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U.S. charges Indian for plot to murder Pannun

Vikash Yadav has been charged with a murder-for-hire plot, along with Nikhil Gupta; Indian probe team visiting Washington DC confirms he is 'no longer' employed with the Indian government; 'it will be relentless in holding accountable anyone who seeks to harm and silence American citizen,' says the U.S. justice department in a statement

GS Paper II:
India-US
India-Canada

An Indian citizen, Vikash Yadav, has been charged with directing a plot to murder pro-Khalistan activist and Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) chief Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York last year.

A U.S. citizen, Pannun is an India-designated terrorist. Mr. Yadav was identified thus far as "CC-1" in the original indictment related to the murder-for-hire plot, filed by the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) in 2023.

Another Indian, Nikhil Gupta, was charged last year and is currently being detained in Brooklyn, following his arrest in the

Czech Republic last year. India-based Mr. Yadav, it is alleged, had recruited Mr. Gupta to find a hitman and have Pannun killed.

The charges against Mr. Yadav were announced on Thursday by the DoJ, two days after an Indian investigating team visited Washington DC. State Department Spokesperson Matt Miller said the Indian team confirmed that Mr. Yadav was "no longer" employed by the Indian government.

18-page indictment

Mr. Yadav was charged in a second superseding indictment unsealed on Thursday in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. The 18-page second indictment in-



The lookout notice issued by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for Vikash Yadav. REUTERS

cludes a picture of Mr. Yadav in Army fatigues.

Mr. Yadav was "employed by the Government of India's Cabinet Secretariat, which houses India's foreign intelligence service, the Research and Analysis Wing", during the

period relevant to the case, as per the DoJ.

"The Justice Department will be relentless in holding accountable any person - regardless of their position or proximity to power - who seeks to harm and silence Ameri-

can citizens," said Attorney-General Merrick B. Garland.

"The FBI will not tolerate acts of violence or other efforts to retaliate against those residing in the U.S. for exercising their constitutionally protected rights," FBI Director Christopher Wray said.

A 'Wanted by the FBI' notice was issued on Thursday, which said that Mr. Yadav was born in Pranpura, Haryana, and used 'Amanat' as an alias while communicating with his co-conspirator, another Indian national, to facilitate the plot.

"Yadav allegedly provided information, such as the victim's residential addresses, phone numbers,

and other identifying information, to the Indian national in furtherance of the plot," the notice said.

"Today's charges are a grave example of the increase in lethal plotting and other forms of violent transnational repression targeting diaspora communities in the United States," Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen said, as he warned "governments around the world" who may be plotting such acts that the U.S. would disrupt them and hold the perpetrators accountable.

The MEA declined to comment on the second indictment. Despite repeated requests for information, the government did

not confirm whether the U.S. has now requested Mr. Yadav's extradition.

The DoJ announcement comes at the end of a week that saw India-Canada ties nose-dive over Ottawa's allegations that Indian government agents were behind acts of violence, including homicides and extortion, across Canada. Central to the trouble between India and Canada was the slaying of a Khalistani separatist, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in June 2023 in Canada. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had said Canada had intelligence that Indian government agents were behind the killing. India has continued to strongly reject the Canadian accusations.

U.S. charges Indian for plot to murder Pannun (19 October)

Vikash Yadav has been charged with a murder-for-hire plot, along with Nikhil Gupta; Indian probe team visiting Washington DC confirms he is 'no longer' employed with the Indian government; 'it will be relentless in holding accountable anyone who seeks to harm and silence American citizen,' says the U.S. justice department in a statement

- Vikash Yadav, an Indian citizen, is charged with plotting to murder pro-Khalistan activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun in New York.
- Pannun is a U.S. citizen and an India-designated terrorist.
- Yadav was previously identified as "CC-1" in an indictment related to the murder-for-hire plot filed by the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) in 2023.
- Another Indian, Nikhil Gupta, was charged last year and is detained in Brooklyn after being arrested in the Czech Republic.
- Yadav allegedly recruited Gupta to find a hitman to kill Pannun.
- The charges against Yadav were announced by the DoJ shortly after an Indian investigative team visited Washington, D.C.
- The State Department confirmed Yadav is "no longer" employed by the Indian government.





- Yadav is charged in a second superseding indictment unsealed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.
- The 18-page indictment includes a picture of Yadav in Army fatigues and states he was employed by India's Cabinet Secretariat, which oversees the Research and Analysis Wing.
- Attorney-General Merrick B. Garland emphasized that the Justice Department will hold accountable anyone seeking to harm American citizens.
- FBI Director Christopher Wray stated that the FBI will not tolerate violence or retaliation against individuals exercising their rights in the U.S.
- A 'Wanted by the FBI' notice for Yadav indicated he was born in Pranpura, Haryana, and used the alias 'Amanat' during communications with a co-conspirator.
- Yadav allegedly provided information about Pannun's residential addresses and contact details to facilitate the plot.
- Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen highlighted the rise in violent transnational repression targeting diaspora communities in the U.S.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) declined to comment on the indictment and did not confirm if the U.S. has requested Yadav's extradition.
- The DoJ announcement followed tensions between India and Canada regarding accusations of Indian agents being involved in violence in Canada.
- Central to the dispute was the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023, with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleging Indian government involvement.
- India has strongly rejected Canada's accusations.



Modi to visit Russia next week to take part in BRICS summit

GS Paper II: Groupings

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a visit to Russia on October 22 and 23 to attend the BRICS Summit, the Ministry of External Affairs announced on Friday. The PM is also “expected to hold bilateral meetings with his counterparts from BRICS member countries and invited leaders” on the sidelines. The big question is if Mr. Modi will hold a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, on which official sources said there is “no clarity” as yet.

“BRICS respects civilizational diversity and offers a platform for mutually beneficial dialogue free from pressure, double standards or interference in domestic affairs,” Russian envoy in India Denis Alipov said on Friday, adding that it was natural for the grouping to expand one way or another. He was speaking at an online conference on BRICS organised by Centre for Global India Insights and India

Writes Network. Stating that the “geopolitical and practical relevance of BRICS grouping was growing”, he said it promoted the agenda of the global south.

The envoy added that when it comes to BRICS membership, the aspiring countries should be “economically ambitious” and “oppose illegitimate sanctions”. He also called for an alternative to the SWIFT system used for global payments from which Russia was expelled after the beginning of war in Ukraine.

Member countries have been pushing for greater use of national currencies for trade among themselves. Diplomatic sources said this was a priority for Russia while ruling out the possibility of a common BRICS currency.

Addressing the conference, South Africa’s High Commissioner-designate to India Anil Sooklal said last year’s focus of BRICS was its expansion, and “we have done that quite effectively bringing the global south to the table”.



Modi to visit Russia next week to take part in BRICS summit (19 October)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Russia on **October 22 and 23 to attend the BRICS Summit**, as announced by the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Alipov mentioned that the **geopolitical and practical relevance of BRICS is growing and promotes the agenda of the global south**.
- **Aspiring BRICS member countries should be "economically ambitious" and "oppose illegitimate sanctions,"** according to Alipov.
- He called for an alternative to the **SWIFT system** for global payments, from which Russia was expelled following the war in Ukraine.
- Member countries are advocating for greater use of national currencies for trade among themselves, prioritized by Russia, while a common BRICS currency is ruled out.
- South Africa's High Commissioner-designate to India, Anil Sooklal, noted that last year's focus for BRICS was its expansion, which has been effectively achieved by bringing the global south to the table.

SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) System

- It is a global messaging network used by banks and financial institutions to securely transmit information and instructions related to cross-border financial transactions.
- It does not handle the transfer of funds itself but provides a secure platform through which messages are exchanged between institutions.

Historical Background

- SWIFT was founded in **1973** in Belgium with the purpose of standardizing and simplifying international payments.
- It became fully operational in **1977**, and today it connects over **11,000 financial institutions** in more than **200 countries**.

How SWIFT Works

- SWIFT assigns a unique **Bank Identifier Code (BIC)** to each participating institution. These codes are used to identify banks during transactions.
- When a customer initiates a cross-border payment, the SWIFT network is used to send payment instructions from the originating bank to the recipient bank.





- The actual transfer of funds occurs through corresponding banks, but SWIFT ensures secure communication of instructions and confirmations.

Key Features

1. **Security:** SWIFT messages are **highly encrypted**, making it difficult for unauthorized entities to intercept or tamper with them.
2. **Standardization:** SWIFT **uses standardized message formats**, ensuring consistent communication between financial institutions worldwide.
3. **Speed:** SWIFT enables quick processing of international transactions, which may otherwise take longer through other methods.

SWIFT and Russia

- In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, many Western countries implemented financial sanctions against Russia.
- As part of these sanctions, **Russia was expelled from the SWIFT network**, effectively isolating its financial institutions from global markets.
- This expulsion made it difficult for Russia to receive payments for exports, including oil and gas, and conduct foreign trade.

