

**GOVERNANCE / SOCIAL JUSTICE**

❖ **Does India's Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 protect patients' rights and dignity in institutions?**

➤ **CONTEXT:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in a report flagged the “inhuman and deplorable” condition of all 46 government-run mental healthcare institutions across the country; out of which three are run by the Union government and the remaining by State governments.

- The report notes the facilities are “illegally” keeping patients long after their recovery, in what is an “infringement of the human rights of mentally ill patients”. Moreover, the perennial shortage of doctors, lack of infrastructure, and proper amenities speak of a “very pathetic and inhuman handling by different stakeholders”.
- The human rights body’s observations were made after visits to all operational government facilities, to assess the implementation of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017(MHA). The MHA, which experts note was a “watershed moment for the right to health movement in India,” discourages long-term institutionalization of patients and reaffirms the rights of people to live independently, and within communities. This right is doubly guaranteed under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2016.
- The present report stated long-term institutionalisation thus not only violates Article 21 of the Constitution which protects personal liberty, but also indicates a “failure of the State Government(s) to discharge the obligation under various international Covenants [such as the United Nations Convention] relating to rights of persons with disabilities which have been ratified by India.”.

➤ **What does the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 say?**

- MHA’s predecessor (the Mental Healthcare Act, 1987) prioritised the institutionalisation of mentally-ill people and did not afford any rights to the patient. “The previous Act provided disproportionate authority to judicial officers and mental health establishments to authorise long-stay admissions often against the informed consent and wishes of the individual. As a result, several persons continue to be admitted and languish in mental health establishments against their will.
- The 1987 iteration embodied the ethos of the colonial-era Indian Lunacy Act of 1912, which linked criminality and madness. Asylums were places where “abnormal” and “unproductive” behaviour was studied as an individual phenomenon, isolating the individual from society. The intervention is meant to correct an inherent deficit or “abnormality”, thereby leading to “recovery”.
- In 2017, the MHA in essence dismantled the clinical heritage attached to asylums. As part of Section 19, the government was made responsible for creating opportunities to access less restrictive options for community living such as halfway homes, sheltered accommodations, rehab homes, and supported accommodation.
- The Act also discourages using physical restraints (such as chaining), objects to unmodified electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), and pushes for the rights to hygiene, sanitation, food, recreation, privacy, and infrastructure.
- Importantly, the Act recognised “people have a capacity of their own. Under Section 5, people are empowered to make “advance directives”. They can nominate a representative for themselves, thereby potentially helping to eliminate absolute forms of guardianship in favour of supported decision-making. This is barring cases where the person needs a higher degree of care and support (even then the admission is done for a limited period).
- This was the first time a psychosocial approach to mental healthcare was adopted. The Act acknowledged that environmental factors such as income, social status, and education impact mental well-being, and therefore, recovery needs a psychiatric as well a social input. “The Act has shifted from providing only treatment to centring the rights and the will of the person. “Earlier it was treatment, but now it is more in terms of care.”

➤ **What are the challenges to implementation?**

- While the MHA safeguards the rights of people in mental healthcare establishments, enforcement challenges remain. Almost 36.25% of residential service users at state psychiatric facilities were found to be living for one year or more in these facilities, according to a 2018 report by the Hans Foundation.
- Experts note three main reasons: non-compliance to MHA regulations, absence of community-based services, and social stigma that looks at a person with mental illness as a “criminal” deserving of incarceration.
- Under the MHA, all States are required to establish a State Mental Health Authority and Mental Health Review Boards (MHRBs) – bodies that can further draft standards for mental healthcare institutes, oversee their functioning and ensure they comply with the Act. In a majority of the States, “these bodies are yet to be established or remain defunct, many States have not notified minimum standards which are meant to ensure the quality of MHEs.
- The absence of MHRBs renders people unable to exercise rights or seek redressal in case of rights violations. In September 2022, the Bombay High Court responded to a plea stating that mental healthcare

institutes “do not routinely assess the condition of patients to ascertain if they can be discharged.” It results in cases where people “languish” in mental hospitals for decades.

