



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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INDIA HOSTS REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEGAL AID

Context: India hosted the first-ever regional conference on "Access to Legal Aid-Strengthening Access to Justice in the Global South".

About

- Organised by the **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** in collaboration with the International Legal Foundation (ILF), the UNDP, and UNICEF.

Conference Highlights

- The conference highlighted the "**New Delhi Statement on Legal Aid Development,**" covering various aspects of access to legal aid like:
 - responsibility of judicial and executive frameworks in developing legal aid mechanisms
 - the role of technology.
 - Trans Judicial communication
 - Funding of legal aid institutions
- Emphasized the **role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the legal landscape.**
- They also pressed for **ethical and responsible use of AI and machine learning** for the advancement of efficiency enhancement in legal and judicial processes.

Free Legal aid in India

- The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 provides free legal aid to a person if any of the following criteria are met:
 - They are a member of a Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe
 - They are a woman, child, specially-abled or mentally challenged
 - They have been a victim of human trafficking or beggar
 - An industrial workman
 - A victim of "a mass disaster, ethnic violence, caste atrocity", natural or industrial disaster

Significance of legal aid:

- **Promoting Equality and Access to Justice:** Legal aid helps to level the playing field by ensuring that everyone has access to legal representation, regardless of their financial status. This **promotes equality before the law.**
- **Protecting Fundamental Rights:** It allows individuals to challenge violations of their rights and seek redress, which is important especially for vulnerable groups, such as women, and children.
- **Promoting Fair Trials and Due Process:** Legal aid ensures that individuals facing criminal charges have access to competent legal representation and upholds the principles of due process.
- **Resolving Disputes and Preventing Conflicts:** It provides individuals with the means to seek legal recourse through the court system- a peaceful and orderly resolution of disputes., rather than resorting to extrajudicial means.
- **Empowering Individuals and Communities:** Legal aid empowers individuals and communities to understand their rights, assert their claims, and navigate the legal system effectively.

- **Upholding the Rule of Law:** Legal aid is essential for upholding the rule of law by ensuring that the law is applied fairly and consistently, regardless of an individual's financial means.
- **Promoting Trust in the Legal System:** Legal aid helps to build trust and confidence in the legal system by ensuring that everyone can seek legal redress when their rights are violated.

Issues of Legal Aid in India:

- **Inadequate Funding:** The allocation for legal aid is significantly lower than the actual requirement, leading to resource constraints that limit the reach and scope of legal aid services.
- **Shortage of Legal Aid Lawyers:** Legal aid lawyers are grossly underpaid, poorly treated and overworked, resulting in a case load imbalance and delays in providing legal assistance.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Many people remain unaware of their right to legal aid and the availability of legal aid services, hindering their access to justice.
- **Coordination and Collaboration Gaps:** There is a need for better coordination and collaboration between various stakeholders, including the government, legal aid providers, and the judiciary, to improve the effectiveness of legal aid services.

Provisions related to Legal aid in India:

- **Article 39A of Constitution:** State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, **provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes** to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disability.
- **National Legal Services Authority:** An apex body constituted to lay down policies and principles for making legal services available under the provisions of the NALSA Act and to frame the most effective and economical schemes for legal services.
 - **The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief.**
 - It also **disburses funds and grants** to State Legal Services Authorities and NGOs for implementing legal aid schemes and programmes.
- **State Legal Services Authority:** To give effect to the policies and directions of the Central Authority (NALSA) and to give legal services to the people and conduct Lok Adalats in the State.
 - **Headed by the Chief Justice of the State High Court** who is its Patron-in-Chief.
- **District Legal Services Authority:** Constituted in every District to implement Legal Aid Programmes and the **District Judge** of the District is its ex-officio Chairman.
- **Taluk Legal Services Committees:** Constituted for each of the Taluk or Mandal or for a group of Taluk and the **senior Civil Judge** operating within the jurisdiction is its ex-officio Chairman.

