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ARTICLE 142 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Invoking its plenary powers under **Article 142 of the Constitution**, the Supreme Court directed the quashing and closure of all nationwide police FIRs registered against students and protesters during the NEET-UG paper leak demonstrations.



Article 142 of the Constitution of India

About Article 142 of the Constitution of India:

What It Is?

- **Article 142** is an extraordinary constitutional provision that equips the Supreme Court of India with inherent, plenary powers to pass any decree or make any order necessary for doing **complete justice** in any cause or matter pending before it.

Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 142(1):** Empowers the Supreme Court to issue such orders/decrees as are essential to ensure complete justice between parties; decrees passed under it are enforceable across the entire territory of India as prescribed by Parliament or presidential order.
- **Article 142(2):** Confers extensive procedural and investigatory authority upon the Court to secure witness attendance, demand discovery or production of documents, and investigate or punish contempt of court.

Key Features of Article 142

- **Power to ensure complete justice:** Article 142 gives the Supreme Court wide powers to pass any order necessary to ensure complete justice in a case before it. This power flows directly from the Constitution.
- **Not restricted by ordinary laws:** The Supreme Court has held in **Union Carbide Corporation v. Union of India** and **Delhi Judicial Service Association** that ordinary statutory limitations cannot restrict its constitutional power under Article 142.
- **Available only to the Supreme Court:** Article 142 is an extraordinary constitutional power exclusive to the Supreme Court. High Courts cannot exercise the same power while deciding cases under Article 226 (**Anil Kumar Jain v. Maya Jain**).
- **Helps address gaps in law:** Where the existing legal framework is inadequate, the Court can use Article 142 to provide appropriate remedies until the legislature or executive acts.
- **Subject to constitutional limits:** Article 142 is wide but not unlimited. In **Prem Chand Garg (1963)** the Court clarified that the power cannot be exercised in a manner that violates fundamental rights or ignores substantive provisions of law.

Significance:

- It enables the Court to provide fair and case-specific remedies, particularly in exceptional situations where ordinary legal remedies may prove inadequate.
- The provision enables the Supreme Court to respond effectively when executive inaction, administrative failure or exceptional circumstances threaten justice.

THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (UNCERD)

India strongly rejected what it termed politically motivated and malicious observations in a press release issued by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) following its 11th periodic review in Geneva.



UNCERD

About The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD): What It Is?

- The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD / UNCERD) is an independent United Nations human rights treaty body composed of 18 independent experts of high moral standing and recognized impartiality. It is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) by its State parties.

Organisation & Institutional Framework:

- **Parent Treaty:** International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), adopted in 1965 and entered into force in 1969.
- **Administrative Support:** Serviced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Aim: To ensure that State parties uphold their international legal obligations to prohibit, eliminate, and punish all forms of racial discrimination, while promoting racial harmony, equality before the law, and the protection of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Key Features of UNCERD Reports:

1. **Mandatory Periodic State Reporting:** State parties are legally obligated to submit an initial report one year after accession, followed by regular reports **every two years**, detailing legislative, judicial, and policy measures enacted to eliminate discrimination.
2. **Issuance of Concluding Observations:** Following interactive dialogues with State delegations, the Committee issues Concluding Observations, highlighting positive developments, key concerns, and actionable recommendations.
3. **Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedures:** Employs preventive mechanisms to monitor developing tensions and prevent structural problems from escalating into open racial or ethnic conflict.
4. **Adjudication of Complaints:** Features procedures to examine **inter-state disputes** as well as **individual communications/petitions** (where a State party has recognized the Committee's competence under Article 14 of ICERD).

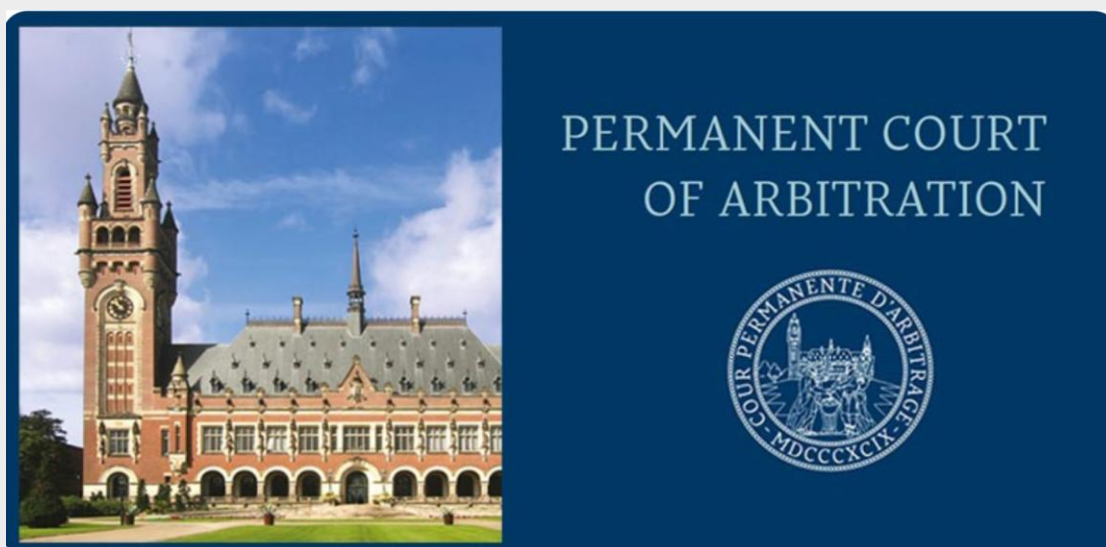
UNCERD and India:

- **Founding & Ratification:** India was among the leaders in drafting the ICERD during the 1960s as part of its global stance against apartheid and colonialism. India signed the convention in 1967 and ratified it in **1968**.
- **Constitutional Alignment:** India's domestic legal framework reflects ICERD principles through **Articles 14, 15, 16, and 17** of the Constitution, alongside special statutes like the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- **Jurisdictional Stance on Caste vs. Race:** A consistent point of discussion between India and CERD concerns the interpretation of descent under Article 1 of ICERD. India maintains that caste-based discrimination is an internal social stratification issue covered under specialized constitutional protections, rather than a form of racial discrimination based on biological or ethnic origin.

THE PERMANENT COURT OF ARBITRATION (PCA)

The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled that the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) remains in force and restricted certain works on **the Ratle Hydroelectric Project**.

- India rejected the ruling, calling the arbitration illegally constituted and its decision null and void.



About The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA):

What It Is?

- The **Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)** is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to facilitating international arbitration, conciliation, and fact-finding for disputes arising between states, state entities, intergovernmental organizations, and private parties.
- Despite its name, it is not a traditional standing court with permanent judges; rather, it is a permanent institutional framework that provides administrative support, procedural rules, and registries for ad-hoc arbitral tribunals.

Establishment: Founded in **1899** during the first Hague Peace Conference under the Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes (convened by Czar Nicholas II of Russia).

Revision: The convention was revised at the second Hague Peace Conference in **1907**.

Headquarters: Peace Palace, The Hague, Netherlands.

India and Pakistan: Both have been **Contracting Parties to the PCA since 1950**, adhering to the **1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions**.

Aim: To provide the international community with accessible, flexible, and peaceful legal mechanisms to settle inter-state and commercial disputes that diplomacy fails to resolve, avoiding recourse to armed conflict.