Call for Alternatives

Countries like Russia, China, and even **India**, as part of a broader BRICS initiative, have been calling for an alternative to the SWIFT system to reduce dependence on Western-controlled financial systems and to avoid vulnerabilities to sanctions.

For example:

- **Russia** has been developing its own financial messaging system, the **SPFS (System for Transfer of Financial Messages)**.
- **China** operates the **CIPS (Cross-Border Interbank Payment System)** to facilitate trade and payments with countries in its Belt and Road Initiative.

Recent Updates

- As of 2024, the debate for an alternative to SWIFT has gained momentum, especially after geopolitical tensions and sanctions against countries like Russia and Iran.
- Discussions about **digital currencies**, particularly **Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs)**, are also seen as potential alternatives for cross-border transactions outside SWIFT.



BRICS

- **BRICS** is an acronym for five major emerging economies: **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**. Originally conceptualized as **BRIC** in 2001 (without South Africa), the group aims to promote peace, security, development, and cooperation among its member states.
- In 2010, South Africa joined the group, leading to the name **BRICS**.

Historical Background

- The term **BRIC** was coined by economist **Jim O'Neill** in 2001 in his research paper for **Goldman Sachs**, highlighting the growing influence of these countries in global economics.
- The BRIC nations began meeting formally in **2006**, and the first BRIC summit was held in **Yekaterinburg, Russia**, in 2009.
- South Africa was formally inducted into the group in **2010** at the BRIC summit in Sanya, China.

BRICS Members

1. **Brazil**: A major Latin American power known for its natural resources and large agricultural sector.
2. **Russia**: A global power with a significant influence on energy markets, primarily through its oil and gas exports.
3. **India**: One of the world's largest economies with a rapidly growing tech industry and a vast workforce.
4. **China**: The world's second-largest economy and the largest exporter of goods, playing a pivotal role in global trade and supply chains.
5. **South Africa**: The largest economy in Africa, providing a gateway to the continent's markets.

Objectives and Principles

The main objectives of BRICS include:

- **Promoting mutual development**: The group supports each other's growth and development agendas.
- **Reforming global governance**: BRICS advocates for a more inclusive world order, particularly in institutions like the **United Nations, International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, and the **World Bank**.
- **Promoting trade and investment**: Enhancing trade relations among the member countries is a core goal.

Important Institutions Within BRICS

1. **New Development Bank (NDB)**: Established in **2014** with the aim of funding infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies. Headquartered in **Shanghai, China**.



2. **BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):** Created to provide a financial safety net to members in case of global liquidity pressures.

Recent Developments

1. **BRICS Expansion:** At the **15th BRICS Summit** in **August 2023** in Johannesburg, South Africa, it was announced that **four new countries** (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE) would join the BRICS group starting in **2024**. Argentina, and, Saudi Arabia are about to join the BRICS.
2. This expansion highlights the group's growing geopolitical relevance and its attempt to challenge Western-dominated institutions.
3. **Trade and Investment:** Trade among BRICS countries has been increasing, with an estimated **\$500 billion** in combined intra-BRICS trade in recent years.
4. **Geopolitical Influence:** BRICS has been vocal in recent international disputes, including advocating for a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine conflict. Russia's exclusion from the **SWIFT** global payments system has pushed BRICS countries to discuss alternatives, like their own cross-border payment systems and increased trade in local currencies.

Key Facts and Data

- BRICS countries collectively account for over **40% of the world's population** and approximately **25% of global GDP**.
- **China** and **India** are the world's most populous countries, and **Russia** is the largest country by landmass.
- The combined foreign reserves of BRICS countries are estimated to be around **\$4.5 trillion**.

Challenges Facing BRICS

1. **Internal Differences:** There are significant political, economic, and cultural differences among BRICS nations. For example, China and India have ongoing border disputes, and Russia faces international sanctions.
2. **Global Influence:** While BRICS is a powerful economic group, its influence is still limited in reshaping global governance due to the dominance of Western institutions like the **IMF** and **World Bank**.

Strategic Importance

- **Alternative to Western Institutions:** BRICS provides a platform for emerging economies to voice their concerns about the Western-dominated global financial and political systems.
- **South-South Cooperation:** BRICS emphasizes cooperation among developing nations and supports reforms in global governance to reflect the current global economic realities.



House panel to discuss readiness to deal with 'non-kinetic warfare'

GS Paper III: Internal Security

Dinakar Peri

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI

Indian armed forces' preparedness to deal with "hybrid warfare" is one of the 17 subjects that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence has narrowed down for deliberations for the year.

According to informed sources, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, a member of the committee, spoke extensively on the growing danger of "non-kinetic warfare" citing the examples of ongoing Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts, where these methods have been deployed. He contended that the future wars will be fought using these tools and urged chairman and BJP MP Radha Mohan Singh, at the committee's first meeting on October 15, to ensure that the parliamentary panel closely investigates the Army's preparedness to face these threats.

Several other members concurred with the view, citing the recent spate of pager blasts in Lebanon, which is an example of a "non-kinetic warfare". As per the Lok Sabha bulletin



Non-kinetic warfare goes beyond the usual military tactics and can involve electronic and information warfare. REUTERS

dated October 16, "preparedness of the armed forces in terms of hybrid warfare including cyber, kinetic and non-kinetic warfare and anti-drone capabilities," is listed among the 17 subjects that the panel will discuss.

Evolving concept

Kinetic warfare typically means military employing a range of weapons. Non-kinetic warfare is an evolving concept, it goes beyond the usual military tactics and can involve electronic warfare, cyber, information, psychological and economic among others. Importantly, it can involve non-military stakeholders too. With technological progress, many believe that the non-kinetic warfare can turn out to be deadlier than the traditional

methods and conflicts may be won by non-kinetic means even before a bullet is fired. For example, a massive cyber or malware attack on critical infrastructure of a country such as power grids and hospitals can cripple a nation. Such cyberattacks have been seen globally.

In the domain of counter-drone technologies, the armed forces have been looking to induct a range of kinetic and non-kinetic solutions to neutralise drones and drone swarms, which have emerged as major disruption in warfare as seen in Ukraine. While kinetic options are to physically shoot and destroy the drones, non-kinetic options are jamming them or taking control of their operation, using laser or electro-magnetic waves

to disrupt their operations.

The House panel will also assess the "strategic operational preparedness of the defence forces in view of the current international security scenario, including border security," which will involve reviewing the prolonged stand-off on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China.

Indigenous production

Among other topics, the panel will be reviewing "indigenous defence production", "resettlement policies, healthcare facilities and avenues for ex-service-men" and "assessment of next of kin policy in the armed forces."

Last month, under an initiative pushed by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff conducted a first of its kind tri-services "future warfare" course which the Defence Ministry termed a rank agnostic course for Major Generals to Majors and their equivalent level officers from other services.

It is intended to acquaint the officers with the operational and technological aspects of modern warfare.





House panel to discuss readiness to deal with 'non-kinetic warfare' (19 October)

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence has identified "hybrid warfare" as one of the 17 subjects for deliberation this year.
- Rahul Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, discussed the increasing threat of "non-kinetic warfare," referencing the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine conflicts.
- Gandhi urged the committee to investigate the Army's preparedness for these threats during the first meeting on October 15.
- Other members supported his views, citing recent pager blasts in Lebanon as examples of "non-kinetic warfare."
- The Lok Sabha bulletin dated October 16 listed the preparedness of armed forces in hybrid warfare, including cyber, kinetic, non-kinetic, and anti-drone capabilities, for discussion.
- Kinetic warfare involves traditional military tactics using weapons, while non-kinetic warfare encompasses electronic warfare, cyber operations, information, psychological, and economic tactics.
- Non-kinetic warfare can involve non-military stakeholders and may be deadlier than traditional methods, potentially winning conflicts without physical combat.
- Examples of non-kinetic warfare include cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, such as power grids and hospitals.
- The armed forces are exploring both kinetic and non-kinetic solutions for counter-drone technologies to neutralize drone threats, which have become significant in modern warfare.
- Kinetic solutions involve physically destroying drones, while non-kinetic options include jamming or disrupting their operations using lasers or electromagnetic waves.
- The House panel will evaluate the strategic operational preparedness of defence forces regarding the current international security scenario and border security, particularly concerning the LAC stand-off with China.
- Other topics for review include indigenous defence production, resettlement policies, healthcare for ex-servicemen, and the assessment of the next of kin policy in the armed forces.
- The Integrated Defence Staff conducted a tri-services "future warfare" course, initiated by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, aimed at familiarizing officers with modern warfare aspects.



PM to launch National Learning Week today

PCS

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the 'Karmayogi Saptah' – National Learning Week – on Saturday, with the exercise seeking to impart fresh impetus towards individual and organisational capacity development for civil servants, his office said.

It noted that the 'Mission Karmayogi' was launched in September 2020, and has made substantial progress since then. It envisions a future-ready civil service rooted in Indian ethos with a global perspective, it added.