- In a separate order in December, the Court subsequently noted the “regrettable state of affairs.” The Court was informed that the State Mental Health Authority – which was required to meet at least four times every under Section 56, had remained inactive until August 2022. The Court further reprimanded the government for its failure to implement the Act.
- Experts notes that the Act takes on a human rights lens by shifting the obligation of care onto different stakeholders — including caregivers, government institutions, police officials, and mental health practitioners. Poor budgetary allocation and utilization of funds further create a scenario where shelter homes remain underequipped, establishments are understaffed, and professionals and service providers are not adequately trained to deliver mental healthcare, she added.
- While the Act says a person can walk out if they are recovered, in practice, people still need somebody— a caregiver or the state -- to take them out. People are either put in these establishments by families or through the police and judiciary. In many cases, families refuse to take them because of the stigma attached to incarceration or the idea that the person is no longer functional in society.
- According to a study gender discrimination plays a role here: women are more likely to be abandoned due to “family disruption, marital discords and violence in intimate relationships,”. Many long-term patients at mental healthcare institutions, especially women have no place to go -- families do not want them back and some are even ask to stay on at the institution as they do not want to go back. Moreover, 55.4% of people who lived in mental healthcare facilities were referred to by the police or magistrates –most people have histories of homelessness, poverty, and a lack of education– and they thus have no place to go after recovery.
- While Section 19 recognises the right of people to “live in, be part of, and not be segregated from society,” there have been no concrete efforts towards implementation. The dearth of alternative community-based services -- in the form of homes for assisted or independent living, community-based mental healthcare services, and socio-economic opportunities – further complicates access to rehabilitation.
- ✓ In 2021, a petition was filed before the Supreme Court challenging the rehabilitation of persons from long-stay mental health establishments into beggar homes or custodial homes in Maharashtra. The plea was in relation to the Maharashtra government shifting 190 patients (who had no family to return to ) to beggar homes, women shelter homes, and age-old homes as a way to “rehabilitate” them in society. The Court subsequently ordered for this practice to be discontinued since it violates MHA, 2017, and that the people be transitioned into community-based rehabilitation facilities instead.
- ✓ States have begun experimenting with this model of reintegration and recovery: Chennai’s Institute of Mental Health launched five halfway home, in collaboration with an NGO and managed by the District Mental Health Programme in October 2021, where people can access the confidence and skills needed to manage themselves outside a structured institution.
- ✓ Kerala has also started half-way homes and community living centres, providing rehabilitation to people who are abandoned by family members, who don’t wish to return to their families, who have no memory of their families, and those who have mental disabilities and are unable to work.

In the absence of rehabilitation, institutions are the only spaces available for many persons living with mental illness. According to expert “this is not the first time NHRC reports have highlighted various challenges and human rights violations within these institutions yet nothing changes on the ground and they suggest implementing rights and recovery-based approaches to change attitudes and practices on the ground.

## PRELIMS

### 1. Ring around a dwarf planet

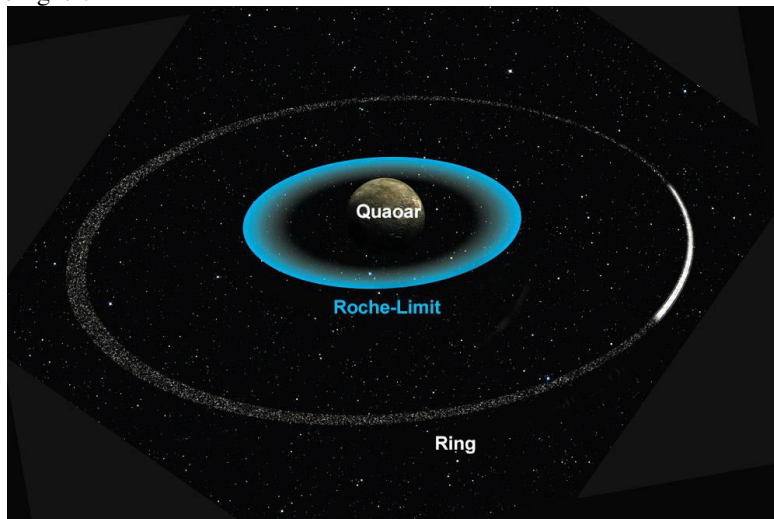
➤ **CONTEXT:** Astronomers have found a ring around a dwarf planet, located in the Kuiper Belt at the solar system’s edge, called Quaoar, according to a new study.

