



Daily Current Affairs



To The Point

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1 BharatNet: Connecting Rural India to a Digital Future

Context: BharatNet, the world's largest rural broadband connectivity initiative, has connected over **2.14 lakh Gram Panchayats** using technologies like **optical fibre, radio, and satellites**. This transformative project is bridging the digital divide, bringing the power of the internet to the remotest corners of India.

Genesis of BharatNet:

- **Launched** in **October 2011** by the **Government of India** under the Ministry of Communications.
- The project aims to provide **affordable high-speed internet** to every **Gram Panchayat** across the country.
- BharatNet is a cornerstone of the government's mission to create a **digitally empowered India**.

Amended BharatNet Program (ABP) 2023:

In 2023, the government introduced the **Amended BharatNet Program (ABP)** with an outlay of ₹ **1,39,579 crores**, enhancing its scope and efficiency.

Key Highlights:

1. Extensive Connectivity:

- Optical Fibre (OF) connections to **2.64 lakh Gram Panchayats** in **ring topology**.
- Provision for connecting approximately **3.8 lakh non-GP villages** on a demand basis.

2. Maintenance and Monitoring:

- **Operation and maintenance** for 10 years, monitored by a **Centralized Network Operating Centre (CNOC)**.
- Payments to Project Implementation Agencies (PIAs) based on Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

3. Advanced Infrastructure:

- **Power backups** at Gram Panchayats and Block levels.
- Deployment of **Remote Fibre Monitoring Systems (RFMS)** for efficient network oversight.

Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN): The **Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN)** is a fund established to improve telecommunications services in India, replacing the **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**. It supports BharatNet by ensuring better accessibility and service quality in rural areas.

Phased Implementation of BharatNet:

- Phase I (Completed):** Connected **1 lakh Gram Panchayats** using **existing infrastructure** with **optical fibre cables**.
- Phase II (Completed):** Extended coverage to an additional **1.5 lakh Gram Panchayats** using a mix of **optical fibre, radio, and satellite technologies**.
- Phase III (Ongoing):**
 - Aims to **future-proof** the network with:
 - **5G technology integration**.
 - Enhanced **bandwidth capacity**.
 - Improved **last-mile connectivity** to ensure reliability and accessibility.

Transformative Impact of BharatNet:





1. Digital Inclusion

- Rural villages now have access to **high-speed internet**, enabling **e-governance**, **online education**, and **telemedicine services**.
- Supports initiatives like **Digital India**, fostering inclusivity.

2. Economic Empowerment

- Internet connectivity has unlocked opportunities for **digital commerce**, **financial inclusion**, and **entrepreneurship** in rural communities.

3. Education and Healthcare

- Facilitates **digital classrooms**, bridging the education divide.
- Enables **telehealth services**, improving rural healthcare accessibility.

4. Strengthening Governance

- Empowers **Gram Panchayats** to implement **e-governance** projects, enhancing **transparency**, **efficiency**, and citizen engagement.

Conclusion: BharatNet is more than just a connectivity project—it is a **lifeline for rural India**, empowering millions to access opportunities far beyond their physical reach. With continued investment, robust execution, and a sustained focus on inclusion, BharatNet is set to transform rural India into a **digitally empowered and economically vibrant society**, bridging the digital divide one village at a time.

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India's Path to a Developed Nation by 2047

Context: India envisions a transformative journey to become a **developed nation** by 2047, fueled by the energy, innovation, and determination of its **youth**. As the nation celebrates its centenary of independence, its focus lies on **inclusive growth**, **sustainable progress**, and **effective governance**, positioning youth at the heart of this mission.



Vision: Viksit Bharat @2047

- The **Viksit Bharat @2047 initiative** aims to create a **prosperous and inclusive India** with a focus on empowering youth as both **drivers** and **beneficiaries** of change.
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** emphasized that the youth are critical agents for steering the nation toward this goal.

