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MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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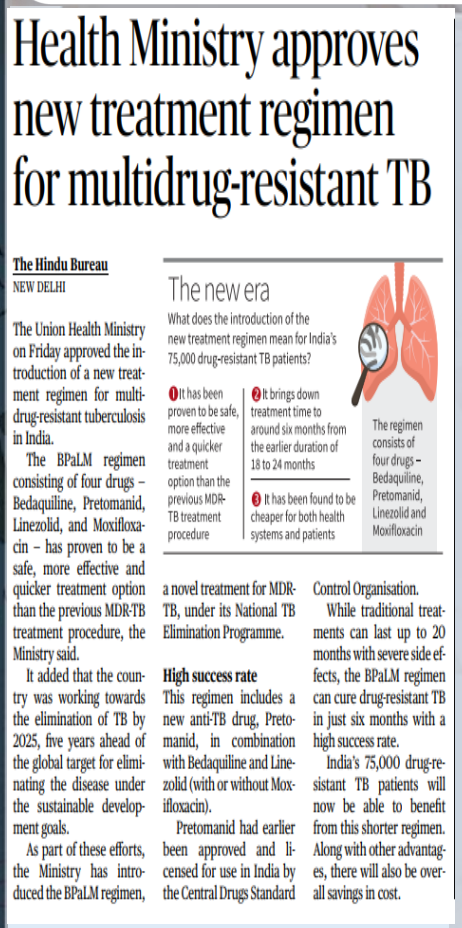

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THE HINDU

Page 1

# BPAL REGIMEN

## (Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Health)



Health Ministry approves new treatment regimen for multidrug-resistant TB

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Friday approved the introduction of a new treatment regimen for multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis in India.

The BPaLM regimen consisting of four drugs – Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid, and Moxifloxacin – has proven to be a safe, more effective and quicker treatment option than the previous MDR-TB treatment procedure, the Ministry said.

It added that the country was working towards the elimination of TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global target for eliminating the disease under the sustainable development goals.

As part of these efforts, the Ministry has introduced the BPaLM regimen, a novel treatment for MDR-TB, under its National TB Elimination Programme.

**High success rate**

This regimen includes a new anti-TB drug, Pretomanid, in combination with Bedaquiline and Linezolid (with or without Moxifloxacin).

Pretomanid had earlier been approved and licensed for use in India by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.

While traditional treatments can last up to 20 months with severe side effects, the BPaLM regimen can cure drug-resistant TB in just six months with a high success rate.

India's 75,000 drug-resistant TB patients will now be able to benefit from this shorter regimen. Along with other advantages, there will also be overall savings in cost.

The new era

What does the introduction of the new treatment regimen mean for India's 75,000 drug-resistant TB patients?

1. It has been proven to be safe, more effective and a quicker treatment option than the previous MDR-TB treatment procedure
2. It brings down treatment time to around six months from the earlier duration of 18 to 24 months
3. It has been found to be cheaper for both health systems and patients

The regimen consists of four drugs – Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid and Moxifloxacin

**Context:** The Union Health Ministry has approved the introduction of a new treatment BPaLM regimen for drug-resistant tuberculosis in India.