The National Learning Week (NLW) will be the largest event of its kind. It aims to create a "One Government" message, align everyone with national goals, and promote lifelong learning, a statement said.

During national learning week, each "karmayogi" will commit to achieving a target of at least four hours of competency-linked learning. The participants may complete the targeted hours through individual role-based modules on iGOT, and webinars (public lectures/policy master classes).

PATRIOTIC IAS

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PM to launch National Learning Week today (19 October)

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- The mission envisions a future-ready civil service grounded in Indian ethos with a global perspective.
- The National Learning Week (NLW) will be the largest event of its kind.
- NLW aims to create a "One Government" message, align everyone with national goals, and promote lifelong learning.
- Each “karmayogi” will commit to achieving a target of at least four hours of competency-linked learning during the week.
- Participants can complete the targeted hours through individual role-based modules on the iGOT platform and webinars, including public lectures and policy master classes.



Child betrothals are a ploy to escape punishment: SC

Top court urges Parliament to outlaw child betrothals, drawing attention to how they threaten laws like POCSO Act; issues guidelines on sex education in schools, compensation scheme for girls

GS Paper I:
Society

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday held that child betrothals, used as a clever ploy to duck punishment under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, violate basic rights of free choice, autonomy, and childhood.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said the anti-child marriage law was vague on child betrothals. The court urged Parliament to outlaw child betrothals and declare a child whose marriage was fixed as “a minor in need of care and protection” under the Juvenile Justice Act.

The Bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said India was yet to wake up to the betrothal of minors even though the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women stipulated the problem way back in 1977.

Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006, girls below 18 and



Break with tradition: Students enact a child marriage scene in a tableau to raise awareness against the social evil. V. RAJU

boys under 21 are deemed to be ‘children’. The law considers the practice of child marriage a criminal offence as well as a social evil.

The court drew attention to how boys suffer as much as girls in child marriages. The judgment said a cocktail of patriarchal notions of masculinity and sexual dominance and egregious misinformation by their peers often convince these tender minds to commit violence against their child brides.

The judgment was based on petitions filed by NGOs, including Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action, which found the rate of child mar-

riages alarming despite the enactment of the PCMA nearly two decades ago.

The court said the centuries-old trajectory of child marriage was “threatening” modern laws like the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. “The institution of child marriage, directly than any other institution, stipulates for the sexual abuse of child brides by design,” the CJI said.

Guidelines to govt.

The court issued various guidelines to the government, including age-appropriate and culturally sensitive sexuality education for children in schools. It suggested a ‘Child Marriage

Free Village’ drive, similar to the ‘Open Defecation Free Village’ move, involving local and community leaders.

The judgment recommended the Home Ministry to establish a designated portal for online reporting of child marriages; the Ministry of Women and Child Development to initiate a compensation scheme for girls opting out of child marriages; and an annual budget to prevent child marriages and support affected individuals.

Chief Justice Chandrachud, who authored the judgment, highlighted the reigning “confusion” in India on how to tackle the interface between personal laws and prohibition of child marriage. He revealed that the Centre had, after the case was reserved for judgment, submitted a “note” pushing for a judicial declaration that the PCMA would prevail over personal laws. Though the note referred to “conflicting” High Court judgments on the issue, the government never followed up by placing these “conflicting” verdicts on record.

Child betrothals are a ploy to escape punishment: SC (19 October)

Top court urges Parliament to outlaw child betrothals, drawing attention to how they threaten laws like POCSO Act; issues guidelines on sex education in schools, compensation scheme for girls

- The Supreme Court held that child betrothals violate basic rights of free choice, autonomy, and childhood.
- A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud noted that the anti-child marriage law was vague regarding child betrothals.
- The court urged Parliament to outlaw child betrothals and declare children whose marriages are fixed as “a minor in need of care and protection” under the Juvenile Justice Act.
- The Bench, including **Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra**, highlighted that India has not fully addressed the issue of minor betrothals, despite international conventions since 1977.
- Under the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006**, girls below 18 and boys under 21 are considered ‘children,’ and child marriage is deemed a criminal offense and social evil.
- The court pointed out that boys suffer as much as girls in child marriages, influenced by patriarchal notions and peer misinformation.
- The judgment was based on petitions from NGOs, including Society for **Enlightenment and Voluntary Action**, which reported alarming rates of child marriages despite the law.
- The court stated that the long-standing practice of child marriage threatens modern laws, including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.
- Chief Justice Chandrachud emphasized that child marriage facilitates sexual abuse of child brides.
- The court issued guidelines for the government, including age-appropriate, culturally sensitive sexuality education in schools.
- It suggested a ‘Child Marriage Free Village’ initiative, similar to the ‘Open Defecation Free Village’ campaign, involving local leaders.
- The judgment recommended creating a designated portal for online reporting of child marriages and a compensation scheme for girls opting out of child marriages.
- The court called for an annual budget to prevent child marriages and support affected individuals.





- Chief Justice Chandrachud noted the confusion in India regarding the interaction between personal laws and the prohibition of child marriage.
- He revealed that the Centre submitted a note advocating for the PCMA to prevail over personal laws but did not follow up on conflicting High Court judgments on the issue.

PATRIOTIC IAS



SC recalls its 2022 judgment on benami law amendments

GS Paper III: Money Laundering

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

A Special Bench of the Supreme Court on Friday recalled its August 23, 2022 judgment which declared provisions and amendments made in the benami property law “unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary”. The Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, referred the case for fresh adjudication.

The amendments, introduced in 2016, had applied retrospectively and could send a person to prison for three years. They empowered the Centre to confiscate “any property” subject to a benami transaction. The decision to recall and have a re-look at the issue was based on review petitions filed by the Union government and Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax (Benami Prohibition). The government was represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

Mr. Mehta said the short legal question raised was whether the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988, as amended by the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act of 2016, had a prospective effect.

However, the 2022 judgment traversed beyond the ambit of the question raised, to declare Section 3(2) of the unamended 1988 Act “unconstitutional for being manifestly arbitrary”. The verdict under question had found Section 3(2) of the 2016 Act as violating Article 20(1) of the Constitution, which prohibits retrospective punishment.

The Review Bench on Friday said the parties were free to argue on the constitutionality of the benami law provisions before the appropriate Bench. The court made it clear that the arguments which led to the 2022 verdict had not squarely addressed the issue of the constitutional validity of Sections 3(2) and 5. “It is trite law that a challenge to the constitutional validity of statutory provisions cannot be adjudicated upon in the absence of a live lis [legal action] and contest between the parties. In the present case, the constitutional validity was not squarely addressed. We accordingly allow the review petition and recall the judgment,” the Review Bench recorded in its short order which restored the case back on the court’s board.

SC recalls its 2022 judgment on benami law amendments

- A Special Bench of the **Supreme Court of India** recalled its judgment from **August 23, 2022**.
- The judgment had declared provisions and amendments in the **Benami Property Law** as “unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary.”
- The Bench was headed by **Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud**.
- The case was referred for fresh adjudication.
- The **2016 amendments** to the Benami law were applied **retrospectively** and could lead to a **3-year prison sentence**.
- These amendments allowed the **Centre to confiscate property** involved in benami transactions.
- The review and recall of the judgment were based on **petitions** filed by the **Union government** and the **Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax (Benami Prohibition)**.
- **Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta** represented the government.
- A key legal question was whether the **Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988**, as amended by the **2016 Act**, should apply **prospectively**.
- The 2022 judgment had declared **Section 3(2) of the 1988 Act** as **unconstitutional for being manifestly arbitrary**.

- The 2022 verdict found **Section 3(2) of the 2016 Act** to violate **Article 20(1)** of the Indian Constitution, which prohibits **retrospective punishment**.



- The **Review Bench** said parties could re-argue the constitutionality of the Benami law provisions before an appropriate bench.
- The court noted that the 2022 judgment didn't address the **constitutional validity** of Sections **3(2)** and **5** directly.
- The court allowed the **review petition** and recalled the earlier judgment, sending the case back for reconsideration.

UGC's draft guidelines for academic leaders inspired by 'traditional wisdom'

GS Paper II:
Governance

NEW DELHI

The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has approved the draft guidelines for institutional leadership development for **higher education institutions (HEIs)**. The draft takes inspiration from the **traditional wisdom of kaal, sthan, and patra** (time, era/context, and the actor) to nurture leadership in academic institutions.

Commenting on the draft, UGC Chairman M. Jagadesh Kumar said nurturing and promoting leadership within HEIs was essential for navigating the complexities of running them. He added that the draft offered a comprehensive framework to develop the next generation of academic leaders. "These guidelines emphasise the im-



The guidelines stress on personal and institutional development for leadership.

portance of both personal and institutional development to foster effective leadership," Mr. Kumar said.

