To watch an in-depth discussion on the topic, click on the YouTube link below: https://www.youtube.com/@PatrioticIAS

For regular updates on UPSC and PCS preparation, join our Telegram Channel: https://t.me/patrioticIAS

09_01_2025 DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

TOPICS COVERED

1. **6 killed, 20 hurt in Tirupati stampede / तिरुपति में भगदड़ में 6 की मौत, 20 घायल** (GS Paper-III: Disaster Management)

2. **Data Rules to be rolled out by mid-2025, says Vaishnaw / डेटा नियम 2025 के मध्य तक लागू हो जाएंगे: वैष्णव** (GS Paper-III: Cyber Security)

3. **Simultaneous elections: MPs on House committee seek more time for deliberations / एक साथ चुनाव: सदन समिति के सांसदों ने विचार-विमर्श के लिए अधिक समय मांगा** (GS Paper-II: Elections)

4. **Centre's move to replace post of Adviser to Chandigarh Administrator with Chief Secy. sparks row in Punjab / चंडीगढ़ प्रशासक के सलाहकार के पद को मुख्य सचिव से बदलने के केंद्र के कदम से पंजाब में विवाद** (GS Paper-II: Union Territory)

5. **Forecast for 2023 Delhi floods was inaccurate as flow of Yamuna was marred by silt, muck: Centre to NGT / 2023 में दिल्ली में बाढ़ का पूर्वानुमान गलत था क्योंकि यमुना का प्रवाह गाद और कीचड़ से भरा हुआ था: केंद्र ने एनजीटी को बताया** (GS Paper-III: Environment / Disaster Management)

6. **India's first battery energy storage system to go live in south Delhi's Kilokri in March** / भारत की पहली बैटरी ऊर्जा भंडारण प्रणाली मार्च में दक्षिण दिल्ली के किलोकरी में शुरू होगी **(GS Paper-III: Energy / PCS)**

7. **Atrocity complaint puts the spotlight on reservation debate within transgender community** / अत्याचार की शिकायत ने ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय के भीतर आरक्षण की बहस को सुर्खियों में ला दिया **(GS Paper-I: Society)**

8. **Centre yet to wake up from its slumber on Dam Safety Act: SC** / बांध सुरक्षा अधिनियम पर केंद्र अभी भी अपनी नींद से नहीं जागा है: सुप्रीम कोर्ट **(GS Paper-III: Disaster Management)**

9. **River interlinking, the fount of environmental disaster** / नदी जोड़ो अभियान, पर्यावरणीय आपदा का स्रोत **(GS Paper-III: Environment)**

10. **The right to food and the struggle with the PDS** / भोजन का अधिकार और सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली के साथ संघर्ष **(GS Paper-III: PDS System)**

11. **Growth chill** / विकास में ठंड **(GS Paper-III: National Accounting)**

12. **Cripple and scuttle** / अपंग और स्कटल **(GS Paper-II: Right to Information)**

13. **China's long game in Africa** / अफ्रीका में चीन का लम्बा खेल **(GS Paper-II: India-Africa and Chinese Angle)**

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14. **The Centre's share in States' revenue has surged in the last decade** / पिछले दशक में राज्यों के राजस्व में केंद्र की हिस्सेदारी बढ़ी है (GS Paper-II: Center State Relations)

15. **Why is deciphering the Indus script important?** / सिंधु लिपि को समझना क्यों महत्वपूर्ण है? (GS Paper-I: Indus Valley Civilization)

16. **How the UAPA, a draconian law, is wrecking lives** / कैसे यूएपीए, एक कठोर कानून, जीवन को बर्बाद कर रहा है (GS Paper-II: UAPA / GS Paper-III: Internal Security)

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21. **India balancing on twin pillars of technology, tradition: Jaishankar** / भारत प्रौद्योगिकी और परंपरा के दोहरे

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स्तंभों पर संतुलन बना रहा है: जयशंकर (GS Paper-II: Indian Diaspora)

22. **Filmmaker and poet Pritish Nandy passes away at 73** / फिल्म निर्माता और कवि प्रीतिश नंदी का 73 वर्ष की आयु में निधन (PCS)

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24. **Homes destroyed, thousands flee as wildfires tear through Los Angeles** / लॉस एंजिल्स में जंगली जानवरों के हमले में हजारों घर नष्ट हो गए, हजारों लोग मारे गए (PCS)

