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# Long overdue

## Coal exchanges can balance out energy scarcities across India

Unveiled at a time of record domestic coal production, the Coal Exchange Rules, 2026, are a case of better-late-than-never. They will create a broad market-based mechanism through regulated trading platforms for the lynchpin of India's energy system – coal. They are aimed at enhancing price discovery, transparency, access for small consumers, as well as, one would hope, reduce bilateral agreements that are often opaque and come with a whiff of graft, too often. Today, most coal transactions between producers and buyers take place through long-term contracts, primarily for the power sector, followed by auctions, imports and captive mining. While India's commodity exchanges are well established, they function largely as financial markets rather than physical delivery platforms. Coal exchanges, however, appear closer in design to power exchanges, which, despite modest volumes, play a role in price discovery, market signalling and the development of secondary markets. As if to prove this point, coal exchanges are expected to serve the non-regulated sector, which relies on Coal India auctions where coal is often sold at a premium to the highest bidder. Power exchanges are not merely niche trading platforms; they serve as points of reference for the broader power market. They have enhanced price discovery and served as a balancing market without replacing long-term power purchase agreements. Initially the power exchanges were only balancing shortages, but eventually the spot prices became a barometer of the broader power market indicating scarcity, surplus and system stresses for all electricity stakeholders. Perhaps the first role of coal exchanges could be to open up inventories, allowing surpluses to balance out shortages across India.

The templates for the two exchanges are not very different though the specific rules framed by the Coal Controller Organisation of India will determine the success of coal exchanges. Just as with the successes, the failures of power exchanges can also serve as lessons learned for coal. Coal is not as fungible as electricity, which once generated is the same everywhere requiring only minimum standards. Coal quality varies widely. Therefore, robust standards and quality assurance are as important as contract design, liquidity creation and enforcement. The latter set of requirements will ensure that major producers and consumers are drawn to the coal exchanges. The emphasis should be on facilitating participation of retail consumers unlike power exchanges, which are dominated by discoms. Coal India's stance will be crucial. Besides safeguards against volatility, dispute resolution mechanisms and improved transportation logistics will be important too, since the coal exchanges will be physical delivery platforms.



# Empowering India's Energy Markets: Coal Exchange for Viksit Bharat

Posted On: 09 JUN 2026 8:56AM by PIB Delhi

In a significant step towards modernizing India's coal supply chain, the Government has paved the way for the establishment of Coal Exchanges in the country. The recently enacted *Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2025* introduced the concept of a Mineral Exchange and empowered the Central Government to promote transparent and efficient trading of minerals, including coal and its processed forms. In pursuance of the above, the Coal Exchange Rules, 2026 have been published by Ministry of Coal in the Official Gazette on 04.06.2026. These are available at the website link <https://coal.gov.in/sites/default/files/2026-06/09-06-2026a-wn.pdf> on the website of Ministry of Coal.

To facilitate this initiative, the Ministry of Coal has already designated the Coal Controller Organisation (CCO) in December 2025, as the authority responsible for registering and regulating Coal Exchanges. Eligible entities will be authorized by CCO to establish and operate Coal Exchanges, frame market rules and bye-laws, and facilitate coal trading. Registrations will be granted for a period of 25 years.

The introduction of Coal Exchanges marks a paradigm shift in coal marketing by moving from the traditional “one-to-many” sales model to a competitive “many-to-many” trading platform. This will enable transparent and market-driven price discovery, improve efficiency, and provide coal producers, including commercial and captive miners, with easier access to a wider pool of buyers. Public Sector coal companies can also leverage the platform to enhance market participation.

The Coal Exchange initiative reflects the Government's commitment to enhancing ease of doing business, promoting transparency, and building a modern, self-reliant energy ecosystem. By creating a more competitive and efficient coal market, the reform is expected to strengthen energy security, support industrial growth, and contribute significantly to the vision of *Viksit Bharat* through sustainable economic development and a future-ready energy sector.

In India, what is the role of the Coal Controller's Organization (CCO) ?

1. CCO is the major source of Coal Statistics in Government of India.
2. It monitors progress of development of Captive Coal/Lignite blocks.
3. It hears any objection to the Government's notification relating to acquisition of coal-bearing areas.
4. It ensures that coal mining companies deliver the coal to end users in the prescribed time.