Key areas addressed include the blend of artistry and science in leadership, underscoring the need for mentorship, continuous learning, and a deep understanding of the unique dynamics within each institution. According to the

draft, leadership must balance administrative responsibilities with encouraging innovation, inclusivity, and industry collaboration.

The guidelines encourage institutions to develop tailored leadership programmes that meet local and national challenges, focusing on skill development, strategic visioning, and adaptive leadership. The effort is in line with the National Education Policy, 2020 and highlights the need to prepare faculty for leadership roles to adapt to new educational structures, such as multidisciplinary approaches, autonomy, and introducing an academic bank of credits.

The guidelines recommend a holistic approach by integrating leadership systems with personal development.

UGC's draft guidelines for academic leaders inspired by 'traditional wisdom' (19 October)

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved draft guidelines for institutional leadership development in higher education institutions (HEIs).
- The draft draws inspiration from traditional concepts of kaal (time), sthaan (context), and patra (actor) to nurture leadership.
- **UGC Chairman M. Jagadesh Kumar** emphasized the importance of nurturing leadership to navigate the complexities of running HEIs.





- The draft provides a comprehensive framework for developing the next generation of academic leaders.
- Key areas addressed include the blend of artistry and science in leadership, mentorship, continuous learning, and understanding unique institutional dynamics.
- Leadership is highlighted as needing to balance administrative duties with fostering innovation, inclusivity, and industry collaboration.
- The guidelines encourage institutions to create tailored leadership programs to address local and national challenges.
- Focus areas include skill development, strategic visioning, and adaptive leadership.
- The effort aligns with the National Education Policy, 2020, and aims to prepare faculty for leadership roles in new educational structures.
- Recommended approaches include multidisciplinary strategies, autonomy, and the introduction of an academic bank of credits.
- A holistic approach is suggested, integrating leadership systems with personal development.

University Grants Commission (UGC)

- The **UGC** was formally established by the **Government of India** in **1956** under the **University Grants Commission Act, 1956**.
- However, its origins date back to **1945** when it was first set up as an advisory body to oversee three central universities: **Aligarh, Banaras, and Delhi**.
- In **1949**, the UGC's role expanded to cover all Indian universities, and it was given statutory status by the **UGC Act** to ensure academic excellence across institutions.
- It is responsible for maintaining standards in university education, disbursing funds, and regulating institutions of higher learning.

Key Functions of UGC

1. **Regulation and Coordination:** The UGC is tasked with setting and maintaining standards in **university education** across India.
2. It provides guidelines for curricula, teacher qualifications, and quality benchmarks.
3. **Fund Disbursement:** UGC allocates funds to universities and colleges for development, research, and infrastructure projects. It provides **financial assistance** to both public and private universities that meet specific criteria.
4. **Accreditation and Recognition:** UGC also works closely with accreditation agencies like the **National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)** to ensure institutions meet prescribed standards.
5. **Monitoring and Inspections:** The UGC periodically inspects universities and colleges to ensure compliance with its standards and regulations.





6. **Policy Recommendations:** UGC advises the government on issues related to higher education, policy changes, and reforms.

Important Initiatives by UGC

1. **National Eligibility Test (NET):** Conducted on behalf of UGC, the **UGC-NET** is a qualifying exam for **Assistant Professorship** and **Junior Research Fellowship (JRF)** positions in Indian universities.
2. **e-ShodhSindhu:** UGC has initiated digital projects like **e-ShodhSindhu**, a platform for providing access to e-journals and other digital resources to universities.
3. **SWAYAM:** In collaboration with the **Ministry of Education**, UGC plays a crucial role in implementing **SWAYAM**, an online platform offering free courses across various disciplines.
4. **Deemed Universities:** UGC has the authority to grant institutions the status of **Deemed to be University**, ensuring high-quality research and teaching in specific disciplines.
5. **Community Colleges and Skill-Based Education:** UGC promotes skill development and vocational training through **community colleges** and skill-based educational programs.

Recent Developments and Updates

1. **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** UGC is playing a pivotal role in implementing the **NEP 2020**, which seeks to overhaul India's higher education system. The policy envisions a more **flexible curriculum**, **interdisciplinary learning**, and the introduction of **multidisciplinary institutions** by 2030.
 - o The UGC is actively facilitating the transformation of universities into **multidisciplinary institutions**.
2. **CUET (Common University Entrance Test):** From **2022**, UGC has introduced the **CUET** for admissions to central universities, marking a significant shift from individual university-based entrance exams.
3. **Regulation of Online Education:** UGC is also working towards expanding online education, with several universities now offering **UGC-recognized online degree programs**.
4. **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC):** To allow for seamless transfers between institutions, UGC has introduced the **ABC** system, which will help students accumulate and transfer credits earned from different universities.

Key Data and Facts

- **UGC Headquarters:** New Delhi, India.
- **Affiliated Universities and Colleges:** UGC oversees over **900 universities** and **40,000 colleges** across the country.
- **Budget:** In the **2023 Union Budget**, the education sector received a boost, with significant allocations for higher education institutions, research grants, and infrastructure.
- **Recent Funding Initiatives:** The UGC has approved financial grants for the establishment of **new universities** and for upscaling existing **central universities**.

Challenges Faced by UGC





1. **Autonomy vs. Regulation:** One of the key issues the UGC faces is balancing institutional autonomy with regulation, especially in the context of allowing private universities more freedom while ensuring quality standards.
2. **Quality Assurance:** Despite the existence of quality standards, some institutions fail to meet UGC's benchmarks, leading to challenges in maintaining consistent educational standards across the country.
3. **Skill Gap:** There is a growing concern over the employability of graduates, which has prompted UGC to emphasize **skill-based education**.



PFI had over 13,000 members in West Asia, Singapore: ED

GS Paper III:
Internal Security

The Enforcement Directorate has attached 35 immovable properties worth ₹56.56 crore in connection with the money laundering probe against the banned Popular Front of India.

The outfit had more than 13,000 active members in Singapore, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, the agency said on Friday.

The ED probe is based on various cases registered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other enforcement agencies.

“Investigations revealed that the office bearers, members, and cadre of PFI were conspiring and raising/collecting funds from within India and abroad through banking channels, ‘hawala’, donations, etc. for committing and financ-

ing terrorist acts across India,” said the agency.

29 bank accounts

According to the ED, the outfit raised funds to the tune of ₹94 crore from different parts of the country and abroad. The money was deposited in 29 bank accounts in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, and Manipur.

It has so far arrested 26 accused persons linked to the proscribed outfit and submitted nine prosecution complaints in the case from February 2021 to May 2024.

The ED said the “real objectives of PFI include formation of an organisation for carrying out an Islamic movement in India through Jihad, though PFI masquerades itself as a social movement”.





PFI had over 13,000 members in West Asia, Singapore: ED (19 October)

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached 35 immovable properties worth ₹56.56 crore related to a money laundering probe against the banned Popular Front of India (PFI).
- PFI reportedly had over 13,000 active members in Singapore, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- The ED investigation is based on cases registered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other enforcement agencies.
- Investigations revealed that PFI office bearers, members, and cadres conspired to raise and collect funds from within India and abroad through banking channels, hawala, and donations for financing terrorist acts across India.
- PFI raised a total of ₹94 crore from various locations in India and overseas.
- The funds were deposited in 29 bank accounts across several states, including Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, and Manipur.
- The ED has arrested 26 individuals linked to PFI and submitted nine prosecution complaints from February 2021 to May 2024.
- The agency stated that PFI's real objectives include forming an organization for an Islamic movement in India through jihad, despite presenting itself as a social movement.



A perilous highway to salvation in the Himalayas

GS Paper III: Environment

The 900-kilometre long, 12-metre wide, two-lane Char Dham Highway Project to boost religious tourism to four shrines will end up as an endeavour with catastrophic consequences for the mountain ecology. The conclusions of a scientific paper written recently by a group of authors led by Jürgen Mey of the Institute of Environmental Science and Geography, University of Potsdam, Germany, confirm the worst fears expressed by the experts. This supposedly all-weather road project, at an outlay of ₹12,000 crore, was initiated despite intense opposition by environmental organisations in Uttarakhand, who called it unscientific.

Domino effect

The paper presents the study results of fully or partially road-blocking landslides between Rishikesh and Joshimath, along National Highway (NH-7) in Uttarakhand. Based on instances of more than 300 landslides along the 250 km-long corridor after exceptionally high rainfall between September and October 2022, the study identified “309 fully or partially road-blocking landslides along the 247 km long road, which amounts to an average landslide density of 1.25 landslides per kilometre”.

While identifying variables such as slope angle, rainfall amount, and lithology as the controlling factors, the study singles out “the road-widening [as] having a doubling impact on the road-blocking landslides”. The construction has now proved to be the prime cause of landslides, whose occurrences have doubled over the years. Deaths and accidents on the Char Dham road have become a daily occurrence during the pilgrimage season. This conclusion supports the earlier expert committee reports – overruled by the authorities – that had flagged improper construction practices during the road widening work in the Uttarakhand Himalayas.

