



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC)

*This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details " National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)". This topic has relevance in the Social Issues section of the UPSC CSE exam.*

GS 2: Social Issues

**Why in the news?**

**Background:**

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has responded to a petition by instructing the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and six state governments to furnish information regarding victims impacted by Salwa Judum.
- The petition contended that those displaced and currently residing in forest areas across multiple states have been denied access to crucial welfare schemes. These include essential rights such as land rights, tribal status, social welfare benefits, and entitlements under the Forest Rights Act.
- Salwa Judum, characterized as a group of tribal individuals organized for resistance against outlawed armed Naxalites, was reportedly supported by the government machinery in Chhattisgarh.
- In 2011, the Supreme Court of India ruled against the arming of civilians in this manner, leading to the ban of Salwa Judum. The court directed the Chhattisgarh government to disband any militia force established to counter Maoist guerrillas.

**National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**

- **Establishment and Legal Framework:**
  - The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was established in 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, with a specific focus on safeguarding human rights within the country.
- **Watchdog Role:**
  - Its primary role is that of a vigilant guardian, overseeing and protecting rights associated with life, liberty, equality, and the dignity of individuals.
- **Composition of NHRC:**
  - The NHRC is comprised of a Chairman and five members.
  - The Chairman is required to be a retired Chief Justice of India or a judge of the Supreme Court.

- Members include serving or retired judges of the Supreme Court, serving or retired chief justices of High Courts, and three individuals with expertise in human rights, ensuring diverse representation and a minimum inclusion of one female member.

#### **Ex-officio Members:**

- Includes chairpersons of various bodies as ex-officio members:
  - National Commission for Minorities
  - National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SCs)
  - National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (STs)
  - National Commission for Women
  - National Commission for Backward Classes
  - National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
  - Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities

#### **Functions of NHRC:**

- **Investigation and Prevention:** Enquire into violations of Human Rights or negligence in preventing such violations by public servants.
- **Legal Intervention:** Intervene in legal proceedings involving allegations of Human Rights violations.
- **Prison Visits:** Visit jails and detention centers to assess the living conditions of inmates.
- **Review and Recommendations:** Review constitutional and legal safeguards for human rights, recommending measures for effective implementation.
- **Addressing Hindrances:** Examine factors like terrorism, naxalism, and militancy hindering human rights, suggesting remedial measures.
- **International Engagement:** Study international treaties on human rights and make recommendations for their effective implementation.
- **Research Promotion:** Undertake and promote research in the field of human rights.

#### **Achievements of NHRC:**

- **Mega Projects Intervention:**
  - Intervened in cases of displacement due to mega projects, disasters, and conflicts.
  - Examined Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 2007, and Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2007, recommending relief measures for the displaced.
- **Police Force Misuse:**
  - Addressed excessive use of police force, particularly in cases involving Adivasis protesting the Narmada Project.
  - Recommended relief measures, dropping of charges, and adequate rehabilitation.
- **Suicide Prevention Measures:**
  - Took Suo motu cognizance of farmer suicides in Maharashtra.
  - Facilitated the formation of committees at the district level to monitor and assist farmers, providing financial assistance and suggesting solutions.
- **Adivasis' Rights Protection:**
  - Responded to violence by Maoists and Salwa Judum in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh.
  - Directed the examination of human rights violations by Naxalites and Salwa Judum, addressing living conditions in refugee settlement colonies.
- **International Conventions Advocacy:**

- Advocated for the ratification of the UN Convention against torture, emphasizing its importance for human rights in India.