Way Ahead

- Legal aid is an **essential component of a fair and equitable society**, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to protect their rights and defend themselves against legal claims.
- By **addressing the existing challenges and implementing measures** to strengthen the legal aid system, India can ensure that everyone has access to justice, regardless of their socioeconomic status.
- The regional conference on Access to Legal Aid represents a **landmark moment in advancing justice through technology**, paving the way for global collaboration and learning from diverse adoption experiences.

Source: [TOI](#)

PEACE ACCORD BETWEEN UNLF AND GOVERNMENT

News: The Union and Manipur governments have signed a peace agreement with the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), a Meitei extremist organization.

What is the UNLF?

- **UNLF** is the oldest valley-based insurgent group in the Manipur valley. It is distinct from the insurgent groups active in the state's Naga-dominated and Kuki-Zomi dominated hills.
- **History:** The UNLF was formed in 1964, with the demand of secession from India under the leadership of Arembam Samarendra Singh.
- **Area of operation:** It includes all the valley areas of Manipur, as well as some villages in the Kuki-Zomi hill districts. It has been operating both within and outside Indian territory.
- **Patronage:** The group has largely been functioning from camps and training bases in Myanmar's Sagaing Region, Chin state, and Rakhine state with the patronage of the Myanmar military.
- **UNLF** is one of the eight Meitei extremist organizations that has declared to be unlawful associations under the anti-terror law, the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967**.

Factional differences

- There are two factions of the UNLF. 65 cadres of one of the factions of the UNLF, led by **K. Pambei, have joined the peace pact**.
- The other faction of the UNLF, led by R.K. Achou Singh alias Koireng, is still out of the pact and is said to be operating from Myanmar.
- This is the first time a valley-based Manipur armed group has agreed to return to mainstream by abjuring violence.

Insurgency in Northeast India

- Northeast India (NEI) today comprises eight states of India: **Sikkim** and the "seven sister states" i.e. **Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya**.
- NEI is bounded by **Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh**.
- NEI has been witnessing insurgency since the 1950s.



WHAT IS UNLF

- > The **United National Liberation Front** or **UNLF**, an extremist group operating in Manipur, was formed on **November 24, 1964**
- > It is the **oldest Imphal valley-based armed group** in the northeastern state
- > Its objective was the secession of **Manipur** from India for the formation of an **independent socialist Manipur**
- > Its founder was **Arambam Samarendra**. He was killed on **June 10, 2000** by **KYKL**, a breakaway faction of **UNLF**
- > The **first council** comprised **Kalalung Kamei** (a Naga) as president, **Thankhopao Singsit** (a Kuki) as vice-president, **Arambam Samarendra** (a Meitei) as its general secretary

Major incidents carried out by UNLF

- > **November 23, 2009** | **5** Assam Rifles personnel, including two officers, were killed in an **ambush** at **Old Somtal** area in **Chandel** district
- > **February 25, 2007** | **16** security personnel were killed in an **ambush** at **Khoirok Lamkai**
- > **October 9, 2005** | **5** soldiers were killed at **Zoupi** in **Chandel** district
- > **November 20, 2002** | **7** **CRPF** men were killed at **Jivan Nagar** in **Bishnupur** district
- > **November 21, 2000** | **5** security personnel were killed at **Jiribam** in **Imphal East** district
- > **February 15, 1999** | **9** security personnel were killed in **Churachandpur** district

Breakaway factions

- > **Revolutionary Government of Manipur** formed in 1968 by **Oinam Sudhir Kumar**
- > **Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL)**, another proscribed outfit, formed in 1994 by **N Oken**

> The **UNLF** launched its armed struggle in 1990 with the formation of its **armed wing, Manipur People's Army (MPA)**




Reasons for Insurgency in NEI

- **Multi-Ethnic Region:** The region is home to around 40 million people including 213 of the 635 tribal groups listed by the Anthropological Survey of India. The situation gets further aggravated due to inter-tribal rivalries, which fuel tribal/ethnic insurgencies.
- **Underdeveloped Region:** Due to the difficult terrain, configuration of forests and mountains, infrastructural development in the region has been slow. This has increased a sense of disenchantment with the authorities.

