

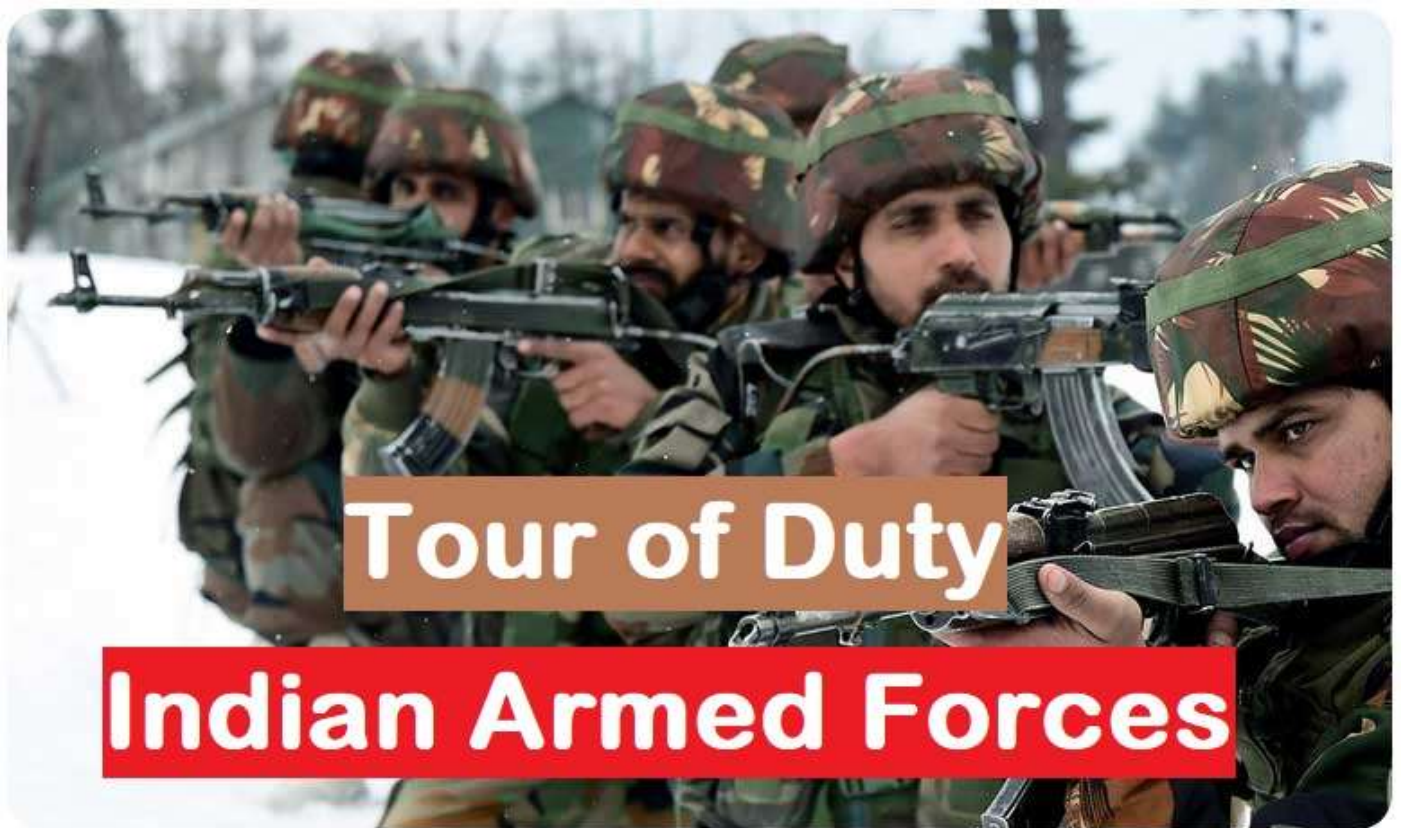
Tour of Duty scheme (GS Paper 3, Defence)

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Defence has recently approved the ambitious **Tour of Duty (ToD) scheme**.
- Already adopted in several other countries, the Tour of Duty, or 'Agneepath', is a scheme under which the **forces will recruit soldiers on a short-term and long-term basis** to serve the country.

