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OCTOBER, 2025



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Census, Caste Census and Delimitation Commission in India

Census in India

- The last **Census in India** was conducted in **2011**.
- The **next Census**, originally scheduled for **2021**, was **postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- Now, after a gap of **17 years**, the new **Census will begin on March 1, 2027**, which will also include a **caste-based census**.



Importance of Census

- The Census provides vital data on the **size, distribution, socio-economic and demographic characteristics** of the population.
- The data is used for:
 - Determining the **number of seats** in Parliament, State Assemblies and local bodies.
 - **Allocating SC/ST reservations** and fixing their proportions.
 - **Policy formulation and development planning**.
 - Implementing the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act)** effectively.



Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act, 2023)

- The Act reserves **33% of seats for women** in the **Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and Delhi Assembly**.
- It is the **106th Constitutional Amendment Act (2023)**, passed and approved by the President.
- The **Delimitation Commission**, based on the new Census, will determine the reserved seats for women.

Legal Framework

- **Census Act, 1948:** Conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner**, under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- **Census Rules, 1990:** Define procedures, appointments and administrative guidelines.
- As per the Act:
 - The **Central Government** can conduct the Census whenever it deems necessary.
 - **Citizens are legally required** to provide accurate information.
 - **Census data remains confidential**.

Constitutional Status

- Under the **Seventh Schedule**, Census is listed in the **Union List (Entry 69)**.
- Therefore, **only the Central Government** has the authority to conduct it (**Article 246**).
- **Articles 341 and 342** deal with the identification and enumeration of **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** and **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**.

Historical Background of Census in India

Period	Description
Rigvedic Period (800–600 BCE)	References to population enumeration found.
Chanakya's Arthashastra (3rd century BCE)	Population data used for taxation policy.
Akbar's Ain-i-Akbari	Recorded data on population, industries and wealth.
1872	First Census under Lord Mayo (non-synchronous).
1881	First synchronous national Census under Lord Ripon; conducted every 10 years thereafter.

Key Features of the 2027 Census

(a) Two-Phase Process

- **Phase 1 (October 2026):** Himalayan states – Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand.
- **Phase 2 (March 2027):** Rest of India.

(b) Inclusion of Caste Data

- For the first time since independence, caste data will be included.
- This will help in **social justice and evidence-based policymaking**.

(c) Use of Digital Technology

- Mobile apps, digital platforms and **GIS mapping** will be used.
- Ensures **transparency, accuracy and efficiency** in data collection.



Caste Census: Historical Context

- The **first Census** in British India was in **1872** under **Lord Mayo**.
- **Regular Census** started in **1881** under **Lord Ripon** and caste enumeration was included.
- Caste data was collected **regularly till 1931**.
- **1941 Census** also included caste data, but it was **never published**.
- **1951 Census** recorded caste data **only for SCs and STs**.
- Following the **Mandal Commission (1990)**, **27% reservation** was implemented for **OBCs** in government jobs.
- The **2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)** collected caste data after independence, but **the results were not made public**.

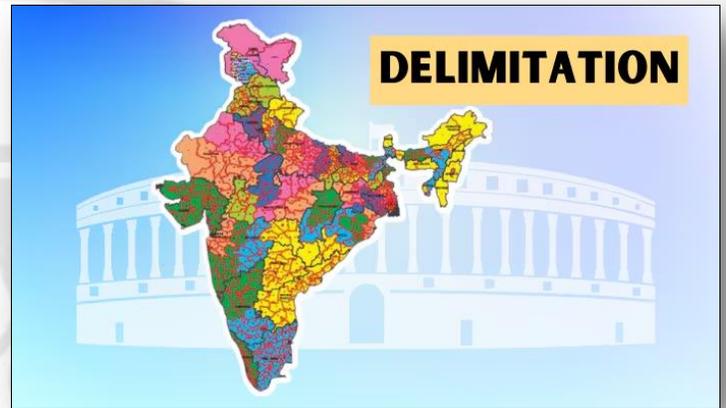
Need for a Caste Census

1. **Policy Transparency:** To make policies scientific and evidence-based.
2. **Reservation Review:** To rationalize reservation according to the actual socio-economic status.
3. **Identification of Marginalized Groups:** To design targeted welfare programs.
4. **Reduction of Social Inequality:** To promote equal opportunities through accurate data.

Delimitation Commission of India: Balancing Representation and Federal Fairness

Why in News?

- Recently, the Union Home Minister assured that the process of *delimitation* (redrawing of constituency boundaries) will be carried out **without reducing the representation of southern states** in the Lok Sabha.
- He emphasized that southern India would not be “penalized” for successfully controlling population growth and that any increase in Lok Sabha seats would ensure **justice and balance** between the north and the south.



This statement has reignited an important national debate:

- *Should political representation be based purely on population?*
- *If yes, will it unfairly disadvantage for states that performed well in population control and human development?*

What is Delimitation?

- **Delimitation** refers to the act of **redrawing the boundaries of electoral constituencies** in a country to ensure fair representation for all citizens.
- The primary aim is to make sure that each constituency has, as far as practicable, **an equal population**, ensuring that every vote carries equal value — “*One Person, One Vote, One Value.*”
- In India, this responsibility rests with an independent body — the **Delimitation Commission of India**, a *quasi-judicial institution* established under the Delimitation Act.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

The legal and constitutional foundation for delimitation in India lies in the following provisions:

1. Article 82 – Delimitation after each Census

- After every Census, Parliament is empowered to enact a new *Delimitation Act*.
- The President of India then constitutes a **Delimitation Commission** to carry out the exercise.

2. Article 170 – Delimitation for State Assemblies

- Deals with the division of states into territorial constituencies for legislative assemblies.

3. Key Constitutional Amendments

Amendment	Year	Significance
42nd Amendment	1976	Suspended delimitation until after the 2001 Census (to encourage population control).
84th Amendment	2001	Extended the freeze on seat allocation until 2026; only SC/ST reservations could be adjusted.
87th Amendment	2003	Allowed use of 2001 Census data for redrawing boundaries, without changing the total number of seats.

Result:

No change in the number of Lok Sabha or Assembly seats since 1971, though population has grown enormously and unevenly across regions.