Key Functions of the PCA:

- **Administration of Ad-Hoc Tribunals:** Serves as the official registry and administrative secretariat for arbitral tribunals constituted under multilateral conventions, bilateral investment treaties (BITs), and international river pacts.
- **Multi-Domain Dispute Resolution:** Facilitates legal settlement across a wide array of disputes, including boundary demarcations, sovereign maritime boundaries, human rights, environmental governance, and commercial investor-state arbitrations.
- **Appointing Authority Services:** The Secretary-General of the PCA acts as an appointing authority to designate neutral arbitrators when disputing parties fail to agree on tribunal composition.
- **Fact-Finding and Conciliation Commissions:** Provides institutional rules and support for non-binding dispute resolution, such as international commissions of inquiry and conciliation panels.

The Indus Waters Treaty & Recent Ruling:

- **Treaty Background:** The World Bank-brokered IWT (1960) allocates Ravi, Beas and Sutlej to India and Indus, Jhelum and Chenab primarily to Pakistan, while permitting limited Indian hydropower use on Western Rivers.
- **August 2026 Ruling:** The PCA held that the IWT remains binding and cannot be unilaterally suspended or held in abeyance, rejecting India's cited grounds, including cross-border terrorism.
- **Ratle Interim Measures:** The PCA temporarily restricted specified construction on the 850 MW Ratle Hydroelectric Project on the Chenab pending Neutral Expert proceedings.

India's Stand:

- **Parallel Proceedings Invalid:** India argues Article IX provides a **graded mechanism**—Permanent Indus Commission → Neutral Expert → Court of Arbitration—making simultaneous proceedings contrary to the treaty.
- **PCA Awards Rejected:** India considers the Court of Arbitration illegally constituted and its decisions on Ratle and Kishenganga null and void.
- **Treaty Remains in Abeyance:** India maintains its decision to hold the IWT in abeyance, linking future engagement to security concerns and seeking renegotiation reflecting climate, demographic and regional realities.

NEW GLOBAL DROUGHT RESILIENCE ARCHITECTURE

At UNCCD COP17, a new global drought resilience architecture was launched to shift from reactive crisis response to proactive preparedness, featuring the world's first Drought Resilience Index (DRI) and Drought Resilience Investment Facility (DRIF).

About Global Drought Resilience Architecture: DRI and DRIF

About Drought Resilience Index (DRI): What It Is?



- The Drought Resilience Index (DRI) is the world's first comprehensive technical monitoring metric and assessment tool designed to evaluate a country's systemic capacity to handle and withstand drought conditions.

Aim: To enable countries to assess their capacity to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to droughts, while identifying structural vulnerabilities to inform more effective, data-driven policies and investments.

Key Features:

- **AI-Powered Analytics:** Integrates advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) features to help policymakers, technical experts, and the public interpret complex climate and geographical data into practical insights.
- **Vulnerability Mapping:** Pinpoints specific regional and national vulnerabilities, allowing governments to target high-risk areas before a drought escalates into a humanitarian crisis.
- **Proactive Paradigm Shift:** Supports the fundamental shift from reactive disaster relief (emergency response) to proactive, technology-enabled resilience and preparedness.
- **Policy & Investment Guide:** Transforms raw technical metrics into actionable intelligence, guiding governments on where to effectively allocate resources and structural investments.

About Drought Resilience Investment Facility (DRIF):

What It Is?

- The Drought Resilience Investment Facility (DRIF) is the world's first global catalytic financing platform dedicated exclusively to funding and scaling drought resilience projects worldwide.

Aim: To utilize public capital to reduce investment risks, thereby unlocking and mobilizing much larger flows of institutional and private finance to strengthen drought resilience at scale.

Key Features:

- **Catalytic De-Risking:** Uses public funds as a buffer to de-risk and secure projects, making them attractive and viable for massive private and institutional capital investments.
- **Focus on Water & Agriculture:** Directs financial flows specifically toward projects that enhance water security and promote sustainable, drought-resistant agriculture.
- **Nature-Based Solutions:** Prioritizes funding for land restoration and nature-based ecological solutions to combat desertification and soil degradation.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Scaling:** Connects governments, development partners, financial institutions, and the private sector to turn theoretical climate commitments into large-scale, on-the-ground implementation.

HANGING AS A CONSTITUTIONAL MODE OF EXECUTION

The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of execution by hanging, rejecting a PIL that challenged it as cruel and violative of the right to dignity under Article 21.

WHY THE SUPREME COURT UPHELD HANGING AS A CONSTITUTIONAL MODE OF EXECUTION

EXPLAINED

The Supreme Court has consistently held that hanging is a **constitutional and legal** mode of execution in India. Here's why.



1. LAW AUTHORIZES IT

The method of execution is governed by **law**. Section 354(5) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 (earlier Section 354(3) CrPC) specifically provides that the person shall be hanged by the neck till death. Since the legislature has **prescribed it**, the Court cannot strike it down.

2. NOT CRUEL OR INHUMAN

The Court has held that hanging does **not** violate **Article 21** (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) as it is neither cruel, inhuman nor degrading. It is a **quick and certain method** compared to other forms that may cause prolonged pain.

3. RAREST OF RARE DOCTRINE

The Court has upheld the death penalty only in the **"rarest of rare"** cases where the crime is so exceptional that life imprisonment is not an option. The method (hanging) is valid, but the imposition is rare.

4. JUDICIAL PRECEDENTS

In **Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980)**, **Machhi Singh v. State of Punjab (1983)**, and subsequent cases, the Supreme Court has repeatedly upheld hanging as a constitutional mode of execution, while ensuring strict safeguards.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL BALANCE

The death penalty is an **exception**, not the rule. Courts ensure it is imposed only when justice demands it, following due process of law.

"The question is not whether death penalty is desirable, but whether it is constitutionally permissible."
– Supreme Court

About Hanging as a Constitutional Mode of Execution: What it is?

- Execution by hanging is the statutory procedure prescribed under **Section 393(5) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023** (formerly Section 354(5) of the CrPC, 1973), which directs that a condemned prisoner be hanged by the neck till he is dead.
- Designed on the long-drop method, it aims to cause instant unconsciousness and rapid death via cervical vertebra fracture (fracture-dislocation at C2–C3), functioning as India's primary legal method for executing capital sentences.

Grounds of the Challenge Against Hanging:

- **Violation of Right to Die with Dignity (Article 21):** The petitioners argued that fundamental rights and human dignity do not cease at the gallows, asserting that the State is constitutionally bound to adopt the least painful and most humane method available.
- **Lack of Guaranteed Instant Death:** Petitioners relied on forensic evidence (such as a historical study of 34 executions in England) showing the intended hangman's fracture occurred in only 3 cases, with several dying slowly from asphyxiation.
- **Inherent Mechanical Unpredictability:** Calculating the drop height based on weight is prone to physical error; too short a drop leads to prolonged strangulation, while too long a drop risks decapitation.
- **Severe Psychological & Physical Trauma:** The preparatory procedures and physical agony associated with the gallows were characterized by petitioners as cruel and degrading.
- **Evolution Beyond Colonial-Era Practices:** The petition highlighted that hanging, codified in 1861 under British rule, lags behind modern medical advancements such as intravenous lethal injections.

Why the Supreme Court Upheld Hanging?

- **Reaffirmation of the Deena v. Union of India (1983) Precedent:** A two-judge bench held that the petitioner failed to place material sufficient to displace the 3-judge bench ruling in Deena, which established that hanging causes the least possible pain when properly administered.
- **Legislative Reaffirmation in BNSS (2023):** The Court noted that Parliament consciously retained hanging under Section 393(5) of the BNSS while overhauling criminal laws, reflecting legislative intent.
- **Absence of Proven Superior Alternatives:** The bench observed that alternative execution methods have not conclusively demonstrated a distinct medical or humane advantage over hanging.
- **Documented Failures of Lethal Injections Abroad:** The Union highlighted that lethal injection has a well-documented history of botched executions, vein-access failures, and prolonged agony in jurisdictions like the United States.
- **Decorum and Decency in Execution:** The Court reaffirmed that hanging satisfies the constitutional mandate of executing a judicial sentence with administrative certainty, decency, and without unnecessary brutality.