Tour of Duty is not conscription:

- Conscription refers to the mandatory of youth in the national armed forces. In some countries, youth must serve a minimum number of years in the armed forces. Countries that follow the practice of conscription include Israel, Norway, North Korea, and Sweden.
- Not to be military conscription like in Israel, the Army has branded ToD as an opportunity for India's youth to experience military life without having to join the armed forces; Army, Navy, and the Air Force on a long-term basis.



How it will function?

- The recruitment of soldiers in the Army will be conducted under the new scheme in the immediate future, and the duration of service for 50 per cent of the recruits could be between three to five years, while the rest may have a much longer tenure.
- All the recruits under the Agneepath scheme shall be released from service after four years. Then 25 per cent will be re-enlisted for full service with a fresh date of joining.
- The first four years of contractual service would not be counted towards their full service for the fixation of pay and pension.

The rationale for Tour of Duty:

- The scheme is also said to benefit the Army financially. This recruitment model has been conceptualised to address personnel shortages, including officers.

- It has also been proposed as a means to generate increased employment opportunities, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that 40 per cent of the personnel are recruited through this medium.
- Currently, the Army recruits young people under the Short Service Commission for an initial tenure of 10 years, extending up to 14 years.
- With no recruitment taking place for nearly two years now in the military, there has been considerable anxiety among the youth, with protests in Haryana and Punjab over the delay.

Upholding the right to repair
(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)

Why in news?

- The U.S. state of New York recently passed the **Fair Repair Act**.

What should be the scope of the right?

- The scope of the right can only be determined in the domestic context of the country. For instance, air conditioners have largely replaced fans and coolers.
- An entire repair class is, in effect, denied its right to conduct business as it does not have the tools, parts, guidelines and technical know-how to repair these high-tech products. Further, the lack of certification/licensing of repair workers is seen as a reflection of their lack of skills.
- But a repair certification/licence can be allotted to those who pass certain criteria and skill tests. In addition to protecting their right to livelihood, it may also prove beneficial as tech companies are required to share their repair manuals with certified technicians.

<h1>Fair Repair Act</h1>			
<p>It requires manufacturers to supply repair information, tools, and parts to independent repair shops and not just their own stores or partners.</p>	<p>This provides consumers with the right to repair and refurbish their purchased goods.</p>	<p>With access to relevant tools and repair manuals, independent repair shops will finally be able to compete with manufacturers.</p>	<p>While this is a victory for consumer rights, privacy, security and quality concerns along with blatant intellectual property (IP) rights violations of the manufacturers cannot be sidelined.</p>

Quality assurance clause:

- Manufacturers claim that the quality and functioning of the product might be adversely affected if they allow repairs by consumers and third parties. These claims are not baseless, for in the absence of supervision, who will ensure the quality of spare parts and even the repair technique.
- The fear of manufacturers is so potent that they incorporate warranty clauses which lapse when the product is repaired by a third party. While necessary clauses to maintain the quality of the product can be included, a blanket waiver should be avoided.

- For instance, the quality assurance clause can be incorporated for use of company-recommended spare parts and certified repair shops. Making repair manuals available to certified business owners could go a long way in balancing the rights of consumers and manufacturers.
- Additionally, manufacturers can sign a **non-disclosure agreement to protect the IP with the certified repairers/businesses**. Customers with access to genuine parts may also approach independent repair providers who may not offer the original manufacturer's warranty but their own warranty. The aim is to protect the rights of all stakeholders.

Adequacy of Consumer Protection Act:

- Often, manufacturers reduce the durability of the product, compelling consumers to either repurchase the product or get it repaired at exorbitant prices affixed by the manufacturers. Specifically, this tramples upon the right to obtain information about the quality of the product, the right to procure products at reasonable prices, and the right to seek redress against unscrupulous practices.
- When read closely, the 'right to repair' can be said to be **implicit in Section 2(9) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019**. This warrants some relief. Its apparent disregard merits an explicit insertion of a 'right to repair' clause in the said provision.
- This would make consumers more aware, provide tooth to an already implicit right, and aid in advancing repair-related liability on various stakeholders, including policy recommendations, pertinent amendments and even a specific law incorporating the right to repair to better implement it.

