



## CURRENT AFFAIRS



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# NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SAFAI KARAMCHARIS (NCSK): UPHOLDING THE SPIRIT OF ARTICLE 17 OF THE CONSTITUTION

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the tenure of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) for three more years, up to March 31, 2028. The current tenure of the Commission was set to expire on March 31, 2025, but has now been extended. Originally established as a statutory body under the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act 1993, the Commission became a non-statutory body after the Act lapsed in 2004. Its role expanded after the enactment of The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, focusing on the elimination of manual scavenging and the rehabilitation of affected workers.



### WHAT IS NCSK?

The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) was constituted on 12 August 1994 as a statutory body under the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act 1993. It was initially established for three years, up to 31 March 1997. Through amendments in 1997 and 2001, the Act's validity was extended to March 2002 and then to February 2004. After the Act lapsed on 29th February 2004, NCSK has been functioning as a non-statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Its tenure is extended periodically through Government Resolutions.



## THE MANDATE OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SAFAI KARAMCHARIS (NCSK)

**1. Recommendations for Upliftment:** Advise the Central Government on specific programs for eliminating inequalities in status, facilities, and opportunities for Safai Karamcharis. Recommend measures for the social and economic upliftment of Safai Karamcharis.

**2. Monitoring and Evaluation:** Study and evaluate the implementation of programs and schemes related to the social and economic rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis and scavengers. Investigate specific grievances and take suo-motu notice regarding non-implementation of:

Programs or schemes for Safai Karamcharis.

Decisions, guidelines, or instructions aimed at mitigating hardships.

Legal provisions concerning Safai Karamcharis.

Could you report these matters to the concerned authorities, as well as the central or state governments?

**3. Working Conditions Assessment:** Study and monitor working conditions, including health, safety, and wages of Safai Karamcharis employed under various agencies (Government, Municipalities, Panchayats, etc.). Make recommendations to improve these conditions.

**4. Reporting to Governments:** Submit reports to central or State Governments on issues concerning Safai Karamcharis, highlighting their difficulties and disabilities. Address any other matter referred by the Central Government.

**5. Implementation of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:**

Monitor the implementation of the Act.

Enquire into complaints regarding contraventions of the Act and provide findings to relevant authorities with recommendations for further action.

Advise Central and State Governments for the effective execution of the Act.

Take suo-motu notice of any non-implementation of the Act.

Possess authority to call for information from any Government or local authority regarding the above matters.

**6. Monitoring Supreme Court Judgment (W.P. (C) No. 324 of 2020 – Dr Balram Singh & Others Vs. Union of India):** Compensation for sewer deaths: The revised compensation amount is Rs. 30 lakhs, payable by the concerned agency (Union, Union Territory, or State Government). If the dependents of any victim have not received this amount, it shall be paid accordingly.

**Compensation for sewer victims with disabilities:** Compensation shall depend on the severity of a disability. Minimum salary: Rs. 10 lakhs. If the permanent disability renders the victim economically helpless, the compensation shall not be less than Rs. 20 lakhs.

## WORKING OF THE COMMISSION:

**Field Visits:** The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Members conduct extensive tours to assess the socio-economic conditions of Safai Karamcharis.

**Interaction & Grievance Redressal:** Engage with Safai Karamcharis individually and through associations; take up grievances with local authorities.

**Complaints Handling:** Receive and address complaints/petitions from Safai Karamcharis nationwide by seeking reports from concerned authorities.

**Proactive Measures:** Take suo-motu cognizance of issues based on media reports and intervene proactively. Investigations & Inquiries: Conduct sittings across the country to investigate grievances, evaluate scheme progress, and ensure the implementation of laws.

**Review & Monitoring:** Regular meetings and video conferences with State/Local authorities to review the problems of Safai Karamcharis. Status of compensation payments to sewer death victims' legal heirs.

**Policy Recommendations:** Provide recommendations to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for rehabilitation and eradication of manual scavenging, both periodically and in Annual Reports.

#### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF NCSK

1. **Regularly review** sewer death cases and compensation payments with States/UTs through official communication with Chief Secretaries and other authorities.
2. **Disposal of 51 cases** where state authorities faced challenges in locating legal heirs after the Commission's intervention.
3. **Ensuring compensation payments** in 20 sewer death cases, with amounts ranging from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 30 lakhs, paid promptly within one month of death.
4. **Securing compassionate** appointments for dependents of deceased Safai Karamcharis.
5. **Inspection of Safai Karamcharis** Neem Chowki Harizon Basti in Sawai Madhopur District, Rajasthan (March 2024) and directing the district administration to renovate the community centre.

#### THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SAFAI KARAMCHARIS (NCSK) FACES SEVERAL CHALLENGES:

1. **Non-Statutory Status:** Since the lapse of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993, in 2004, the Commission has been functioning as a non-statutory body. This limits its authority in enforcing decisions and recommendations.
2. **Inadequate Implementation of Laws:** Despite The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, manual scavenging persists in many parts of India. The lack of strict enforcement mechanisms leads to the continued exploitation of workers.
3. **Delayed Compensation for Sewer Deaths:** Many state governments delay or fail to provide compensation as mandated by the Supreme Court. Bureaucratic hurdles and difficulties in identifying legal heirs further slow down the process.
4. **Lack of Awareness and Reporting Mechanisms:** Many Safai Karamcharis are unaware of their rights and the legal provisions available to them. Fear of job loss prevents them from reporting unsafe working conditions and wage disparities.
5. **Poor Working Conditions:** Safai Karamcharis continues to face hazardous working environments, including exposure to toxic gases, lack of protective gear, and unsafe sanitation infrastructure. Employers often ignore health and safety regulations.
6. **Limited Employment Alternatives:** Rehabilitation efforts for manual scavengers are often ineffective, and there are limited opportunities for alternative livelihoods. Skill development programs and financial assistance schemes do not reach all beneficiaries.



**7. Inefficient Coordination Between Agencies:** Multiple agencies, including municipalities, state governments, and the central government, handle different aspects of Safai Karamcharis' welfare, leading to poor coordination. Delays in policy implementation and execution of schemes.

**8. Inadequate Funding and Resources:** The Commission lacks adequate financial and administrative resources to function effectively. Insufficient staff and infrastructure hinder field visits, grievance redressal, and monitoring.

**9. Non-recognition of Contractual and Informal Workers:** Many Safai Karamcharis work on a contractual basis and are not covered under various welfare schemes. Private agencies employing sanitation workers often evade accountability.

**10. Social Stigma and Discrimination:** Safai Karamcharis continues to face caste-based discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society. The stigma attached to sanitation work affects their access to education, housing, and other social services.

### WAY FORWARD FOR NCSK

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**Follow-up Mechanism** – Though NCSK's recommendations are not binding, a structured follow-up system should be established to ensure effective implementation, with regular monitoring by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

**Increased Resource Allocation**—The government should enhance NCSK's financial and human resources to strengthen its functioning, outreach, and implementation of welfare schemes.

**Curbing Corruption** – Strict monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be implemented to prevent misuse of funds meant for Safai Karamcharis' welfare under schemes like Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) and National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC).

**Financial Compensation Authority**—The Commission should be empowered to recommend and directly facilitate financial compensation under government provisions, such as the Supreme Court-mandated ₹30 lakh compensation for sewer deaths and other relief schemes.

**Alternative Employment Opportunities**—The Government should ensure the effective implementation of the Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), skill development initiatives under the Skill India Mission, and NSKFDC loans for business startups.

**Reducing Social Stigma**—To improve their socio-economic conditions, Public awareness campaigns under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the inclusion of Safai Karamcharis in social welfare schemes like PM Awas Yojana and Ayushman Bharat should be promoted.

**Technology Integration** – Adopting advanced mechanized cleaning technologies under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban & Rural) should be prioritised to eliminate manual scavenging and ensure worker safety. The government should encourage states to procure robotic scavenging machines under the NAMASTE scheme for sewer and septic tank cleaning.

### CONCLUSION

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The NCSK plays a vital role in safeguarding Safai Karamcharis but faces challenges like lack of enforcement power, resource constraints, and ineffective implementation. Strengthening it with greater authority, financial autonomy, technological adoption, and government support is essential. A holistic approach involving policy reforms, skill development, and alternative employment will help eradicate manual scavenging and ensure dignity for Safai Karamcharis. Collaborative efforts are key to creating a safer and more inclusive environment.

### PRELIMS QUESTION:

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**Q. With reference to the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK), consider the following statement:**

1. The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) is a statutory body.
2. The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) is mandated to take suo motto action.
3. The NCSK can study and monitor working conditions, including health, safety, and wages of Safai Karamcharis employed under various agencies.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

**ANSWER: B**

**MAINS QUESTION:**

**Q. Despite various legal safeguards and government initiatives, Safai Karamcharis continue to face social and economic challenges. Critically analyse the role of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) in addressing these issues. Suggest measures to enhance its effectiveness.**

**(Answer in 250 word)**

Munde Dhananjay Navnath

## UNIQUE SECURITY CHALLENGES IN BORDER AREAS

**WHY IN THE NEWS?**

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, chaired a high-level review meeting in New Delhi on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting, attended by key officials including Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha and top officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Jammu and Kashmir administration, discussed strategies to combat terrorism in the region. Shri Amit Shah emphasized the government's commitment, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, to completely eradicate terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. He directed security agencies to intensify efforts and set a "zero infiltration" goal while focusing on a ruthless approach towards terrorism and infiltration.