Alternative Modes & Law Commission Views:

- **187th Law Commission Report (2003):** Under Justice M. Jagannadha Rao, the Commission recommended amending the law to provide lethal injection as an alternative mode, allowing the convict a choice of execution method.
- **Military Law Precedents (Shooting by Firing Squad):** Under the Army Act, 1950, Navy Act, 1957, and Air Force Act, 1950, court-martial death sentences can be carried out either by hanging or by shooting.
- **Recommendatory Nature of Law Commission:** The Supreme Court reiterated that Law Commission reports are advisory and cannot supersede statutory provisions enacted by Parliament.
- **International Divergence:** While several retentionist nations have transitioned to lethal injections or firing squads, others face severe global shortages of lethal execution drugs and rising constitutional litigation over botched protocols.

Way Ahead:

- **Room for Future Judicial Scrutiny:** The Supreme Court explicitly clarified that its judgment does not permanently close the issue if new, compelling empirical or medical evidence emerges.
- **Executive Examination of Alternatives:** The Union Government may constitute an expert multidisciplinary committee (comprising criminologists, forensic pathologists, and bioethicists) to study less painful execution technologies.
- **Drafting Comprehensive Jail Manual Safeguards:** Standardize equipment calibration, drop-chart measurements, and executioner training across all state prison manuals to eliminate risks of execution error.
- **Parliamentary Deliberation on Dual-Option Models:** Parliament can debate introducing lethal injection as a statutory alternative alongside hanging, as suggested by the 187th Law Commission report.

Conclusion:

The Supreme Court's judgment reaffirms that while capital punishment must be administered with dignity, replacing hanging requires conclusive empirical proof of a superior, painless alternative. By anchoring its reasoning in judicial precedent and recent legislative reaffirmation in the BNSS, the Court upheld the state's existing execution framework. However, by leaving the door open to future scientific review, the judiciary has preserved space for constitutional law to evolve alongside advancements in medical science.

| ZONAL COUNCIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to chair the 31st Southern Zonal Council (SZC) meeting on August 20, 2026, in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.



The Zonal Councils

About The Zonal Councils:**What It Is?**

- **Zonal Councils** are high-level statutory deliberative bodies created to promote interstate cooperation, resolve disputes, and ensure coordinated socioeconomic planning among States and Union Territories grouped into distinct geographic zones.

Established In: 1956.

Statutory Genesis: Set up under **Part III of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956.**

Constitutional Status: Zonal Councils are **statutory bodies**, not constitutional bodies.

Composition of Zones: The 1956 Act divided the country into five zonal councils—Northern, Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern.

- **Note:** The North-Eastern Council was created separately under the North-Eastern Council Act, 1971.

Aim: To foster **cooperative federalism**, build emotional integration among states, arrest the growth of acute regionalism/linguism, and provide an institutional platform for the Centre and States to collaborate on common economic, developmental, and security matters.

Key Functions of Zonal Councils:

- **Resolution of Inter-State Boundary & Linguistic Disputes:** Deliberates on and suggests solutions for sensitive inter-state border friction and matters concerning linguistic minorities.
- **Joint Socio-Economic Planning:** Formulates common regional policies across agriculture, health, education, coastal security, and disaster management.
- **Regional Transport & Infrastructure Connectivity:** Coordinates development plans for inter-state highway networks, railway connectivity, and regional energy grids.
- **Water Sharing & River Valley Coordination:** Discusses mutual agreements regarding inter-state water sharing, irrigation canals, and reservoir operations.
- **Technical Screening via Standing Committees:** Operates through a Standing Committee headed by member States' Chief Secretaries (on rotation) to screen, resolve, and refine administrative issues before they reach the apex ministerial council.

Significance:

- **Strengthens Cooperative Federalism:** Provides a regular forum for the Centre and States to resolve issues collectively and strengthen Team India.
- **Regional Consensus Building:** Helps neighbouring States resolve shared administrative and developmental issues through dialogue rather than litigation.

GISAT-1A (EOS-05) EARTH OBSERVATION SATELLITE

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is preparing to launch the **GISAT-1A (EOS-05)** Earth observation satellite aboard the **GSLV-F17** rocket in September 2026.



The GISAT-1A Mission

About The GISAT-1A Mission: What It Is?

- **GISAT-1A** (designated as **EOS-05**) is a state-of-the-art, agile **Geo-Imaging Satellite** designed to operate from a **Geo synchronous Orbit (~36,000 km altitude)**. Unlike conventional remote sensing satellites operating in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), GISAT-1A remains stationed over the Indian subcontinent, enabling continuous, near real-time optical surveillance and environmental monitoring.

Nodal Agency: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Launch Vehicle: **GSLV Mk-II (Flight F17)**, featuring the indigenous Cryogenic Upper Stage (CE-7.5) and a 4-metre Ogive payload fairing.

Aim: To provide near real-time, high-temporal-resolution imaging of the entire Indian subcontinent and surrounding oceanic bodies to enable rapid disaster monitoring, continuous agricultural assessment, and enhanced national security surveillance.

Key Features of the GISAT-1A Mission:

- **Persistent Geo synchronous Vantage Point:** Stationed in a geostationary orbital slot (~36,000 km above the equator), keeping almost the entire Indian landmass in continuous line of sight throughout daylight hours.
- **High Temporal Revisit Capabilities:** Capable of capturing images of the entire Indian mainland every **30 minutes** at a spatial resolution of 42 metres, with rapid target steering capable of capturing designated high-priority areas every **5 minutes**.
- **Advanced Optical & Hyperspectral Payloads:** Equipped with a 700 mm Ritchey–Chrétien telescope and high-sensitivity sensors operating across **Multispectral (VNIR)** and **Hyperspectral (VNIR and SWIR)** bands to discern fine surface mineralogy, crop stress, and vegetation indices.
- **Agile Spacecraft Platform:** Built upon ISRO's proven **I-2K satellite bus**, featuring an electronically steerable phased-array antenna and high-agility, jitter-free pointing mechanisms for rapid re-orientation between observation targets.
- **Robust Mission Lifespan:** Designed for an operational mission life of **10 years**, powered by multi-junction solar arrays generating over 2,200 W of onboard electrical power.

Significance:

- **Real-Time Disaster Monitoring:** Enables continuous tracking of cyclones, floods, cloudbursts and forest fires, strengthening early warning and disaster response.
- **Strengthening GSLV Reliability:** Validates the GSLV Mk-II and its cryogenic stage, supporting future missions such as NavIC and Gaganyaan.

HUMAN STAMPEDES IN INDIA

At least seven devotees were killed and several others injured in a tragic stampede-like incident outside the Ashok Dham Temple in Bihar's Lakhisarai district.



Human Stampedes in India

About Human Stampedes in India:**What it is?**

- A **human stampede** is a sudden, rapid, and uncoordinated movement of a mass crowd triggered by panic, excitement, perceived danger, or systemic crowd control failures. In crowded settings, when crowd density exceeds critical thresholds (typically 4 to 5 persons per square meter), progressive crowd collapse or crowd turbulence occurs, leading to compressive asphyxiation, crushing, and trampling injuries.