Product liability clause:

- The product liability clause under Section 84 can be amended and expanded to impose product liability concerning various reparability parameters of the product. France requires manufacturers to display a reparability index on their products which consists of five parameters.
- This helps consumers understand if the products are repairable, difficult to repair or not repairable at all. The duration of imposing product liability may vary depending on the product and its longevity.

Conclusion:

- The EU's guidelines on **Ecodesign for Energy-Related Products and Energy Information Regulations, 2021**, mandate manufacturers to provide spare parts for up to 10 years to avoid premature obsolescence.
- The New York legislation is a reminder that it is time to not only acknowledge the right to repair of consumers but also respond to the corresponding rights of the manufacturers. This warrants some expedited policy changes to recognise the 'right to repair', be it through amendments in the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 or through a separate law.

Gender Budgeting in India & Lessons from Namibia **(GS Paper 2, International Relation)**

Context:

- Namibia, a Sub-Saharan country ranked **sixth in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Index 2021** report, followed by Rwanda, making them the only two African countries to have made to the list of top 10 countries.
- Although India ranks 131 in HDI (Human Development Index) and Namibia at 130, Namibia has 91.7 percent of legal frameworks that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality under the SDG indicator as compared to 83.3 percent in India.

National Gender Policy (NGP) in Namibia:

- Post-Independence from South Africa in 1990, the Government of Namibia, in 1997, adopted the National Gender Policy (NGP) and National Plan of Action (NPAC), in order to address inequalities in men and women which was approved in 1998.
- The Namibian government has come a long way and has created gender cells in every Office/Ministry/Agency since it launched the National Gender Policy (2010-2020) and National Plan of Action (NPAC) policy.

- In 2014-15, there was a significant increase in the number of women in the Parliament—it increased from 25 percent to 47 percent.
- Additionally, politicians were trained in gender sensitivity; parliamentary debates from a gender perspective increased; and the Namibian government granted NAD\$5.4 billion to Gender Responsive Budgeting (equivalent to 9.2 percent of the total budget) for its annual budget in 2022.

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Guidelines:

- In 2015, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) of Namibia came out with a set of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Guidelines.

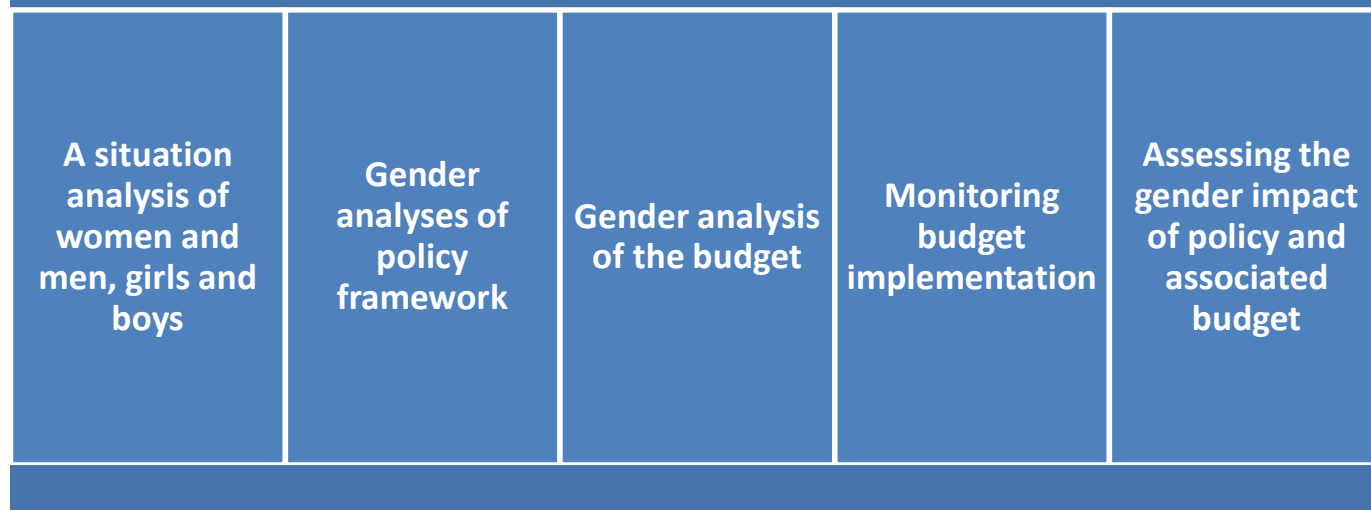
Approaches to Gender Responsive Budgeting in Namibia