- **Lack of Livelihood opportunities:** In the absence of major economic opportunities the youth are easily lured by various insurgent groups to earn easy money.
- **Sense of Isolation, Deprivation and Exploitation:** Distance from the center and meager representation in the parliament has further led to disillusionment in the dialogue process, thereby making call of the gun more attractive.
- **Demographic Changes:** The influx of refugees from neighboring countries have led to a dramatic change in the demographic landscape of the region.
- **External Support:** The insurgencies in the NEI have been supported by erstwhile East Pakistan, in the form of training of personnel of Naga Army and giving them weapons. Later, China also provided weapons and moral support to the insurgents.

Government steps for the development of NER

- **PM-DevINE Scheme:** Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE) aims to support infrastructure and social development projects along with enabling livelihood activities for youth and women.
- **Northeast Desk:** A dedicated Northeast Desk has been set up within Invest India, which supports the Northeast States in their outreach activities to the investors as well as in facilitating and handholding select companies.
- **Mission Organic Value Chain Development (MOVCD-NER):** The aim of the mission is to promote organic farming in the region. It seeks to replace traditional subsistence farming with a cluster-based approach.
- **Connectivity Projects:** To create alternate routes to the region and decrease its dependence on the Chicken's Neck, the Indian government has planned additional routes through South East Asia like **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor**, etc.
- **Separate ministry for the region:** The Department of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) was created in **2001** and was accorded the status of a full-fledged ministry in **2004**.

Way Ahead

- **Involvement of Civil Society:** Engagement of civil society for rapprochement with the insurgent organizations for peace talks must continue.
- **Support from neighboring countries:** The armies of India and Myanmar carried out **Operation Sunrise** along the Indo-Myanmar border to counter insurgent groups in Myanmar.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Respect the diverse cultural and ethnic identities in the region and incorporate local perspectives into policies and programs of the government.
- **Peace Agreements:** Peace pacts such as the Bodo Accord, Bru-Reang Agreement, NLFT-Tripura Agreement, Karbi Anglong Agreement and the Assam-Meghalaya Inter State Boundary Agreement etc should be encouraged. The agreements are poised to give a fillip to usher in a new era of peace in the North East.

Source:IE

UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES PREVENTION ACT (UAPA)

News: Seven students in Kashmir were arrested and booked under the **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)** for allegedly raising pro-Pakistan slogans during the Cricket World Cup final held recently.

What is Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)?

- The UAPA **gives powers to the government to probe and prosecute people for acts of terrorism**, and to designate an organisation as an “**unlawful association**” or a “**terrorist organisation**”, or an individual as a “**terrorist**”.
- It was enacted on the **recommendation of the National Integration Council**, set up in **1961** to find ways to counter problems that were dividing the country.
 - However, in its original form, the Act largely dealt with **secessionist activities**, with no explicit mention of terrorism.

Further Amendments

- In 2004, the Act was amended for the first time, with “**and for dealing with terrorist activities**” added to its title.
- In the aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai attacks in 2008, another set of amendments broadened the definition of terrorism in the Act, and introduced **longer incarceration and more stringent bail conditions**.
- In 2012, the UAPA was further amended to include “**economic security**” of the country in the ambit of terrorism. Under this, the statute went on to designate production, smuggling and distribution of **counterfeit Indian currency as a terrorist act**.
- The 2019 amendment gave the government the powers to **designate an individual as a terrorist**. Until then, only organisations could be designated as “terrorist”.
 - This was criticised as **overturning the founding principle of the criminal justice system that presumes innocence until proven guilty** for every suspect.

What are the Issues with UAPA?