Strategic Roadmap:

The **Union Budget 2024-25** outlines a nine-pronged strategy to realize the dream of **Viksit Bharat**:

1. **Agriculture:** Boosting productivity and ensuring resilience.
2. **Employment and Skilling:** Expanding opportunities and workforce capabilities.
3. **Human Resource Development:** Promoting social justice and inclusive growth.
4. **Manufacturing and Services:** Enhancing competitiveness and innovation.
5. **Urban Development:** Creating smart, sustainable cities.
6. **Energy Security:** Focusing on green and renewable energy sources.
7. **Infrastructure:** Building world-class infrastructure.
8. **Research and Innovation:** Driving cutting-edge advancements.
9. **Next-Gen Reforms:** Implementing transformative policies for future growth.

Key Initiatives for Viksit Bharat:

Skilling and Empowerment:

- **National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (NPSDE):** Bridges skill gaps and promotes apprenticeships.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):** Trained over **1.42 crore individuals** since 2015.
- **Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS):** Provides vocational training with a focus on **female participation**.
- **PM Vishwakarma Initiative:** Upskills traditional artisans and craftsmen.

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- **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP):** Enhances transparency and resolves land disputes.
- **APAAR ID:** A digital academic identity streamlining educational transitions and prior learning recognition.
- **5G Connectivity:** Extends digital inclusion to remote areas, boosting sectors like **agriculture, healthcare, and retail.**

Innovative Platforms:

- **PRAGATI Platform:** Real-time tracking of projects worth ₹18 lakh crore, ensuring timely execution.
- **Aspirational Districts Program:** Addresses regional disparities using digital tools for **inclusive development.**

Youth Engagement:

- **Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue:** Transformed from the **National Youth Festival**, empowering young leaders to contribute holistically.

Challenges on the Path to Viksit Bharat:

1. **Economic Inequality:** Persistent income and regional disparities hinder equitable progress.
2. **Skill Development and Education:** Insufficient infrastructure and training leave youth unprepared for future job markets.
3. **Environmental Concerns:** Rapid industrialization and urbanization exert pressure on natural resources, exacerbating climate change issues.
4. **Governance and Corruption:** Inefficiencies and corruption delay essential reforms.
5. **Technological Disruptions:** While **AI** and advancements enhance productivity, they also risk labor displacement and inequality.

Conclusion and Way Forward:

India's journey to **Viksit Bharat by 2047** is a shared vision involving **citizens, industries, and institutions.** By addressing challenges, leveraging its **youth potential**, and fostering **transparent governance**, India is well-positioned to achieve its ambitions.

This mission isn't just about development—it's about creating a **thriving, inclusive, and sustainable nation** where every individual contributes to and benefits from the nation's progress. Together, we can realize the dream of a **brighter and prosperous India.**

3

Government Ends No-Detention Policy in Central Schools

Context: The Central Government has officially abolished the **no-detention policy** in schools under its administration, including **Kendriya Vidyalayas** and **Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas**.

About the New Decision:

- The move impacts nearly **3,000 Central schools**, including:
 - Sainik Schools**, managed by the Ministry of Defence.
 - Eklavya Model Residential Schools**, overseen by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

END
OF THE
NO DETENTION
POLICY



Understanding the No-Detention Policy:

- Introduced under Section 16 of the Right to Education Act, 2009**, the policy prohibited schools from detaining students up to **Class 8**.
- Objective:** The policy aimed to minimize dropouts and ensure all children received a **basic level of education**.
- Criticism:**
 - States reported that students were becoming **less serious about academics**.
 - In 2016, the **Central Advisory Board of Education** recommended abolishing the policy due to declining academic standards.
- 2019 Amendment:**
 - Allowed governments to hold back students in **Class 5, Class 8**, or both if they failed a **re-examination**.
 - Gave States the discretion to implement or scrap the no-detention policy.
 - Following this, **18 States and Union Territories** abolished the policy.

New Policy Framework:

The **abolition of the no-detention policy** allows schools to:

- Hold back students** who fail their **annual examinations**.
- Provide **additional support mechanisms** for struggling students to ensure they catch up academically.