Key Data & Statistics on Stampedes in India:

- **Dominance of Religious Congestion:** According to national disaster analyses, over 75% of all fatal stampedes in India occur at religious shrines, pilgrimages, and festival congregations.
- **Mortality Magnitude:** National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data indicates that over 2,500 people have lost their lives in crowd crushes and stampede incidents across India over the past two decades.
- **Mechanism of Fatality:** Forensic studies reveal that compressive/traumatic asphyxiation, rather than physical trampling alone, accounts for more than 80% of deaths in crowd crushes.
- **Vulnerability of Women and Children:** Women, elderly devotees, and children constitute over 70% of casualties in mass religious stampedes due to physical vulnerability when segregated queues collapse.

Causes of Stampedes in India:

- **Sudden Surges and Capacity Breaches:** Excessive influx of pilgrims far exceeding venue carrying capacities.

Example: Simultaneous arrival of special trains at Lakhisarai dumping thousands of pilgrims at Ashok Dham Temple within minutes.

- **Panic Induced by Rumours:** Rapid spread of unverified panic about structural failures or hazards.

Example: Rumours of a live electric wire falling following an electric pole collapse triggering mass panic at Ashok Dham.

- **Structural and Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Narrow bottlenecks, faulty barricades, single-entry points, and steep steps.

Example: Bamboo barricade collapse under heavy crowd pressure causing devotees to fall on top of each other.

- **Disaster-Event Ingress/Egress Mixing:** Lack of unidirectional flow leading to head-on collisions between incoming and departing devotees.

Example: Bidirectional rush during peak holy hours in narrow temple corridors.

- **Poor Inter-Agency Coordination:** Gaps between local civil administration, transport authorities (railways/buses), and temple management boards.

Example: Unannounced train drop-offs overwhelming local police bandobast.

Challenges Associated with Crowd Management:

- **Lack of Real-Time Crowd Analytics:** Absence of AI-enabled density cameras and automated headcount sensors to trigger early warning diversion protocols.

Example: Visual estimates by police failing to detect dangerous pressure build-ups.

- **Entrenched Faith-Driven Resistance:** Devotees attempting to break queues or rush during specific auspicious astrological timings (*Muhurats*), resisting police discipline.
- **Underdeveloped Holding Areas:** Inadequate holding pens and zigzag waiting corridors outside main shrines, allowing continuous surges straight toward inner sanctums.
- **Compromised Emergency Medical Access:** Narrow approach roads choked with shops, unauthorized stalls, and pilgrims, preventing rapid deployment of ambulances.

Example: First responders struggling to reach injured victims during peak festival traffic.

- **Informal Temple Governance:** Many historical shrines lack trained private security forces, disaster management plans, or professional event controllers.

NDMA Guidelines for Crowd Management & Stampede Prevention:

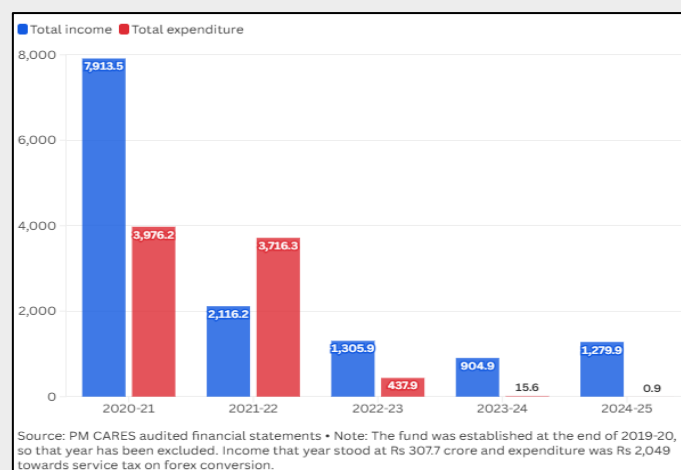
- **Enforce Unidirectional Crowd Movement:** Design strictly segregated, one-way entry and exit routes without bi-directional crossover, ensuring continuous crowd dispersal away from the sanctum.
- **Create Tiered Holding Areas & Snake Queues:** Establish multi-stage holding zones with zigzag barricaded corridors outside the main shrine to break the kinetic momentum of incoming crowds.
- **Establish Unified Command Centers & PA Systems:** Deploy central control rooms linked with high-decibel Public Address (PA) systems and CCTV surveillance to instantly quell rumours and provide clear instructions.
- **Pre-Calculate Carrying Capacity & Regulate Inflow:** Fix strict carrying capacities for shrines, utilizing time-slotted online passes, wristbands, or physical token distribution during peak festivals.
- **Mandatory Disaster Management Plans & Medical Corridors:** Mandate that every major shrine maintain an approved Event Disaster Management Plan, dedicated green corridors for ambulances, and on-site emergency first-aid posts.

Conclusion:

The tragic loss of life at Ashok Dham Temple highlights the urgent necessity of treating crowd management as a core disaster-risk reduction discipline. Implementing NDMA guidelines—specifically capacity ceilings, unidirectional routing, holding infrastructure, and rapid rumour-dispelling protocols—is critical for pilgrim safety. Ultimately, harmonizing technological surveillance with proactive administrative planning is vital to ensure that religious faith is matched with human safety and dignity.

PM CARES FUND

The PM CARES Fund released its delayed FY 2023-24 and 2024-25 audited statements, showing expenditure of just ₹87.85 lakh in FY25, against ₹1,279.9 crore income and an ₹8,452.06 crore closing balance.



The PM CARES Fund

About The PM CARES Fund:

What It Is?

- The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) is a dedicated national public charitable trust set up to provide assistance, emergency relief, and rehabilitation during public health crises, natural calamities, or man-made disasters.

Established In & History:

- **Established On:** Registered on March 27, 2020, under the Registration Act, 1908 in New Delhi.
- **Historical Context:** Constituted in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic to create a specialized, flexible national corpus for healthcare infrastructure augmentation, indigenous medical research, and direct financial relief for affected citizens.

Aim: To undertake and support relief or assistance of any kind relating to a public health emergency, calamity, or distress situation—including upgrading healthcare and pharmaceutical infrastructure, funding critical research, and rendering direct financial grants to distressed populations.

Key Features of the PM CARES Fund:

- **Ex-Officio Trusteeship & Pro Bono Governance:** Chaired by the Prime Minister of India (ex-officio), with the Ministers of Defence, Home Affairs, and Finance as ex-officio trustees, alongside eminent nominated trustees who serve entirely in a pro bono capacity.
- **Exclusively Voluntary Contributions:** Operates without any budgetary allocations from the Government of India, relying entirely on voluntary contributions from individuals, organizations, and public/private entities.
- **100% Tax Exemption Under Section 80G:** Donations qualify for a 100% tax exemption under Section 80G of the **Income Tax Act, 1961** for donors.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Eligibility:** Qualifying contributions from companies are recognized as eligible Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending under Schedule VII of the **Companies Act, 2013**.
- **FCRA Exemption for Global Inflows:** Granted an exemption under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)**, maintaining a dedicated bank account to accept international donations from overseas individuals and institutions (similar to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund – PMNRF).

GRASSLANDS & OPEN NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS(ONES)

India launched its first-ever comprehensive Guide to Grasslands and Other Open Natural Ecosystems (ONES) of India during an official side event at the 17th Session of the Conference of the Parties (UNCCD COP17) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.



Grasslands and Other Open Natural Ecosystems

About India Launches First-Ever Guide to Grasslands and Other Open Natural Ecosystems: What It Is?

- An authoritative, first-of-its-kind national knowledge framework and conservation reference document that maps, classifies, and details the rich diversity, ecological services, fire ecology, carbon sequestration potential, and socio-economic importance of India's non-forest open biomes.

