closely with **ICAR institutions** like the Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research (Karnal).

Future Focus:

- CIMMYT is seeking **new funding sources** to continue:
 - **Advanced breeding programs**
 - **Climate-resilient crop research**
 - **High-yield, disease-resistant wheat development**
- Emphasizes the need for **Indian support** to ensure continuity in agricultural innovation for global food security.

Source: [IndianExpress](#)

Editorial Summary

World Population Day

Context

World Population Day was celebrated on 11 July annually.

World Population Day

- Established by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** in 1989, inspired by the "Day of Five Billion" observed on July 11, 1987, when world population reached 5 billion.
- **Aim:** To raise awareness on population issues such as family planning, gender equality, poverty, maternal health, and human rights.
- **Theme 2025:** "Empowering young people to create the families they want in a fair and hopeful world"
- **Focus:** Rights, empowerment, and opportunities for youth, especially regarding sexual and reproductive health.

Present Scenario of Population

- **Global Trends:**
 - World population (2024): **8.2 billion** (UN WPP 2024).
 - Projected peak: **~10.3 billion by 2080s**; slow decline to ~10.2 billion by 2100.
 - Population growth is slowing due to declining fertility rates in many countries.
- **India's Context:**
 - India is the world's most populous country (2024).
 - **India has the world's largest youth population: 371 million** (ages 15-29) as per UNICEF.
 - Fertility rates have dropped near or below replacement level (TFR close to 2.0 in NFHS-5).
 - Regional and socio-economic variations persist.
- **Changing Discourse:**
 - Shift from concerns about "population explosion" (Malthusian fears) to anxiety over **population decline** and aging.
 - Rising voices—often ill-informed—predict "population collapse"; data suggests otherwise due to **population momentum** (growth continues for decades even after TFR falls below replacement).

Challenges Associated with Current Population Trends

- **Population Momentum and Aging:** Even with low fertility, large young populations sustain growth (population momentum).
 - Aging populations in developed and some developing countries raise concerns about pension burdens and shrinking workforces (e.g., Japan, Italy).
- **Unrealized Fertility Aspirations:** Many people have fewer children than they desire due to **financial, social, and infrastructural barriers**.
 - **Example:** UNFPA (2025) found 40% of surveyed individuals globally could not realize their desired family size.
- **Societal and Gender Issues:** Pronatalist policies sometimes curb women's reproductive rights and reinforce stereotypes.
 - Stigmatization of women choosing not to have children; neglect of those who want children but face barriers.

- **Barriers to Family Formation:** Factors include high costs of childcare, lack of affordable housing, job insecurity, and inadequate work-family balance.
 - **Example:** In India, main barriers are **financial (38%)**, housing (22%), childcare (18%), and unemployment (21%)—UNFPA 2025.
- **Ethno-nationalist and Coercive Responses:** Some countries resort to ethno-nationalist narratives or coercive measures to boost fertility, which are ethically problematic and largely ineffective.

Solutions and Way Forward

- **Support Reproductive Autonomy and Choice:** Focus on enabling all individuals, especially women, to **realize their desired family size**—neither forcing births nor restricting childbearing.
 - **Example:** Sweden's family-friendly policies emphasize parental leave, universal childcare, and flexible work options, supporting voluntary fertility.
- **Invest in Societal Infrastructure:** Improve access to **affordable housing, quality childcare, and secure employment** to reduce barriers to parenthood.
 - **Example:** South Korea, after a decade of birth decline, is witnessing a modest rebound in births post investments in housing, childcare, and job security.
- **Promote Gender Equality in Work and Family Life:** End workplace penalties for motherhood; encourage **shared parental responsibilities**.
 - **Example:** Norway offers generous parental leave for both parents and promotes fathers' participation in childcare.
- **Discourage Coercive and Target-driven Pronatalism:** Avoid baby bonuses or cash incentives that reinforce traditional gender roles without addressing root causes.
 - Instead, focus on **long-term societal changes** supporting women and families holistically.
- **Leverage Population Momentum for Demographic Dividend:** Countries like India should invest in **health, education, and skill development** for their large youth populations.
 - **Example:** India's Skill India and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao schemes aim to harness youth potential and empower women.
- **Data-driven and Context-specific Approaches:** Policy decisions should be informed by **robust data** and tailored to local contexts rather than global alarmism.
 - **Example:** Regular use of NFHS in India for designing targeted interventions.
- **Encourage Women's Participation in Workforce:** Address workforce shortages not by forcing more births, but by enabling more women to work.
 - **Example:** Policies in Canada and France that support working mothers have improved both workforce participation and birth rates.

Potential of India's Youth Population

- **Demographic Dividend:** If properly harnessed, India's young workforce can boost GDP by **up to \$1 trillion by 2030** (World Bank/NITI Aayog estimate).
- **Social Progress:** Can drive innovation, economic growth, and improved social indicators (health, education, skill development).
- **Challenges:** If not equipped with education, skills, and opportunities, this potential can turn into a demographic burden (unemployment, social unrest).