Composition of the Delimitation Commission

The Commission is formed by the **President of India** in consultation with the **Election Commission of India**.

<p>Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A sitting or retired Judge of the Supreme Court – <i>Chairperson</i> 2. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) or his nominee 3. The State Election Commissioner of the concerned state(s) 	<p>Nature and Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a quasi-judicial body, independent of political control. • Its orders are final and cannot be challenged in any court of law. • The Election Commission is responsible for implementing these orders.
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Judicial Exception:

In the *Kishore Chandra Chhaganlal Rathod vs. State of Gujarat* case, the Supreme Court observed that although its orders are final, **judicial review is possible** if recommendations are arbitrary or violate constitutional principles.

Functions and Powers of the Commission

- Fix boundaries of **Lok Sabha** and **State Assembly** constituencies.
- Maintain near-equal population across constituencies within a state.
- Identify **Scheduled Caste (SC)** and **Scheduled Tribe (ST)** reserved constituencies.
- Consider **public suggestions and objections** before finalizing.
- Once notified, its report **cannot be altered** by Parliament or the government.

It is, therefore, often called a “**Powerful Commission.**”

Historical Evolution of Delimitation in India

Commission	Year	Chairperson	Census Used	Key Highlights
1st	1952	Justice Fazl Ali	1951	First exercise after independence.
2nd	1963	Justice K.N. Wanchoo	1961	Updated constituencies after population rise.
3rd	1973	Justice J.L. Kapur	1971	Last before seat freeze; boundaries redefined.
4th	2002	Justice Kuldeep Singh	2001	Implemented after long gap; J&K excluded.
Special	2020	Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai	—	Conducted for J&K, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland & Arunachal Pradesh.

Recent Case: Jammu & Kashmir (2020–2022)

- After the abrogation of **Article 370**, the **Delimitation Commission for J&K** was set up.
- **Report (2022):**
 - Total seats: 114 (including 24 reserved for PoK).
 - Effective seats increased from 83 to 90.
 - Jammu: 43 seats | Kashmir: 47 seats.
 - Introduced SC/ST reservation for the first time.
 - Aimed to enhance regional and demographic balance.

Why Delimitation is Crucial

1. **Ensures Equal Representation:**
Prevents under- or over-representation of regions with unequal population growth.
2. **Maintains Electoral Fairness:**
Aligns representation with demographic realities and migration trends.
3. **Adapts to Urbanization:**
Rapidly growing cities and shrinking rural populations need new constituency boundaries.
4. **Strengthens Democracy:**
Upholds equality of vote and citizen participation.

Challenges and Controversies

1. Population Freeze and Imbalance

- Since seat allocation has been frozen since 1976, constituencies in fast-growing states like **Uttar Pradesh** or **Bihar** now represent far more people than those in **Kerala** or **Tamil Nadu**.
- This violates the ideal of equal vote value.

2. Political Gerrymandering

- Though the Commission is independent, political parties often lobby or influence public consultation phases to shape boundaries favorable to them.

3. North–South Divide

- **Southern states** (Tamil Nadu, Kerala andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana) have achieved lower fertility rates and better governance.
- **Northern states** (UP, Bihar, MP, Rajasthan) continue to have high population growth.
- A population-based seat reallocation could **increase northern dominance** in Parliament and **reduce southern representation**.

Example:

- **Uttar Pradesh:** 1 MP = ~25.3 lakh people
- **Tamil Nadu:** 1 MP = ~18.4 lakh people
This means a Tamil Nadu voter's vote is worth more in relative terms.

4. Impact on Federalism

- A larger number of MPs from populous northern states could lead to **policy bias** toward their regional needs.
- This might weaken **cooperative federalism** and increase political alienation in the South.

5. Administrative Complexity

- Implementing new boundaries requires redrawing thousands of polling stations, updating electoral rolls and reorganizing administrative units.

Possible Solutions and Policy Options

1. Increase Total Lok Sabha Seats

- Expand the House to accommodate proportional increases without taking away representation from any region.
- India currently has **543 elected MPs** — this could be expanded to 700+ as per population growth.

2. Adopt a Multi-Criteria Formula

- Use not only population but also indicators such as **development, governance quality, education and efficiency** to determine seat allocation.

3. Weighted Representation

- Introduce a system where population and performance (like fertility rate control) are both considered.

4. Promote Consensus and Dialogue

- Encourage **Centre–State consultations** and **bipartisan consensus** before 2026 to avoid political polarization.

5. Regular Delimitation

- Conduct delimitation after every Census (every 10 years) to ensure timely adjustments rather than massive shifts after decades.

6. Public Participation and Transparency

- Publish draft maps, encourage public feedback and make the process transparent to avoid perceptions of bias.

The 2026 Challenge

- The **next delimitation** after 2026 will be one of the most critical in India's democratic history.
- It will decide the **future political weight of states**, redefine **Centre-State power relations** and test the strength of India's **federal structure**.

Key Question:

How can India ensure fair representation **without punishing** states that have achieved population control and high human development?

Conclusion

Delimitation lies at the intersection of **democracy, demography and federalism**.

Its primary goal — *equal representation for equal citizens* — must coexist with India's plural and federal character.

- On one hand, the **principle of equality** demands that representation reflect current population realities.
- On the other, **federal fairness** demands that development and population control efforts not be discouraged.

As India prepares for the post-2026 delimitation, policymakers must balance:

- **Demographic justice** with
- **Developmental incentives** and
- **Representation equality** with **federal stability**.

Ultimately, the Delimitation Commission is not just redrawing boundaries it is **reshaping the geometry of Indian democracy** for the next century.



Nobel Prize 2025: Overview and Winners

Why in news?

The Nobel Prizes for 2025 were announced between October 6 and October 9, with the Peace Prize scheduled for October 10 (today, as of the current date) and the Prize in Economic Sciences set for October 13.

Below is a detailed summary of the announced winners, including their achievements, backgrounds and significance.

1. Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (Announced October 6, 2025)

- **Laureates:** Awarded jointly to **Mary E. Brunkow** (USA), **Frederick J. Ramsdell** (USA) and **Shimon Sakaguchi** (Japan).
- **Reason:** "For their discoveries concerning peripheral immune tolerance."
- **Details:**
 - The immune system protects against infections but must avoid attacking the body's own tissues, which can lead to autoimmune diseases like type 1 diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis. These laureates uncovered mechanisms of **peripheral immune tolerance**, where regulatory T cells (Tregs) suppress harmful immune responses outside the thymus (central tolerance).
 - **Shimon Sakaguchi** (Osaka University) identified Tregs in the 1990s, showing they prevent autoimmunity. His work built on earlier skepticism and defined a new class of T cells.
 - **Mary E. Brunkow and Frederick J. Ramsdell** (then at the University of Washington) discovered the **FOXP3 gene** mutation linked to immune dysregulation (e.g., in "scurfy" mice models), confirming Tregs' role.
 - **Impact:** Their research has advanced treatments for autoimmune disorders, organ transplants and cancer immunotherapies (e.g., CAR-T cell therapies). It explains why the immune system tolerates the body's own cells while fighting threats.
 - **Backgrounds:**
 - Brunkow: Geneticist specializing in immunology; key in identifying FOXP3 mutations.
 - Ramsdell: Immunologist; focused on T-cell development.
 - Sakaguchi: Pioneering immunologist; his 1995 paper redefined T-cell subsets.
 - **Significance:** This is the first Nobel in Medicine shared among three for Treg research, building on prior immunology prizes (e.g., 2011's for allergies). It highlights the immune system's complexity beyond central tolerance.

2. Nobel Prize in Physics (Announced October 7, 2025)

- **Laureates:** Awarded jointly to **John Clarke** (USA/UK), **Michel H. Devoret** (France/USA) and **John M. Martinis** (USA).
- **Reason:** "For the discovery of macroscopic quantum mechanical tunnelling and energy quantisation in an electric circuit."
- **Details:**
 - Quantum effects were thought limited to atomic scales, but these laureates demonstrated them in larger systems—like handheld electrical circuits—using superconducting Josephson junctions.
 - They observed **quantum tunneling** (particles passing through barriers) and **quantized energy levels** in macroscopic setups, challenging classical physics.
 - **Key Experiments:** Clarke (UC Berkeley) pioneered sensitive quantum sensors; Devoret (Yale) and Martinis (Google Quantum AI) advanced circuit quantum electrodynamics (cQED), enabling qubit control for quantum computers.
 - **Impact:** Foundations for quantum technologies, including quantum computers (e.g., error-corrected qubits), cryptography and sensors for dark matter detection. Builds on 2022's quantum entanglement prize.
 - **Backgrounds:**
 - Clarke: British physicist; expert in SQUIDS (superconducting quantum interference devices) for magnetometry.
 - Devoret: French physicist; bridged quantum optics and circuits.
 - Martinis: American; led quantum chip development at Google.
 - **Significance:** Expands quantum mechanics to "human-scale" systems, accelerating practical quantum tech amid global competition (e.g., US-China quantum race).

3. Nobel Prize in Chemistry (Announced October 8, 2025)

- **Laureate:** **Omar M. Yaghi** (USA/Jordan).
- **Reason:** "For creating molecular constructions with large spaces through which gases and other chemicals can flow." (Focus on metal-organic frameworks, or MOFs.)
- **Details:**
 - Yaghi pioneered **reticular chemistry**, designing porous crystalline materials (MOFs) with atomically precise structures. These frameworks have vast surface areas (up to 7,000 m²/g) for capturing gases like CO₂ or hydrogen.
 - His work started in the 1990s, creating the first MOFs for efficient storage and separation of molecules.
 - **Impact:** Applications in carbon capture (climate change mitigation), hydrogen fuel storage (clean energy), water purification and drug delivery. MOFs could reduce industrial emissions by 10-20%.
 - **Background:** Born in Jordan (1965); PhD from University of Illinois; Professor at UC Berkeley. As a child, inspired by a book on molecules; reflects on "drifting" into chemistry.
 - **Significance:** Chemistry's first solo prize since 2009; complements 2016's for molecular machines. Addresses urgent global challenges like net-zero emissions.

4. Nobel Prize in Literature (Announced October 9, 2025)

- **Laureate:** László Krasznahorkai (Hungary).
- **Reason:** "For his compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art."
- **Details:**
 - Known as the "master of the apocalypse," Krasznahorkai's novels blend dystopian melancholy, biblical rhythms and Eastern European existentialism. His prose features long, hypnotic sentences exploring collapse, faith and human frailty.
 - Debut: *Satantango* (1985), a rural apocalypse tale adapted into Béla Tarr's film. Other works: *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1989), *Seiobo There Below* (2004).
 - **Impact:** Influences global literature; won 2015 Man Booker International for *Satantango*. Praised by Susan Sontag; reaffirms art's resilience amid chaos.
 - **Background:** Born 1954 in Gyula, Hungary; studied philosophy; screenwriter for Tarr's films. Lives reclusively; said the prize proves "literature exists beyond non-literary expectations."
 - **Significance:** First Hungarian winner; 118th Literature prize. Follows 2024's Han Kang; emphasizes Central European voices post-Cold War.

5. Nobel Peace Prize (Announced October 10, 2025)

- **Status:** To be announced today at 11:00 CEST (5:00 AM EDT) by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo.
- **Details:** Among 338 nominees (244 individuals, 94 organizations). Focuses on efforts for fraternity among nations, disarmament, or human rights. Recent themes: nuclear abolition (2024 to Nihon Hidankyo). Watch live on nobelpeaceprize.org.
- **Significance:** Often the most publicized; past winners include Malala Yousafzai (2014) and UN agencies.

Prize Amount and Date

- Total amount: 11 million Swedish kronor (approximately US\$1.2 million)
- Prize Distribution Date: December 10, 2025 (Alfred Nobel's death anniversary)

Other Nobel Prize Announcements

- Physics: October 7
- Chemistry: October 8
- Literature: October 9
- Peace: October 10
- Economic Sciences: October 13

Background of the Nobel Prize

- The Nobel Prize was established by Swedish scientist, chemist and inventor Alfred Nobel.
- Alfred Nobel was the inventor of dynamite and held approximately 355 patents in his lifetime.