- The ring, however, is positioned much further away from the planet than is usual and defies theoretical explanations.
- The study, ‘A dense ring of the trans-Neptunian object Quaoar outside its Roche limit’.
- The study described the findings as “very strange”, saying they might force astronomers to rethink the laws governing planetary rings. According to the study, the ring lies far away from the Roche limit — a mathematically determined distance beyond which rings aren’t supposed to exist.
- With an estimated radius of 555 km, Quaoar is roughly half the size of Pluto and orbits beyond Neptune. It also has a moon of its own, which is known as Weywot. As the dwarf planet is too small and too distant to be observed directly, the researchers detected the ring with the help of a phenomenon called stellar occultation.
- **How was the ring discovered?**
- A stellar occultation occurs when, as seen from Earth, a bright star passes behind a planet. This allows astronomers or anybody on Earth to observe the sharp silhouette of the planet for a brief period of time.

- The phenomenon, which rarely occurs, is used by researchers to analyse a planet's atmosphere and determine if it has a ring around it — in 1977, scientists discovered the Uranian ring system with the help of stellar occultation.
- The team involved in the latest study examined Quaoar for around three years, between 2018 and 2021, through Earth-based and space-based telescopes. During these years, the dwarf planet passed in front of four stars, helping researchers observe the shadow of the eclipses.
- “However, they also observed some dimming of the starlight before and after the star blinked out. That pointed to a ring obscuring part of the light”.

➤ **What is the Roche limit?**

- The most intriguing part of the findings is the distance between Quaoar and its ring. Located 2,500 miles away from the dwarf planet, the ring is around 1,400 miles further away from the Roche limit, as per the calculations of the scientists. They suggest that at such a distance, the particles of the ring should have come together to form a moon.



- ✓ For a further understanding of the Roche limit, let's look at the Earth and the moon. The Earth's gravity pulls on the moon. However, one side of the moon is closer to the planet and hence, the pull is stronger on the side facing the Earth. The result is the so-called tidal force, which either stretches or compresses the moon from all sides. What helps the moon keep it together is its own gravity. It essentially counteracts the effect of the tidal force.
- ✓ But if it bring the moon closer to the Earth, the tidal force will overcome the satellite's gravity and then disintegrate it, turning the moon into a ring. The minimum distance at which this happens is known as the Roche limit. It is named after the French astronomer Édouard Roche, who discovered the limit in 1848.

- The Roche limit doesn't just exist between just the Earth and the moon. It is applicable to any planet and the celestial bodies around it. For instance, Saturn. The beautiful rings that we see around the planet are within the Roche limit and therefore, there are no moons in that area.
- In 1992, comet Shoemaker–Levy 9 got too close to Jupiter, breaching the Roche limit, and was broken apart by the tidal force. Two years later, parts of it collided with the planet, providing the first direct observation of an extraterrestrial collision of solar system objects.

➤ **What is the reason behind Quaoar's far-out ring?**

- As of now, nobody exactly knows how Quaoar's ring has managed to remain stable at such a distance from the Roche limit. The researchers of the study have said that there can be a variety of possible explanations but they aren't sure about any one of them.
- It might be possible that Quaoar's moon, Weywot, or some other unseen moon contributes gravity that somehow holds the ring stable. Another potential explanation can be that the particles of the ring are colliding with each other in such a way that they are avoiding to coalesce into a moon.
- No matter what the reason, astronomers believe the new study points to the possibility of discovering more rings around smaller planets like Quaoar in the outer solar system, which might expand our understanding of planetary ring systems.

**2. Man Made Fibre**

➤ **CONTEXT: Textile Minister holds first meeting of the newly constituted Textile Advisory Group for Manmade Fibre (MMF).**

➤ **Types of Fibres:**

- Natural fibres: Natural fibres are fibres made by nature.
  - ✓ Examples are cotton, wool, silk, flax or hemp.
- Man-made fibres (MMF). Man-made fibres (MMF) are fibres made by man.
  - ✓ MMF can be organic or inorganic.
  - ✓ Organic MMF can be made from natural materials like wood, or are made from synthetic polymers.

➤ **Classification of Man-made Fibres**

- Synthetic Fibres:
  - ✓ Synthetic fibres are synthesis from chemical processes.
  - ✓ Man-made synthetic fibres are also called artificial fibres.