### **Issues or Concerns with NHRC:**

- **Recommendatory Nature:**
  - The functions of the NHRC are recommendatory, lacking the power to impose punishment for human rights violations.
  - Recommendations are non-binding on the concerned government or body.
- **Limited Powers Concerning Armed Forces:**
  - NHRC has limited role, power, and jurisdiction in addressing human rights violations by armed forces.
- **Administrative Constraints:**
  - As a Paris principle-compliant institution, administrative constraints hinder smooth functioning, lacking required infrastructure.
- **Financial Constraints:**
  - The commission relies on grants from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), lacking financial autonomy for effective functioning.
- **Manpower Constraints:**
  - Operates below sanctioned strength, resorting to hiring retired government officials due to increasing workload.
- **Lack of Legal Manpower:**
  - The law division lacks adequate resources, facing a shortage of trained manpower in the field of human rights.
- **Lack of Suo Moto Uptake:**
  - NHRC has been criticized for not taking suo moto action on arrests made under the UAPA law, related to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.
- **Lack of Diversity:**
  - Concerns about limited diversity as the Chairman and members are predominantly from the judicial fraternity, lacking mandatory representation of minorities, SCs, and STs.
- **Political Interference:**
  - Composition of the selection committee favors the party in power, raising concerns about potential political interference.
- **Narrow Jurisdictions:**
  - NHRC can only investigate complaints registered within 1 year, limiting its jurisdiction.
- **Control of Home Ministry:**
  - Under the Home Ministry, NHRC investigating police-related human rights violations may raise concerns about independence.

### **Suggestions to Enhance NHRC's Effectiveness:**

- **Constitutional Body Status:** Consider making NHRC a constitutional body, similar to the South African Human Rights Commission.
- **Parliamentary Report Presentation:** Propose tabling NHRC reports in parliament, with the government presenting an action taken report based on NHRC recommendations.
- **Mandatory Time Frame:** Amend the act to include a mandatory time frame for action taken and response formulation on NHRC recommendations.
- **Independent Cadre:** Develop an independent cadre of staff, including legal and human rights experts.

- **Financial Independence:** Provide the commission with financial autonomy to handle increasing workload and responsibilities.
- **Expanded Jurisdiction:** Expand the period of jurisdiction, allowing NHRC to investigate matters older than 1 year.
- **Contempt Powers:** Accord NHRC with contempt powers to ensure the effective implementation of recommendations.

**SOURCE:**

[NHRC seeks report from MHA, six States regarding Salwa Judum displacement – The Hindu](#)

**Q.1 Consider the following regarding National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):**

1. The Chairman is required to be a retired Chief Justice of India or a judge of the Supreme Court.
2. Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities is one of the ex-officio members

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**ANSWER: C**

**Q.2 Discuss the role and functions of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in India. Evaluate its effectiveness in safeguarding human rights, addressing violations, and promoting justice.**

**Rishabh**

## **EMERGING ISSUES IN INDIA- RUSSIA RELATIONS**

**MAINS RELEVANCE: GS2 SYLLABUS- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/ or affecting India's interests:**

**WHY IN NEWS:**

1. **External Affairs Minister** S. Jaishankar on Monday began his 5 day visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg, during which he will hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Trade Minister Denis Mantu.
2. The visit is also significant as it comes in lieu of the annual summit due to be held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin, an **unbroken tradition from the year 2000 until 2021** due to the Russia-Ukraine war.
3. The visit is expected to see discussions on a number of thorny bilateral issues, including continuing problems over the **rupee-rouble payment mechanism** amid a surge in the import of Russian oil and bilateral trade and **delays in supplies of defense equipment**.
  1. Russia's supply of the fourth and fifth regiment of the **S400 Triumph Air Defence Systems**, also under U.S. sanctions, have been delayed and are now expected in 2024.

## INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS: CONVERGENCE:

### 1. GEO-POLITICAL:

1. The India and Russia ties have been a longstanding relation since 1971 when Russia supported India in Liberation war of Bangladesh against pressure of Nuclear warfare by USA
2. India-Russia signed the Indo-Soviet **Treaty of Friendship & Cooperation on 9th August 1971**: It was the **first political treaty** India made with another nation.
3. It acted as a turning point in India's traditional **Non-aligned policy** so vigorously enunciated at Bandung in 1955.
4. India further signed the "**Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership**" in 2000.
5. Political engagement has seen further highs with the current Government. For example: In 2019, President Putin signed the Executive Order on awarding PM Narendra Modi Russia's highest state decoration – The **order of St Andrew the Apostle**.
6. India's decision to not join the U.S.led naval **operation against Houthi attacks** on shipping in the Red Sea, named "**Operation Prosperity Guardian**" so far is also likely to find favor in Moscow.