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 3 and 4 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 4

Consider the following statements :

1. Coal sector was nationalized by the Government of India under Indira Gandhi.
2. Now, coal blocks are allocated on lottery basis.
3. Till recently, India imported coal to meet the shortages of domestic supply, but now India is self-sufficient in coal production.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

- 1. Context:** Coal Exchange Rules, 2026 notified under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Act, 2025 to establish regulated Coal Exchanges for market-based coal trading.
- 2. Why this Reform?**  
India's coal sector has largely operated through long-term contracts, auctions and administrative allocation. Coal Exchanges aim to introduce transparent price discovery, competition and efficient allocation.
- 3. Coal Exchange:** A regulated platform where multiple buyers and sellers trade coal, similar to power exchanges.
- 4. Coal Controller Organisation (CCO):** Non-Statutory Office under the Ministry of Coal; responsible for coal statistics, coal grading, quality surveillance, monitoring captive coal/lignite blocks and regulation of Coal Exchanges. (UPSC has previously asked about CCO functions.)
- 5. Legal Framework:**
  - **MMDR Act, 1957:** Principal law governing mining; States auction most onshore mineral blocks and grant leases, while the Centre notifies minerals and frames rules.
  - **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015:** Introduced auction-based allocation of coal blocks.
- 6. Coal Sector Reforms:** Private Mining → Nationalisation [Coking Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1972; Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973] → Coal India Limited (1975) → Coal Block Auctions (2015) → Commercial Coal Mining (2020) → Coal Exchanges (2026).

## Prelims Facts

- **China is the world's largest producer and consumer of coal; India ranks 2nd.**
- **United States of America (USA) has the world's largest coal reserves; India ranks 5th (~401 Billion Tonnes).**
- **India's annual coal production has crossed 1 Billion Tonnes.**
- **Coal India Limited (CIL) contributes about 75% of domestic coal production.**
- **Coal-based thermal power plants generate nearly 75% of India's electricity.**
- **India imports coal mainly coking coal used in the steel industry.**
- **Coal quality sequence: Anthracite → Bituminous → Lignite → Peat (decreasing carbon content and calorific value).**

# Project Kusha, our indigenous air defence shield, will be a game changer, says Rajnath

**Saurabh Trivedi**

NEW DELHI

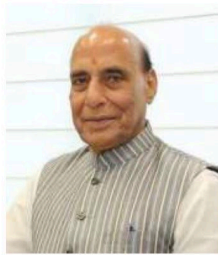
Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday described the indigenous Project Kusha air defence programme as a “game changer” for India’s security architecture, asserting that its importance had already been demonstrated during Operation Sindoor.

Addressing scientists and officials in Hyderabad, after inaugurating the Advanced Weapon System Complex at the Defence Research and Development Organisation’s (DRDO) Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL) in the Dr. A.P.J.

Abdul Kalam Missile Complex, Mr. Singh said India’s indigenous air defence capabilities had successfully thwarted enemy intentions during the operation.

“Today I predict that Project Kusha will be a game changer for India’s security scenario. It is a world-class indigenous air defence system. Just as the Govardhan hill protected the entire region of Braj in the *Dvapara Yuga*, our air defence system provided a protective umbrella during that period (Operation Sindoor),” he said.

Project Kusha is a long-range air defence missile system being developed by the DRDO to provide a



Rajnath Singh

comprehensive shield against a wide range of aerial threats.

The Defence Minister praised the DRDO’s Missile Systems and Strategic Systems cluster for strengthening India’s technological excellence, strategic

autonomy and national security.

He said indigenous systems such as Akash and BrahMos had proved India’s capability to compete in the global defence technology ecosystem.

## Changing warfare

Highlighting the changing nature of warfare, Mr. Singh said emerging technologies such as precision-strike systems, integrated air defence networks, hypersonic weapons, autonomous platforms, artificial intelligence and electronic warfare were reshaping modern battlefields. In this environment, he stressed the need for both resi-

lience and deterrence.

Referring to the government’s ambitious “**Mission Sudarshan Chakra**”, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his Independence Day address in 2025, Mr. Singh said the initiative would establish a multi-layered missile defence shield capable of protecting military assets, critical infrastructure and civilian establishments across the country.

“The system will provide robust protection while ensuring citizens face minimal inconvenience. It will also possess the capability to deliver a decisive response whenever required,” he said.