25. **India's Misri meets Taliban's Foreign Minister in Dubai** / भारत के मिसरी ने दुबई में तालिबान के विदेश मंत्री से मुलाकात की (GS Paper-II: India-Afghanistan)

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27. **Denmark is 'open to dialogue' with U.S., says Foreign Minister** / डेनमार्क अमेरिका के साथ बातचीत के लिए तैयार है: विदेश मंत्री (GS Paper-II: Global World Order)

28. **Female birds 'can't reproduce without male sex hormones'** / मादा पक्षी नर सेक्स हार्मोन के बिना प्रजनन नहीं कर सकतीं (GS Paper-III: S&T)

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29. Review asserts link between fluoride levels and IQ loss / समीक्षा में हाइड्रोजन के स्तर और IQ हानि के बीच संबंध का दावा किया गया (GS Paper-III: S&T)

6 killed, 20 hurt in Tirupati stampede

Thousands of people had gathered to collect tickets for temple festival tomorrow; Naidu directs action against TTD employees found guilty

GS Paper III: Disaster Management

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUMALA

Six persons were killed and more than 20 critically injured in a stampede at Tirupati late on Wednesday evening as people jostled for tickets for the Vaikunta Ekadasi festival at the Tirumala temple on Friday, the Chairman of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Trust Board, B.R. Naidu, said.

The TTD had set up around 90 counters at various locations in Tirupati and announced that tickets would be made available from 5 a.m. on Thursday. The announcement drew tens of thousands of people, eager to ensure their place for darshan.

However, the overwhelming crowd at the

Rush for darshan: People gather near a ticket counter at Vishnu Nivasam in Tirupati on Wednesday. ANI

counters, including Vishnu Nivasam, Bairagipatteda, and Ramachandra Pushkarini, led to chaos as the arrangements were reportedly not adequate. The police had a tough time controlling the crowd.

The injured were rushed to the government-run Sri Venkateswara Ramnarain Ruia Hospital for treatment. Authorities

have yet to confirm the identities of the deceased and the injured.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock over the incident and instructed the TTD and police officials to extend the best medical care. He called for strict action against the employees responsible for the incident.

Stampede in Tirupati: Six Killed, 20 Injured

तिरुपति भगदड़: छह लोगों की मौत, 20 घायल

Six persons killed and more than 20 injured in a stampede at Tirupati on Wednesday evening during a rush to collect Vaikunta Ekadasi festival tickets for Tirumala temple.

तिरुपति में बुधवार शाम को भगदड़ में छह लोगों की मौत और 20 से अधिक लोग घायल हो गए, जब लोग तिरुमला मंदिर के वैकुंठ एकादशी उत्सव के टिकट लेने के लिए उमड़े।

• The stampede occurred as **thousands of people gathered** to ensure their place for **darshan** at the festival on **Friday**.

भगदड़ तब हुई जब **हजारों लोग शुक्रवार** को **दर्शन** के लिए अपनी जगह सुनिश्चित करने के लिए इकट्ठा हुए।

TTD Counters and Ticket Distribution
टीटीडी काउंटर्स और टिकट वितरण

- The **Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD)** set up **around 90 counters** in **Tirupati** to distribute tickets starting from **5 a.m. on Thursday**.

  तिरुमाला तिरुपति देवस्थानम्स (टीटीडी) ने तिरुपति में लगभग 90 काउंटर्स लगाए और **गुरुवार सुबह 5 बजे** से टिकट वितरण शुरू करने की घोषणा की।

- The announcement drew **tens of thousands of people**, but **arrangements were inadequate**, causing **chaos** at locations like **Vishnu Nivasam, Bairagipatteda**, and **Ramachandra Pushkarini**.

  इस घोषणा से **हजारों लोग** इकट्ठा हुए, लेकिन **प्रबंधन अपर्याप्त** था, जिससे **विशाल भीड़** ने **विष्णु निवासम, बैरागीपट्टेदा** और **रामचंद्र पुष्करिणी** जैसे स्थानों पर **अराजकता** फैला दी।

- **Police struggled to control the crowd**, leading to **severe injuries** for more than **20 people**.