Establishment

- Alfred Nobel died in 1896.
- He wrote in his will that a large portion of his estate be kept as a fund.
- This fund was to be awarded annually to individuals who had performed "the most beneficial work for mankind."
- Based on this will, the Nobel Prizes began to be awarded in 1901.

Fields of the Nobel Prize

According to Alfred Nobel's will, the prizes are awarded in the following fields:

1. Physics
2. Chemistry
3. Medicine or Physiology
4. Literature
5. Peace

Later, in 1968, the Swedish Central Bank (Sveriges Riksbank) established an additional prize in the field of economics, called the "Nobel Memorial Prize" (The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel).

Awarding Institutions

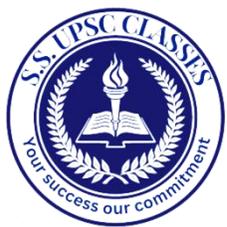
- Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences—for Physics, Chemistry and Economics
- Karolinska Institute—for Medicine or Physiology
- Swedish Academy—for Literature
- Norwegian Nobel Committee—for the Peace Prize

Award Form

- Each prize consists of a gold medal, a certificate (Diploma) and a cash prize are awarded.
- Currently, this amount is approximately 11 million Swedish kronor (approximately US\$1.2 million).
- The prize is awarded annually on December 10th—the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death.

Question: What is the subject of the 2025 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine?

- A) Gene therapy in cancer
- B) Vaccine development
- C) Peripheral immune tolerance
- D) Artificial organ development



India's move towards recognizing the Taliban? Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi is coming to India on a five-day visit.

Why is in the news?

Taliban flag poses diplomatic dilemma ahead of Amir Khan Muttaqi's first visit to India

India is yet to grant official recognition to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

Key points:

- Since the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, India has not yet formally recognized the new government. However, events are rapidly changing.
- Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's visit to India and India's presence at the "Moscow Format" meeting held in Russia before that, indicate that India is moving towards a new era of dialogue and cooperation with the Taliban regime.

UN sanctions still apply to Taliban Foreign Minister

- Significantly, Amir Khan Muttaqi's name is on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Sanctions List.
- Nevertheless, India has granted him permission to visit- that is, granted him an "exemption" from UN sanctions- to enable him to undertake diplomatic travel.
- This "exemption" is granted only when a country's government and the United Nations agree on diplomatic and humanitarian purposes.
- India has not only granted Muttaqi permission to visit, but has also decided to accord him protocol at the level of Foreign Minister- a significant symbolic step.

Foreign Minister Protocol

According to reports in The Hindu and Reuters, the Indian government is preparing to provide Amir Khan Muttaqi with all the diplomatic privileges accorded to any other country's foreign minister-

- Official reception and security arrangements at the airport
- Formal meetings at Hyderabad House
- Hosting diplomatic lunches or dinners
- Interactions with senior Indian officials and institutions

“Moscow Format” Meeting: India and the Taliban's first official joint presence

- A “Moscow Format” meeting of 10 countries was recently held in Moscow, the capital of Russia.
- It included India, Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.
- For the first time, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi participated in this meeting as an “official member.”
- The Taliban’s black and white flag was also hoisted at this meeting- a symbol of Russia and other regional countries’ acceptance of the Taliban as a “ground reality.”
- India also did not oppose the Taliban representative from this forum, but instead agreed to a joint statement- this in itself signifies a “de facto” recognition.

India’s Policy Shift: “Influence Through Contact”

- India vacated its embassy when the Taliban seized power in 2021.
- However, in 2022, India again sent a "Technical Mission" team to Kabul, which remains active today.
- This team provides services such as humanitarian aid, medical support and scholarships to Afghan citizens.
- India's policy now clearly focuses on "Engagement without Recognition."
- New Delhi believes that completely ignoring the Taliban would be against India's interests, especially as China and Pakistan are deepening their influence there.

Why the setback for Pakistan?

- Pakistan has always had influence in Afghanistan, but its relationship with the Taliban is no longer the same.
- Pakistan had hoped that the Taliban would remain its full ally, but now the Taliban has tried to balance Islamabad's diplomacy by increasing contacts with countries like India.
- This growing closeness between India and the Taliban is a major blow to Pakistan because:
- India's soft power in Afghanistan has been quite influential;
- The Taliban needs humanitarian aid and trade cooperation from India; and through India, the Taliban is trying to gain international legitimacy.

Potential Issues in India-Taliban Talks

The following issues may be prominent in the meeting between External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Amir Khan Muttaqi:

1. Humanitarian assistance – increasing the supply of wheat, medicines and other relief materials from India.
2. Education and scholarships – re-entry and visa facilitation for Afghan students in Indian universities.
3. Security cooperation – controlling the activities of terrorist groups such as ISIS-K or al-Qaeda.
4. Trade and connectivity – reviving Afghan trade through the Chabahar Port and international transit routes.

Regional Equations: The Role of Russia, China and Iran

Russia's role in the Moscow Format has been crucial. China and Iran- all three countries- are now close to practically recognizing the Taliban. These countries' goals are:

- To eliminate US influence in Afghanistan,
- And to strengthen regional stability and counter-terrorism cooperation.

India is part of this group and its challenge is to derive strategic advantage from the Taliban while maintaining its democratic credentials.

Criticism from Former Afghan Leaders

- Former Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta and other diplomats have cautioned India that this engagement could "strengthen the legitimacy of the Taliban regime.
- The Taliban remains restrictive on issues of women's education, human rights and freedom. India should not compromise its democratic identity."
- However, Indian diplomats maintain that "dialogue does not mean support."
- It is part of a strategic balance- to protect India's geopolitical interests.

The Hindu reports: "This is practical diplomacy, not formal recognition."

- The Hindu report states that India's move is part of practical diplomacy.
- India has understood that the ground realities in Afghanistan have changed.
- India cannot protect its interests by remaining isolated from the Taliban regime, especially when China has begun infrastructure investments there.
- Former Ambassador Vivek Katju said-

"India should work in coordination with the United Nations and the international community. But our interests in Afghanistan are very deep- so dialogue with the Taliban is essential."