Consider the following statements about Mission Sudarshan Chakra of India :

1. It aims to enhance India's air defence, ballistic missile defence and aerial offensive capabilities.
2. This Mission is being designed to enhance rapid, precise, and powerful defence responses, reinforcing India's strategic autonomy.
3. One of the aims of this Mission is to cover all public places of India by an expanded nationwide security shield by 2035.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1 only

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1. **Context:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh highlighted the importance of Project Kusha, India's indigenous long-range air defence programme developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
  2. **Project Kusha:** Indigenous Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LR-SAM) system designed to intercept aircraft, stealth fighters, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), cruise missiles and ballistic missiles.
  3. **Development Status:** Received Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) from the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) in 2023; induction expected around 2028–29.
  4. **Key Features:** Three-layer interceptor system with engagement ranges of about 150 km, 250 km and 350 km; intended to provide capabilities comparable in role to advanced systems such as S-400 Triumf.
  5. **Mission Sudarshan Chakra:** National initiative launched in 2025 to establish a country-wide multi-layered air and missile defence shield by 2035 for protecting major cities, military installations, nuclear assets and critical infrastructure.
  6. **Project Kusha vs Mission Sudarshan Chakra**
    - Project Kusha = Specific long-range interceptor missile system.
    - Mission Sudarshan Chakra = Overall national air-defence architecture.
    - Project Kusha will form one of the major layers within Mission Sudarshan Chakra.
    - Kusha = Weapon System; Sudarshan Chakra = Integrated Defence Network.

# Equality of treatment for Persons with Disabilities

Addressing the digital divide through the Digital India Mission, India has marched on towards becoming a global “best practice” model of a digital welfare state. Yet, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) remain largely excluded from this promise of universal outreach. Disability pensions, contrary to the very principles underlying disability rights, are determined not by the nature or extent of disability but by domicile, the discretionary decisions of State governments, and cumbersome bureaucratic processes. As a result, a vulnerable section of citizens continues to remain outside the ambit of a welfare architecture that otherwise prides itself on inclusivity and last-mile delivery.

## An inadequate safety net

The 2011 Census recorded 2.68 crore PwDs. Today, accounting for population growth and changing disease profiles, their number is conservatively estimated at 4.5 crore-6 crore. Although the Supreme Court of India has recognised the right to live with dignity as a fundamental right and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provides legal protection, disability benefits – especially pensions – remain fragmented, discretionary, and inadequate. As a result, the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme covers only a small fraction of PwDs, while pension amounts in most States range from just ₹300 to ₹500 a month, with a few offering ₹1,000-₹3,000.

India spends barely 0.02% of GDP on disability welfare including pensions. South Africa spends 0.12%-0.15% of GDP (six times more); Brazil 0.45%-0.50% (20 times more); OECD countries 2.2% (110 times more) and Australia 0.35%-0.40% (20 times more).

Beyond politics, sound economics demands the inclusion of PwDs. The World Bank and UNDP estimate that low- and middle-income countries lose 3%-7% of GDP when PwDs are excluded from education, employment, and social security. Disability income improves household stability, rural consumption, and labour participation. Studies show fiscal multipliers of 1.4-1.6, while the 2025 Pro Bono Economics report found that the socio-economic returns from disability pensions exceed their costs by nearly 48%. Far from being a welfare expense, disability pensions are an investment and an effective economic stimulus.

India must establish a Minimum Universal Disability Pension Floor Rate (MUDPFR) to give effect to the state's constitutional obligation, under Article 41, to provide public assistance to persons with disabilities, and to operationalise Section 24 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, which guarantees adequate



**Sushil Kumar**

Former Secretary, Government of India, and an Advocate in the Supreme Court and High Court

India must adopt a minimum universal disability pension floor rate

social security, including pension benefits. Such a measure would translate the promise of inclusive growth and “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas” into reality by shifting disability pensions from a matter of charity and discretion to a matter of citizenship rights. While ensuring that no disabled person receives less than a minimum pension regardless of where they live, a MUDPFR will still allow States to provide additional top-ups.

This is not an unrealistic proposal. South Africa provides a national disability grant with uniform eligibility norms; Brazil's BPC guarantees a national minimum income; and Australia and New Zealand operate nationwide disability pension systems. Several developing countries, including Kenya, Rwanda, Thailand and Indonesia, also provide disability income support at the national level. International experience shows that centrally set standards promote uniformity, universality and portability.