There are two key GRB approaches followed in Namibia:

The three-category expenditure approach:

- Gender-specific expenditures:** Allocations to programmes that specifically target groups of women, men, girls, and boys. These include expenditure on maternal health, girls’ education, micro-credit, and income generation activities for women.
- Expenditures that promote gender equity in public service:** This comprises allocations to equal employment opportunities in government departments and authorities.
- General or mainstream expenditure:** The focus of this category is on the differential impact on women, men, girls, and boys. It covers all expenditures, which the above two categories do not include. It consists of expenditures on education, health, infrastructure, mining, security, and defence.

The five-step approach to gender-responsive budgeting



Gender-responsive budgeting in India:

- Gender-responsive budgeting was first introduced in 2001 in India.
- In 2003, the Government of India suggested that all ministries and departments include a section on gender issues in their respective annual reports. In 2004, an expert group was set to classify government transactions and “to examine the feasibility of and suggest the general approach to gender budgeting”.
- By 1 January 2005, all departments and ministries were instructed to form gender budgeting cells as per the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance guidelines.

The gender budget statement in India in 2005 comprises two parts:

- Part A of the budget comprises women-specific schemes, which provide 100 percent allocation for women (schemes such as Poshan 2.0).
- Part B of the budget comprises pro-women schemes which provide at least 30 percent to 99 percent of the allocation for women (such as Samagra Shiksha).

Gender budgeting scheme:

- A gender budgeting scheme was launched to facilitate capacity building and support research, to encourage planning, formulation of budgets and implementation procedures with a gender lens, allowing state governments and government agencies to use this scheme.
- Later in 2013, a set of guidelines highlighting a road map towards institutionalising gender budgeting was issued to all states.
- Until 2015–16, 56 ministries and departments have set up gender budgeting cells but India's gender budget has been below 5 percent for the last five years.

Budget 2022:

- The much-awaited gender budget, in 2022, too declined marginally this year from 4.4 percent in 2021 to 4.3 percent of the total union budget. Though the budget has increased in absolute numbers, it has decreased as the total of the union budget.
- In 2021, the amount for gender budget allocated was US\$ 19.7 billion, this has seen an increase of 11 percent to US\$ 22.05 billion. Furthermore, Part A of the scheme which focuses on women-specific schemes has been allotted US\$ 3.45 billion, leading to an increase of 6 percent, as compared to the last year's US\$ 3.25 billion.
- Part B of the scheme, which consists of pro-women schemes, which have a primary focus on women, has been allocated 84 percent of the total gender budget at US\$ 18.6 billion, this section of the budget has seen an increase of 12 percent from US\$ 16.6 billion. In 2020, the pre-pandemic gender budget was 4.72 percent of the union budget.
- The **pandemic has brought out greater fault lines in the society**, clarifying that even though women account for 48 percent of the population in the country, they continue to bear the brunt of the pandemic. However, areas such as digital literacy, skill training, and domestic violence against women, only received 2 percent of the budget.

Way Forward:

- Gender inequality continues to be a major roadblock to India's development. It needs to follow a nuanced approach that addresses the needs and challenges of vulnerable groups at present and in future by mainstreaming GRB and drawing lessons from Namibia's policy initiatives.
- Measures can be taken by the MWCD to devise a framework that ensures planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the progress of initiatives and assessing whether the objectives are being met or not.
- Administrations across the country must train personnel on gender sensitivity, resources that facilitate income generation, and allocation of funds. Participation and coordination amongst ministries at all levels must be initiated to attain inclusive and sustainable development.

