

- It empowers the central government to freeze, seize or attach financial assets and economic resources of people engaged in such activities.

Key developments that echoes the need for amendment

- **To align with international benchmarks:** The relevant organisations at the international level, such as the Financial Action Task Force have expanded the scope of targeted financial sanctions and demand tighter controls on the financing of WMD activities.
- **To keep pace with evolving threats:** With advancements in technologies, new kinds of threats have emerged that were not sufficiently catered for in the existing legislation. These include developments in the field of drones or unauthorised work in biomedical labs that could maliciously be used for terrorist activity.

Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act, 2005.

- Its primary objective **to provide an integrated and overarching legislation** on prohibiting unlawful activities in relation to all three types of WMD (i.e., Nuclear, Chemical and Biological), their delivery systems and related materials, equipment and technologies.
- It instituted **penalties for contravention** of these provisions such as imprisonment for a term not less than five years (extendable for life) as well as fines.
- The Act was passed to meet an international obligation enforced by the **UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540** of 2004.
 - UNSCR 1540 established binding obligations on all UN member states to take and enforce effective measures against proliferation of WMD, their means of delivery and related materials to non-state actors.

About Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)


- There is **no single, authoritative definition of a WMD in international law** and the expression is usually understood to cover nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons.
- According to the **United States Department of Homeland Security**, “A weapon of mass destruction is a nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological, or other device that is intended to harm a large number of people.
- It is therefore **categorised as a class of weaponry with the potential to:**
 - Produce in a single moment an **enormous destructive effect** capable to kill millions of civilians, jeopardize the natural environment, and fundamentally alter the lives of future generations through their catastrophic effects;
 - **Cause death or serious injury** of people through toxic or poisonous chemicals;
 - **Disseminate disease-causing organisms or toxins** to harm or kill humans, animals or plants;
 - **Deliver nuclear explosive devices, chemical, biological or toxin agents** to use them for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.

DID YOU KNOW?



• The expression “weapon of mass destruction” (WMD) is considered to have been **used first by the Archbishop of Canterbury (England), in 1937** to refer to the aerial bombing of civilians in the Basque town of Guernica by German and Italian fascists in support of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War.

Definitions of WMDs as per India’s WMD Act, 2005

Nuclear weapons 	Chemical weapons 	Biological Weapons 
<p>Those which are categorized as having nuclear capabilities and recognized by the Government of India. In general, these machinery and weapons use the process of nuclear fission in order to facilitate an explosion.</p>	<p>Toxic chemicals and their precursors (except where used for peaceful purposes); munitions and devices specifically designed to cause death or other harm through the toxic properties of those toxic chemicals; and any equipment specifically designed for use in connection with the employment of these munitions and devices.</p>	<p>Microbial or other biological agents, or toxins of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes; and weapons, equipment or delivery systems specially designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.</p>