A MUDPFR of ₹8,000 per month for 40 lakh beneficiaries would cost about ₹38,400 crore annually (0.08% of GDP), while ₹10,000 for 65 lakh beneficiaries would cost ₹78,000 crore. Even a pension of ₹15,000 per month would keep expenditure below 0.2% of GDP. Such spending is fiscally manageable when compared with allocations for food subsidies (₹2.05 lakh crore), rural development (₹1.80 lakh crore), tax concessions and revenue foregone (₹1.72 lakh crore), and infrastructure (₹11.11 lakh crore). Yet, disability pensions and inclusion continue to receive only a tiny fraction of public expenditure.

## From fragmentation to integration

The current disability pension system, shared between the Ministry of Rural Development and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, leads to duplication, delays and diffused accountability. Countries that have faced similar challenges have addressed them through a single national authority – South Africa's SASSA, Australia's NDIA, Brazil's INSS and Ireland's Department of Social Protection. India too needs a National Disability Pension Authority to oversee eligibility norms, a national registry, portability, digital integration, grievance redress and State-wise performance monitoring – one standard, one system, one nation.

Implementing a robust disability pension system would strengthen India's bid for a UN Security Council seat by translating its commitments into action under Article 28 of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ILO Recommendation No. 202, SDG 1.3, and the G-20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, all of which endorse social protection as a cornerstone of inclusive development.

Combining pensions with employment

support can move persons with disabilities from mere survival to productive participation. A MUDPFR could also yield economic benefits. Countries such as Singapore, South Korea, South Africa and Brazil integrate disability pensions with employment and social security systems. India should similarly strengthen its fragmented Disability Employment Incentive Scheme. Models abroad include employer tax incentives in Nigeria, the U.K.'s Access to Work programme, and Australia's wage subsidies. Existing schemes such as PM-DAKS, NAPS and State-level employer incentives provide a foundation for expansion.

## Constitutional imperative

A MUDPFR would give effect to the Constitution's guarantees of equality, equal protection, dignity and the right to life. India has already standardised major welfare programmes – from food security and health care to PM-KISAN and pensions – and delivers benefits at scale through DBT and UPI. The capacity and technology exist. What is needed is the political will to prioritise dignity. Disability pensions remain one of the few entitlements determined by where a person lives. If dignity is a constitutional right, geography cannot decide the minimum support for survival.

More than an economic or administrative reform, a MUDPFR is a moral one. It affirms that persons with disabilities are rights-bearing citizens, not recipients of charity. By transforming the state from a benevolent provider into a constitutional guarantor, it strengthens dignity, inclusion and citizenship.

Should India continue with a system in which disability pensions vary according to State budgets, political priorities and bureaucratic complexities, leaving persons with disabilities vulnerable to hardship? Or should the Republic guarantee a minimum level of support for all? A Viksit Bharat cannot leave its most vulnerable citizens at the mercy of a postcode lottery. Federalism cannot be a justification for inequity.

A MUDPFR is the next logical step in India's welfare architecture, building on rights-based entitlements enabled by digital inclusion and DBT. It would humanise the state, uphold the dignity of persons with disabilities and strengthen the Republic.

Over the past 75 years, India has steadily expanded its welfare state in pursuit of social justice. With the necessary platforms and delivery systems now in place, the time has come to secure the foundation. The real question is whether India recognises dignity for persons with disabilities as a constitutional right and a collective obligation. That promise is long overdue, and a MUDPFR offers a way to fulfil it.

दिव्यांगता के संदर्भ में सरकारी पदाधिकारियों और नागरिकों की गहन संवेदनशीलता के बिना दिव्यांगजन अधिकार अधिनियम, 2016 केवल विधिक दस्तावेज़ बनकर रह जाता है। टिप्पणी कीजिए। (150 शब्दों में उत्तर दीजिए)

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 remains only a legal document without intense sensitisation of government functionaries and citizens regarding disability. Comment. (Answer in 150 words)

1. **Context:** The article argues for a Minimum Universal Disability Pension Floor Rate (MUDPFR) so that every Person with Disability (PwD) receives a nationally guaranteed minimum pension, ensuring equality, dignity and social security across India.

## 2. Why Needed?

- Disability pensions vary widely across States.
- 2011 Census: 2.68 crore PwDs; current estimates: 4.5–6 crore.
- India spends only 0.02% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on disability welfare.
- Exclusion of PwDs from education, employment and social security may cost economies 3–7% of GDP.
- A pension floor of ₹8,000/month would cost only about 0.08% of GDP.