  पुलिस को भीड़ नियंत्रित करने में कठिनाई हुई, जिससे **20 से अधिक लोग गंभीर रूप से घायल** हो गए।

Response from Authorities
प्रशासनिक प्रतिक्रिया

- **The injured** were taken to the **government-run Sri Venkateswara Ramnarain Ruia Hospital** for **treatment**.

  घायलों को **सरकारी श्री वेंकटेश्वर रामनारायण रुइया अस्पताल** में **इलाज** के लिए ले जाया गया।

- **Authorities are yet to confirm** the **identities** of the **deceased** and **injured**.

  प्रशासन ने अब तक मृतकों और घायलों की पहचान की **पुष्टि नहीं की** है।

- **Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu** expressed **shock** and directed **TTD and police officials** to ensure **best medical care** and take **strict action** against **guilty employees**.

  आंध्र प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री एन. चंद्रबाबू नायडू ने घटना पर **दुख** व्यक्त किया और **टीटीडी व पुलिस अधिकारियों** को **बेहतर चिकित्सा सुविधा** प्रदान करने और **दोषी कर्मचारियों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई** करने के निर्देश दिए।

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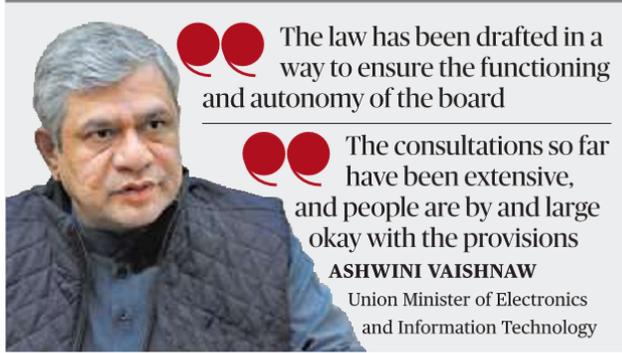# Data Rules to be rolled out by mid-2025, says Vaishnaw

GS Paper III: Cyber Security

Varghese K. George
Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

The Union government is aiming at finalising and notifying the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, currently in a draft state, by the middle of the year, Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw has said.

> The law has been drafted in a way to ensure the functioning and autonomy of the board

> The consultations so far have been extensive, and people are by and large okay with the provisions

ASHWINI VAISHNAW
Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology

"The consultations so far have been extensive, and people are by and large okay with the provisions," Mr. Vaishnaw said in an exclusive interview with *The Hindu* on Wednesday. "I don't see too many amendments coming in the final notification beyond some tweaks."

While large firms are prepared to comply quickly with most of the Rules, Mr. Vaishnaw said that a maximum of two years are being given for implementation. This will allow certain categories of data fiduciaries some more time to prepare for the full implementation of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, which the Rules seek to operationalise. The government is currently accepting stakeholder comments on the draft until February 18.

"The law has been drafted in a way to ensure the functioning and autonomy of the Personal Data Protection Board of India," Mr. Vaishnaw said, adding that the implementation of the Act would be digital in nature. The same approach has been followed in at least one other institution: the Grievance Appellate Committee, which deals with social media complaints under the IT Rules, 2021.

Promoting components
On electronics manufacturing, Mr. Vaishnaw said, "We are working on a programme for promoting and incentivising component manufacturing in our country", adding to existing schemes for IT hardware and semiconductors.

FULL INTERVIEW ON

- The **Union government** is aiming to **finalise and notify the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules** by the **middle of 2025**, currently in a **draft state**.

  केंद्र सरकार का लक्ष्य डिजिटल व्यक्तिगत डेटा संरक्षण नियमों को 2025 के मध्य तक अंतिम रूप देने और अधिसूचित करने का है, जो फिलहाल ड्राफ्ट स्थिति में हैं।

- **Union Minister of Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw** said that **consultations** have been **extensive**, and people are **largely in agreement** with the provisions.

  केंद्रीय इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स और आईटी मंत्री अश्विनी वैष्णव ने कहा कि परामर्श व्यापक रहे हैं और लोग मुख्य रूप से प्रावधानों से सहमत हैं।

- He added that he doesn't foresee **major amendments** beyond **minor tweaks** in the **final notification**.