Why the Change?

- Academic Standards:** The policy was linked to **compromised learning outcomes**, especially in higher grades.
- Fear of Failing:** The prospect of being held back is expected to motivate students to focus on **learning fundamental concepts** and excelling in exams.
- Improved Outcomes:** This shift aims to raise **academic and educational standards** across India.

Conclusion:

Scrapping the no-detention policy marks a significant step towards addressing **declining academic rigor** in schools. By reintroducing accountability, the move is expected to help students grasp **core concepts**, build a solid educational foundation, and contribute to **enhancing the nation's academic standards**.

4

India's Dependence on China for Critical Minerals: Challenges and the Road Ahead

Context: In 2023, the Ministry of Mines identified **30 critical minerals** vital for **India's economic growth** and **national security**.

- The report highlighted **complete import dependence** for 10 of these minerals but didn't address India's **dependence on China**, the global leader in critical minerals.
- This dependency exposes India to **strategic vulnerabilities**, emphasizing the urgency of exploring alternatives.



Understanding Critical Minerals:

Critical minerals are essential raw materials for **economic stability** and **national security**, often used in **advanced technologies** and **renewable energy solutions**.

- Rare and Non-Substitutable:** These minerals are difficult to mine, challenging to replace, and prone to **supply chain disruptions**.
- Rising Demand:** Driven by global technological progress and the transition to **green energy**, ensuring a steady supply of critical minerals is a strategic imperative for nations worldwide.

China's Stronghold in Critical Minerals:

China dominates the global market for critical minerals due to:

- Extensive Resources:** China has identified **173 types of minerals**, including:
 - 13 energy minerals
 - 59 metallic minerals
 - 95 non-metallic minerals
- Strategic Investments:** In 2023, China invested **\$19.4 billion** in exploration, discovering **132 new deposits**, including **34 major ones**.
- Processing Leadership:** Controls a major share of mineral refining:
 - Rare Earths:** 87%
 - Lithium:** 58%
 - Silicon:** 68%
- Global Investments:** China holds strategic stakes in **overseas mining projects**, strengthening its grip on supply chains.

China's Export Tactics: China uses its dominance to strategically control the export of critical minerals:

- Notable Measures:**
 - 2010: **Rare earth embargo** on Japan.
 - Recent restrictions on **Gallium, Germanium, and Antimony** exports.
 - 2023: **Ban on rare earth technologies** to safeguard domestic interests.
- Calculated Approach:** China avoids drastic moves that could disrupt its **export-driven industries** or affect its reliance on imported raw materials.

India's Reliance on China:

India heavily depends on Chinese imports for six critical minerals (2019–2024 data):

1. **Bismuth (85.6%)**: Essential for **pharmaceuticals and chemicals**.
2. **Lithium (82%)**: A key component in **EV batteries and energy storage systems**.
3. **Silicon (76%)**: Used in **semiconductors and solar panels**.
4. **Titanium (50.6%)**: Crucial for **aerospace and defense**.
5. **Tellurium (48.8%)**: Integral to **solar and thermoelectric devices**.
6. **Graphite (42.4%)**: Vital for **EV batteries and steel production**.

China's dominance in these minerals exposes **India's supply chain vulnerabilities**.

Why Does India Rely on Imports?

Despite abundant resources, India faces several structural challenges:

1. **Technological Barriers**: Limited ability to extract minerals like **lithium** from **Jammu & Kashmir's 5.9 million tonnes of deposits**.
2. **Investment Challenges**: **High risks** deter private investments in exploration.
3. **Policy Gaps**: Lack of incentives and advanced technologies hinder domestic production.