- **Low conviction:** According to NCRB, between 2018 and 2020, as many as 4,690 people were arrested under the UAPA **but only 3% were convicted**.
- **Sharp Rise in Use:** There is a sharp surge in the state’s use of UAPA – against tribals in Chhattisgarh, those using social media through proxy servers in Jammu and Kashmir; and journalists in Manipur among others.
- **Stringent Provision of bail:** The standard for bail under the UAPA is that it cannot be granted unless the court is of the view that the accused is innocent of the alleged offence.
- **Highly Discretionary:** It confers upon the government broad discretionary powers and also authorizes the creation of special courts with the ability to use secret witnesses and to hold closed-door hearings.
- **Ignoring Fundamental Rights:** It can simply be used to bypass fundamental rights.
 - For instance, those arrested under UAPA can be incarcerated up to 180 days without a charge sheet being filed, thus directly violating Article 21 of the constitution.

Related Supreme Court Judgements

- **Nisar Ahmad Khan v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2014):** It emphasized the importance of following due process of law and providing fair trial to persons accused under UAPA.
- **Ashwini Kumar v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2023):** This judgment upheld the constitutional validity of UAPA but cautioned against its arbitrary and excessive use.

Way Ahead

- Terrorism is unquestionably a global threat and needs to be tackled but the Act has indeed been the center of several debates due to its **abusive nature and lack of a proper mechanism for backup.**
- It is up to the state, judiciary, civil society **to balance constitutional freedom and the imperative of anti-terror pursuits.**
- Further, there should be regular monitoring and reporting on the use of UAPA to ensure it is being used in a fair, transparent, and accountable manner.

Source: [IE](#)

PRADHAN MANTRI JANJATI ADIVASI NYAYA MAHA ABHIYAN

In News: The Union Cabinet has recently approved **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN).**

About

- The Prime Minister has announced the PM JANMAN Abhiyan on **Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas** in Jharkhand's Khunti.
- The scheme focuses on 11 critical interventions for **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.**
- **Allocation for the scheme:** The total outlay for this has been pegged at Rs 24,104 crore, of which the central share will be Rs 15,336 crore and the states will contribute Rs 8,768 crore.
- **Beneficiaries:** Over **28,16,000 (28.16 lakh) tribal people** from **220 districts** in **18 states and one Union Territory** will benefit from this scheme.
 - Those tribals who have not yet benefited from Government of India schemes will be the beneficiaries under this scheme.
 - The beneficiaries have been identified from **among 75 tribal communities** with scattered habitation.

Provisions of the scheme

- **The scheme targets to provide:**
 - 4.90 lakh **pucca homes** at a cost of Rs 2.39 lakh per house,
 - **Construction** of 8,000 kilometres of **roads** at a cost of Rs 1 crore per kilometre,
 - **Piped water supply** for all Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) habitations,
 - **Community water supply** in 2,500 villages/habitations with a population of less than 20 households,
 - A thousand **mobile medical units** with medicine cost for 10 districts at Rs 33.88 lakh per mobile medical unit,
 - 500 **hostels** at a cost of Rs 2.75 crore each, and

- **Vocational and skilling centres** in 60 Aspirational PVTG block at Rs 50 lakh per block.
- **It will also provide for the:**
 - Construction of 2,500 **Anganwadi centres** (at Rs 12 lakh each), **multipurpose centres** (at Rs 60 lakh each),
 - **Last-mile electricity connection** for 57,000 households,
 - A 0.3 KW **solar off-grid system**,
 - **Solar lighting in streets**, and
 - Installation of **mobile towers** in 3,000 villages.
- **Others:**
 - The **Union Ministry of Ayush** will set up **Ayush Wellness Centres**, according to existing norms, and Ayush facilities will be extended to PVTG habitations through mobile medical units.
 - The **Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** will facilitate skill and vocational training in PVTG habitations, multi-purpose centres and hostels, according to the **suitable skills** of these communities.