**INDIA BORDER AND SECURITY:**

Force	Established	Mandate
<b>Border Security Force (BSF)</b>	1965	Guards India's land borders prevents unauthorized entry, combats smuggling, ensures peace in border areas, and supports the Army during wartime.
<b>Assam Rifles (AR)</b>	1835	Secures northeastern borders, conducts counterinsurgency operations, and supports internal security with dual control (MHA & MoD).
<b>Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)</b>	1962	Guards the Indo-Tibetan border, prevents border violations and participates in disaster relief, rescue operations, and peacekeeping missions globally.
<b>Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)</b>	1963	Secures India-Nepal and India-Bhutan borders focus on border security, counter-smuggling, unauthorized immigration, community policing, and disaster relief.
<b>National Security Guard (NSG)</b>	1984	Elite counter-terrorism force handling bomb disposal, hostage rescue, and counter-hijacking operations. Played a key role in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.
<b>Indian Coast Guard (ICG)</b>	1978	Secures maritime borders, conducts anti-smuggling and anti-piracy operations, and handles disaster management along the coast.
<b>Central Industrial</b>	1969	Secures critical infrastructure like airports, nuclear plants, and

Force	Established	Mandate
<b>Security Force (CISF)</b>		government buildings, provides fire safety, and VIP security, and protects heritage monuments.
<b>Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)</b>	1939	Maintains internal security, conducts counterinsurgency operations, and provides law enforcement support in conflict zones, elections, and during disasters.
<b>Special Protection Group (SPG)</b>	1985	Provides proximate security to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers, and their families, with a focus on close protection and intelligence collaboration.

### CHALLENGES TO NATIONAL SECURITY IN BORDER AREAS:

- 1. Cross-Border Terrorism:** Infiltration by terrorist groups, especially from Pakistan and Bangladesh, remains a major threat.
- 2. Smuggling & Illegal Immigration:** Porous borders facilitate arms, drugs, and human trafficking, threatening security.
- 3. Border Disputes:** Ongoing territorial disputes, particularly with China and Pakistan, create tensions.
- 4. Infiltration & Espionage:** Cross-border espionage and intelligence gathering pose serious risks.
- 5. Ethnic & Political Instability:** Insurgencies and separatist movements complicate security in border regions.
- 6. Technological & Cyber Threats:** Advanced technology like drones and cyberattacks challenge border defence systems.
- 7. Lack of Infrastructure:** Remote areas lack roads, surveillance, and communication, hindering security efforts.
- 8. Climate & Natural Disasters:** Harsh climates and disasters like floods complicate border management.
- 9. International Relations:** Diplomatic tensions with neighbouring countries affect border security cooperation.
- 10. Resource Constraints:** Limited manpower and funds stretch border security forces thin.

### UNIQUE CHALLENGES TO INTERNAL SECURITY IN JAMMU KASHMIR:

- 1. Cross-border Terrorism:** Militant groups, especially from Pakistan, infiltrate the region to carry out attacks, creating ongoing security threats.
- 2. Separatist Sentiment:** A significant portion of the Kashmiri population desires an independent Kashmir, fueling protests and unrest.
- 3. Social Media Manipulation:** Misinformation spreads on social media, exacerbating tensions and inciting violence.
- 4. Narco-terrorism:** Drug trafficking funds terrorist activities, complicating the security environment.
- 5. Difficult Terrain:** The region's mountainous geography makes surveillance and security operations difficult.
- 6. Human Rights Concerns:** Allegations of human rights abuses by security forces alienate the local population.
- 7. Political Instability:** Shifting government policies regarding Kashmir creates confusion and uncertainty among the people.

### WAY TO IMPROVE BORDER SECURITY:

### 1. Increase Cooperation:

**Coordinate Agencies:** Enhance communication between local authorities and border agencies.

**Build Capacity:** Train officials to handle common border security challenges.

**Facilitate Cooperation:** Promote collaboration at interagency, intra-service, and international levels.

### 2. Improve Technology:

**Biometric Identification:** Use fingerprint, iris scanners, and facial recognition for border identification.

**Surveillance Systems:** Deploy telecom fiber for monitoring and detecting unauthorized activities.

**Floodlighting:** Illuminate border areas for improved visibility and security.

### 3. Raise Awareness:

**Reduce False Documents:** Enhance technology and public awareness to limit counterfeit documents.

### 4. Economic and Social Development:

**Trade and Relations:** Foster border community involvement in trade and diplomatic relations.

**Border Area Development:** Focus on infrastructure and social development in border regions.

### CONCLUSION:

Border security is crucial for maintaining national sovereignty and stability. Challenges such as cross-border terrorism, smuggling, territorial disputes, and technological threats demand a multi-pronged approach. Increased cooperation between agencies, advanced technologies like biometric identification and surveillance systems, and raising public awareness can help mitigate these challenges. Additionally, economic development and infrastructure improvements in border areas are essential for enhancing security and fostering positive relations with neighbouring countries. Strategic, coordinated efforts are needed to ensure India's borders remain secure and protected.

### PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

**Q. With reference to the Border Security Forces in India, consider the following statements:**

1. The Border Security Force (BSF) was established in 1965 to protect India's land borders.
2. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) is responsible for securing India's borders with Nepal and Bhutan.
3. The National Security Guard (NSG) specializes in counter-terrorism operations and has a significant role in bomb disposal and hostage rescue.

**How many of the above-given statements are correct?**

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

**Answer: B**

### MAINS QUESTIONS:

**Q. Discuss the importance of inter-agency coordination and technological advancements in strengthening border security in India.**

**(250 words, 15 marks)**



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