The Strategic Path Forward:

To reduce dependence on China, India is implementing several strategies:

1. **Securing Overseas Assets**: Establishing **Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL)** to acquire international mineral resources.
2. **Fostering Collaborations**: Joining initiatives like the **Minerals Security Partnership** and **Critical Raw Materials Club** to diversify supply sources.
3. **Investing in R&D**: Leveraging institutions like the **Geological Survey of India** and **CSIR** for innovative mining and processing technologies.
4. **Promoting Recycling**: Encouraging a **circular economy** and offering production-linked incentives to reduce dependency.
5. **Policy Reforms**: Updating mining regulations and introducing incentives to attract private investments.

Conclusion:

India's heavy reliance on China for critical minerals poses significant risks to its **economic security** and **development goals**.

- **Overcoming these challenges** requires a long-term commitment to **investment, technology development, and global partnerships**.
- With proactive policies and sustained efforts, India can secure a **self-reliant future**, reducing its dependency and ensuring robust supply chains for critical minerals.

Quick Insight: What is an Ore in Mining?

Ore is a natural rock or sediment containing **valuable minerals** at concentrations that make extraction profitable. The **grade of ore** refers to the proportion of the desired material present.

5 Bangladesh's Extradition Request for Sheikh Hasina: Implications and Challenges

Context: Bangladesh has formally requested **India** to extradite its former Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina**, who sought asylum in India on **August 5** after mass protests led to the end of her **16-year rule**.



- **Diplomatic Note:** Bangladesh has sent an official request to India, citing the need for Hasina to face **judicial processes** for alleged crimes, including **genocide** and **crimes against humanity**.
- **Legal Action:** The **International Crimes Tribunal (ICT)** in Dhaka has issued arrest warrants for Hasina and some of her former ministers and officials.

The India-Bangladesh Extradition Treaty:

Overview of the Treaty:

- **Signed in 2013** to address cross-border criminal activities, particularly involving **Indian insurgents** in Bangladesh and **Bangladeshi militants** hiding in India.
- It provides a legal framework for extradition but does not make compliance mandatory in every case.

Key Provisions:

1. Extraditable Offences:

- The treaty mandates extradition for individuals charged with, convicted of, or wanted for committing offences punishable by at least **one year of imprisonment** in both countries.
- This includes **financial crimes, murder**, and attempts to commit or assist in such crimes.

2. Dual Criminality:

- The offence must be recognized as a crime in **both countries**.

3. Provisions for Refusal:

- **Political Offences:** Extradition can be denied if the offence is of a **political nature**, except for crimes like **murder, enforced disappearance, or torture**.
- **Good Faith:** Refusal is possible if the accusations are not made in **good faith** or are seen as unjust.
- **Military Offences:** Acts classified solely as military offences are not subject to extradition under the treaty.

2016 Amendment:

- Simplified the process by removing the requirement for evidence.
- Now, only an **arrest warrant** from a competent court is required.
- Sheikh Hasina's multiple arrest warrants make her case eligible for extradition under this amendment.

Details of Bangladesh's Extradition Request:

Bangladesh's Diplomatic Note:

- The request asks **New Delhi** to send back **Sheikh Hasina** to face judicial processes.

India's Response:



- The **Ministry of External Affairs** has acknowledged receiving the request but has not provided an official statement.
- Indian officials are evaluating the **legal and diplomatic grounds** before deciding.

Strained Bilateral Relations:

- Sheikh Hasina's asylum in India and her public remarks have **strained India-Bangladesh ties**.
- **Hasina's Allegations:**
 - She accused the interim government of **genocide** and **minority persecution**, including attacks on **Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian** communities.
 - She called for **justice** and investigations into violence during the protests.
- **Bangladesh's Concerns:**
 - Interim leader **Prof. Muhammad Yunus** has expressed discontent over Hasina's statements, claiming they create **tension** between the nations.
 - Yunus urged India to help resolve these issues to maintain bilateral harmony.

Regional Implications:

- The extradition request and the political situation surrounding **Hasina's asylum** could significantly impact **India-Bangladesh relations**, necessitating cautious and strategic diplomacy.

Can Sheikh Hasina Be Extradited?