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### 2. GEO-STRATEGIC:

1. Russia has also provided "unwavering support" to India's demand for **Permanent Seat at UNSC**
2. Russia can significantly contribute to **defusing tensions with China**: For example Russia organized a trilateral meeting among the foreign ministers of Russia, India, and China following deadly clashes in the Galwan Valley in the disputed territory of Ladakh in 2020.
3. There is a long standing mutual cooperation against Terrorism through Groupings such as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (**SCO**) & **BRICS** etc
4. Two Inter-Governmental Commissions – one on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (**IRIGC-TEC**), and another on Military-Technical Cooperation (**IRIGC-MTC**), meet annually.
5. Both countries regularly conduct the Tri-Services exercise '**INDRA**'.
6. Russia is India's **topmost weapon supplier**:
  1. Though as per **SIPRI Report 2021**: Russia's share in India's weapon import has fallen from 69% to **49%**
  2. Examples of India's Import: MIG-21, Sukhoi-30, T-72 tanks, Russian S-400 air defense missile system and a joint venture to manufacture AK-203 assault rifles.
7. Indian Navy's first submarine, '**Foxtrot Class**' came from Russia
8. **INS Vikramaditya**, the sole aircraft carrier operated by India, is also Russian in origin.
9. The **joint military programmes** between India and Russia include: **BrahMos cruise missile** programme, 5th generation fighter jet programme, **Sukhoi Su-30MKI** programme, Ilyushin/HAL Tactical Transport Aircraft & KA-226T twin-engine utility helicopters.
10. Russia is an important partner for India in the area of peaceful use of **nuclear energy**:
  1. **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant** (KKNPP) is being built in India .
  2. Both India and Russia are implementing **Rooppur Nuclear Power Project in Bangladesh**

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### 3. TRADE RELATIONS:

1. The two countries intend to increase bilateral investment to **US\$50 billion** and bilateral trade to **US\$30 billion by 2025**.
2. A Phenomenal Growth in Bilateral Trade has been observed as it has increased by around **2.1 times** in January- September in 2023, up to almost 50 billion USD owing to strong **demand for hydrocarbons in India**.
3. Exceeding Expectations: India and Russia have already **achieved the bilateral trade target** of \$30 billion before the target year of 2025.
4. Resilient **Engineering Exports**: According to Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) India, amid declining demand for engineering goods from major markets such as the US and China, shipments to Russia continued their **uptrend and more than doubled** to around US\$ 123 million in July 2023 from around US\$ 55 million in July 2022.
5. India has also shown active engagement in the **Eastern Economic Forum (EEF)** to develop Russia's far east (eg-Vladivostok). It will help India to Explore **Critical Minerals** such as Hydrocarbon,diamonds, gold and tungsten from Far-East.
6. India and Russia are discussing a free trade agreement (FTA) involving the **Eurasian Economic Union (EEU)**, against the backdrop of bilateral economic ties seeing a sharp expansion since the start of the Ukraine conflict.
7. Member countries of EEU: Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.
8. Diversifying Trade: India has diversified its export basket to Russia to include pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, coal, diamonds, chemicals, and ceramics, among other goods.
9. **Rupee-Rouble Mechanism: De-Dollarization of Economy**: The payment mechanism between India and Russia was devised to circumvent the **U.S. and EU sanctions** against Russia over the Ukraine war.
  - 1.