  उन्होंने कहा कि अंतिम अधिसूचना में बड़े संशोधनों की संभावना नहीं है, केवल छोटे बदलाव हो सकते हैं।

- **Large firms** are **prepared to comply** with most of the Rules, but **two years** will be given for **full implementation** to allow certain **data fiduciaries** more time.

बड़ी कंपनियां अधिकांश नियमों का **पालन करने के लिए तैयार** हैं, लेकिन **पूर्ण कार्यान्वयन** के लिए कुछ **डेटा फिड्यूशरी** को अधिक समय देने के लिए **दो साल** का समय दिया जाएगा।

- The **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023** will be operationalised through these Rules.
  डिजिटल व्यक्तिगत डेटा संरक्षण अधिनियम (डीपीडीपी), 2023 को इन नियमों के माध्यम से लागू किया जाएगा।

- The **government** is accepting **stakeholder comments** on the **draft Rules** until **February 18, 2025**.
  सरकार 18 फरवरी 2025 तक **ड्राफ्ट नियमों** पर **हितधारकों की टिप्पणियां** स्वीकार कर रही है।

- Mr. Vaishnaw said the law will ensure the **functioning and autonomy** of the **Personal Data Protection Board of India**, and the implementation will be **digital.**
  श्री वैष्णव ने कहा कि यह कानून **भारत के व्यक्तिगत डेटा संरक्षण बोर्ड** के **कार्य और स्वायत्तता** को सुनिश्चित करेगा और कार्यान्वयन **डिजिटल** होगा।

- The same **digital approach** has been used in the **Grievance Appellate Committee**, which handles **social media complaints** under the **IT Rules, 2021**.
  सामाजिक मीडिया शिकायतों को संभालने वाले **अपील समिति** में भी यही **डिजिटल दृष्टिकोण** अपनाया गया है, जो **आईटी नियम, 2021** के तहत आता है।

Promoting Components
घटक निर्माण को बढ़ावा देना

- Regarding **electronics manufacturing**, Mr. Vaishnaw said that the government is working on a **programme** to **promote and incentivise component manufacturing** in **India**.
  इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स निर्माण के बारे में श्री वैष्णव ने कहा कि सरकार **घटक निर्माण** को **बढ़ावा देने और प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए कार्यक्रम** पर काम कर रही है।

- The programme will add to the existing **schemes for IT hardware and semiconductors**.
  यह कार्यक्रम **आईटी हार्डवेयर और अर्धचालक योजनाओं** में **जोड़ा जाएगा।**

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Simultaneous elections: MPs on House committee seek more time for deliberations

GS Paper II: Elections

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

At the first meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on two Bills on conducting simultaneous polls on Wednesday, Opposition members argued that the panel should be given at least a year to complete its work, considering the scope and scale of deliberations required.

The committee has time till the first week of the next session of Parliament, which is likely to begin on January 31, leaving it with just three weeks.

The meeting began with a presentation by the Union Ministry of Law and

Opposition members argued that the panel should be given at least one year to complete its work

Justice on the provisions of the Bills. Opposition members said the two Bills violated the basic structure doctrine of the Constitution, since they sought to make the State legislature subordinate to the national legislature.

Several members questioned the government's argument that simultaneous polls are better for the economy. According to sources, Lok Sabha mem-

ber and Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said all the studies quoted by former President Ram Nath Kovind-led high-level committee to claim that simultaneous polls will significantly reduce expenditure, are from the pre-EVM era.

Members also asked if the cost of holding elections has come down since the 2004 Lok Sabha election when EVMs were used for the first time in all 543 seats. Seeking answers from a different perspective, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj and Shiv Sena (Shinde) MP Srikant Shinde wanted the Law Ministry to give an exact estimate of the jump

expected in per capita GDP with simultaneous polls.

Key BJP ally Janata Dal (United) questioned the efficacy of the legislation in a multi-party polity such as India. According to sources, the party's national working president and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay K. Jha said, "If a State government falls in three years, then as the legislation says, the new government will hold office only for the remainder of the five-year period. Doesn't this dilute the mandate of the new government which will only have a two-year term? Why would the voters take such a government seriously?"

Simultaneous Elections: MPs on House Committee Seek More Time for Deliberations

समानांतर चुनाव: संसदीय समिति के सांसदों ने विचार-विमर्श के लिए अधिक समय मांगा

At the first meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on two Bills regarding simultaneous polls, Opposition members demanded that the panel be given at least a year to complete its work due to the scope and scale of deliberations required.