Conclusion: India's "Diplomatic Rebalancing" Strategy

While India is currently refraining from formally recognizing the Taliban, every move makes it clear that New Delhi is now adopting the "Politics of Realism."

Muttaqi's visit to Delhi is not just a visit, but the beginning of a rebalancing of its Afghan policy.

India has now begun to view Afghanistan not as a "crisis-ridden country" but as a "partner in regional stability."

If this dialogue progresses, the coming months could see

- humanitarian assistance agreements,
- trade agreements,
- formal security coordination arrangements between India and the Taliban.

And the day is not far off when India will recognize the Taliban- if not "de jure" (formally), then at least "de facto" (practically)- as a recognized government.

India, Afghanistan and the Taliban: Regional Diplomacy

- India and Afghanistan's relations are decades old. These relations encompass historical, cultural, religious, economic and diplomatic dimensions.
- Afghanistan's geopolitical importance is enhanced by its position as a strategic bridge between South Asia and Central Asia.
- Afghanistan has repeatedly faced political instability, war and external intervention. In this complex scenario, the Taliban's rise and
- seizure of power are significant developments that have a direct impact on regional security and India-Afghanistan relations.

Taliban: Origin and Ideological Background

- Name and Meaning: "Taliban" is derived from the Arabic word "talib," meaning student or disciple.
- Founded: In 1994, by Pashtun students educated in Pakistani madrassas under the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar.
- Objective: To impose Sharia law-based governance and a "pure Islamic system" in Afghanistan.
- Social and ideological basis: The Taliban emerged in protest against the chaos, tribal conflict and corruption that followed the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989).

First Taliban Regime (1996–2001)

Seizure of Power

- Captured Kabul in 1996.
- Country name: Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
- Mullah Omar: "Amir-ul-Momineen" (Leader of the Believers).

Key Features

- Complete ban on women's education and employment.
- Media, music, films, dance, sports, etc. prohibited.
- Strict punishments for theft, adultery and apostasy, such as flogging and stoning to death.
- 2001: Destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, considered an inhumane act against world cultural heritage.

US Intervention and the Fall of the Taliban (2001)

- September 11, 2001: Terrorist attacks on the United States (9/11).
- Accusations against the Taliban: Providing shelter to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda.
- US-led NATO forces invaded Afghanistan.
- Taliban rule ended by December 2001; a new government was formed under the leadership of Hamid Karzai.
- Taliban underground, but active in rural areas.

Resurgence and the Doha Agreement (2004–2020)

- 2004–2020: Gradually regained influence in southern and eastern Afghanistan.
- Support from Pakistan.
- Gradually becoming a well-organized insurgent organization.

Doha Agreement (2020)

- Agreement between the US and the Taliban, reached in Qatar.
- US agreed to withdraw troops.
- The Taliban promised to reduce violence and enter into talks with the Afghan government.
- This was seen as the first step towards the Taliban's legitimacy internationally.

Second Takeover (2021)

- August 2021: US and NATO troops withdraw.
- The Taliban capture Kabul without major conflict.
- President Ashraf Ghani flees the country.
- The Taliban re-declares the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
- Current leadership: Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada.

Current Regime (2021–2025) and Challenges

- Restrictions on women's education (after grade 6), higher education and employment.
- Restrictions on media, the arts and free expression.
- Acute economic crisis: foreign aid suspended, banking system in shambles.
- Hunger, unemployment and humanitarian crisis.
- Terrorist groups such as IS-K are challenging the Taliban regime.
- According to the United Nations, approximately 28 million people depend on humanitarian aid.

India-Afghanistan Relations

Historical and Cultural Perspective

- Cultural, religious and trade exchanges.
- After independence, India considered Afghanistan a friendly nation.

2001–2021: India's Investments and Contributions

- Over \$3 billion invested in education, health, infrastructure and humanitarian assistance.
- Major projects: Parliament building, roads, power projects, schools and hospitals.

India-Taliban Relations and Policy (2021–2025)

- No formal recognition, but humanitarian and strategic engagement.
- Policy: “Engagement without Recognition”
- Humanitarian aid: wheat, medicines, vaccines.
- Limited diplomatic engagement: security, terrorism control, development projects.
- Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's visit to Delhi in 2025 is indicative of this policy.

India's Priorities

- Not using Afghanistan for anti-India terrorism.
- Controlling Pakistan-backed networks.
- Contributing to the humanitarian and development needs of the Afghan people.

International Scenario

- China, Russia, Iran and Qatar opened embassies in Kabul, but did not formally recognize.
- Limited international aid and investment under Taliban rule.
- Global community: Considering recognizing the Taliban on the condition of adopting “inclusive and rights-based governance.”

India and Afghanistan Relations: Strategic Importance

Afghanistan is a geopolitical bridge between South Asia and Central Asia.

India's Strategy:

1. Security: Preventing anti-India terrorism.
2. Development: Investment in education, health and infrastructure.
3. Diplomatic Balance: Dialogue and assistance without formal recognition.

Challenges and Future

- The Taliban regime's harsh religious policies and human rights violations.
- The threat from Pakistan-backed terrorist groups.
- The security and effectiveness of India's aid projects.
- Limits on international recognition and investment.

Question: What facilities will be provided to Taliban Foreign Minister Muttaqi during his visit to India?

- A) Only normal visa facility
- B) Signing of a foreign investment agreement
- C) Diplomatic protocol equivalent to that of a foreign minister
- D) Only participation in humanitarian aid distribution programs



Russia Prepares for Major Deal with India on Northern Sea Route: Strategic Implications for China

Hindi News / India / Russia Is Preparing A Major Deal With India On Northern Sea Route And Arctic Accord China Will Be Su

इसे कहते हैं दोस्ती! नॉर्डन सी रूट पर भारत के साथ बड़ी डील की तैयारी में रूस...दोनों तरफ से घिर जाएगा चीन

Edited By: अंजन कुमार | टाइम्स न्यूज नेटवर्क • 8 Oct 2025, 9:41 am



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WHY IN NEWS ?