Steps towards growing sustainably

(GS Paper 3, Environment)

Context:

- As India marks 75 years of independence in 2022, achieving economic growth with environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation have emerged as key challenges.
- The **environmental impact of growth** includes the increased consumption of natural resources, higher levels of pollution, and the potential loss of ecological habitats.
- However, not all forms of growth cause damage to the environment and **growth enabled with innovation** can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Synchronisation of ease of doing business & normalisation of conformities:

- A business regulatory regime based on trust with effective regulations that protect the environment yet ensure growth requires a fine balancing act.
- The government has shown commitment to synchronising the ease of doing business and normalisation of conformities without compromising the natural resources and environmental conditions of the country.
- It has recently streamlined more than 25,000 compliance conditions to support ease of living and ease of doing business.
- Further, it has stressed that compliance systems must be based on trust by promoting self-assessment and effective internal control mechanisms.



PARIVESH 2.0:

- The Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change has instituted the mechanism for a faster and more transparent environmental clearance regime for developmental and industrial activities.
- PARIVESH 2.0 is a **web-based, role-based workflow application** that has been developed for online submission and monitoring of the proposals submitted for seeking environment, forest, wildlife, and Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) clearances from central, state, and district authorities.
- It **automates the entire tracking of proposals**, which includes online submission of a new proposal, editing/updating the details of proposals and displaying their status at each stage of the workflow.
- The system has an **efficient technology-driven workflow** that minimises redundancies, a robust appraisal process, a reliable and validated database that encourages accountability and ease of doing business.
- The average time for granting environmental clearances (ECs) has reduced significantly from more than 150 days in 2019 to less than 90 days, and in some of the sectors, even within 60 days. These efforts to streamline

the tedious process of environmental clearances through digital intervention and transparent mechanism have been well received by the industry.

Exemption from environmental clearance:

- The ministry has proactively undertaken stakeholder consultations in the last 24 months and has issued various office memorandums, clarifications, guidelines, and amendments in the EIA notifications 2006, most recently in April 2022, where category and threshold limits of several projects were amended to accelerate production and developmental activities in line with Aatmanirbar Bharat and PLI schemes.
- The amendment provides for **exemption of environmental clearance to several projects**, including defence-related or border area projects, thermal plants up to 25 MW based on biomass, and expansion of terminal building of airport, basically for projects deemed as public utility works.
- The **exemptions come with the condition that standard environmental safeguards** for such projects would be followed by the agency executing such projects or by providing for environmental safeguards in the environmental management plan at the time of granting such clearances. The validity of environmental clearance to hydro-power and nuclear projects, among others, was extended.

Air pollution in India:

- In a recent survey by Smart Air, of the 25 most polluted cities in the world, nine are in India.
- The government has been making efforts to control industrial pollution, industries have been categorised as red, orange, green, or white based on pollution potential. The frequency of renewal of consent has been linked with the category to ease the burden.
- The real-time monitoring of industrial emissions and effluents is being carried out by Online Continuous Emission and Effluent Monitoring Systems (OCEMS) analysers for applicable parameters in an industry. In case of exceeding of prescribed standards, the web portal generates SMS alerts to concerned officials.

Way Forward:

- The Finance Minister, while presenting Budget FY23, referred to the **Circular Economy transition**. This aligns with waste management rules through which the Centre is strengthening the digital mechanism of **Extended Producer Responsibility portals** for plastic, e-waste, and battery waste as an environment protection strategy, making the manufacturer responsible for the entire life cycle of the product, especially for take-back, recycling, and final disposal.
- These amendments, the time-bound implementation of the compliance management regime, government action on green clearance conditions, self-regulation processes for the proponents, OCEMS, and many more will all act as key enablers for better facilitation of the overall vision of transforming the whole compliance process digitally.
- This will go a long way in enhancing the ease of doing business and reducing the cost of doing business as well as making Indian industry more sustainable in line with the demand of the times.
- The industry must continue to work with the government on ensuring sustainable and environmentally-aligned growth processes.