Scheduled Tribes in India & Constitutional Provisions

- **Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities:** India's 705 Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities — making up 8.6% of the country's population — live in 26 States and six Union Territories.
- **Scheduled Areas:** Scheduled Areas cover 11.3% of India's land area, and have been notified in 10 States: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh.
- **PVTGS:** India has a Scheduled Tribe population of 10.45 crore, according to the 2011 census.
 - Of the total, 75 communities in 18 states and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been categorised as PVTGs.
 - On the recommendation of the **Dhebar Commission**, the Central government began to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category in 1975.
 - These PVTGs continue to face vulnerability in social, economic and educational fields.
 - The **Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission** to improve the socio-economic conditions of these groups was announced in the Union Budget for 2023-24.
- **Article 244:** Pertaining to the administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas, Article 244 is the single most important constitutional provision for STs.
 - **Article 244(1)** provides for the application of Fifth Schedule provisions to **Scheduled Areas** notified in any State other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
 - The Sixth Schedule applies to these States as per **Article 244(2)**.
 - The **Fifth Schedule under Article 244(1)** of the Constitution defines **Scheduled Areas**. On the other hand, the **Sixth Schedule under Article 244 (2)** of the Constitution defines **Tribal areas**.

Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas

- It is observed to honour the birth anniversary of the tribal freedom fighter, **Birsa Munda**.
- He was an Indian freedom fighter, religious leader and folk hero from the Munda Tribe in the Chhota Nagpur Plateau area.

Source: PIB

OPTICAL FIBRES

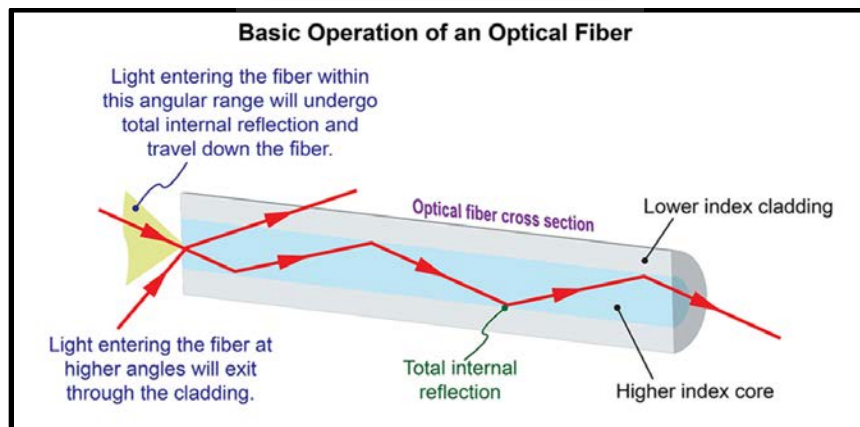
Context: Optical fibers are thin strands of glass or plastic that form the **backbone of the modern internet**, carrying most of the world's data traffic.

About Optical Fibres

- Optical fibres are made of **thin cylindrical strands of glass**. The diameter of a typical fibre is close to the diameter of a **human hair**.
- These fibres **can carry information, such as text, images, voices, videos, telephone calls**, and anything that can be encoded as digital information, across large distances **almost at the speed of light**.
- Almost 60 years ago, physicist **Charles Kao** suggested that glass fibres could be a superior medium for telecommunication, **replacing the copper wires of the time**.
 - For his achievements concerning fibre optic communication, **Dr. Kao received a part of the 2009 Nobel Prize in physics**.



Working of optical fibres



- When a beam of light falls on a glass surface, it passes through partially while the rest is reflected away. When it passes through, **its path bends because the refractive index of glass is different from that of air**.

- The refractive index is the property of a medium that determines **how fast light can travel in it**.
- When a beam travels in the reverse direction, i.e. from glass to air, **it's possible that it won't enter the air**. Instead, it will be completely reflected back within the glass.
 - This phenomenon, known as **total internal reflection**, is the basis of guiding light across long distances without a significant loss of optical power.
 - With proper adjustments, the light can be kept bouncing within the glass with very little escaping outside.
- This is how signals encoded as electromagnetic waves can be fed into one end of an optical fibre, and they will reflect and bounce many times between the glass walls as they traverse several kilometres bearing the information in the signals.