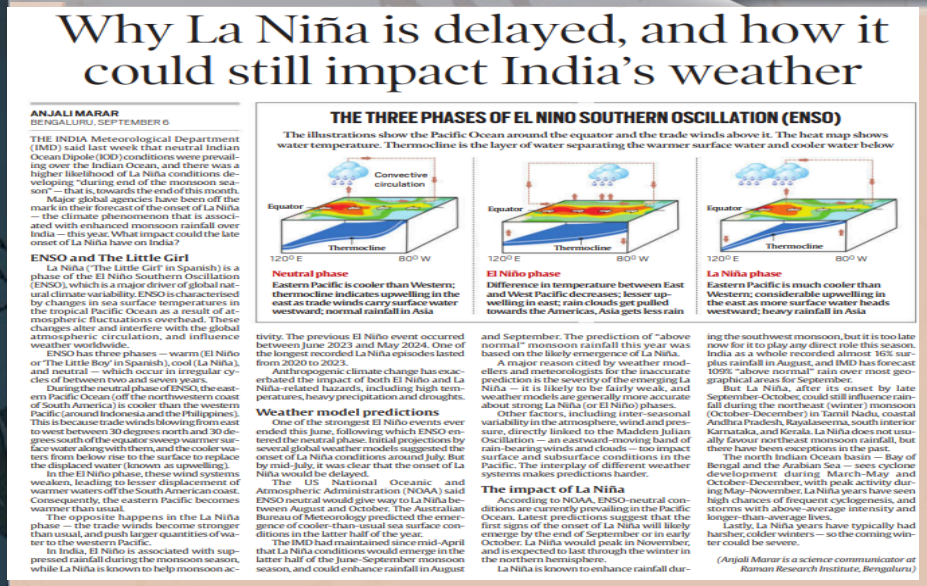
**BPaL Regimen**

- **About**: It is a groundbreaking approach for **drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB)** utilizing bedaquiline, pretomanid, and linezolid.
- **Consist of**: Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, Linezolid and Moxifloxacin
- **Duration**: Unlike traditional DR-TB treatments that last 18 months, BPaL shortens the treatment period to just 26 weeks.
- **Purpose and Focus**: BPaL specifically targets drug-resistant tuberculosis, particularly for patients with pre-XDR TB or those who are unresponsive to MDR pulmonary TB treatments.
- **Role of Pretomanid:** It is a new anti-TB drug, plays a crucial role in the regimen. It has been approved and licensed for use in India by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).
- **Treatment Focus on MDR-TB**: The BPaLM regimen specifically targets multi-drug resistant TB, offering a potentially more effective treatment option.
- **Global Impact**: The regimen has shown promising results in various countries, including Pakistan, South Africa, and Ukraine, marking a significant advancement in the fight against M/XDR-TB.
- **NAAT Testing**: A nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) is used to detect the DNA of Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex (MTBC) in respiratory samples, aiding in TB diagnosis.
- **Treatment Duration Comparison**: BPaL reduces the treatment duration from the traditional 18 to 24 months to around 6 months.
- **Simplified Medication**: The previous all-oral regimen required nearly 14 different anti-TB drugs daily, while BPaL simplifies the regimen to just three daily tablets.

**Current Status of TB in India:**

- As per **Global TB Report 2023**, India had the **highest prevalence** of Tb. However, India's efforts have resulted in **reduction of TB incidence by 16%** in 2022 (from 2015) al**most double the pace at which global TB incidence** is declining (which is 8.7%).
- India aims to eliminate tuberculosis (TB) by 2025, which is five years ahead of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target of 2030.
- By adopting this regimen, India strengthens its efforts to meet its ambitious goal of eliminating TB by 2025.
- India's treatment success rate is 56% for MDR/RR-TB cases and 48% for XDR-TB cases, largely due to prolonged and toxic drug regimens.

# LA-NINA
## (Syllabus GS Paper 1 – Geography)



Why La Niña is delayed, and how it could still impact India's weather

ANJALI MARAR
BENGALURU, SEPTEMBER 6

THE INDIA Meteorological Department (IMD) said last week that neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions were prevailing over the Indian Ocean, and there was a higher likelihood of La Niña conditions developing "during end of the monsoon season" — that is, towards the end of this month.

Major global agencies have been off the mark in their forecast of the onset of La Niña — the climate phenomenon that is associated with enhanced monsoon rainfall over India — this year. What impact could the late onset of La Niña have on India?

### ENSO and The Little Girl

La Niña ('The Little Girl' in Spanish) is a phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which is a major driver of global natural climate variability. ENSO is characterised by changes in sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean as a result of atmospheric fluctuations overhead. These changes alter and interfere with the global atmospheric circulation, and influence weather worldwide.

ENSO has three phases — warm (El Niño or 'The Little Boy' in Spanish), cool (La Niña), and neutral — which occur in irregular cycles of between two and seven years.

During the neutral phase of ENSO, the eastern Pacific Ocean (off the northwestern coast of South America) is cooler than the western Pacific (around Indonesia and the Philippines). This is because trade winds blowing from east to west between 30 degrees north and 30 degrees south of the equator sweep warmer surface water along with them, and the cooler waters from below rise to the surface to replace the displaced water (known as upwelling).

In the El Niño phase, these wind systems weaken, leading to lesser displacement of warmer waters off the South American coast. Consequently, the eastern Pacific becomes warmer than usual.

The opposite happens in the La Niña phase — the trade winds become stronger than usual, and push larger quantities of water to the western Pacific.

