



## ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION - GS III MAINS

**Q.** Organ donation can help save the lives of multiple people. Discuss the prospects of organ transplantation in India and suggest measures for the effective regulation of the same. (15 marks, 250 words)

**News:** *Delhi HC tells Health Ministry to fix timelines for organ transplantation process*

### What's in the news?

- In a significant judgment, the Delhi High Court has ruled that “the entire process” of transplanting organs from living donors, from the submission of application to the final decision, “ought not to ideally exceed 6 to 8 weeks”.

### Key takeaways:

- It also directed the Health Ministry to prescribe specific timelines for each stage of the process.
- “The processing of forms, the conduct of interviews and the decision making itself is expected to be within fixed timelines and not in an expanded or elastic manner,” Justice Prathiba M. Singh said, stressing that “delays in such cases can have life-threatening consequences”.

### Organ transplantation in India:

- The number of organ transplants has increased by over three times from 4,990 in 2013 to 15,561 in 2022.
- The most common organ transplant is for the kidney, followed by liver, heart, lung, pancreas, and small bowel transplants.
- In 2022 alone, nearly 12,791 living donor transplants and 2,765 deceased donor transplants were conducted.
- **Only 1,743 (14%) of the organs were from deceased donors, while the majority of organs harvested were from living donors, specifically kidney and liver donations.**
- Nearly all deceased organ donations in 2021 were in 15 states, with the top five accounting for over 85% of the total.

### Need for Increased Organ Donations in India:

- India conducts the **third highest number of transplants in the world**, but the number of organs needed is still much higher than the number of transplants.
- **Lifestyle diseases** are increasing the demand for organs as heart and lungs can only be retrieved from deceased donors.



- Nearly 1.5 lakh persons die in road traffic accidents every year in India, many of whom can ideally donate organs.
- Organ transplantation also helps to **reduce the burden on the healthcare system** by reducing the need for hospitalization, repeat surgeries, and long-term treatment.
- India has an organ donation rate of 0.52 per million population, much lower than the rate in Spain (49.6 per million).
- Organ donation can help **save the lives of multiple people**, as one donor can donate several organs and tissues.

## Challenges in Organ Transplantation:

### 1. Lack of awareness:

- There is a lack of awareness among people about the importance of organ donation and transplantation, which leads to a shortage of donated organs.

### 2. Shortage of donors:

- Despite increasing awareness, there is still a shortage of organ donors due to several reasons, including religious beliefs, and lack of trust in the medical system.

### 3. Legal and ethical issues:

- There are several legal and ethical issues surrounding organ donation, including consent, allocation of organs, and the fair distribution of organs.

### 4. Transportation and preservation:

- Organs need to be transported and preserved under specific conditions to ensure their viability for transplantation which has logistical challenges, especially for organs that have a short shelf life.

### 5. Medical suitability:

- Not all donated organs are suitable for transplantation due to medical conditions or other factors, which can limit the number of available organs for transplant.

### 6. Costs:

- The costs associated with organ transplantation can be high, which can limit access to treatment for some patients.

## Measures taken by Government:

### 1. Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA):

- It was enacted in **1994** and governs organ transplantation in India.
- The act also establishes the **National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO)** and **State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organizations (SOTTO)** to oversee organ donation and transplantation activities.

### 2. National Organ Transplant Programme (NOTP):

- It was launched in 2014 to create a national registry of organ donors and recipients, establish more organ transplant centers, and raise awareness about organ donation.

### 3. Deceased Organ Donation Program:

- It was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to encourage organ donation from deceased individuals.



#### 4. National Organ Donation Day:

- The government of India has designated **November 27** as National Organ Donation Day to raise awareness about the importance of organ donation and encourage people to pledge to donate their organs.

#### 5. Swasth Bharat Yatra:

- It is a **government-led campaign** to promote healthy living, prevent lifestyle diseases, raise awareness about organ donation and encourage people to pledge to donate their organs.

#### 6. National Organ and Tissue Transplant Registry:

- It has established a National Organ and Tissue Transplant Registry to maintain records of organ donations and transplantation in the country to help in the development of policies and strategies to promote organ donation and transplantation.

#### 7. Organ Retrieval Banking Organization:

- It is a part of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi and is responsible for the retrieval, preservation, and distribution of organs for transplantation in the Delhi-NCR region.

### Recent Changes in Guidelines:

#### 1. Registration for Organ Recipients:

- Government **removes the need for domicile registration** to receive organs from a particular state/union territory
- All states/UTs directed to not charge any fee for organ recipient registration.
- Patients will now be allotted a unique ID by NOTTO on registering which will get carried forward even if the patient changes multiple hospitals in different States.

#### 2. Age Bar Lifted:

- Earlier, preference was given to younger patients below 65 years of age.
- The government **removes the age bar** for organ registration in consideration of the right to life enshrined under Article 21.

#### 3. Transplantation of Human Organs Act:

- Organ retrieval, storage, and transplantation are governed under THOA, 1994.
- The law has been adopted by most states but some aspects are vague, leading to confusion and different implementations.
- The government is working on a '**one nation, one policy**' approach to eliminate variations.
- The Health Ministry has instructed States to **stop charging registration fees** from patients.

#### 4. Organ donor:

- Anyone regardless of age or gender can become an organ and tissue donor with parental or legal guardian consent required for minors.
- Living persons can only donate to immediate blood relations, while a brain-dead person can donate more than 20 organs and tissues.



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## 5. Awareness and Education:

- To create awareness about organ donation, a **chapter will be added to the school curriculum soon.**
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare suggests wide orientation and re-orientation through **training programmes**, newly-designed courses and digital interventions for healthcare professionals and domain knowledge experts.
- It also pushed for a **multi-stakeholder exercise** such as partnerships with NGOs for communicating effectively and making people realise their contributions towards a greater good.
- The Health Secretary also suggested that consultations and discussions can lead to memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and consequently, **creation of centres of excellence at the State and regional levels** where these specialised services can be provided to the needy.