Advantages of optical fibres

- **Immunity to Electromagnetic Interference (EMI):** Optical fibers are immune to EMI, **unlike copper cables** that are susceptible to interference from electrical sources.
- **High Bandwidth:** Optical fibers can transmit significantly more data than copper cables. This means they can handle the increasing demand for high-speed internet and data transmission.
- **Long-Distance Transmission:** Optical fibers can transmit data over longer distances without signal degradation. This is crucial for telecommunications networks that span vast areas.
- **Lightweight and Flexible:** Optical fibers are lightweight and flexible, making them easy to install and handle, especially in confined spaces.
- **Durability:** Optical fibers are highly resistant to corrosion, moisture, and extreme temperatures, ensuring long-term reliability.
- **Security:** Optical fibers are difficult to tap or intercept, providing enhanced security for sensitive data transmission.
- **Future-Proof:** Optical fiber technology is constantly evolving, offering the potential for even higher bandwidths and longer transmission distances in the future.

Applications of optical Fibres:

- **Telecommunications:** Optical fibers are the backbone of the modern telecommunications network, able to transmit data much faster and over longer distances than copper wires.
- **Computer networking:** Optical fibers are used to connect computers and servers within local area networks (LANs). They provide high-bandwidth connections essential for cloud computing, big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT).
- **Cable television:** Optical fibers are used to deliver cable television signals to homes and businesses.
- **Medical imaging:** Optical fibers are used in a variety of medical imaging devices, such as endoscopes, microscopes, and lasers.
- **Sensor networks:** Optical fibers are used to transmit data from sensors in a variety of applications, such as environmental monitoring, industrial automation, and in hazardous locations.
- **Military and aerospace applications:** Optical fibers are used for secure communications in hostile environments, missile guidance systems, and laser rangefinders.

- **Scientific research:** Optical fibers are used in spectroscopy, fiber optics sensing, and optical communication.

Source: TH

FACTS IN NEWS

KALBELIA DANCE

Context: Kalbeliya is a popular dance form from Rajasthan.

About

- It is primarily performed by the members of the **Kalbeliyas, a nomadic group of snake charmers and dancers.**
- Inscribed in **2010 on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**, the dance involves women in black skirts in swirling, graceful movements that **replicate the movements of a serpent.**
- The dance is typically **performed by a group of women accompanied by male musicians.**
 - The dancers wear brightly colored skirts, blouses, and heavy jewelry. The male musicians typically play the **dhol (a drum), the pung (a snake charmer's pipe), and the khanjari (a tambourine).**
- It is thought that the Kalbelia dance **dates back more than 300 years.**
 - According to legend, the Kalbeliyas created the dance to appease the snake gods and avoid getting bitten by them.
- The Kalbeliyas claim to use the dance to **express their love of nature and distinctive culture.**



Source: TH

INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION

News: The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, GoI is organizing the 19th Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

About

- **IOTC is an intergovernmental organization** responsible for the management of tuna and tuna-like species in the **Indian Ocean.**
- **Objectives:** It promotes cooperation among its Contracting Parties (Members) and Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties in order to ensure the conservation and appropriate utilization of fish stocks and encouraging the sustainable development of fisheries.
- **Headquarters:** Victoria, Seychelles

History

- The IOTC is the successor to the Indo-Pacific Tuna Development and Management Programme, which was established in **1982**.
- The Agreement for the Establishment of the IOTC was approved by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in **1993**. The agreement entered into force in **1996**.

Members

- IOTC has **30 members** (as of May 2023) including **India**, Pakistan, the UK, France etc.
- The Agreement is open to any state that has coasts within the Indian Ocean region (or adjacent seas) as well as any state that fishes for tuna in the Indian Ocean region.
- The agreement is also open to regional economic organizations.

Source: [IOTC](#)