Recent developments indicate that Russia is intensifying efforts to collaborate with India on the **Northern Sea Route (NSR)**, a strategic maritime corridor in the Arctic Ocean along Russia's northern coast.

This route offers a significantly shorter and faster trade pathway between Asia and Europe, reducing the distance by about 40% compared to the traditional Suez Canal route, saving approximately 10-14 days of transit time.

Russia is heavily investing in the NSR to establish it as a global trade artery and India is emerging as a key partner in this endeavor.

This potential deal not only promises economic benefits but also carries significant geopolitical implications, particularly in **strategically encircling China** from multiple fronts. Below is a detailed breakdown of the deal, its components and its broader implications.

Key Components of the India-Russia NSR Deal

1. Construction of Icebreaker Ships:

- Russia has proposed that India participate in building **four non-nuclear icebreaker ships**, with an estimated cost exceeding **₹6,000 crore (approximately \$750 million)**. These ships are critical for breaking ice along the NSR, ensuring year-round navigability in the Arctic's harsh conditions.
- Indian shipyards, such as **Cochin Shipyard**, are likely candidates for this joint production effort. This move prioritizes India over China, which had previously shown interest in similar projects.
- **Significance:** This collaboration will transfer advanced shipbuilding technology to India, create jobs and position India as a player in Arctic maritime infrastructure.

2. Cargo Transit and Trade Connectivity:

- The NSR offers India an opportunity to boost imports of Russian oil, gas and other commodities at lower costs due to reduced transit times. In 2024, India began using the NSR to export agricultural products to Russia, marking a milestone in bilateral trade.
- Projections suggest that by **2025**, India's cargo transit volume via the NSR could reach **5 million tons**, significantly enhancing trade efficiency.
- Plans are underway to link the NSR with India's **Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor** and the **Chabahar Port** in Iran, creating a seamless trade network connecting South Asia, the Middle East and Europe via the Arctic.

3. Joint Working Group and Training:

- During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow in **July 2024**, India and Russia established a **Joint Working Group** to advance NSR cooperation. The group's first meeting occurred in **October 2024**, focusing on:
 - Training Indian sailors for polar navigation in the Arctic.
 - Exploring joint shipbuilding projects tailored for Arctic conditions.
- Russia is offering technical expertise and training to Indian personnel, enhancing India's capacity to operate in the Arctic.
- The upcoming visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India in **December 2025** is expected to finalize key agreements, potentially sealing the "Arctic Pact."

Key Aspect	Details	Benefits for India
Icebreaker Construction	4 non-nuclear icebreakers, joint production at Cochin Shipyard (target: 2025)	Technology transfer, job creation
Cargo Transit	5 million tons by 2025, oil/gas imports via NSR	Lower costs, faster delivery
Connectivity	Linking Chabahar Port and Chennai-Vladivostok route to NSR	Integration with INSTC, Asia-Europe link
Training/Shipbuilding	Russian training for Indian sailors, joint Arctic shipbuilding	Capacity building in Arctic navigation

Strategic Implications: Why China Faces a “Double Encirclement”

This India-Russia collaboration on the NSR poses a significant challenge to China’s geopolitical and economic ambitions in the Arctic and beyond. Here’s how it creates a strategic “encirclement” of China:

1. China’s Ambitions in the NSR:

- China has been aggressively pursuing its “**Polar Silk Road**” initiative, aiming to integrate the NSR into its **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**. In 2025, China launched the **Lianyungang-Arkhangelsk container line** under its “Ice Silk Road” project, signaling its intent to dominate Arctic trade routes.
- However, Russia’s decision to prioritize India over China for the icebreaker deal and broader NSR collaboration undermines China’s aspirations for dominance in the Arctic. By choosing India, Russia is diversifying its partnerships and reducing reliance on China.

2. Geopolitical Balancing by Russia:

- Since the onset of the Ukraine conflict, Russia has faced Western sanctions, making it heavily dependent on China for trade and economic support. However, Russia is wary of becoming overly reliant on Beijing and is seeking to balance this relationship by strengthening ties with India.
- India has emerged as Russia’s largest oil buyer (after China), accounting for a significant portion of Russia’s energy exports. By deepening NSR cooperation, Russia gains a strategic partner in India, reducing China’s leverage over Moscow.
- This move aligns with Russia’s broader strategy to counterbalance China in global forums like **BRICS**, where both nations aim to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar in trade.

3. “Encirclement” of China:

- **From the East (Indian Ocean):**
 - India’s **Chabahar Port** in Iran, developed as a counter to China’s **Gwadar Port** in Pakistan (part of the BRI), is being integrated with the NSR. This creates a robust trade corridor linking South Asia to Europe via the Arctic, bypassing China’s BRI routes.
 - The **Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor** further strengthens India’s presence in the Indo-Pacific, challenging China’s dominance in regional trade networks.
- **From the North (Arctic):**
 - India’s entry into the NSR, supported by Russia, dilutes China’s influence in the Arctic. By collaborating with India on icebreakers and training, Russia is signaling that it prefers a multipolar Arctic framework over a China-dominated one.
- Analysts view this as part of Russia’s strategy to “hedge” against China, ensuring that Beijing does not monopolize critical trade routes or gain excessive influence in Russia’s Arctic backyard.

4. Economic and Strategic Setback for China:

- China’s exclusion from the icebreaker deal and limited role in NSR development could hinder its Polar Silk Road plans. The NSR’s shorter transit times and lower costs threaten to divert trade away from China’s BRI routes, such as the Suez Canal or China-Europe land routes.
- Additionally, India’s growing presence in the Arctic strengthens its bid for a larger role in the **Arctic Council**, where China is only an observer. This could further limit China’s influence in Arctic governance.

Benefits and Challenges for India

Benefits:

1. Economic Gains:

- The NSR could reduce shipping costs by **30-40%** compared to the Suez Canal, particularly for energy imports (oil and gas) from Russia. This is critical for India, which relies heavily on imported energy.
- Faster transit times (10-14 days less) will enhance trade efficiency, benefiting Indian exporters and importers.