Definitions: Grasslands & Open Natural Ecosystems(ONEs):

- **Grasslands:** Terrestrial biomes dominated by continuous or semi-continuous herbaceous vegetation—primarily grasses (*Poaceae*), sedges, and forbs—with little to no tree canopy cover, maintained naturally by distinct climatic regimes, wild/domestic grazing pressure, and natural fire cycles.
- **Open Natural Ecosystems (ONEs):** A broader umbrella classification covering diverse non-forest landscapes naturally characterized by open canopies and low tree densities, including:
 - Cold and hot deserts (e.g., Thar, Spiti, Ladakh)
 - Tropical and sub-tropical savannas and scrublands
 - Saline wetlands and desert flats (e.g., Banni, Rann of Kutch)
 - Ravines and badlands (e.g., Chambal)
 - Rocky lateritic plateaus and high-altitude alpine meadows (*Bugyals* and *Margas*)

Launched At: The 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17 to UNCCD) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Aim: To reclassify grasslands as valuable ecosystems, integrate them into biodiversity frameworks, and promote science-based restoration to meet India's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) commitments.

Key Features of the Guide:

- **Nationwide Geographic & Ecological Mapping:** Documents the spatial distribution and ecological characteristics of major non-forest biomes across India—from Himalayan alpine meadows and Terai flood grasslands to Deccan savannas, Banni plains, and Thar desert scrublands.
- **Thematic Scientific Sections:** Features detailed analyses on pastoral mobility, rangeland dynamics, fire ecology, below-ground soil organic carbon (SOC) sequestration, and hydrology.
- **Integration of Indigenous & Community Governance:** Documents traditional community-conserved rangelands such as **Orans** (sacred groves), **Gauchars** (village commons), and pastoral grazing systems managed by nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.
- **Correction of Flawed Afforestation Approaches:** Emphasizes that planting trees in naturally open, treeless biomes damages endemic biodiversity, alters groundwater tables, and degrades unique grassland ecosystems.
- **Tool for LDN & Target 15.3 Implementation:** Provides standardized scientific metrics and restoration guidelines to help policymakers, forest departments, and researchers meet India's commitments under UNCCD and SDG 15.3.

THE BRICS NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK (NDB)

Abdolnasser Hemmati, Governor of the Central Bank of Iran, announced that Iran is advancing toward official membership in the **BRICS New Development Bank (NDB)**.



The BRICS New Development Bank (NDB)

About The BRICS New Development Bank (NDB):

What It Is?

- The **New Development Bank (NDB)**—formerly called the *BRICS Development Bank*—is a multilateral development bank (MDB) established by the founding BRICS nations.
- Headquartered in **Shanghai, China**, it provides loans, equity participation, guarantees, and technical assistance to finance sustainable infrastructure and green development projects across emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs).

History & Formation

- **Proposal (2012):** The idea for a South–South development bank was first mooted by **India** at the 4th BRICS Summit in New Delhi (2012).
- **Formal Agreement (2014):** Member nations signed the formal Agreement establishing the NDB on **July 15, 2014**, during the 6th BRICS Summit in **Fortaleza, Brazil**, accompanied by a \$100 billion Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).
- **Operationalization (2015):** The bank entered into force in July 2015, with India's **K. V. Kamath** appointed as its first elected President.
- **Regional Hubs:** Established regional offices in Johannesburg (South Africa), São Paulo (Brazil), Moscow (Russia), and GIFT City, Gujarat (India).

Membership & Shareholding Architecture:

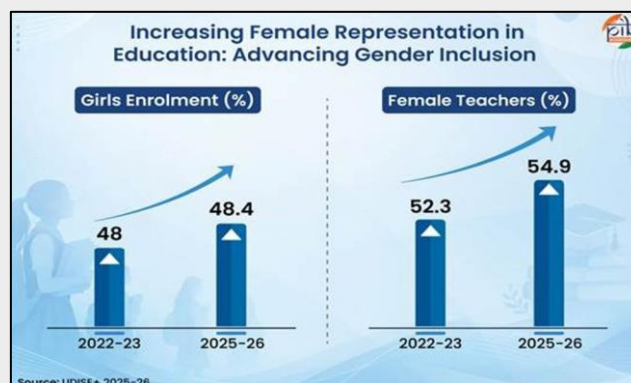
- **Founding Members (Equal Voting):** Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (each initially contributed an equal share of the \$50 billion subscribed capital).
 - Unlike the Bretton Woods institutions, **no single member possesses veto power**, and each founding member exercises equal voting rights.
- **Expanded Members:** Open to all United Nations member states (with the rule that founding BRICS nations must retain at least 55% of total voting power). The bank has expanded to admit:
 - **Bangladesh** (admitted 2021)
 - **United Arab Emirates** (admitted 2021)
 - **Egypt** (admitted 2021/2023)
 - **Algeria** (admitted 2024)
 - **Uzbekistan** (admitted 2026)

Key Functions of the NDB:

- **Financing Sustainable Infrastructure:** Extends long-term sovereign and non-sovereign loans, equity financing, and credit guarantees to critical public works, including clean energy, transport networks, water management, and digital infrastructure.
- **Promoting Local Currency Lending:** Provides financing denominated in members' domestic currencies to insulate emerging economies from foreign exchange volatility and global interest rate shocks.
- **Green & Climate Financing:** Prioritizes climate-resilient projects and issues green financial bonds to support renewable energy transitions and environmental social governance (ESG) standards.
- **Emergency & Counter-Cyclical Relief:** Operates emergency assistance facilities to offer counter-cyclical budgetary support to member economies facing severe macroeconomic shocks or public health emergencies.
- **Technical & Project Advisory Assistance:** Delivers technical assistance, feasibility studies, and institutional capacity-building support to accelerate project preparation in developing nations.

COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF INDIA'S SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L) released the UDISE+ 2025-26 Report, providing a comprehensive assessment of India's school education system.



About India's Changing School Education System: Beyond the Numbers
What It Is?

- The UDISE+ 2025-26 Report presents a data-driven assessment of India's school education landscape, covering 14.67 lakh schools, 1.03 crore teachers and 24.72 crore students.

Key Findings:

- **Improved Teacher Availability:** India's overall Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) is 24:1, within the NEP 2020 benchmark of 30:1. It ranges from 10:1 at Foundational to 21:1 at Secondary level.
- **Enrolment & Progression:** Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) stands at 89.6% at Middle and 71.7% at Secondary level, indicating improved access but continued scope for expansion at higher stages.
- **Better Retention & Transition:** Retention stands at 98.5% at Foundational, 91.1% at Preparatory, 83.7% at Middle and 51.9% at Secondary level. Transition to Secondary level is 88.3%.

- **Declining Dropouts:** Dropout rates have fallen to 1.8% at Preparatory and 7% at Secondary level, though the Middle-stage rate marginally increased to **3.6%**.
- **Better Resource Utilisation:** Single-teacher schools declined by around 3% to 1,00,843, while zero-enrolment schools fell 29% to 5,663, reflecting improved resource allocation.
- **Gender & Social Inclusion:** Girls constitute 48.4% of enrolment, while women comprise 54.9% of teachers. SC and ST students together account for 27.7% of total enrolment.
- **Infrastructure & Digital Expansion:** 95% of schools have electricity, 99.5% safe drinking water, 98.5% girls' toilets and 90.5% libraries. Computer access has reached 69.9%, while 67.4% have internet connectivity.

Significance:

- **Evidence-Based Education Governance:** UDISE+ provides granular data for planning, resource allocation and monitoring implementation of NEP 2020.
- **Improved Access & Inclusion:** Better retention, gender participation and infrastructure indicate progress towards equitable and inclusive school education.
- **Digital & Human Capital Development:** Growing digital connectivity and teacher availability strengthen learning environments and support India's long-term human capital formation.

THE DISTINGUISHED JURIST PROVISION

At NLU Delhi, Supreme Court Judge Justice Ujjal Bhuyan highlighted Article 124(3)(c), calling the provision to appoint a distinguished jurist as a Supreme Court judge an unused mandate for over 76 years.