In India, El Niño is associated with suppressed rainfall during the monsoon season, while La Niña is known to help monsoon activity. The previous El Niño event occurred between June 2023 and May 2024. One of the longest recorded La Niña episodes lasted from 2020 to 2023.

Anthropogenic climate change has exacerbated the impact of both El Niño and La Niña-related hazards, including high temperatures, heavy precipitation and droughts.

### Weather model predictions

One of the strongest El Niño events ever ended this June, following which ENSO entered the neutral phase. Initial projections by several global weather models suggested the onset of La Niña conditions around July. But by mid-July, it was clear that the onset of La Niña would be delayed.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said ENSO neutral would give way to La Niña between August and October. The Australian Bureau of Meteorology predicted the emergence of cooler-than-usual sea surface conditions in the latter half of the year.

The IMD had maintained since mid-April that La Niña conditions would emerge in the latter half of the June-September monsoon season, and could enhance rainfall in August and September. The prediction of "above normal" monsoon rainfall this year was based on the likely emergence of La Niña.

A major reason cited by weather modellers and meteorologists for the inaccurate prediction is the severity of the emerging La Niña — it is likely to be fairly weak, and weather models are generally more accurate about strong La Niña (or El Niño) phases.

Other factors, including inter-seasonal variability in the atmosphere, wind and pressure, directly linked to the Madden Julian Oscillation — an eastward-moving band of rain-bearing winds and clouds — too impact surface and subsurface conditions in the Pacific. The interplay of different weather systems makes predictions harder.

### The impact of La Niña

According to NOAA, ENSO-neutral conditions are currently prevailing in the Pacific Ocean. Latest predictions suggest that the first signs of the onset of La Niña will likely emerge by the end of September or in early October. La Niña would peak in November, and is expected to last through the winter in the northern hemisphere.

La Niña is known to enhance rainfall during the southwest monsoon, but it is too late now for it to play any direct role this season. India as a whole recorded almost 16% surplus rainfall in August, and IMD has forecast 109% "above normal" rain over most geographical areas for September.

But La Niña, after its onset by late September-October, could still influence rainfall during the northeast (winter) monsoon (October-December) in Tamil Nadu, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema, south interior Karnataka, and Kerala. La Niña does not usually favour northeast monsoon rainfall, but there have been exceptions in the past.

The north Indian Ocean basin — Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea — sees cyclone development during March-May and October-December, with peak activity during May-November. La Niña years have seen high chances of frequent cyclogenesis, and storms with above-average intensity and longer-than-average lives.

Lastly, La Niña years have typically had harsher, colder winters — so the coming winter could be severe.

*(Anjali Marar is a science communicator at Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru.)*

THE THREE PHASES OF EL NINO SOUTHERN OSCILLATION (ENSO)

The illustrations show the Pacific Ocean around the equator and the trade winds above it. The heat map shows water temperature. Thermocline is the layer of water separating the warmer surface water and cooler water below



**Impact of Delayed La Nina Onset on India's Monsoon**

- **Role in Monsoon** La Nina typically boosts rainfall during India's southwest monsoon season, which runs from June to September.
- **Current Status of La Nina**: As the monsoon season nears its end, La Niña conditions have not yet emerged in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, meaning it will not directly influence the current rainfall.
- **Factors Affecting Rainfall**: Other climatic factors beyond La Niña also impact monsoon rainfall, so a delayed onset does not necessarily predict poor monsoon performance.
- **Regional Variations**: Eastern and northeastern India, along with parts of the north and northwest, have seen deficient rainfall, while central and southern India have enjoyed more than normal precipitation.

**Context**: Global models mis predicted La Nina's onset, leading to significant forecasting errors. The delay in La Nina's arrival has substantial implications for climate predictions and related impacts.

**La-Nina**

- **Definition**: La Niña, meaning 'The Little Girl' in Spanish, is a phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), a significant climate driver.
- **ENSO:** It involves fluctuations in sea temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean, affecting global atmospheric circulation and weather patterns.
- **Phases of ENSO:** It has three phases: warm (El Niño), cool (La Niña), and neutral. Each phase influences global weather differently.
- **Neutral Phase Conditions**: During the neutral phase, the eastern Pacific is cooler than the western Pacific due to the movement of trade winds and upwelling of cooler waters.
- **El Nino Phase Conditions**: In El Niño, trade winds weaken, leading to warmer sea temperatures in the eastern Pacific and less displacement of warm water.
- **La Nina Phase Conditions**: In La Niña, trade winds strengthen, pushing more warm water to the western Pacific and making the eastern Pacific cooler.
- **Impact on India:** La Nina is known to enhance monsoon activity in India, whereas El Niño often suppresses it.
- **Recent Events**: The most recent El Niño occurred from June 2023 to May 2024, while one of the longest La Niña episodes lasted from 2020 to 2023.