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#### 4. CULTURAL RELATIONS:

1. Cultural contact through Yoga, Vaishnavism, Ayurveda and Dance etc
2. About 20 Russian Institutions, including leading universities and schools, regularly **teach Hindi** to about 1500 Russian students
  1. EXAMPLE: creation of a **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)**.
3. Apart from Hindi, languages such as **Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu, Sanskrit and Pali** are taught in Russian Institutions

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#### EMERGING ISSUES BETWEEN RUSSIA & INDIA:

1. **High trade deficit incurred by India**: The skewed trade balance has been an area of concern between the two countries:
  1. For example, during FY23, India had around a **\$43 billion trade deficit** with Russia, which left their exporters with **large surpluses in their Vostro accounts** in India.
  2. This has meant delayed payments, as well as the need for India to use third country currencies including the **UAE Dirham and Chinese Yuan** to pay for Indian imports from Russia that have grown a massive 368% year on year from 2022 to 2023, mainly due to an **increase in import of Russian oil**, leading to a major trade deficit.
  3. This has created **Challenges in Rupee- Rouble Trade**: Indian refiners are using a mix of currencies to settle most of their Russian oil purchases.
2. Both countries previously discussed trading in their local currencies but this is yet to take off because of **currency volatility and the high trade deficit**.

3. **Russia's Over Dependence on China:** China enjoys direct connectivity, advanced logistics supply, a high level of trade, and profitability with Russia.
    1. Since the beginning of Russia- Russia-Ukraine conflict, Russia-China cooperation has grown in all directions.
    2. The trade turnover between the two countries reached a record \$190 billion last year, increased by another 39% in the first quarter of this year compared with the same period in 2022.
  4. **Infrastructure and Connectivity Issues:** Inadequate transportation infrastructure and connectivity can impede the smooth flow of goods between India and Russia.
    1. The absence of a direct trade route and high shipping costs make exports to Russia a costly affair for India, as it doesn't share a land border with Russia, unlike China
  5. **Divergence on International Relations:** While Russia has been openly critical of Israel's actions, and in particular, the U.S.'s support to Israel over the bombing of civilians, India's stand has been less strident.
  6. **Challenging India's role as Balancing Power:** Russia along with China has been highly critical of India as **Member of QUAD** including US, Australia and Japan, grouping formed to ensure security of trade and transit in Indo-Pacific region
  7. While India has been wary of **SCO's emerging outlook as "Anti-Western" grouping:** Eg- Recent inclusion of Iran and Belarus as member & Myanmar as Observer making practically every member facing sanctions by Europe & USA.
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#### STEPS TO TAKE BY INDIAN DIPLOMACY:

1. **Addressing Trade Imbalance:** A huge imbalance in trade heavily towards Russia is an issue in the Rupee-Ruble trade. To solve this problem, Russia is keen to **import manufacturing equipment** including machinery from India.
2. **Increasing Asia's Importance for Russia:** To compensate for the decline in trade with the West, Russia is looking much more toward Asia.
  1. For India, this could mean broadening our engagement that was overly reliant on the triad of military, nuclear, and space cooperation.
3. Providing Solutions to Short- and Medium-Term Challenges in Business: **Payments, logistics, and certification** were some of the key areas of issues and it is possible to find solutions to them.
  1. Attracting Russian's investors towards India's key infrastructure shall be emphasized upon
4. **Improving Rupee-Ruble Trade:** To tackle the accumulation of Indian currency in Russia, **increasing Rupee trade with third countries common to both India and Russia**, where India has a trade surplus can help in ensuring seamless money flow while solving the problem.
  1. For this, India has taken steps to de-dollarize trade while pushing for the internationalization of the Indian Rupee.
5. **New Trade Routes:** The development of new trade routes like the **Eastern Maritime Corridor** and the **Northern Sea Route** will also be of interest in deepening trade ties.
  1. **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** is another effective connectivity initiative to increase Indo-Russian trade.
  2. The two countries are also discussing the possibility of launching a **trans-Arctic container shipping line** and processing facilities along the Northern Sea Route.
6. Defense deals and nuclear energy cooperation can further float relations

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## CONCLUSION:

Thus in words of International Policy Expert **Suhasini Hiader**: India's adequate response to the crisis posed by Russia-Ukraine War has displayed its "**Diplomatic Deftness**" as India not only secured its National interest but reinforced its commitment for Rule based order. However, **addressing trade imbalances, enhancing connectivity, and exploring diversified partnerships** will be crucial for sustaining and strengthening their economic ties in the evolving global landscape.