The Distinguished Jurist Provision

About The Distinguished Jurist Provision:

What It Is?

- A **distinguished jurist** refers to an eminent legal scholar, academician, author, or researcher of exceptional juristic learning and repute who is eligible for direct elevation as a judge of the Supreme Court of India, even without prior experience as a practicing advocate or a High Court judge.

Constitutional Articles:

- **Article 124(3)(c) (Supreme Court):** Lays down that a citizen of India who is, in the opinion of the President, a distinguished jurist is qualified for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court.
- **Article 217 (High Courts):** The 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act (1976) briefly introduced a similar distinguished jurist clause for High Court appointments, but it was subsequently **repealed by the 44th Constitutional Amendment Act (1978)**. Thus, the route exists exclusively for the Supreme Court.

History & Constituent Assembly Debates:

- **Kamath Amendment (1949):** V. Kamath proposed allowing eminent legal scholars, not just judges and advocates, to join the Supreme Court, drawing from ICJ practice.
- **Ayyangar & Ambedkar's Support:** Ananthasayanam Ayyangar backed the idea, citing Felix Frankfurter's US Supreme Court appointment, while B. R. Ambedkar accepted the proposal, favouring the term distinguished jurist.

Key Features of the Provision:

- **Academic and Theoretical Pathway:** Creates a non-litigation eligibility channel for constitutional thinkers, jurists, and law professors who do not meet the 10-year active Bar practice or 5-year High Court bench criteria.
- **Subjective Presidential Opinion / Collegium Initiation:** Appointment is constitutionally anchored to the opinion of the President, which under contemporary jurisprudence is filtered through the binding recommendation of the **Supreme Court Collegium**.
- **Exclusivity to the Apex Court:** Applies solely to Supreme Court appointments under Article 124(3)(c) and is not available for appointments to state High Courts.
- **Institutional Non-Utilization (Dead Letter):** Despite being in force since January 26, 1950, **not a single distinguished jurist has been appointed to the Supreme Court**; elevations have remained confined to sitting High Court judges and practicing Senior Advocates.
- **Bar Council and Professional Constraints:** Bar Council of India regulations generally prohibit full-time academic law teachers from practicing in courtrooms, creating an institutional divide between the legal academy and active judicial selection networks.

EXERCISE MAITREE-XV

An 85-personnel Indian Army contingent, primarily from 9 Gorkha Rifles, departed for Thailand to participate in the 15th edition of the India-Thailand Joint Military Exercise MAITREE-XV (2026).



Exercise MAITREE-XV

About Exercise MAITREE-XV:

What It Is?

- **Exercise MAITREE** is an annual bilateral joint military exercise conducted between the Indian Army and the Royal Thai Army, designed to improve tactical cooperation, share field expertise, and build joint operational capabilities.

Host & Participating Nations:

- **Host Country:** Thailand (at Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani).
- **Nations Involved:** India and Thailand, comprising 85 personnel from each side.

Aim: To foster military cooperation, deepen camaraderie, and enhance combined capabilities in executing joint counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations in jungle and semi-urban environments under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Key Features of Exercise MAITREE-XV:

- **Focus on Jungle & Semi-Urban Warfare:** Involves company-level tactical drills, room-intervention drills, raid maneuvers, and counter-insurgency/counter-terror operations tailored to dense jungle and semi-urban terrains.
- **UN Chapter VII Framework:** Conducted in alignment with the United Nations Chapter VII mandate to establish shared standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- **Alternating Bilateral Hosting Tradition:** Instituted in 2006, the exercise alternates annually between India and Thailand (with the 14th edition held at the Foreign Training Node in Umroi, Meghalaya, in September 2025).
- **Technology & Experience Sharing:** Features combat discussions, tactical demonstrations, weapon/equipment sharing, and a final joint validation exercise to integrate modern battlefield technologies.

Significance:

- Deepens defence cooperation with Thailand, a key ASEAN partner, supporting India's regional security engagement.
- Enhances coordination and joint readiness for counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, and regional security challenges.

THE NORTHERN GOSHAWK

The Northern Goshawk (*Baaj*), Punjab's state bird, has re-entered the political spotlight ahead of state assembly elections after rival political leaders claimed sightings of the bird, interpreting them as divine symbols of protection and blessing.



The Northern Goshawk

About The Northern Goshawk:**What it is?**

- A medium-to-large raptor in the family Accipitridae (historically classified as *Accipiter gentilis*, and recently reclassified as *Astur gentilis* for the Eurasian goshawk). Known as a "true hawk," it is widely celebrated for its speed, maneuverability, and prowess in falconry.

Habitat: Primarily inhabits mature temperate and boreal woodlands, including mixed deciduous and coniferous forests. It is widely distributed across Eurasia and North America, ranging from Scandinavia, northern Russia, and the Mediterranean to the Himalayas, eastern China, and Canada.

IUCN Status: Categorized as **Least Concern (LC)** on the IUCN Red List.

Key Characteristics:

- **Forest-Adapted Morphology:** Possesses relatively short, broad wings and a long tail, providing aerodynamic agility to navigate dense tree canopies and make rapid sharp turns while chasing prey.
- **Distinctive Plumage and Eye Colour:** Features slate-grey to dark brownish-black upperparts with finely barred white-and-grey underparts. Juveniles have pale yellow irises that mature into bright orange or striking deep red eyes in adults.
- **High-Speed Pursuit:** Known for an aggressive and reckless hunting style, diving through thick brush and reaching horizontal chase speeds of up to 40 miles per hour (approx. 64 km/h).

- **Broad Diet:** An opportunistic apex predator hunting a diverse array of animals, including gamebirds, grouse, hares, squirrels, and other smaller raptors like owls and kestrels.
- **Fierce Nest Defense:** Exhibits strong nest fidelity by reusing the same nesting sites across multiple years, defending its territory aggressively against large intruders, including humans.

Significance:

- Deeply revered in Sikh history and culture as the avian companion of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who is traditionally depicted carrying a white hawk on his wrist. It serves as a spiritual emblem of sovereignty, courage, and justice.
- Designated as the official **State Bird of Punjab**, making its legal protection and conservation an emblem of regional and cultural pride.

BISHKEK DECLARATION

Leaders of the 10 member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)—including India, Russia, and China—concluded the 26th Council of Heads of State summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, by signing the joint Bishkek Declaration.



About The SCO Bishkek Declaration:

What It Is?

- The **Bishkek Declaration** is the consensus-based joint communique and strategic outcome document adopted by the heads of state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation at their 26th annual summit. It sets the institutional roadmap, security priorities, and economic coordination framework for the Eurasian bloc for the next 25 years.

Host City & Nation: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Summit Chair: President **Sadyr Japarov** of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Presidency Handover: Concluded with the transfer of the rotating SCO Presidency to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the 2026–2027 tenure.