India's Right to Refuse:

India has grounds to deny extradition based on the treaty's provisions:

- **Good Faith Concerns:** India can argue that the charges lack **good faith** or are politically motivated.
- **Political Offences:** If the charges are deemed **political**, extradition may be refused.
- **Military Offences:** Accusations related solely to military laws are not extraditable.

Potential Impact of Refusal

Refusing the request could further **strain bilateral relations**, but compliance must align with **India's legal framework** and **diplomatic interests**.

Conclusion: The extradition of Sheikh Hasina presents a complex challenge for **India-Bangladesh relations**. While the **extradition treaty** provides a legal framework, political sensitivities and bilateral ties will play a crucial role in determining India's response.

For India, balancing its commitment to **justice** with preserving regional **diplomatic harmony** will be key to navigating this delicate issue.

6 MHA Reimposes Restrictions in Three Northeast States: What You Need to Know

Context: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has reintroduced the **Protected Area Regime (PAR)** in the northeastern states of **Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram**. This move places new restrictions on the movement of **foreigners**, requiring them to obtain prior **permission** and **Protected Area Permits (PAP)** to visit these regions.



- The **relaxation** previously granted to these states under the **Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958** has been **withdrawn** with immediate effect.

What is the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958?

Under this order, **foreign nationals** cannot enter or remain in a **protected area** without a permit issued by the **Central government** or an authorized office. The permit specifies entry points, residence, and stay duration.

- This order covers areas located between the **inner line** and the **international border** of certain states, including **Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland**, and regions in **Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand**, and part of **Sikkim**.
- Additionally, the **Andaman & Nicobar Islands** and parts of **Sikkim** are designated as **restricted areas**.

Relaxation of the Protected Area Regime:

In **2010**, the **MHA** relaxed the **PAR** for **Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland** due to improved security conditions and efforts to boost tourism.

- Relaxation Timeline:** The initial relaxation, meant to last one year, was extended multiple times. By **2022**, the exemption was extended until **December 31, 2027**.
- However, on **December 17, 2024**, the relaxation was **withdrawn** due to rising **security concerns**.

Reasons Behind the Withdrawal of the Relaxation:

The **growing security issues** in the region, particularly in **Manipur**, have prompted the MHA to reimpose the **PAR**.

- Ethnic Violence:** Since May 2023, **Manipur** has been grappling with violent ethnic clashes.
- Myanmar Refugees:** The **influx of refugees** from **Myanmar** following the military coup in 2021 has escalated tensions along India's **1,643 km border** with Myanmar, which passes through the northeastern states of **Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram**.
- The **Free Movement Regime (FMR)**, which allowed people living within 16 km of the international border to move freely, was **suspended** by the MHA in January.

How to Obtain a Protected Area Permit (PAP):

Foreigners wishing to visit **Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram** must now follow the PAP procedure.

- Application Process:** The PAP can be obtained through Indian **embassies, consulates**, the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, or **Foreigners Regional Registration Offices (FRRO)**.
- Foreign nationals from countries such as **Afghanistan, China, and Pakistan** must also seek **prior approval** from the MHA.



- **Registration Requirements:** Foreign visitors must now **register with the Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO)** within **24 hours** of arrival in any district or state.
- **Myanmar Nationals:** Previously exempt from PAP requirements, **Myanmar nationals** must now also **register** within 24 hours of arrival, regardless of the type of visa held.

The Inner Line and its Significance:

The **Inner Line (IL)** is a colonial-era concept designed to protect the indigenous tribes of the **Northeast** from external exploitation.

- It **separates** the tribal-majority **hills** from the plains and requires visitors to obtain an **Inner Line Permit (ILP)** for entry and stay in these areas.

Conclusion: Addressing Security Concerns and Monitoring Movement:

By reimposing the **Protected Area Regime (PAR)**, the **MHA** aims to address **growing security challenges** in **Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram**, especially in the wake of ethnic violence and the **Myanmar refugee crisis**.

While the **restrictions** might impact tourism, the government's priority is to **safeguard national security** and control the movement of foreigners in these sensitive border regions.

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