2. Strategic Leverage:

- Collaboration on the NSR positions India as a key player in the Arctic, potentially paving the way for a stronger role in the Arctic Council.
- The integration of Chabahar Port with the NSR strengthens India's **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, creating a counterbalance to China's BRI.

3. Technological and Industrial Growth:

- Joint production of icebreakers and training programs will enhance India's shipbuilding and polar navigation capabilities, fostering technological self-reliance.

Challenges:

1. Environmental Concerns:

- The Arctic is an environmentally sensitive region and increased shipping could face scrutiny from environmental groups and Arctic Council members. India will need to balance economic interests with sustainable practices.

2. Western Opposition:

- Western countries, particularly the U.S., may view India's collaboration with Russia skeptically due to ongoing sanctions on Moscow. India will need to navigate this diplomatically to avoid straining ties with the West.

3. Logistical Hurdles:

- Operating in the Arctic requires specialized infrastructure and expertise, which India is only beginning to develop. Scaling up capacity will take time and significant investment.

4. Geopolitical Risks:

- Aligning closely with Russia could complicate India's relations with other powers, particularly if tensions escalate in the Indo-Pacific or Arctic regions.

Broader Context and Future Outlook

The India-Russia NSR deal is a strategic masterstroke that aligns with both nations' interests:

- For **Russia**, it diversifies partnerships, reduces dependence on China and strengthens its position as a key player in Arctic trade.
- For **India**, it enhances energy security, boosts trade efficiency and elevates its global geopolitical stature.

The anticipated visit of President Putin to India in **December 2025** will be a critical moment. If the "Arctic Pact" is finalized, it could mark a turning point in India-Russia relations and reshape global trade dynamics. The NSR has the potential to become a new artery of global commerce, challenging traditional routes like the Suez Canal and countering China's BRI ambitions.

Key Questions Moving Forward:

- Will India and Russia successfully execute the icebreaker project by 2025?
- How will China respond to this strategic alignment, particularly in the Arctic and Indian Ocean?
- Can India balance its NSR ambitions with environmental and diplomatic challenges?

In conclusion, the India-Russia partnership on the Northern Sea Route is poised to redefine trade and geopolitics in the Arctic. By leveraging this opportunity, India not only secures economic benefits but also positions itself as a counterweight to China, creating a strategic "encirclement" that could reshape the global balance of power. All eyes are now on the December 2025 summit, where the contours of this transformative deal may be finalized.



Sir Creek to Karachi– Any aggression will be met with a befitting reply: Rajnath Singh

Why in the news?

Key points:

- Defense Minister Rajnath Singh warned Pakistan in a statement on the occasion of Vijayadashami at the Bhuj military base on October 2, 2025.
- He stated that any aggression in the Sir Creek region would be met with a “befitting reply”—a response that would impact both history and geography.
- The minister also underlined that New Delhi has repeatedly attempted to resolve the dispute through dialogue, but Pakistan's intentions remain unclear.

Weapon worship and message in Bhuj

- Weapon worship was performed at the Bhuj military station in the presence of senior officers, including General Upendra Dwivedi and the advanced L-70 air defense gun was unveiled.
- Rajnath Singh described systems like the L-70 as crucial during Operation Sindoor, which neutralized drones and ammunition launched by Pakistan.

Referring to Operation Sindoor

- Referring to Operation Sindoor, the Minister said that Pakistan's attempts to breach India's security from Leh to Sir Creek were thwarted and the Indian Army delivered a befitting reply.
- He also said that the Indian Army sent a message to the world that it can inflict heavy losses on Pakistan whenever, wherever and however it wishes—despite India's restraint as the operation was against terrorism, not to promote terrorism.

Sir Creek: Geographical, Strategic and Economic Importance

Geographical Location

- Sir Creek is a 96-kilometer-long estuary located between India and Pakistan.
- It stretches between the Kutch region of Gujarat and the Sindh province of Pakistan and ultimately empties into the Arabian Sea.

Natural Features

- This area is marshy and subject to tidal influences.
- The water level here constantly changes with the tides, making precise demarcation difficult.

Strategic Importance

- Sir Creek is a sensitive and disputed area of the India-Pakistan border.
- Located on the Arabian Sea coast, it is extremely important from a strategic perspective.
- This area allows control over maritime trade routes, naval activities and maritime surveillance.
- This is why both India and Pakistan consider this area strategically important.

Economic Importance

- Marine resources, especially fish, are abundant in the Sir Creek area.
- Potential oil and natural gas reserves are likely to be present here.
- This area is also crucial for determining the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which directly impacts fishing, mining and other marine economic activities.

Sir Creek Dispute:

1908 – Dispute erupts between the rulers of Kutch and Sindh over firewood stacks along the Sir Creek creek.

1914 – The King of Kutch and the Sindh provincial government agree to a proposal from the Bombay Presidency. This proposal recognized the creek as part of Sindh, but did not specify the boundary.

1947 (After Independence) – Following the India-Pakistan partition, Pakistan claimed the entire Sir Creek and, citing the 1914 agreement, stated that the border lies on the eastern bank.

India's Position –

India, relying on the Thalweg Principle, stated that the border line should be in the middle of Sir Creek. ("Thalweg Principle = the international legal principle of treating the deepest course of a river/creek as the border.")

1965 – Clashes broke out between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch region. This conflict further deepened the Sir Creek dispute.

1968 – Both countries referred the Kutch dispute to an International Tribunal. The Tribunal awarded most of the area to India, but no decision was reached on Sir Creek.

1990–2000 – Several rounds of talks were held between India and Pakistan. A joint survey was also conducted, but no final solution was reached.

Current Status –

Sir Creek remains a sensitive dispute between India and Pakistan. India advocates a peaceful resolution, while Pakistan has periodically engaged in provocative actions in the region.

Creek

- A creek is a small, narrow and often marshy waterway connected to a river, lake, or sea.
- It is commonly found in tidal areas, where water levels fluctuate with the tides.