- ✓ These synthetic fibres were first developed in the nineteenth century for the production of stronger fibres that can withstand high pressure.
- ✓ Examples of synthetic fibres are nylon, acrylic, polyester etc.
- **Regenerated Fibres:**
  - ✓ These are semi-synthetic fibres that are made from the raw materials having long chain polymer structures.
  - ✓ They are modified and are partially degraded during the chemical processes.
  - ✓ These regenerated fibres are made from cellulose polymers that are naturally occurring in cotton, wood, hemp, flax etc.
  - ✓ The cellulose is first converted into a pure form of viscous mass and is then converted into fibres by extrusion through spinnerets.
  - ✓ The first man-made regenerated fibres are rayon and acetate.
- **Advantages of MMF**
  - ✓ High strength, Retains their original shape, Elastic, Soft, Low cost, Colours can be easily incorporated into man-made fibres, They are lightweight materials, Easy manufacturing.
- **Disadvantages of MMF**
  - ✓ Man-made fibres do not absorb moisture and traps heat in our body.
  - ✓ Some man-made fibres cause skin allergies due to their dermatological actions.
  - ✓ Man-made fibre fails to absorb the perspiration
- 3. **Vibrant Village Program**
  - **CONTEXT:** In a concerted push to upgrade infrastructure along the country's northern border amid the ongoing standoff with China, the Union Cabinet Wednesday approved the allocation of Rs 4,800 crore for the Centre's Vibrant Villages Programme even as the Cabinet Committee on Security approved the induction of over 9,000 troops in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).
  - **About the scheme**
    - The Vibrant Villages scheme will provide funds for development of essential infrastructure and creation of livelihood opportunities in 19 Districts and 46 Border blocks 4 states and 1 UT along the northern land border of the country.
    - Mandate: Vibrant Villages Program will help in achieving inclusive growth and retaining the population in the border areas.
    - In the first phase 663 Villages will be taken up in the programme.
    - Scope: Vibrant Villages Program will be implemented in 19 Districts and 46 Border blocks 4 states and 1 UT along the northern land border of the country.
    - Funding: Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) was approved with financial allocation of Rs. 4800 Crore.
    - Out of financial allocation of Rs. 4800 Crore 2500 crore rupees will be used for roads.
    - Significance: the Vibrant Villages scheme will result in Comprehensive development of villages of blocks on northern border thus improving the quality of life of people living in identified border villages.
    - This will help in encouraging people to stay in their native locations in border areas and reversing the outmigration from these villages adding to improved security of the border.
  - **Program Features**
    - The Vibrant Villages scheme aids to identify and develop the economic drivers based on local natural human and other resources of the border villages on northern border and development of growth centres on "Hub and Spoke Model". This to be done through-
      - ✓ Promotion of social entrepreneurship,
      - ✓ Empowerment of youth and women through skill development and entrepreneurship,
      - ✓ Leveraging the tourism potential through promotion of local cultural, traditional knowledge and heritage and
      - ✓ Development of sustainable eco-agribusinesses on the concept of "One village-One product" through community based organisations, Cooperatives, SHGs, NGOs etc.
  - **Implementation**
    - Vibrant Village Action Plans will be created by the district administration with the help of Gram Panchayats. 100 % saturation of Central and state schemes will be ensured.
    - Key outcomes that have been attempted are, connectivity with all-weather road, drinking water, 24x7 electricity – Solar and wind energy to be given focused attention, mobile and internet connectivity.
    - Tourist centers, multi-purpose centers and health and wellness Centers.
    - There will not be overlap with Border Area Development Programme

### ANSWER WRITING

**Q. Discuss the challenges and opportunities of India's export sector and suggest strategies to increase its competitiveness.**