Youth Women-Oriented Challenges in India

- **Reproductive Autonomy:** **36%** of Indian adults face unintended pregnancies; **30%** report unmet reproductive goals (UNFPA, 2025).
- **Child Marriage:** Prevalence reduced by half since 2006 but remains high at **23.3%** (NFHS-5, 2019-21).
- **Teenage Pregnancy:** National average at **7%** for ages 15-19, with some states recording over double this rate.

- **Education Gaps:** Socio-cultural norms restrict girls' access to secondary and higher education, impacting their empowerment.
- **Low Labour Force Participation:** Limited economic opportunities; only about **20%** of women participate in the formal workforce.
- **Gender-based Discrimination & Social Barriers:** Persistent socio-cultural barriers limit women's choices and opportunities in health, employment, and leadership.

Successful Government & Non-Government Initiatives To Encourage Women

| Initiative | Objective/Focus | Impact/Results |
|---|---|---|
| Beti Bachao Beti Padhao | Promote girls' education, reduce gender bias | Improved sex ratio, increased school enrolment |
| National Adolescent Health Programme | Improve adolescent health, nutrition, SRH education | Reduced adolescent fertility rates, increased awareness |
| Project Udaan (Rajasthan) | Keep girls in school, reduce child marriage, SRH awareness | Prevented 30,000 child marriages, 15,000 teen pregnancies averted |
| Advika (Odisha) | Prevent child marriage, empower adolescents through education, skills | 11,000 villages declared child marriage-free; 950 marriages stopped in 2022 |
| Project Manzil (Rajasthan) | Economic empowerment of young women through skills and jobs | 28,000 girls trained, 16,000 employed in skilled jobs |

What Can Be Done?

- **Expand Access to Education:** Universal secondary education, especially for girls; leverage cash transfers and scholarships.
 - E.g., Project Udaan
- **Enhance Sexual & Reproductive Health (SRH) Services:** Ensure universal access to contraception, maternal health, safe abortion, and SRH information.
 - E.g., National Adolescent Health Programme
- **Boost Economic Empowerment:** Scale up skill development and job creation for young women; promote entrepreneurship.
 - E.g., Project Manzil
- **Address Social & Gender Norms:** Implement consistent behaviour change communication, involve communities in challenging harmful norms.
 - E.g., Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao & Advika Programme
- **Multi-sectoral Investments:** Invest in healthcare, housing, childcare, workplace flexibility, and social security for young families.
- **Youth-Centric Policy Making:** Involve youth in decision-making; develop platforms for their voices and leadership.
- **Strengthen Data Systems:** Regular, disaggregated data collection for targeted interventions and monitoring.

Source: The Hindu: [Link 1](#), [Link 2](#)

How terror networks abuse digital tools

Context

The “Comprehensive Update on Terrorist Financing Risks” report from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) reveals that e-commerce platforms and online payment services are being misused for financing terrorist activities.

Platforms Used by Terrorists for Financing Activities

- **E-commerce Platforms:** Terrorists abuse online marketplaces for **operational procurement** (equipment, weapons, chemicals, 3D-printing materials).
 - Use over/under-invoicing, posing as buyers/sellers to move funds.
 - Trade in low-value goods, wildlife, or stolen artefacts to generate and transfer funds.
- **Online Payment Services:** Use of digital wallets, payment gateways, and platforms like PayPal for pseudo-anonymous transfers.
 - Attractiveness increases in jurisdictions with **lax regulation**.
- **Social Media & Messaging Applications:** Integration of e-commerce and payment functions allows **direct transactions** without leaving the app.
 - Used for fundraising, propaganda, and selling/buying goods linked to terror finance.
- **Crowdfunding Sites:** Raising funds under false pretenses (e.g., fake charities or causes) that are redirected for terrorism.
- **Virtual Assets & Blockchain:** Cryptocurrencies and blockchain-based transfers offer **pseudo-anonymity** and global reach.
 - Exploited for fundraising and cross-border transfers.
- **Informal Mechanisms:** Cash couriers, **hawala** networks, and money mules remain widely used, especially in regions with weak financial oversight.
- **Legal Entities:** Shell companies, trusts, and certain non-profit organisations are used to obscure fund flows and bypass scrutiny.

FATF Recommendations To Stop it

- **Address Transnational Risks:** Promote **international cooperation** to tackle cross-border terror financing, as digital platforms transcend national boundaries.
 - Prioritize **multilateral designation** of terrorist organizations (e.g., under UN Security Council sanctions).
- **Expand Regulatory Oversight:** Bring **social media, messaging platforms, and e-commerce services** under the scope of AML/CFT (Anti-Money Laundering/Countering Financing of Terrorism) standards.
- **Engage the Private Sector:** Foster **public-private partnerships** between governments, financial institutions, tech companies, and e-commerce platforms to share intelligence and best practices.
- **Improve Risk Analysis and Surveillance:** Regularly update **national, sectoral, and emerging risk assessments** to detect and address new terrorist financing schemes.]

Source: [Financial Express](#)