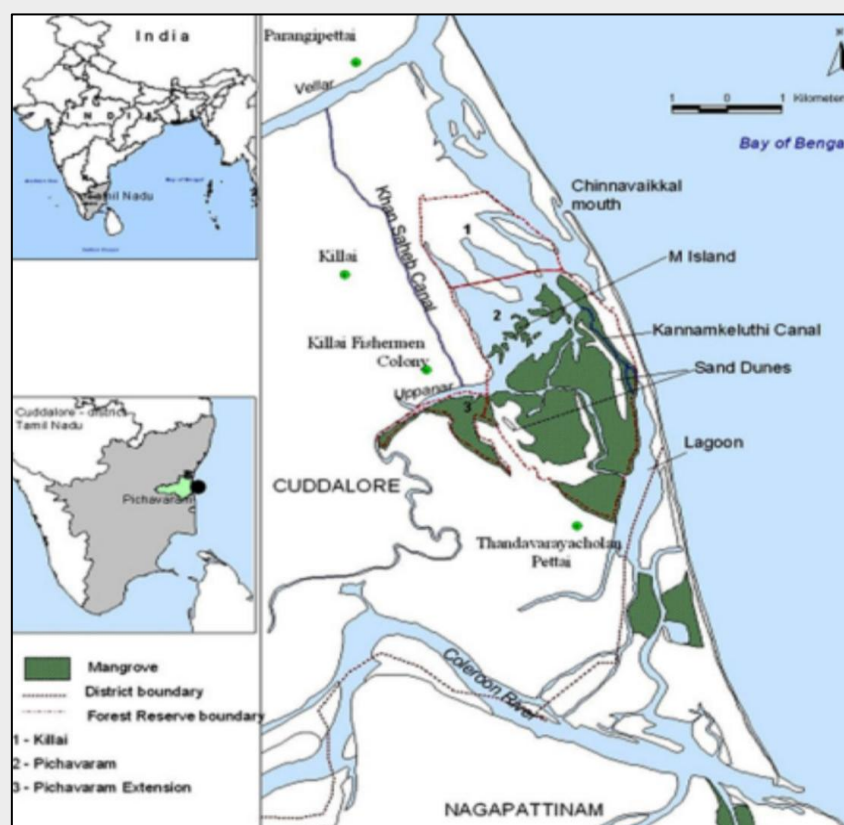
Official Theme (2026): *25 Years of the SCO: Together for Sustainable Peace, Development and Prosperity.*

Key Outcomes of the Bishkek Declaration:

- **No Double Standards on Terrorism:** Condemned terrorism in all forms and rejected **double standards**, calling for action against cross-border terrorism, safe havens and terror financing under UN coordination.
- **No Use of Extremist Proxies:** Rejected the use of terrorist, separatist or extremist groups for political or strategic purposes, stressing state responsibility for counter-terrorism.
- **Condemnation of Strikes on Iran:** Condemned unilateral military strikes on Iran as violations of international law and called for a diplomatic resolution to the West Asia conflict.
- **SCO Not a Military Bloc:** Reaffirmed that the SCO is not a military-political alliance or directed against any country, upholding sovereignty and non-interference.
- **Energy & Food Security:** Warned that conflicts and disruptions at chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz threaten global energy and food security, especially in developing countries.
- **Local Currency & Financial Cooperation:** Supported greater trade in national currencies, alternative payment systems, and discussions on an SCO Development Bank.
- **Sovereignty-Based Connectivity:** Backed regional connectivity, including CKU and INSTC, while stressing respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- **Youth Science & Innovation:** Institutionalised initiatives such as the SCO Young Scientists Forum and Start-up Forum to promote scientific and innovation cooperation.

PICHAVARAM MANGROVE FOREST

A comprehensive ecological-economic study conducted by the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru, valued the **Pichavaram Mangrove Forest** in Tamil Nadu at a total economic value (TEV) of ₹2,485.38 crore.



About The Pichavaram Mangroves:

What It Is?

- **Pichavaram Mangrove Forest** is one of the largest and most ecologically vital estuarine mangrove ecosystems in India, spanning approximately **1,478.64 hectares**. Classified as an intertidal forested wetland, it features a complex labyrinth of roughly 4,400 large and small canals permanently rooted in shallow brackish water, connecting river mouths, backwaters, and the Bay of Bengal.

Located In:

- **District & State:** Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, India.
- **Geographic Coordinates:** Coromandel Coast, situated between two prominent river mouths – the **Vellar estuary** to the north and the **Coleroon (Kollidam) estuary** to the south.
- **Hydrographic Basin:** Part of the Vellar-Coleroon estuarine complex, which feeds into the shallow **Killai backwater** system and communicates with the open sea through a narrow littoral sandbar channel.

Origin & Ecological Evolution:

- **Deltaic Sedimentation:** Formed through centuries of alluvium deposition and fluvio-marine interactions where freshwater discharge from the Vellar, Coleroon, and Uppanar rivers meets the semi-diurnal tides of the Bay of Bengal.
- **Littoral Barrier Dynamic:** The formation of an offshore sandy barrier spit isolated the inner lagoon, creating a calm, low-energy brackish environment that allowed halophytic mangrove vegetation to establish dense, stilt-rooted colonization over soft, fine muds.

Key Characteristics:

- **Permanent Submersion:** Rooted continuously in water rather than dry tidal flats. Dense networks of *Rhizophora apiculata* (stilt roots) and *Avicennia marina* (pneumatophores) form an intricate aquatic maze.
- **Blue Carbon Sink:** Stores an average of 251.14 tonnes of soil carbon per hectare, with over 75% of its total carbon locked securely in deep sediment.
- **Coastal Bio-Shield:** Dampens storm surges and cyclones from the Bay of Bengal, notably buffering coastal villages during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and checking shoreline erosion.
- **Breeding Ground & Livelihoods:** Acts as a nutrient-rich nursery for mud crabs, tiger prawns, and finfish, sustaining over 1,000 artisanal fishing families.
- **Habitat Diversity:** Spans a rich ecological ecotone of mangrove forests, intertidal mudflats, salt marshes, and dry evergreen scrub.

Conservation & Protection:

- **Ramsar Site:** Designated as Ramsar Wetland No. 2482 in **April 2022**, protecting 1,478.64 hectares.
- **Important Bird Area (IBA):** Listed under BirdLife International as a vital Central Asian Flyway stopover for pelicans, spoonbills, and flamingos.

MISSION RANGEEN MACHHLI

Vice-President of India released the Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031 Strategic Action Plan for Ornamental Fisheries Development during a fisheries outreach programme at Agatti in Lakshadweep.



About Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031:

What It Is?

- Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031 is an initiative by the Government of India to develop, regulate, and scale the ornamental fisheries sector (breeding, rearing, and trading of decorative fish for home aquariums and commercial displays) into an organized, globally competitive industry.

Organisations Involved: Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India.

Location Focus: Lakshadweep Islands (launched from Agatti Island).

Key Features of Mission Rangeen Machhli 2031:

- **Standardized Value Chain SOPs:** Establishes nationwide Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) covering broodstock management, captive breeding, hatchery protocols, disease prevention, and safe live-fish packaging/transportation.
- **Comprehensive Biosecurity & Quality Framework:** Sets up standardized quarantine mechanisms, fish health surveillance, and quality assurance to prevent invasive pathogens and meet stringent international import standards.
- **End-to-End Traceability & Certification:** Implements traceability systems to verify captive-bred origins, preventing illegal capture of endangered reef fauna and enabling global sustainability certifications.
- **Cluster-Based Value Chain Integration:** Aligns with the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) to build specialized infrastructure clusters for production, processing, air-cargo logistics, and domestic/export market linkages.
- **Livelihood & Women Empowerment:** Focuses on training coastal fishers, youth, and women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in low-investment, high-return backyard ornamental fish rearing and reef-friendly aquaculture.

Lakshadweep and Ornamental Fishing:

- **Vast Maritime Resource Base:** Lakshadweep commands an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of nearly 4 lakh sq. km (around 17% of India's total EEZ) and over 4,200 sq. km of calm, shallow atoll lagoons, offering an ideal natural setting for controlled mariculture.
- **Rich Coral Reef Biodiversity:** The archipelago's pristine coral reefs host an abundance of high-value marine ornamental fish species—such as clownfish, damselfish, butterflyfish, angelfish, and wrasses.
- **Diversifying Island Livelihoods:** Traditionally dependent on oceanic tuna capture (Yellowfin and Skipjack) and coconut farming, climate-resilient alternative through captive breeding and live-fish exports without degrading native reef ecosystems.
- **Integrated Blue Economy Synergies:** Complements Lakshadweep's notified status as a dedicated Seaweed Cluster and the development of the Lakshadweep Sustainable Tuna brand, establishing an integrated, sustainable blue-economy ecosystem.