PIB

Sep 5

## NATIONAL TEST HOUSE
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

# National Test House signs Memorandum of Understanding with Bureau of Energy Efficiency to promote energy efficiency in India

**Context:** A Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed between the National Test House (NTH) and the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) to advance energy efficiency initiatives throughout India.

**National Test House**

- **About:** It is a premier scientific and technical institution of this country employed in the service of the country for more than a 110 years.
- **Under the**: Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.
- **Establishment**: 1912.
- **Largest Testing Laboratory**: It is India's largest multi-location multidisciplinary industrial central government's testing laboratory dealing with almost all sorts of testing, calibration, and quality evaluation related to industry, commerce, trade, etc., as per international and national standards.
- **Technical Consultancy:** It offers technical consultancy, testing, calibration, and quality evaluation across various sectors, adhering to both national and international standards.
- **Pioneering Drone Certification**: It is the pioneering governmental entity in India for drone certification.
- **Branch Locations:** Its branches are established at Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Ghaziabad, Jaipur, Guwahati, and Varanasi.

**Salient features of the MoU are**:

- BEE shall recognise NTH as referral laboratory and send its cases pertaining to technical disputes regarding the test results for consultation.
- BEE shall nominate Officers of NTH in their various Technical Committees in consideration of expertise with NTH Officers.
- NTH shall conduct Capacity Building Training to BEE Officers at the NTH Regional Laboratories / BEE Head Quarters at Delhi.
- Complete Review of existing S & L Programme of BEE including Check Testing Procedures.
- Any other Technical matter pertaining to S & L Scheme with mutual consent.

**Bureau of Energy Efficiency**

- **Establishment**: It was established in 2002 under the provisions of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
- **Objective**: The primary objective of BEE is to reduce energy intensity in the Indian economy.
- **Functions**: It coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies, and other organizations; recognizes, identifies, and utilizes the existing resources and infrastructure in performing the functions assigned to it under the Energy Conservation Act.
- **Nodal Ministry**: Ministry of Power.

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# NATIONAL TIGER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Environment)

## NTCA letter on relocation from tiger zones draws ire

Apex tiger conservation authority asks 19 States to 'prioritise' removal of residents from core tiger zones; senior Environment Ministry official says these letters are routine and periodic reminders

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

A recent letter by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) — the apex body tasked with tiger conservation — asking 19 States to "prioritise" the removal of villagers who are residents in the core tiger zones has drawn the ire of several organisations and activists, who have written to Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav protesting against these directions.

"It has been observed that 591 villages comprising 64,801 families are still residing in the core area (of the tiger zone). The progress of village relocation is very slow and it poses grave concern in the light of tiger conservation," said the letter written by G.S. Bharadwaj, Additional DGF (Project Tiger) and Member Secretary, NTCA to Subhash Malkede, Chief Wildlife Warden, Karnataka on June 19.

Though *The Hindu* has only viewed this letter, similar letters have been sent to other States too. Karnataka has 81 villages in the core zone, with 1,175 families having been relocated since the inception of Project Tiger in 1973.



The "core zone" is a tiger reserve area where tribals cannot live, while hunting and collecting forest produce is banned. FILE PHOTO

The "core zone" refers to the portion in a tiger reserve where tribals cannot live and activities such as hunting and collecting forest produce is banned. There is a concentric circle outside the "core zone" called the buffer zone where these restrictions are eased but regulated.

There are 53 tiger reserves in India across 19 States, with 848 villages comprising 89,808 families in the core zone. Since 1973, 257 of these villages comprising 25,007 families have been relocated. The Wildlife Act says that core zones are to be "inviolate" and these must be made so by coaxing residents to "voluntarily relocate" on "mutually agreed terms and conditions".

"We are appalled at the step taken by the NTCA directing the relocation of the forest dependent communities in flagrant violation of all the relevant laws," read the letter by the organisations dated September 5.