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## Prelims Question (2019)

Q: Recently, India signed a deal known as 'Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field' with which of the following countries?

- (a) Japan
- (b) Russia
- (c) The United Kingdom
- (d) The United States of America

Ans: (b)

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## POTENTIAL PRELIMS 2024 QUESTIONS:

Q1: "Operation Prosperity Guardian" recently seen in the news is associated with which of the following:

1. Operation by India to curb Narco-Terrorism in Golden Crescent region
2. Operation by USA to provide Maritime security in Red Sea region
3. An initiative launched by BRICS countries to provide loans to Lower Middle income countries
4. A joint military exercise between all members of QUAD grouping

ANSWER: B

## EXPLANATION:

### "Operation Prosperity Guardian":

1. It is an initiative **launched by USA to protect Red Sea commerce**.
2. This follows missile and drone attacks by **Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis**:
  1. The Houthis are a large clan belonging to the Zaidi Shia sect, with roots in **Yemen's northwestern Saada province**.
  2. The Houthi movement, officially called Ansar Allah (Supporters of God), began in the 1990s against the dictatorship of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh.
  3. Today, the Houthis are one faction in a bloody civil war that has raged in Yemen since 2014.
  4. The Houthis, backed by Iran, are a part of what Iran calls, "**The Axis of Resistance**": an informal **anti-Israel and anti-West** political and military coalition that it leads.



5. Other notable groups in the Axis include **Hezbollah and Hamas**.
6. In Yemen, the Houthis are fighting against the Sunni-led internationally recognized Yemeni government, backed by **Saudi Arabia and the UAE**.
3. Countries Involved: The U.K., Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, and Spain are participating.
4. Joint Patrols: These nations will conduct joint patrols in the southern **Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden**
5. **NOTE: India is NOT a member of alliance**
6. Recently Japanese owned & Liberia flagged merchant Vessel **Chem Pluto** with 21 crew members (20 Indians & 1 Vietnamese national) sailing from UAE to New Mangalore port (India) faced drone attack by Iran backed **Houthi militants** in the Red Sea region, just outside Indian **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**.

Q2: India & Russia have recently accomplished 50 years of Strategic ties through Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship & Cooperation 1971. Which of the following initiatives are being developed under joint cooperation by India & Russia:

1. INS Vikramaditya
2. BrahMos cruise missile programme
3. Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu
4. Rooppur Nuclear Power Project in Bangladesh

Choose the correct code from options below:

1. Only one pair
2. Only two pair
3. Only three pair
4. All of the above pair

**ANSWER: D**

**EXPLANATION:**

1. The India and Russia ties have been a longstanding relation since 1971 when Russia supported India in Liberation war of Bangladesh against pressure of Nuclear warfare by USA:
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3. Political engagement has seen further highs with the current Government. For example: In 2019, President Putin signed the Executive Order on awarding PM Narendra Modi Russia's highest state decoration – The **order of St Andrew the Apostle**.
4. **JOINT PROJECTS BY INDIA & RUSSIA:**
  1. Indian Navy's first submarine, '**Foxtrot Class**' came from Russia
  2. **INS Vikramaditya**, the sole aircraft carrier operated by India, is also Russian in origin.
  3. The **joint military programmes** between India and Russia include: **BrahMos cruise missile** programme, 5th generation fighter jet programme, **Sukhoi Su-**

**30MKI** programme, Ilyushin/HAL Tactical Transport Aircraft & KA-226T twin-engine utility helicopters.

4. Russia is an important partner for India in the area of peaceful use of **nuclear energy**:
5. **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant** (KKNPP) is being built in India .
6. Both India and Russia are implementing **Rooppur Nuclear Power Project in Bangladesh**

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**Practice Mains Question:** Discuss the importance of India-Russia relationship in the current global context. In light of recent developments, highlight the scope for strengthening economic and strategic cooperation between the two countries especially with regards to India's Act Far East policy. (15 marks, 250 words)

Suyash Rai