## 3. Legal Basis

- Article 14 – Equality before Law.
- Article 21 – Right to Life with Dignity (Francis Coralie Mullin, 1981; Bandhua Mukti Morcha, 1984).
- Article 41 – Public assistance in cases of disability (Directive Principles of State Policy).
- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016** – Disabilities expanded from 7 to 21; Section 24 mandates social security support.

## 4. Way Forward

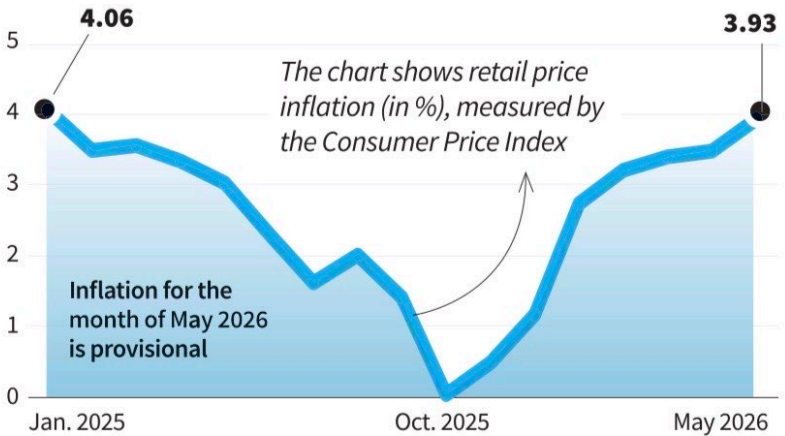
- National disability pension floor with State top-ups.
- National Disability Pension Authority for portability, uniform eligibility and grievance redressal.
- Similar nationwide disability income support exists in South Africa, Brazil and Australia.

## Prelims Facts

- India is a signatory to the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**.

# Inching higher

Combination of low base and cost pass-through from West Asia war into food and fuel increase retail inflation print



## Food prices push up retail inflation to 3.9%

**Ashokamithran T.**

MUMBAI

Retail inflation, as measured by the **Consumer Price Index**, increased to **3.9%** as food prices rose in **May**, according to data from the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** released on Friday. The inflation rate was **3.5%** in April.

Retail prices moved at the fastest pace since January 2025, when the index increased 4.06%, and

touched 3.9% last month, making it the highest inflation number in 16 months.

The headline numbers had reduced since October 2024, when the inflation was over 6%. By October 2025, it had almost stagnated. From November 2025, retail inflation started rising due to the low base and now has come just 0.07% short of the **RBI's target inflation rate of 4%**.

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Consider the following statements :

1. The weightage of food in Consumer Price Index (CPI) is higher than that in Wholesale Price Index (WPI).
2. The WPI does not capture changes in the prices of services, which CPI does.
3. Reserve Bank of India has now adopted WPI as its key measure of inflation and to decide on changing the key policy rates.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

1. **Context:** Retail inflation (Consumer Price Index - CPI) increased from 3.5% (April 2026) to 3.9% (May 2026) due to rising food prices; inflation remains within the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) target range.

## 2. **CPI & WPI**

- **CPI (Consumer Price Index):** Measures retail inflation; compiled by National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- **WPI (Wholesale Price Index):** Measures wholesale inflation; compiled by Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- **Food Weight:** CPI (45.86%) > WPI Food Articles (22.62%).
- **CPI** includes services; **WPI** excludes services.
- RBI targets CPI inflation, not WPI inflation.

## **Prelims Facts**

- **CPI Base Year:** 2012 → 2024.
- **WPI Base Year:** 2011–12 → 2022–23.
- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Base Year:** 2011–12 → 2022–23.
- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP) Base Year:** 2011–12 → 2022–23.
- **RBI Inflation Target:** 4% ± 2% (2–6%).
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):** 6 members (3 RBI + 3 Central Government nominees); Governor has a casting vote.

# Odisha to introduce free education from KG to PG in govt. schools, colleges: CM

**Satyasundar Barik**  
BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday announced that education from kindergarten (KG) to postgraduate (PG) level in all government institutions in Odisha would be made completely free.

Addressing a press conference on the occasion of the Bharatiya Janata Party government completing two years in the State, Mr. Majhi said, “Our government is committed to making education truly free and universal. Therefore, I announce that education from KG to PG level will be completely free of cost.”