The letter alleges that the NTCA's relocation orders were in "complete violation" of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, the Forest Rights Act, the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act (LARR), and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

"The NTCA action put pressure on the State governments to relocate communities... forcing the State governments to commit illegalities. This would lead to massive conflicts between State authorities and the Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwelling tribes living in the tiger reserves," the letter added.

A senior official in the Environment Ministry, who declined to be identified, told *The Hindu* that these letters were "routine" and periodic reminders to the States to make core zones inviolate. "The process of relocation is voluntary and cannot be done without settling the rights of forest dwellers. There are several success stories but it is a necessarily slow process as data will show."

**Core Zone**

- **About:** It refers to the portion in a tiger reserve where tribals cannot live and activities such as hunting and collecting forest produce is banned.
- **According to the Wildlife Act**: Core zones are to be 'inviolate' and these must be made so by coaxing residents to "voluntarily relocate" on "mutually agreed terms and conditions".
- **Buffer Zone**: There is a concentric circle outside the 'core zone' called the buffer zone where these restrictions are eased but regulated.
- **Statistics**: There are 55 tiger reserves in India across 19 States with 848 villages comprising 89,808 families in the core zone.
- Since 1973, 257 of these villages comprising 25,007 families have been relocated.

**Context:** A recent letter from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) urging 19 states to prioritize the removal of villagers from core tiger zones has sparked criticism from various organizations and activists, who have expressed their concerns to the Union Environment Minister.

**National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**

- **About**: It is a statutory organization created under the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006 following the recommendation of the Tiger Task Force.
- **Constituted under**: Section 38 L (1) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Chairperson**: Minister of Environment .
- **Members include**: The authority consists of the Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests (as Vice-Chairperson), three members of Parliament, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests and other members.
- **Objectives:**
    - To grant statutory authority to Project Tiger, making compliance with its directives a legal requirement.
    - To enhance accountability in the management of Tiger Reserves by facilitating Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between the Center and State governments within the federal structure.
    - To establish parliamentary oversight in the process.
    - To cater to the livelihood concerns of local communities residing in the vicinity of Tiger Reserves.

TIMES OF INDIA

Sep 6

# INTERPOL
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)

# Interpol issued highest ever 100 Red Notices last year on India's request: CBI

**Context**: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) chief recently revealed that Interpol issued a record 100 Red Notices last year, the highest number ever, at India's request.

**International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol)**

- **About:** It is the world's largest international police organization.
- **Headquarters**: Lyon, France
- **Network of nations**: A network comprising 192 member nations and headquartered in Lyon, France.
- **Objective**: To enable police around the world to work together to make the world a safer place.
- **Working mechanism**: The Interpol basically connects police across the world even if these individual member nations do not have diplomatic relations.
  - The Interpol facilitates information exchange, knowledge sharing and research between nations.
  - This is done by issuing colour-coded 'notices' in four languages - English, Spanish, French, and Arabic.
  - The Interpol doesn't have law enforcement powers such as arrest.
- **India's status:** India has been a member since 1956.
  - **National Central Bureau:** India maintains a National Central Bureau which serves as the national platform for cooperation between domestic law enforcement units and the international police community.
  - **Contact point**: The NCB is the designated contact point for the Interpol.
  - **Collaboration**: India has collaborated with the Interpol in tackling a myriad of organised crimes.

**Red Notice**

- Issued to locate and provisionally arrest an individual pending extradition.
- Issued by the General Secretariat at the request of a member country or an international tribunal based on a valid national arrest warrant.
- **Other Type of Notice**
  - Yellow Notice
  - Blue Notice
  - Black Notice
  - Green Notice
  - Orange Notice
  - Purple Notice

## UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Health/Gov. Policies)

# NITI Ayog, NHRC organise conference on 'Universal Access to Healthcare' in New Delhi

**Context:** NITI Aayog, inaugurated a National Conference on "Universal Access to Healthcare: Digital Solutions" in New Delhi.

**Universal Access to Healthcare: Digital Solutions**

- **Organized by**: NITI Ayog and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- **Collaboration**: National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India in collaboration with the Sankala Foundation.
- It is a non-profit organisation registered in 2022 under Section (8) of the Companies Act, 2013 of India.
- **Objective:** To bring together practitioners, government officials, leading experts, innovators and policy makers in the field of healthcare and digital healthcare technology to explore the way forward for universal access to affordable and quality healthcare services especially to people living in rural, remote and hilly areas.
- **Three Technical Sessions**: Models of Change in Healthcare', `Future Frontiers in Digital Health', and `Technology-enabled Universal Health Coverage.'