LGBTQIA+ INCLUSION BEYOND LEGAL RECOGNITION

GS Paper II — Polity, Governance & Social Justice | Also relevant for GS Paper I (Society) and Essay

[Rahul Rajendran]

Context

The Supreme Court's verdict in *Supriyo & Supriya Chakraborty v. Union of India* (17 October 2023) marked a watershed in India's ongoing conversation on queer rights. The five-judge Constitution Bench, in a 3:2 split, declined to legally recognise same-sex marriage or civil unions, holding that the right to marry is not an unqualified fundamental right and that the authority to legislate on marriage rests with Parliament, not the judiciary.

A subsequent review petition was dismissed on 9 January 2025, closing the immediate judicial avenue. The episode is a useful lens to examine a larger governance question: does legal recognition, by itself, deliver substantive inclusion?

Background

India's queer rights jurisprudence has evolved in three major phases. First, the NALSA judgment (2014) recognised transgender persons as a “third gender,” affirmed the right to self-identify one's gender without medical or judicial proof, and directed reservations in education and public employment.

Second, *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018) decriminalised consensual same-sex relations by reading down Section 377 IPC, holding it violative of Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21.

Third, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 codified anti-discrimination provisions, though it has drawn criticism for diluting the self-identification standard set by NALSA and for weak penal provisions. The *Supriyo* verdict of 2023 represents the current outer limit of judicially granted recognition — dignity and non-discrimination are affirmed, but institutional rights linked to marriage (inheritance, adoption, medical decision-making, pension, insurance) remain unaddressed in law.



Key Issues: Why Legal Recognition Is Necessary but Not Sufficient

- Implementation deficit: Rights recognised on paper are not automatically enforced. NALSA's self-identification principle, for instance, is inconsistently applied by state agencies issuing identity documents, undermining access to welfare schemes meant for transgender citizens.
- Absence of a horizontal anti-discrimination law: India still lacks a comprehensive law analogous to the UK's Equality Act 2010, covering housing, employment, and healthcare discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, not only gender identity.
- Institutional and economic exclusion: Without marriage-linked rights, same-sex partners are excluded from next-of-kin status in hospitals, joint bank accounts, employer-provided health insurance, and inheritance under personal laws – a structural, not merely social, form of exclusion.
- Family and social non-acceptance: Legal decriminalisation has not translated into family or community acceptance; conversion “therapy,” forced marriages, and social ostracism persist despite being flagged as harmful by the National Medical Commission.
- Intersectionality: Caste, class, religion, and rural-urban location compound vulnerability. Urban, English-speaking, upper-caste queer individuals have disproportionately benefited from judicial gains, while working-class and rural queer and transgender persons remain largely outside the ambit of these reforms – a gap India's welfare architecture rarely accounts for.

Way Forward

- Legislative action: Parliament, as the Supreme Court itself noted, is the appropriate body to enact a civil union or partnership law addressing succession, medical consent, and adoption – without necessarily amending personal marriage laws, balancing constitutional morality with legislative competence.
- Effective implementation of existing law: Strengthen grievance redressal and penal provisions under the 2019 Act, and ensure uniform application of the NALSA self-identification standard across states.
- Institutional reform: Mandate anti-discrimination policies in public employment, healthcare protocols sensitised to queer patients, and curriculum-level engagement in schools, aligned with international frameworks such as the Yogyakarta Principles and the UNDP's LGBTI Inclusion Index, which flag data gaps, safety, and economic inclusion as priority dimensions.
- Data collection: A dedicated Census/NSSO module on sexual orientation and gender identity would allow evidence-based policymaking, addressing the current absence of reliable national data.

Conclusion

Judicial recognition has been indispensable in shifting India's constitutional posture toward LGBTQIA+ citizens, but as the Supreme Court itself acknowledged in *Supriyo*, courts cannot substitute for legislative and administrative action. Genuine inclusion requires closing the gap between constitutional morality and social morality – through statute, institutional reform, and sustained public engagement – so that dignity, once affirmed by courts, becomes a lived reality rather than a judicial abstraction.

FINDING THE NUMBER OF TRAILING ZEROES

[AFEEF ASLAH T P]

1. What is a Trailing Zero?

Trailing zeroes are the sequence of **zeroes at the very end** (rightmost side) of a number before any non-zero digit.

For example, in the number **45,000**, there are **3 trailing zeroes**. In contrast, in **40,500**, only the last 2 zeroes count as trailing zeroes (the middle zero is not trailing).

A trailing zero is created ONLY when a factor of 2 combines with a factor of 5.
 $2 \times 5 = 10$ (gives exactly 1 trailing zero)

2. The Fundamental Rule: Counting Pairs of (2×5)

To find the total number of trailing zeroes in any product, we **break down** all numbers **into their prime factors and count** how many **2s and 5s** are present in the multiplication.

Since **every complete pair** of (2×5) **produces one 10** (and thus **one zero**), if one of the factors is fewer in number, the number of complete pairs is equal to the number of that limiting factor.

Number of Trailing Zeroes = Minimum (Count of 2s, Count of 5s)

Example : Find the trailing zeroes in $12 \times 25 \times 40$

Step 1: Prime factorize each term:

- $12 = 2^2 \times 3 = (2 \times 2 \times 3)$
- $25 = 5^2 = (5 \times 5)$
- $40 = 2^3 \times 5^1 = (2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 5)$

Step 2: Total prime factors of 2 and 5:

- Total number of 2s = $2 + 3 = 5$
- Total number of 5s = $2 + 1 = 3$

Step 3: Find the number of trailing zeroes:

- **$\text{Min}(5, 3) = 3$ pairs of $(2 \times 5) = 3$ trailing zeroes.**

3. UPSC CSAT Previous Year Question (UPSC 2020)

Question (UPSC CSAT 2020):

How many zeroes are there at the end of the following product?

$$1 \times 5 \times 10 \times 15 \times 20 \times 25 \times 30 \times 35 \times 40 \times 45 \times 50 \times 55 \times 60$$

- a) 10
- b) 12
- c) 14
- d) 15

Step-by-Step Solution

Rewrite each term by breaking it down into prime factors containing 2s and 5s:

$$1 \times 5 \times (5 \times 2) \times (5 \times 3) \times (5 \times 2^2) \times (5 \times 5) \times (5 \times 3 \times 2) \times (5 \times 7) \times (5 \times 2^3) \\ \times (5 \times 9) \times (5 \times 5 \times 2) \times (5 \times 11) \times (5 \times 2^2 \times 3)$$

Term	Factor Breakdown	Number of 2s	Number of 5s
1	1	0	0
5	5	0	1
10	5×2	1	1
15	5×3	0	1
20	5×2^2	2	1
25	5×5	0	2
30	$5 \times 3 \times 2$	1	1
35	5×7	0	1
40	5×2^3	3	1
45	5×9	0	1
50	$5 \times 5 \times 2$	1	2
55	5×11	0	1
60	$5 \times 2^2 \times 3$	2	1

Finding the total number of factors:

- Total Number of 2s = $0 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 2 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 3 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 2 = 10$
- Total Number of 5s = $0 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 1 + 1 = 14$

Since the number of zeroes is determined by the smaller count of 2s and 5s:

Number of zeroes = Minimum(10, 14) = 10

Correct Answer: Option (a) – 10

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