The researchers have also predicted an uptick in summer monsoon precipitation due to elevation-dependent warming in the years to come. Thus, landslides and fatalities will become more frequent as climate change prediction models suggest more frequent extreme rainfall events. The study underscores that important environmental caveats must be respected before commencing any mammoth engineering project in the Indian Himalayas.

The authorities put forth the reason for wanting “smoother” and “faster all-weather” connectivity for pilgrim tourists from the plains and the armed forces and armaments, but the engineering interventions have been done with scant regard to the local geology and environment. The government has ignored its original policy framework recommending “best practice” norms for infrastructural expansion in mountainous regions to minimise the negative impact on the mountain ecosystems and landscapes.



C.P. Rajendran

Adjunct Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, and the Director of the Consortium for Sustainable Development, Connecticut, U.S.

There is growing scientific evidence that the Char Dham Highway Project will have catastrophic consequences for the mountain ecology

The project, which was initiated under the ‘Char Dham Pariyojana’, is in fundamental violation of all environmental norms and conservation strategies that need to be followed in the Himalayas.

The government used a technical loophole and divided the project into 50-plus smaller projects to bypass environmental clearance and impact assessment reports. Calling the project a ‘geological and ecological fraud’, the petitioners have argued that the roads were longer than 100 km in some stretches and would have a cumulative impact on the whole region. Land encroachment combined with the blasting and the cutting of slopes for developmental projects causes additional stress on a fragile ecosystem. One accepts that roads are the lifeline of remote mountainous regions, but such megaprojects must fully consider the region’s environmental fragility.

Though the project began as a tourism project, it was finally defended in the Supreme Court of India as a defence-related requirement for moving troops and armaments, ignoring the point that the defence forces can airlift troops and heavy artillery during emergencies. The Court initially favouring a narrower intermediate road width for the highways (5.5 m), based on the recommendation of an expert committee appointed in 2019 and a Ministry of Road Transport and Highways’ circular of 2018. But the Court finally permitted the Union Government to go ahead with the project on widening the hill roads from a national security angle.

No scientific assessment

It is a matter of concern that such massive projects are getting the go-ahead without any scientific assessment especially in an unstable and fragile region such as the Indian Himalayas. A key question is this: is mountain morphology, with steep slopes and sharp gradients, easily amenable to human engineering? Unlike the hinterland in the mountains, the steep gradients of the Uttarakhand Himalaya or the Himachal Himalaya make them dynamically heterogeneous in terms of climatic variables and hydrological and tectonic processes at every turn of the mountain path.

A widened road faces problems now as it is constantly blocked by recurrent landslides. It is most likely that this project will end up not being what it was envisioned to be. Not only would the movement of troops or armaments be delayed in critical moments but also much time and resources would have to be used to clear or reconstruct damaged road stretches. Year-wise statistics show a rise in the loss of human lives. In the last four years, 160 people have lost their life in landslide incidents in Uttarakhand, according to the National Crime Records Bureau.

The entire region has been destabilised due to massive construction activities. Ground subsidence is now recognised as a “silent

disaster” in many parts of the Himalayas. In a study published in Scientific Reports this year, widely reported land deformation in Joshimath town is being attributed to uncontrolled anthropogenic activities, infrastructural development and inadequate drainage systems. Recently, it has been reported that the Tungnath temple in the Rudraprayag district is facing serious issues such as subsidence, weakening foundation and shifting wall slates, which have caused water leakage especially during the rainy season.

Such incidents have not impacted the government’s thinking on its developmental models for such fragile areas. Unsurprisingly, the Border Roads Organisation is now seeking clearance to widen the Gangotri-Dharasu stretch in the fragile Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone, whose integrity is important for the ecology of the Ganga river near its origin.

The issue of local distress

According to Census 2011, of Uttarakhand’s 16,793 villages, 1,053 have no inhabitants, while another 405 have a population of less than 10 people. This situation must have been aggravated recently since large-scale infrastructural projects were brought into the hill State. Internal and external migration have led to depopulation and land abandonment in rural areas despite the State government’s initiatives in incentivising agriculture. Road widening, that promotes increased motorised tourism, will encourage entrepreneurs from the plains to set up hotels and business centres, often forcing the local people to opt for employment in the tourism industry rather than sticking to farming.

Environmental factors such as the depletion of water resources and other emerging hazards may have resulted in people leaving the agriculture sectors. With low returns from the land, farmers sell their lands to private entrepreneurs from the plains.

The State government is countering this trend by framing laws against selling land to outsiders, but this is a step that will not mitigate the local distress caused by human-induced environmental degradation. The State government claims that Uttarakhand’s GSDP has increased 1.3 times in 20 months and that the unemployment rate has decreased by 4.4% in one year. By its admission, people in the State have obtained more employment in tourism.

Making feel-good speeches on climate-change resilience in COP meetings while implementing disaster-prone infrastructure in the country’s most fragile area proves a double standard. The Himalayas face multifaceted environmental challenges that require well-thought-out sustainable pathways. The Union and State governments must scale down these ongoing massive construction programmes, which include dams, and formulate sound ecological solutions for the mess they have already created.



A perilous highway to salvation in the Himalayas (19 October)

- The Char Dham Highway Project is 900 kilometres long, 12 metres wide, and consists of two lanes, aimed at boosting religious tourism to four shrines.
- The project, with a budget of ₹12,000 crore, is anticipated to have catastrophic consequences for mountain ecology.
- A scientific paper led by Jürgen Mey from the Institute of Environmental Science and Geography, University of Potsdam, Germany, confirms fears about the project.
- The project faced intense opposition from environmental organizations in Uttarakhand, who labeled it unscientific.
- The study examines road-blocking landslides between Rishikesh and Joshimath along National Highway (NH-7).
- After heavy rainfall from September to October 2022, over 300 landslides were documented along a 250 km corridor.
- The study found 309 fully or partially road-blocking landslides along 247 km, averaging 1.25 landslides per kilometre.
- Key variables affecting landslides include slope angle, rainfall amount, and lithology.
- Road widening has been identified as having a doubling effect on the occurrence of road-blocking landslides.
- Construction practices during road widening have been criticized in previous expert committee reports, which were ignored by authorities.
- Deaths and accidents on the Char Dham road have become frequent during the pilgrimage season.
- Researchers predict increased summer monsoon precipitation due to elevation-dependent warming in the future.
- Climate change models suggest more extreme rainfall events, leading to more landslides and fatalities.
- The study emphasizes the need for respecting environmental considerations before initiating large engineering projects in the Indian Himalayas.
- Authorities cited the need for “smoother” and “faster all-weather” connectivity for pilgrims and armed forces as reasons for the project.
- Engineering interventions were carried out with little regard for local geology and the environment.
- The government ignored its own policy framework that recommends “best practice” norms for infrastructure in mountainous areas to minimize environmental impact.
- The project, initiated under the ‘Char Dham Pariyojana,’ fundamentally violates environmental norms and conservation strategies in the Himalayas.
- The government exploited a technical loophole, dividing the project into over 50 smaller projects to avoid environmental clearance and impact assessments.
- Petitioners labeled the project a ‘geological and ecological fraud,’ noting that some road stretches exceed 100 km, posing a cumulative impact on the region.





- Land encroachment, along with blasting and cutting slopes for development, adds stress to the fragile ecosystem.
- While recognizing that roads are vital for remote mountainous regions, it's argued that megaprojects must account for environmental fragility.
- The project began as a tourism initiative but was later defended in the Supreme Court as a defence-related requirement for troop and armament movement.
- The Court initially favored a narrower road width (5.5 m) based on expert recommendations and a Ministry of Road Transport and Highways circular.
- Ultimately, the Court allowed the Union Government to proceed with widening the hill roads, citing national security concerns.

No scientific assessment

- There is concern over massive projects proceeding without scientific assessment in unstable regions like the Indian Himalayas.
- A key question arises: is mountain morphology, characterized by steep slopes and sharp gradients, suitable for human engineering?
- The steep gradients of Uttarakhand and Himachal Himalayas make them dynamically heterogeneous in climatic, hydrological, and tectonic processes.
- Widened roads face constant blockages from recurrent landslides, suggesting the project may not meet its intended goals.
- Movement of troops and armaments could be delayed in critical moments, requiring significant time and resources to clear or reconstruct damaged roads.
- Over the last four years, 160 lives have been lost in landslide incidents in Uttarakhand, according to the National Crime Records Bureau.
- Massive construction activities have destabilized the entire region, leading to ground subsidence, recognized as a "silent disaster."
- A study published in Scientific Reports attributes land deformation in Joshimath to uncontrolled human activities and inadequate drainage systems.
- The Tungnath temple in Rudraprayag district is experiencing subsidence, weakening foundations, and shifting wall slates, causing water leakage during the rainy season.
- Such incidents have not changed the government's approach to developmental models in fragile areas.
- The Border Roads Organisation is seeking clearance to widen the Gangotri-Dharasu stretch in the Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone, crucial for the ecology of the Ganga river.