**Digital Health Initiatives of India**

- **Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH):** The GIDH is a WHO managed network which was unanimously adopted by all G20 countries, invited countries and international organizations.
- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission**: rephrase: It aims to provide digital health IDs for all Indian citizens to help hospitals, insurance firms, and citizens access health records electronically when required.
- **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)**: To provide every citizen with a unique health id ndhm and enable access to their health records through a digital platform.

ECONOMIC TIMES Sep 6

# GALATHEA BAY PORT

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

# Centre notifies Galathea Bay as a 'Major Port'

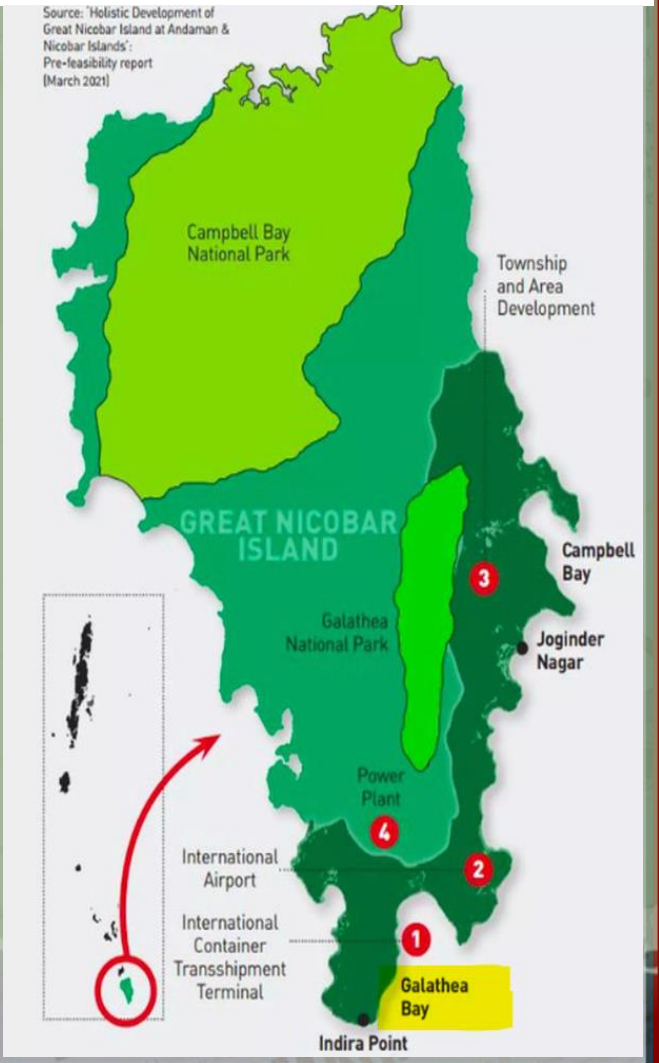
**Context:** The centre has notified the international trans-shipment hub at Galathea Bay in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands as a 'Major Port'.

**Galathea Bay Port**

- **About:** It is being developed as an International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP).
  - A transshipment port serves as a hub where cargo is transferred between vessels for onward shipment to its final destination.
- **Location:** It is situated in the Great Nicobar Island of Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India.
- **Eligible:** It is also eligible for central funding and will be developed under the public-private partnership model.
- **Developed in four phases**: Phase 1 is proposed to be commissioned in the year 2028 with handling capacity of ~ 4 Million TEUs, increasing to 16 Million TEUs in the ultimate stage of development by 2058.
- Under the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, four port clusters with a capacity of more than 300 MTPA and two with capacity more than 500 MTPA will be developed.

**Significance of Galathea Port**

- **Trade Facilitation**: ICTP at Galathea Bay will enhance EXIM trade by leveraging its location on a key international shipping route.
- **Forex Savings:** By reducing reliance on foreign ports for transshipment, the project will save foreign exchange and attract foreign direct investment.
- **Boost to Indian Ports:** Increased economic activity will benefit other Indian ports by redistributing cargo and fostering regional trade.
- **Proximity to Key Choke Points**: The port's location near strategic chokepoints like the Malacca Strait will offer advantages in global shipping routes.
- **Connectivity**: The port will strengthen India's connectivity with major international routes connecting Europe, Africa, and Asia.