**Introduction**

- India is the world's fifth-largest economy and has a significant export sector. In recent years, the country has been trying to boost its export competitiveness to enhance its economic growth. According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), India's exports grew from USD 289 billion in 2008 to USD 600 billion in 2021. Despite this impressive growth, India's export sector faces several challenges that impede its competitiveness in the global market.
- Challenges faced by India's export sector: Despite being one of the fastest-growing economies, India's export sector has faced several challenges over the years, such as:
  - Infrastructure: India's export sector lacks world-class infrastructure, which makes it difficult to move goods from production centers to ports.
  - Regulatory procedures: Cumbersome regulatory procedures have been a major challenge for the export sector in India. Long wait times and complicated procedures often discourage exporters from shipping their goods.
  - Inefficient customs clearance: The process of customs clearance in India is slow and bureaucratic, leading to delays and higher costs.
  - Competition from other countries: India faces stiff competition from other emerging economies, such as China and Vietnam, which have well-established export sectors and offer low-cost manufacturing options.
  - High logistics costs: The high logistics costs in India, including transportation and storage, make it less competitive in the global market.
  - Lack of Innovation: India's export sector is dominated by traditional industries, such as textiles, gems and jewelry, and agriculture. These industries have limited potential for innovation and value addition, leading to low-profit margins and lower competitiveness.
- Opportunities in India's export sector: Despite the challenges, India's export sector has several opportunities to increase its competitiveness in the global market. Some of the opportunities include:
  - Favorable government policies: The government of India has introduced several policies to boost exports, such as the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) and the Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS).
  - Skilled labor force: India has a large pool of skilled workers, which can be leveraged to increase the competitiveness of the export sector.
  - Emerging sectors: India's service sector is growing rapidly, which presents opportunities for exports in sectors such as IT services (Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), healthcare (Dr. Reddy's Laboratories), and education.
  - Rising middle class: India's growing middle class has increased demand for high-quality goods, which presents opportunities for Indian exporters to cater to this market.
- Strategies to increase India's export competitiveness: To increase India's export competitiveness, the following strategies can be implemented:
  - Improving Infrastructure: The government should invest in improving infrastructure, including roads, railways, and ports, to reduce transportation costs and improve logistics.
  - Streamlining Regulatory Procedures: The government should simplify and streamline regulatory procedures to make it easier for exporters to ship their goods.
  - Enhancing Customs Clearance: The government should introduce technology-based solutions to improve customs clearance processes and reduce delays.
  - Developing New Markets: Indian exporters should explore new markets to reduce their reliance on traditional markets such as the United States and Europe.
  - Encouraging Innovation: The government should encourage innovation in the manufacturing sector by providing incentives for research and development.

### Conclusion

- India's export sector has significant potential for growth, but it faces several challenges. The government and the private sector must work together to address these challenges and implement strategies to increase India's export competitiveness.
- By improving infrastructure, simplifying regulatory procedures, enhancing customs clearance, exploring new markets, and encouraging innovation, Indian exporters can take advantage of the opportunities in the global market and boost India's economic growth.

### MCQs

1. Consider the following statements
  1. Vibrant village programme is central sector scheme under which holistic development works are to be undertaken across the northern bordering villages
  2. It has been announced under union budget 2023-24

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) **Neither 1 nor 2**

2. Which of the following is a man-made fibre?
  - a) Linen
  - b) Rayon**
  - c) Silk
  - d) Hemp
3. Consider the following statements
  1. Quaoar is currently defined as a minor planet
  2. Quaoar is in a distant part of the Solar System called the Kuiper belt, which contains many icy bodies.
 Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
  - a) 1 only
  - b) 2 only
  - c) Both 1 and 2**
  - d) Neither 1 nor 2
4. Roche limit often mentioned is related to which of the following?
  - a) Celestial mechanism**
  - b) Pollution limit
  - c) Building code in earth quake prone area
  - d) International trade
5. With reference to Mental Healthcare Act 2017, consider the following statements:
  1. All States are required to establish a State Mental Health Authority and Mental Health Review Boards (MHRBs).
  2. It decriminalized attempted suicides.
 Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
  - a) 1 only
  - b) 2 only
  - c) Both 1 and 2**
  - d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. Consider the following statements, with respect to National Central Zoo authority
  1. It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment & Forests and climate change.
  2. The Central Zoo Authority has been constituted under the section 38A of Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972
  3. It is an affiliate member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA)
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
  - a) 1 and 2 only
  - b) 2 and 3 only
  - c) 1 and 3 only
  - d) 1,2 and 3**
7. The statue called Parrot lady often mentioned in news recently belongs to which of the following?
  - a) Konark Sun Temple
  - b) Temples of Hampi
  - c) Khajuraho temple**
  - d) Lingaraj temple
8. The term "AMRITPEX2023" often mentioned in news is related to which of the following?
  - a) Exhibit rich culture and heritage achievements of India through stamps and letter writing**
  - b) Promoting the ocean expeditions by Indian Navy
  - c) Exhibiting India's agricultural commodities at internal food festivals
  - d) Exhibiting the tribal handicraft at India International Trade Fair.
9. Parhaiya is a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of recently seen in news belongs to which of the following state or UTs?
  - a) Jharkhand**
  - b) Rajasthan
  - c) Kerala
  - d) Jammu and Kashmir
10. Saman Bird sanctuary is located in which of the following state?
  - a) Rajasthan
  - b) Manipur**
  - c) Kerala
  - d) Andhra Pradesh