The issue of local distress

- According to Census 2011, Uttarakhand has 16,793 villages, of which 1,053 are uninhabited and 405 have populations of fewer than 10 people.





- The situation may have worsened recently due to large-scale infrastructural projects in the region.
- Internal and external migration have contributed to depopulation and land abandonment in rural areas, despite government initiatives to incentivize agriculture.
- Road widening facilitates increased motorized tourism, attracting entrepreneurs from the plains to establish hotels and businesses, which pressures local populations to seek employment in tourism instead of agriculture.
- Environmental factors, including water resource depletion and other hazards, have also driven people away from agriculture.
- Farmers, facing low returns, often sell their land to private entrepreneurs from the plains.
- The State government is attempting to counteract this trend by enacting laws against selling land to outsiders; however, this measure may not alleviate local distress caused by environmental degradation.
- The government claims that Uttarakhand's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has increased by 1.3 times in 20 months and that unemployment has decreased by 4.4% in one year, attributing job growth to tourism.
- The government's emphasis on climate-change resilience in international forums, while pursuing disaster-prone infrastructure projects in fragile areas, reflects a double standard.
- The Himalayas are confronted with multifaceted environmental challenges that necessitate the formulation of sustainable pathways.
- Both Union and State governments must reconsider ongoing large-scale construction programs, including dam projects, and develop sound ecological solutions to address the environmental issues they have exacerbated.



Forecasting better in India, come rain or shine

GS Paper III: Disaster Management

The monsoon season this year in India has been one of the worst in recent times, with recurrent flooding impacting most States. According to a 2021 study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), approximately 40% of districts in India experience alternating climatic hazards, which means that flood-prone regions are also facing droughts during the dry season and vice-versa. Separately, an analysis of 40 years of rainfall data by CEEW shows that there has been an increase of up to 64% in heavy rainfall days during the monsoons over the last decade.

Extreme weather needs better forecasting
In this increasingly complex scenario, while nearly two-thirds of India's population are exposed to flood risks, only a third of the flood-prone population is covered by early warning systems. This is in stark contrast to cyclone early warning systems which cover all cyclone-prone areas in the country. It is evident that India must invest in enhancing weather forecasting and bringing technological innovation to the forefront, as a safety net, to address the growing extreme weather risks.

The 'Mission Mausam', that was approved in September 2024, broadly focuses on increasing India's weather observation network, improving weather forecasting models and investigating weather modification techniques. The mission will be implemented primarily by three institutes under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, namely the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM). The ₹2,000 crore initiative aims to augment the weather observation network using a variety of instruments while also improving forecasting models through an improved understanding of the physics of the atmosphere and the integration of machine-learning approaches.

To harness its potential, India must expand its



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With improvements, the 'Mausam Mission' will transform how weather information can help India become climate smart

forecasting capabilities in areas that face a high climate risk and make data widely available for developing use cases across sectors such as energy, agriculture and water. These are the key pathways 'Mission Mausam' should focus on.

Gaps in radar coverage, limited data access

First, prioritise installing weather observation platforms on India's western coast and in large urban centres facing high climate risks. India has 39 Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs) to monitor rainfall, with many covering a radius of 250 kilometres. These provide short-term forecasts, ranging from minutes to a few hours, of extreme rainfall events. Nine of these radars are located in the Himalayan States, eight along the eastern coast, and 17 located in various Indian cities. The remaining five are on the west coast. Recent studies indicate that cyclones are becoming more frequent and intense in the Arabian Sea. But, as said, only five radars monitor the entire west coast. Even key cities such as Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Bengaluru (Karnataka), and Jodhpur (Rajasthan), which have faced repeated flooding recently, do not have radars as yet. Therefore, 'Mission Mausam' should prioritise the installation of weather radars and other observational platforms in areas that have not been covered as yet and which face growing climate risks.

Second, make weather data openly available for researchers and entrepreneurs to develop use cases. Open access to weather data helps in the analysis of trends and in understanding the causes behind extreme weather events better. It also helps in the creation of localised early warning tools. For instance, the United States has made the data from its 160 DWRs openly available which has resulted in the creation of several analytical tools to support local governments. Similarly, the United Kingdom, France, and the European Union have made their weather forecasting data available on cloud for anyone to access. While the IMD shares data through its

data supply portal, restrictions remain on the volume of data provided.

Moreover, the data on the portal is not freely available to researchers from academic institutions and think tanks. Therefore, 'Mission Mausam' should establish infrastructure to distribute data generated by the new instruments, such as weather radars, wind profilers and radiometers, in the public domain. Moreover, the data from the weather forecasting models developed as part of the mission should also be placed in the public domain for researchers to validate and provide suggestions for improvement. This will foster innovation and localised decision-making.

Reaching out to users

Third, improve communication tools for weather warnings and enhance user capacity. The IMD disseminates weather information through multiple channels, which include web and mobile applications. Over the years, the web application has been significantly strengthened to the extent that it now provides district-wise weather warnings that range from an hour to the next four days of forecast. However, the user experience could be improved further. While the tool offers helpful warnings, providing users with guidance on how to interpret these warnings would enhance their experience. 'Mission Mausam' must focus on enhancing users' capacity to understand and act on warnings through informative videos, media, and guides.

'Mission Mausam' is a timely move by the Union government to make the country weather ready and climate smart through an expanded observational network and improved weather forecasting. With improvements, the mission can transform how weather information is shared and understood in India. This is critical at a time when extreme weather events are taking a heavy toll on lives and livelihoods.

The views expressed are personal

Forecasting better in India, come rain or shine (19 October)

- This year's monsoon season in India has been among the worst in recent times, with recurrent flooding affecting most states.
- A 2021 study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) found that approximately 40% of districts in India face alternating climatic hazards, experiencing both floods and droughts.
- An analysis of 40 years of rainfall data by CEEW shows a 64% increase in heavy rainfall days during the monsoons over the last decade.





- Nearly two-thirds of India's population is exposed to flood risks, but only a third of the flood-prone population is covered by early warning systems.
- This is in contrast to cyclone early warning systems, which cover all cyclone-prone areas in the country.
- India needs to invest in enhancing weather forecasting and technological innovation to address growing extreme weather risks.
- 'Mission Mausam,' approved in September 2024, aims to increase India's weather observation network and improve forecasting models and weather modification techniques.
- The mission will be implemented by three institutes under the Ministry of Earth Sciences: India Meteorological Department (IMD), National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), and Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).
- The ₹2,000 crore initiative will augment the weather observation network and improve forecasting models using advanced atmospheric physics and machine learning.
- India must expand forecasting capabilities in high climate risk areas and make data widely available for developing use cases in sectors like energy, agriculture, and water.
- These areas should be key focus points for 'Mission Mausam.'

Gaps in radar coverage, limited data access

- Prioritize installing weather observation platforms on India's western coast and in large urban centers facing high climate risks.
- India has 39 Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs) monitoring rainfall, covering a radius of 250 kilometers, providing short-term forecasts of extreme rainfall events.
- Nine radars are in Himalayan states, eight along the eastern coast, and 17 in various cities; only five are on the west coast.
- Recent studies show cyclones are becoming more frequent and intense in the Arabian Sea, but only five radars monitor the entire west coast.
- Key cities like Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, and Jodhpur lack weather radars despite facing repeated flooding.
- 'Mission Mausam' should prioritize the installation of radars and observational platforms in unmonitored areas facing growing climate risks.
- Make weather data openly available for researchers and entrepreneurs to develop use cases and analyze trends.
- Open access to weather data facilitates better understanding of extreme weather causes and creation of localized early warning tools.



- The U.S. has made data from its 160 DWRs publicly available, supporting the development of various analytical tools for local governments.
- The IMD shares data through its portal, but restrictions exist on data volume and access for researchers from academic institutions and think tanks.
- 'Mission Mausam' should establish infrastructure to distribute data from new instruments like weather radars and radiometers in the public domain.
- Weather forecasting models developed as part of the mission should also be made publicly available for validation and improvement.
- Improve communication tools for weather warnings and enhance user capacity to interpret and act on them.
- The IMD disseminates weather information via web and mobile applications, providing district-wise warnings for up to four days.
- User experience could be enhanced by providing guidance on interpreting warnings through informative videos, media, and guides.
- 'Mission Mausam' aims to make India weather-ready and climate-smart through an expanded observational network and improved forecasting.
- With improvements, the mission can transform the sharing and understanding of weather information, which is critical given the toll of extreme weather events on lives and livelihoods.

Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs)

- Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs) are advanced meteorological instruments used to detect precipitation, estimate rainfall, and measure wind speed and direction.
- They play a crucial role in weather forecasting, especially for early detection of severe weather conditions such as thunderstorms, cyclones, and tornadoes.
- In India, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and other scientific agencies like ISRO and DRDO have deployed DWRs as part of a broader strategy to improve weather prediction accuracy and disaster management.
- The Doppler radar system was first developed during World War II to detect enemy aircraft. However, in the 1950s, scientists began to use it for meteorological purposes.
- The term "Doppler" refers to the **Doppler Effect, which is the change in frequency of waves as the source and observer move relative to each other.**
- When applied to weather radars, this effect helps measure the velocity of precipitation particles, enabling meteorologists to estimate wind speeds and storm dynamics.
- India introduced DWRs in the late 1980s and 1990s, but the major push for expansion came in the 2000s.

Features and Functioning of Doppler Weather Radars

1. **Precipitation Measurement:** DWRs detect the size, shape, and movement of precipitation particles like raindrops, snowflakes, or hail. The radar emits radio waves, which hit these particles and reflect back, providing data about their intensity.



2. **Wind Velocity Estimation:** Doppler radars measure the speed and direction of winds by detecting shifts in frequency caused by moving particles. This is essential in predicting storm severity and direction.
3. **Storm Tracking and Prediction:** By continuously monitoring storm systems, DWRs provide real-time data that helps meteorologists track the development and movement of cyclones, thunderstorms, and tornadoes.
4. **Data on Cloud Systems:** DWRs can analyze cloud patterns, aiding in rainfall prediction and identifying potential flooding risks.

India's Doppler Weather Radar Network

- As of recent reports (2024), India has a growing network of DWRs to improve meteorological predictions, especially in cyclone-prone and monsoon-dependent regions.
1. **Current Network:** India currently has more than **39 operational DWRs** located in critical regions. Major cities like **Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai**, and coastal areas like **Visakhapatnam, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Paradip** have DWR systems installed.
 2. **Expansion Plans:** IMD plans to increase the number of DWRs to 56 by 2025. This expansion is crucial for covering the entire Indian landmass, especially northeastern states and hilly regions like Jammu and Kashmir.
 3. **Notable DWR Installations:** Some notable DWR locations include:
 - **Chennai** (installed at IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre)
 - **Delhi** (Palam and Ayanagar)
 - **Bhubaneswar** (critical for tracking cyclones in the Bay of Bengal)

Impact

1. **Cyclone Prediction:** DWRs have significantly improved India's ability to predict cyclones. For example, during **Cyclone Fani (2019)** and **Cyclone Amphan (2020)**, DWRs provided critical data that helped issue timely warnings, reducing the death toll and damage.
2. **Flood Forecasting:** In monsoon seasons, DWRs are crucial for predicting heavy rainfall and potential flooding. This data allows authorities to make evacuation and relief plans in advance.
3. **Agriculture and Disaster Management:** DWR data aids in crop forecasting and disaster preparedness, which is vital for India's agrarian economy. Accurate rainfall prediction helps farmers with sowing and harvesting plans.

Challenges and Technological Advancements

1. **Terrain Limitations:** Hilly and forested areas often present challenges for radar systems, as the signals can be obstructed. Efforts are ongoing to address this by installing more radars in difficult terrains.
2. **Maintenance and Upgradation:** DWRs require regular calibration and maintenance to ensure accurate data collection. Upgrading older systems with modern technologies is crucial for sustained performance.
3. **Technological Innovations:** India is exploring new advancements in radar technology, such as **polarimetric radars**, which provide more detailed data by using both vertical and horizontal radio waves. These systems offer better precipitation and storm intensity estimates.

Recent Updates and Government Initiatives





1. **IMD and ISRO Collaboration:** IMD works closely with **ISRO** to enhance weather prediction capabilities. For example, data from the **INSAT-3D satellite** complements DWR data, offering a more comprehensive weather picture.
2. **Disaster Management Initiatives:** DWR data is a key component of the **National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP)**, helping states like **Odisha, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu** in disaster preparedness during cyclones.
3. **PMO and Union Ministry Initiatives:** Under the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**, accurate weather predictions using DWR data are leveraged for flood prevention in housing projects. Moreover, DWR systems play a vital role in monitoring climate change impacts as part of India's **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**.
4. **International Collaborations:** IMD collaborates with global agencies like the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** for technological exchange and skill development, enhancing DWR operations in India.



GS Paper II: international Relations

Israel versus the UN

India's stand must keep in mind the UN's importance in the global order

India's decision not to associate itself with a letter at the United Nations that supported UN Secretary-General António Guterres and criticised Israel's decision to ban him from the country, is both puzzling and a cause for concern. The letter, circulated by Chile more than a week ago, reposed faith in the UN and its top officials, after the Israeli Foreign Minister accused them of bias and said Mr. Guterres did not "deserve to step foot on Israeli soil". While the world has watched for more than a year, Tel Aviv has sought reprisal for the October 7, 2023 terror attacks by Hamas, with its devastation of Gaza. That hunt for its enemies has taken Israel across international borders, with strikes on Lebanon and Yemen and covert operations such as the bombing of the Iranian embassy in Damascus, the killing of a Hamas leader in Tehran, and using pager bombs to target Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, what has stood out in the past year is its assault on the UN system: Israel has deliberately targeted the UNRWA, an organisation India supports, accusing the UN agency of Hamas links. At the UN General Assembly, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu referred to the body as an "anti-semitic" swamp. Most recently, Israeli forces launched attacks on the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, UNIFIL, where 903 Indian soldiers are deployed as a part of a 50-nation, 10,000 strong force. The ban on Mr. Guterres followed Iran's October 1 missile attacks on Israel, and Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz accusing Mr. Guterres of not condemning them "unequivocally". As a result, the letter, signed by 104 nations and the African Union, as well as another letter by 34 UN peacekeeping nations (that India was not a part of, but later "aligned" itself with), are being seen as signs of the unease in the Global South and in Europe with Israel's attacks on the world body mandated to resolve conflict issues.

Given the situation, and the risk to Indian soldiers, it is disappointing that New Delhi has kept itself at arm's length from statements that were critical of Israeli actions against the UN. Even when clarifying its position on Thursday, the Ministry of External Affairs chose to stay safe, expressing no criticism of Israeli action against the UN. India is a leading member of the UN system and has made generous contributions to it since its inception. It has also been a beneficiary of the services and the platform it provides. Respect from all member-states for the UN Secretary-General's office is part of the UN charter (Article 100 (2)). Given India's close bilateral ties with Israel, some in the government might see the abstention from comment as an exercise of 'realpolitik' restraint. When it comes to the importance of the UN-based international rule of law and global order, however, there can be no half-measures.

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Israel versus the UN (19 October)

India's stand must keep in mind the UN's importance in the global order

- India did not associate with a UN letter supporting Secretary-General António Guterres and criticizing Israel's ban on him.
- The letter was circulated by Chile and expressed faith in the UN and its officials.
- Israel's Foreign Minister accused the UN of bias, claiming Guterres did not "deserve to step foot on Israeli soil."
- Israel has been retaliating against Hamas since the October 7, 2023 terror attacks, leading to extensive military actions in Gaza and beyond.
- Israel's actions have included strikes on Lebanon and Yemen, and covert operations targeting Iranian interests.
- Israel has attacked the UNRWA, which India supports, accusing it of links to Hamas.
- Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu described the UN as an "anti-semitic" entity.
- Recent attacks on UN peacekeeping forces in Lebanon involved Indian soldiers as part of the multinational force.
- The ban on Guterres followed missile attacks from Iran and criticism of Guterres's response.
- 104 nations and the African Union signed the letter, reflecting Global South and European unease with Israel's actions against the UN.
- India's reluctance to criticize Israel's actions raises concerns, especially regarding the safety of Indian soldiers.
- The Ministry of External Affairs did not express criticism towards Israel in its clarifications.
- India has historically been a strong supporter and contributor to the UN system.
- Respect for the UN Secretary-General's office is mandated by the UN charter (Article 100(2)).
- India's abstention from comment may reflect a desire for 'realpolitik' restraint in its relationship with Israel.
- The importance of the UN-based international rule of law and global order necessitates clear positions without ambiguity.



GS Paper III: Inclusive Growth

Fate of nations

The 2024 Nobel recognises
the need for 'inclusive' institutions

The 2024 economics Nobel prize is an important one as it highlights what really matters at the end of the day for the long-term economic success of any country. U.S. economists Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson were rewarded for their work on how the quality of institutions in a country can lead it either down the path of economic prosperity or abject poverty. Their study was on the effects of colonialism on the quality of institutions and post-colonial growth of various countries. They found that countries with institutions that secured the rule of law and enforced property rights offered individuals a strong incentive to work, save and invest in the long run. On the other hand, countries with extractive institutions which gave rise to concentration of power and constrained political freedoms suffered deep economic pain. Some have pointed to the authors' lack of a substantial critique of the brutality of colonialism and of painting too rosy a picture of the development of western institutions. But the salience of their analysis remains.