**BUSINESS STANDARD** Page 1

# REGIONAL RURAL BANKS (RRBS)

**(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)**

## ‘One State, One RRB’ policy on govt’s table

HARSH KUMAR
New Delhi, 6 September

The Union Ministry of Finance is planning to consolidate the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) under a policy of “One State, One RRB” to improve their efficiency and avoid undue competition among sponsoring public sector banks.

“The ‘One State, One RRB’ policy is on the table, and work is underway. We aim to reduce the total number of RRBs from 43 at present to around 30,” said a senior government official requesting anonymity.

The official further explained that this will result in the merger of RRBs within a state under one sponsor bank based on performance. Consequently, each State will have one sponsor bank that will absorb the assets of the other RRBs in that State.

“The quantity or number of RRBs is not important; the quality is very important. There is a need to enhance technology, including increasing the availability of mobile banking. The ‘One State, One RRB’ policy will help with this and also reduce competition among them,” the official added.

An email sent to the Finance Ministry requesting comment did not elicit any response till the time of going to the press.

### STATUS CHECK

Currently, there are 43 RRBs across India. A look at states where the number of RRBs is more than 1



**Andhra Pradesh (3)**
Canara Bank, Union Bank of India, Indian Bank

**Uttar Pradesh (3)**
Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank

**West Bengal (3)**
Punjab National Bank, UCO Bank, Central Bank of India

**Bihar (2)**
Punjab National Bank, Central Bank of India

**Gujarat (2)**
Bank of Baroda, State Bank of India

**Jammu & Kashmir (2)**
State Bank of India, J&K Bank

**Karnataka (2)**
Canara Bank

**Madhya Pradesh (2)**
Bank of India, State Bank of India

**Maharashtra (2)**
Bank of Maharashtra, Bank of India

**Odisha (2)**
Indian Overseas Bank, State Bank of India

**Rajasthan (2)**
Bank of Baroda, State Bank of India

**Telangana (2)**
State Bank of India

**Context:** The Union Ministry of Finance is planning to consolidate the Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) under a policy of “One State, One RRB” to improve their efficiency and avoid undue competition among sponsoring public sector banks.

### One State, One RRB

- **Aim**: To improve their efficiency and avoid undue competition among sponsoring public sector banks.
- To reduce the total number of RRBs from 43 at present to around 30,” said a senior government official requesting anonymity.
- **Significance:** It will help with this and also reduce competition among them.

### Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)

- **About:** This is a government owned scheduled commercial bank of India that operates at regional level in different states of India.
- **Establishment:** 26 September 1975 and the RRB Act 1976
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Finance
- **Five RRBs**: Set up on 2 October 1975 on the recommendations of the Narsimha Committee.
- **Ownership**: Central government, state government, and the sponsoring bank with 50%, 15%, and 35% shareholding respectively.
- **First RRBs Bank:** Prathama Bank, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Functions of RRBs**: Providing basic banking services in rural and semi-urban areas, facilities such as locker services, internet and mobile banking, debit and credit cards, extend credit to rural individuals like small farmers, artisans, and entrepreneurs, while also accepting deposits.

PIB Sep 5

# SAMRIDH
(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

## Secretary, MeitY launches 2nd Cohort of Startup Accelerators of MeitY for Product Innovation, Development and Growth (SAMRIDH)

**Context:** MeitY has launched the 2nd Cohort of its Startup Accelerators program for Product Innovation, Development, and Growth (SAMRIDH).

**SAMRIDH**

- **About:** It is a flagship programme of MeitY for startups acceleration under National Policy on Software Products – 2019.
- **Launched**: August 2021
- **Aim**: To support 300 software product startups with outlay of ₹99 crore over a period of 4 years.
- **Implemented by:** MeitY Start-up Hub (MSH), Digital India Corporation (DIC).
- **Eligibility Criteria for Accelerator**:
  - Must be a registered Section-8/Society or Not-for-Profit Company (eligible to hold equity) with operations in India.
  - The Accelerator and its team should have over 3 years of startup experience, having supported more than 50 startups, with at least 10 receiving external investment.
  - Required to have experience in running startup program cohorts with activities aligned with the SAMRIDH program's desirable criteria.
- **Strategic Impact**:
  - **Focus Areas**: Enhances software product startups' market readiness and growth potential.
  - **National Policy Alignment:** Supports the goals of the National Policy on Software Products – 2019.