The Chief Minister said the initiative would benefit all students in the State, particularly those from



CM Mohan Charan Majhi at an event marking two years of the BJP government in Odisha, in Bhubaneswar on Friday. ANI

economically weaker sections and girls.

## Food scheme soon

In another announcement, Mr. Majhi said the government would launch the Chief Minister Annapurna Yojana to strengthen food security. Under the scheme, all beneficiaries of

the National Food Security Act and the State Food Security Scheme would receive an additional 5 kg of rice per month free of cost.

“As a result, every beneficiary will receive 10 kg of rice free of cost every month. The scheme will benefit 3.28 crore beneficiaries, covering about 80

per cent of the State’s population. The State government will spend ₹8,813 crore annually on this programme,” he said.

In the education sector, Mr. Majhi said the government had taken two historic steps: implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which he said had been pending due to political reasons, and establishment of Godabarish Mishra Model Primary Schools in every panchayat. He said that out of 2,200 schools planned in the first phase, foundation stones had been laid for 322. Over the last two years, 26,615 teaching and non-teaching staff have been recruited, he said, adding that 45,000 more teachers would be recruited over three years.

**Context:** Odisha Government announced free education from Kindergarten (KG) to Postgraduate (PG) level in all government educational institutions to improve access, affordability and educational inclusion.

### **Mains Value Addition Facts**

- Article 21A – Right to Education (6–14 years).
- Article 45 – Early Childhood Care and Education.
- National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 advocates universal access from pre-school to higher education.
- **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-4** – Inclusive and equitable quality education for all.
- Education is a key driver of human capital formation, productivity and demographic dividend.
- Higher educational attainment is associated with improved labour-force participation, especially among women.
- **Can be cited as an example of a welfare-state approach to education and inclusive development.**
- **Useful in GS-2 answers on Education, Social Justice and Human Resource Development .**

# 'Deep-seated' bias for male child persists in society: SC

**Aaratrika Bhaumik**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has observed that though the country's child sex ratio has shown "clear signs of improvement", the continued prevalence of sex selection practices reflects "deep-seated patriarchal preferences" for a male child.

A Bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and P.K. Mishra made the observation while dismissing a Maharashtra doctor's appeal challenging criminal proceedings against him under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PCPNDT Act).

Referring to various schemes introduced by State governments to curb female foeticide, the court said these reflected sustained efforts to address

**The court noted that the country continues to face significant gaps in gender parity**

the systemic discrimination faced by "the girl child in an inherently patriarchal" society.

However, it pointed out that several States continue to record sex ratios at birth below the national average. "...the country's sex ratio has shown clear signs of improvement in recent years... Nonetheless, several States still report sex ratios at birth below the national average. This shows the continuing presence of deep-seated patriarchal preferences towards a male child and the 'behind the curtains' prevalence of sex selection practices," the Bench said.

Accordingly, the top

court stressed that strict enforcement of the PCPNDT Act would remain essential until entrenched social attitudes towards the girl child undergo change.

The judges also noted the country continues to face significant challenges in achieving gender parity when assessed against global indicators. "On a global level though, unfortunately, the data does not present a positive outlook. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025 records a drop in our ranking in terms of overall gender parity score from the previous year to 131 out of 148, from 129 the previous year", the Bench said.

Accordingly, the Bench refused to quash the criminal proceedings against the doctor, underlining that "letting infractions slide" would defeat the purpose of the PCPNDT Act.

Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world ?

- (a) World Economic Forum
- (b) UN Human Rights Council
- (c) UN Women
- (d) World Health Organization

**Context:** The Supreme Court, while refusing to quash proceedings under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 [PCPNDT Act], observed that despite improvements in the child sex ratio, deep-rooted patriarchal preference for a male child continues to drive sex-selection practices in society.

### **Mains Value Addition Facts**

- PCPNDT Act, 1994 prohibits sex selection before and after conception and regulates prenatal diagnostic techniques.
- The Court emphasised that strict enforcement of the Act remains necessary until societal attitudes towards the girl child change.
- NFHS-5 (2019–21): Sex Ratio at Birth = 929 females per 1,000 males.
- **Global Gender Gap Report 2025 (World Economic Forum):** India ranked 131st out of 148 countries (129th in 2024).
- Highlights the gap between legal equality and social reality in achieving gender justice.

### **Mains Keywords**

- Deep-rooted patriarchal preference.
- Gender-sensitive governance.
- Substantive equality.
- Constitutional morality.
- Dignity of the girl child.
- Behavioural and social transformation.