The "institutions" that the laureates talk about as crucial to long-term economic prosperity are nothing but the various rules, which could be either explicit laws or implicit social norms that govern human interaction in society. Such institutions may also include laws that protect citizens from expropriation by the government. The rapid economic growth of China and India since their economic liberalisation in the late 1970s and the early 1990s, respectively, are good examples of countries prospering soon after a significant change in the nature of the institutions or the "rules of the game" that governed their economies. Structural reforms that further improve the quality of institutions are thus crucial if these economies are to achieve living standards similar to those of high-income developed countries in the West. Notably, the Nobel also comes at a time when existing institutions around the world are under the significant threat of being destabilised by personality-driven populist movements. It is worth noting that in their work, the Nobel laureates have classified democracy as an important "inclusive" institution that is good for long-term economic growth. However, the rise of illiberal democracies with protectionist economic policies in recent years shows that liberal institutions that work for the upliftment of the many and development not just for a few, are now under severe threat. A democracy driven by short-term populist policies can be as "extractive" as an autocracy that serves the interests of a narrow elite that is close to people in power.





Fate of nations (19 October)

The 2024 Nobel recognises the need for 'inclusive' institutions

- The 2024 economics Nobel prize emphasizes the importance of institutional quality for a country's long-term economic success.
- U.S. economists Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson were recognized for their research on institutions and economic outcomes.
- Their study focused on the effects of colonialism on institutional quality and post-colonial growth in various countries.
- Countries with institutions that ensure rule of law and property rights incentivize work, saving, and investment.
- In contrast, countries with extractive institutions suffer from concentrated power and constrained political freedoms, leading to economic hardship.
- Some critiques suggest the authors inadequately address colonial brutality and overly idealize Western institutions.
- The concept of "institutions" includes explicit laws and implicit social norms governing societal interactions.
- Institutions also encompass laws protecting citizens from government expropriation.
- China's and India's economic growth since their liberalization reflects the impact of significant institutional changes.
- Structural reforms to enhance institutional quality are essential for achieving high living standards comparable to developed countries.
- The Nobel award coincides with global threats to existing institutions from personality-driven populist movements.
- The laureates identify democracy as an important "inclusive" institution for long-term economic growth.
- The rise of illiberal democracies with protectionist policies indicates that liberal institutions are under threat.
- Short-term populist-driven democracies can be as extractive as autocracies serving narrow elite interests.



Interest rate cut at this stage could be premature, highly risky: RBI Chief

'September inflation still high and future monetary policy action will depend on incoming data and outlook'; Inflation is expected to remain elevated this month before moderating, averred central bank Governor Shaktikanta Das

GS Paper III:
Economy

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday asserted an interest rate cut at this stage could be "premature" and "very very risky" as retail inflation was still high, and future monetary policy action would depend on incoming data and outlook.

Earlier this month, the RBI announced status quo in repo rate, citing inflationary concerns, though it



No, we are not policemen. We are watching... We maintain vigil over the credit markets and take action when it becomes necessary

SHAKTIKANTA DAS,
RBI Governor

changed the monetary policy stance to 'neutral'.

Participating in the India Credit Forum hosted by a financial news agency, Mr. Das said the September inflation was high and the

next print too was expected to remain elevated before moderating. "So, therefore, rate cut at this stage will be very premature and can be very, very risky when your inflation is five

and a half and next print is also expected to be high," Mr. Das said. Refusing to give any indications about rate cuts in future, the RBI Governor said the central bank would take action on the basis of the incoming data and outlook.

Mr. Das also said the Reserve Bank does not act like a policeman, but maintains tight vigil on the market and takes regulatory action whenever necessary. The remark comes a day after the central bank directed Sachin Bansal's

Navi Finserv and three other NBFCs to cease and desist from sanctioning and disbursing loans effective from the close of business of October 21 on material supervisory concerns, including usurious pricing.

"No, we are not policemen. We are watching. We are watching very closely. We maintain vigil over the credit markets and when it becomes necessary, we take action," he said. The Governor also emphasised that the country's growth story was intact.

Interest rate cut at this stage could be premature, highly risky: RBI Chief (19 October)

'September inflation still high and future monetary policy action will depend on incoming data and outlook'; Inflation is expected to remain elevated this month before moderating, averred central bank Governor Shaktikanta Das

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das stated that an interest rate cut at this time could be "premature" and "very very risky" due to high retail inflation.
- He noted that future monetary policy actions will depend on incoming data and the economic outlook.
- Earlier in the month, the RBI announced it would **maintain the repo rate** but changed its monetary policy stance to 'neutral' due to inflation concerns.
- Das highlighted that September inflation was high and the next inflation print is also expected to be elevated before moderating.



- He emphasized that a rate cut at this stage could be very risky, with current inflation at five and a half percent.
- The RBI Governor refrained from indicating future rate cuts, stating that decisions will be based on incoming data.
- Das clarified that the RBI does not act like a policeman but maintains tight vigilance on the market, taking regulatory action when necessary.
- This statement follows the RBI's directive for Navi Finserv and three other NBFCs to cease sanctioning and disbursing loans due to supervisory concerns, including usurious pricing.
- He reiterated that the country's growth story remains intact.

Inflation could rise 0.2% thanks to the MSP hikes for crops: economists

GS Paper III

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

India's retail inflation, which rebounded to a 9-month high of 5.5% in September, could stay buoyant this month, too, amid hardening vegetable prices, and Centre's recent hike in minimum support price (MSP) for crops ahead of the Rabi sowing season could add a tad more momentum to food inflation, economists reckon.

"The delayed exit of monsoon rains in October remains a worry. Vegetable prices in the first 10 days of October have risen by 10-20%, and may lead to a si-



ilarly elevated print in October," HSBC economists Aayushi Chaudhary and Pranjul Bhandari said in a report. They expect food prices will begin to fall from November, with cooling temperatures and healthier reservoir levels.

However, with the Un-

ion Cabinet announcing a 2.4% to 7% hike in the MSP for the upcoming Rabi crop, there could be some impact on some key crops whose inflation is already elevated. For instance, MSP for wheat, which saw a 6.7% rise in retail prices in September, has been raised by 6.6%.

The hikes are relatively lower for mustard (5.3%), masoor (4.3%) and chana (3.9%), but the price rise in the latter two was high in September with chana retail prices up 21.2%.

"If the entire increase in MSP is passed on to final prices for all output in an extreme scenario, the im-

act on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) would be around 0.27%. However, this would normally hold for wheat where there is procurement, and may not be the case for other crops," Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis said, pegging the overall inflationary impact of MSP hikes at around 0.18-0.20% over a year.

While chana and masoor have 0.5% weight in the basket, mustard oil accounts for 1.3%. For wheat and atta together, CPI has 2.73% weight. The four crops have a weight of almost 4.5% in the retail inflation gauge, he said.

Inflation could rise 0.2% thanks to the MSP hikes for crops: economists (19 October)

- India's retail inflation reached a 9-month high of 5.5% in September and could remain buoyant in October due to rising vegetable prices and a recent hike in minimum support prices (MSP) for crops.





- Economists predict that the delayed exit of monsoon rains in October is a concern, with vegetable prices rising by 10-20% in the first 10 days of the month, potentially leading to elevated inflation.
- HSBC economists Aayushi Chaudhary and Pranjul Bhandari expect food prices to decline from November, aided by cooler temperatures and healthier reservoir levels.
- The Union Cabinet announced a 2.4% to 7% hike in MSP for the upcoming Rabi crop, which may impact inflation for key crops already experiencing price increases.
- The MSP for wheat increased by 6.6%, coinciding with a 6.7% rise in its retail prices in September.
- Lower hikes were noted for mustard (5.3%), masoor (4.3%), and chana (3.9%), with chana retail prices up 21.2% in September.
- If the entire increase in MSP is passed on to final prices, the impact on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) could be around 0.27%, particularly for wheat, where procurement is involved.
- Bank of Baroda chief economist Madan Sabnavis estimates the overall inflationary impact of MSP hikes at around 0.18-0.20% over a year.
- Chana and masoor have a weight of 0.5% in the CPI basket, mustard oil accounts for 1.3%, and wheat and atta together have a weight of 2.73%.
- The four crops collectively account for almost 4.5% of the retail inflation gauge.

Kenya Deputy President sacked in impeachment (19 October)

- Kenya's parliament unanimously voted to support **President William Ruto's** nominee to **replace his deputy, Rigathi Gachagua**, who was **impeached**.
- Following the vote, a high court issued an injunction suspending the replacement process.
- The nominee, **Kithure Kindiki**, a 52-year-old academic turned political heavyweight, was a frontrunner after Gachagua's impeachment.
- Gachagua was removed from office for **“gross violation” of the constitution**, including threatening judges and practicing ethnically divisive politics.
- He was cleared of other charges, such as corruption and money-laundering.
- The impeachment has captivated public attention in Kenya, a country generally regarded as a stable democracy.