**Second Cohort SAMRIDH**

- **About:** As part of this programme, the second cohort SAMRIDH was launched September 2024.
- **Agenda:** It is a part of the 100-day agenda of the Government of India to select and support 125 startups through potential accelerators so as to achieve the target of nurturing 300 startups.

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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1/2 – Art& culture/Gov. Bodies)

## Shared ownership of protected monuments with Waqf Board causes conflict, says ASI

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI



The ASI's list had 53 protected monuments, including Fatehpur Sikri, which have also been declared as Waqf property. FILE PHOTO

Quoting the examples of Fatehpur Sikri in Agra and Atala Masjid in Jaunpur, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) told a Parliamentary panel that having protected monuments which are also notified as Waqf property gives rise to conflicts and administrative issues. The ASI made this argument during its submission to a joint committee holding consultations on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Contesting this claim, Opposition members of the committee argued that no monument is arbitrarily appropriated by the Waqf Board without historical evidence supporting its ownership, noting that the ASI's own governing legislation – the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act) – equips the organisation to deal with such cases.

The ASI shared a list of 53 protected monuments, which have also been declared as Waqf property by the Waqf Board, using the Waqf Act, 1995. Such "dual authorities" create conflict, ASI officials said. They underlined that many of these properties have been categorised as Waqf only after they were declared as protected sites.

According to sources, the ASI complained that its staff have been restricted from carrying out "conservation" work in such monuments. They also accused the Board of carrying out "several additions and alterations" to the original structure of these protected monuments, hampering the "authenticity and integrity" of such structures. They listed the examples of the Atala Masjid in Jaunpur where shops were built into the enclosure, and Mecca Masjid in Ahmednagar, where fittings and fixtures were installed without the ASI's permission. They also cited the case of Fatehpur Sikri, where officials claimed that the Waqf is directly appointing tour guides, replacing the ASI-certified guides.

These ASI charges were contested by a number of Opposition members. All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) MP Asaduddin Owaisi, it is learnt, pointed out that the ASI is deliberately ignoring the very framework of laws that it operates under. The AMASR Act, he argued, provides for balancing private property rights to protected monuments with the public purpose of preservation.

Other members countered that no property could be declared as a Waqf arbitrarily without historical evidence of "Waqf by user". The new law, they said, is trying to do away with this very clause of "Waqf by user" which will throw open all Waqf properties for multiple claims.

ASI officials were also cornered by the ruling BJP's MPs, who asked them why the organisation had failed to act in instances listed by them where the Waqf status allegedly threatened the integrity and authenticity of the protected structures.

**Context**: The ASI informed a Parliamentary panel that shared ownership of protected monuments with the Waqf Board has led to conflicts. This issue is a key concern in the ongoing discussions on the Waqf Bill.

### Archaeological Survey of India

- **About:** It is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Culture
- **Founded in**: 1861
- **Father of Indian Archaeology**: Alexander Cunningham
- **Function**: The organization is responsible for the management and preservation of over 3650 ancient monuments, archaeological sites, and national heritage.
- **Heritage Preservation**: Engaging in a range of activities, the organization conducts surveys of antiquarian remains, explores archaeological sites, and undertakes excavation projects.

### Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act)

- **Passed by**: Parliament in 1958.
- **Aim:** To protect and preserve ancient monuments for future generations.
- It also provides for the regulation of archaeological excavations and for protection of sculptures, carvings and other such objects.
- **Applicability**: Covers monuments over 100 years old, regardless of ownership (public or private).
- **Protected Area:** A 100-metre radius around the monument is off-limits for construction.
- **Ancient Monument is defined as:** "Any structure, erection, or monument, or any tumulus or place of interment, or any cave, rock-sculpture, inscription, or monolith which is of historical, archaeological, or artistic interest and which has been in existence for not less than 100 years".
- **Archaeological sites and remains**: It mean "any area which contains or is reasonably believed to contain ruins or relics of historical or archaeological importance which have been in existence for not less than 100 years".
- **AMASR Amendment Bill**:
  - The Bill allowing the construction of public works in "prohibited areas", and the approval and impact assessment of such public works.
  - **Definition of Public Works**: "Construction works related to infrastructure financed and carried out by any department or offices of the central government for public purposes which is necessary for the safety or security of the public at large and emergent necessity is based on specific instance of danger to the safety or security of the public at large and there is no reasonable possibility of any other viable alternative to such construction beyond the limits of the prohibited area".

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