Characteristics

1. Narrow and long – Creeks are typically long and narrow, unlike larger river courses.
2. Marshland – Their banks are often marshy and muddy.
3. Tidal influence – The water level in a creek fluctuates day and night due to ocean or river tides.
4. Fresh and salt water – It may contain both fresh river water and salt sea water.
5. Difficulty of demarcation – The nature of water and marshes is constantly changing, making boundary marking difficult.
6. Maritime and economic importance – Important for activities such as fishing, naval surveillance and potential oil and gas reserves.

Examples

- Sir Creek – A 96-kilometer-long tidal creek located between Gujarat and Sindh provinces on the India-Pakistan border. It has long been considered a disputed area between the two countries.
- Numerous smaller creeks are also found along India's western coast (Gujarat, Maharashtra) and eastern coast (West Bengal, Odisha).

Warning

- The Defense Minister clarified that Pakistan's recent military buildup in the region raises questions about its intentions and that any aggression would be met with a decisive response.
- Addressing the troops, he expressed satisfaction with the success of the operation's military objectives and stated that the fight against terrorism continues.

India-Pakistan Border Dispute:

1. The border dispute between India and Pakistan is one of the world's longest-standing and volatile geopolitical conflicts.
2. Its roots lie in the partition of British India in 1947. Even 75 years after independence, the dispute remains focused on areas such as Kashmir, Sir Creek and Siachen.

Historical Background

- 1947 – British India was partitioned. Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir decided to accede to India to defend against Pakistan-backed invaders.
- 1947-48 – The first Indo-Pak war took place, followed by a ceasefire brokered by the United Nations.
- 1949 – The Line of Control (LoC) was established, but both sides do not consider it a permanent border.
- 1965 – Pakistan's Operation Gibraltar and a full-scale war.
- 1971 – The Bangladesh Liberation War and the Indo-Pak War, which resulted in Pakistan's defeat and the creation of Bangladesh.
- 1972 – The Shimla Agreement was signed.
- 1980s – The rise of militancy in Kashmir.
- 1999 – The Kargil War.
- 2008 Mumbai attacks and the 2019 abrogation of Article 370 – relations between the two countries deteriorated further.
- 2021 – A ceasefire along the LoC provided temporary relief.

Major India-Pakistan Wars

1. 1947-48: First Kashmir War
Attack by Pakistan-backed tribesmen.
A ceasefire followed India's intervention, but the Kashmir issue remained unresolved.
2. 1965: Second War
Pakistan's Operation Gibraltar.
India retaliated and the war ended with the Tashkent Agreement.

3. 1971: Third War (Bangladesh Liberation War)

Repression and refugee crisis in East Pakistan.

India's intervention led to Pakistan's defeat and the creation of Bangladesh.

4. 1999: Kargil War

Pakistani forces infiltrated Kargil.

India's Operation Vijay was successful and Pakistan retreated under international pressure.

Major Disputed Areas

<p>Jammu and Kashmir</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The largest dispute. • India – Control of Jammu, the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. • Pakistan – Control of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. • The abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 further escalated tensions. 	<p>Sir Creek</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 96-km-long tidal estuary between Gujarat and Sindh. • India – considers the mid-channel as the border. • Pakistan – considers the east coast as the border. • Strategic importance due to EEZ, fishing and potential oil and gas reserves.
<p>Siachen Region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glacier in the Karakoram Range. • India's Operation Meghdoot in 1984 – control of Siachen and Salto Ridge. • It is the world's highest battlefield. 	<p>Salto Ridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The western part of Siachen. • India controls the peaks, Pakistan controls the valleys.

Recent Events (2021–2025)

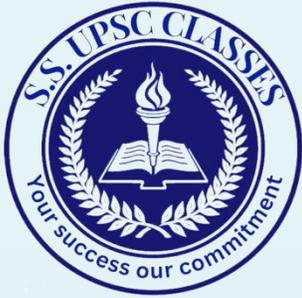
- 2021 – Ceasefire along the LoC, but violations continue.
- 2023–24 – Violent incidents and attacks on civilians in Kashmir.
- April 22, 2025 – Pahalgam terror attack, 27 civilians killed.
- May 6–7, 2025: Operation Sindoor
- India launched massive missile and air strikes on terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and PoK.
- Four days of intense drone and missile warfare ensued.
- Ceasefire effective May 10, 2025.

Question: Which theory does India rely on in the Sir Creek dispute?

- Eastern Bank Theory
- Thalweg Theory
- Maritime Waterway Theory
- Frontier Treaty Theory

Question: Sir Creek is located between which regions of India and Pakistan?

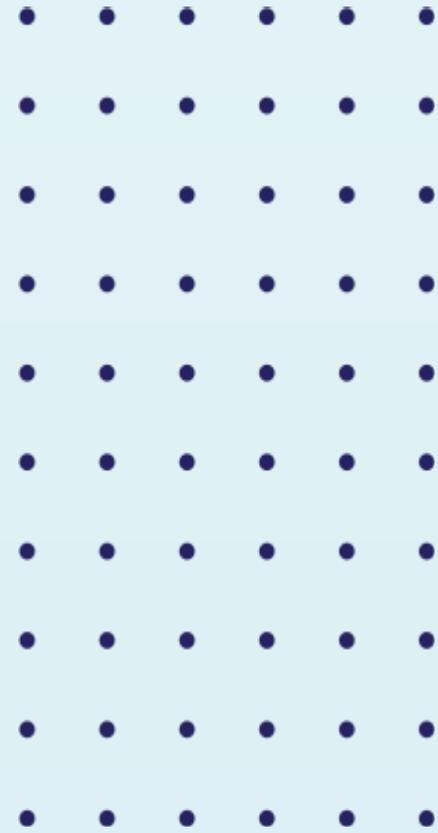
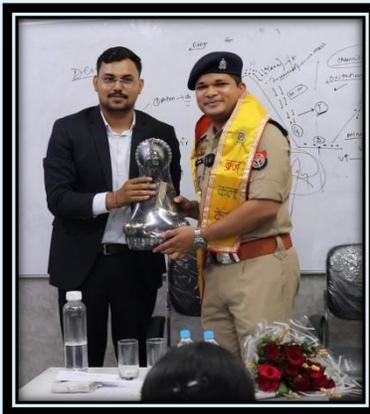
- Kashmir and Punjab
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- Rajasthan and Balochistan
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