समानांतर चुनाव से संबंधित दो विधेयकों पर संयुक्त संसदीय समिति की पहली

बैठक में, विपक्षी सदस्यों ने समिति को कम से कम एक वर्ष का समय देने की मांग की, क्योंकि इसके लिए व्यापक विचार-विमर्श की आवश्यकता है।

- The committee has time till the **first week of the next session of Parliament**, likely to begin on **January 31**, leaving it with just **three weeks** to complete its task.
  समिति के पास **अगले संसद सत्र के पहले सप्ताह** तक का समय है, जो **31 जनवरी** से शुरू होने की संभावना है, जिससे उसके पास कार्य पूरा करने के लिए केवल **तीन सप्ताह** शेष हैं।

- The meeting started with a **presentation by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice** on the provisions of the Bills.
  बैठक की शुरुआत **कानून और न्याय मंत्रालय** द्वारा विधेयकों के प्रावधानों पर **प्रस्तुति** से हुई।

- **Opposition members** argued that the **two Bills** violate the **basic structure doctrine** of the **Constitution** by making the **State legislatures subordinate** to the **national legislature**.
  विपक्षी सदस्यों ने तर्क दिया कि ये **दो विधेयक संविधान के मूल ढांचे के सिद्धांत** का उल्लंघन करते हैं क्योंकि ये **राज्य विधानसभाओं** को **राष्ट्रीय संसद के अधीन** बना देते हैं।

- Some members questioned the government's claim that **simultaneous polls** would be better for the **economy**.
  कुछ सदस्यों ने सरकार के इस दावे पर सवाल उठाया कि **समानांतर चुनाव अर्थव्यवस्था** के लिए बेहतर होंगे।

- According to sources, **Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra** pointed out that the **studies** cited by the **Ram Nath Kovind-led committee** on the benefits of simultaneous elections were from the **pre-EVM era**.
  सूत्रों के अनुसार, **कांग्रेस नेता प्रियंका गांधी वाड्रा** ने बताया कि **राम नाथ कोविंद की अध्यक्षता वाली समिति** द्वारा **समानांतर चुनावों** के लाभों के लिए जिन **अध्ययनों** का उल्लेख किया गया है, वे **ईवीएम युग से पहले के हैं**।

- Members also questioned if the **cost of elections** has reduced since the **2004 Lok Sabha elections**, when **EVMs** were used in **all 543 seats** for the first time.
  सदस्यों ने यह भी सवाल किया कि क्या **चुनावों की लागत 2004 के लोकसभा चुनावों** के बाद से कम हुई है, जब **सभी 543 सीटों** पर पहली बार **ईवीएम** का उपयोग किया गया था।

- **BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj** and **Shiv Sena MP Srikant Shinde** asked the **Law Ministry** to provide an **exact estimate** of the **increase in per capita GDP** expected due to **simultaneous polls**.
  भाजपा सांसद बंसुरी स्वराज और **शिवसेना सांसद श्रीकांत शिंदे** ने **कानून मंत्रालय** से **समानांतर चुनावों** के कारण होने वाली **प्रति व्यक्ति जीडीपी वृद्धि** का **सटीक अनुमान** प्रस्तुत करने को कहा।

- **Janata Dal (United)**, a key **BJP ally**, questioned the **efficacy** of this legislation in **India's multi-party system**.
  जनता दल (यूनाइटेड), जो **भाजपा** की एक प्रमुख सहयोगी पार्टी है, ने **भारत की बहुदलीय व्यवस्था** में इस कानून की **प्रभावशीलता** पर सवाल उठाया।

- According to sources, **JD(U) national working president Sanjay K. Jha** stated that if a **State government** falls within **three years**, the **new government** will serve only the

remaining two-year term, which **dilutes the mandate**.

सूत्रों के अनुसार, **जेडीयू के राष्ट्रीय कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष संजय के. झा** ने कहा कि अगर **किसी राज्य सरकार** का पतन **तीन वर्षों** में हो जाता है, तो **नई सरकार** केवल शेष **दो वर्ष** की अवधि के लिए कार्य करेगी, जो **जनादेश को कमजोर** करता है।

- He further added that **voters** might not take such a government **seriously** if its term is shortened.

उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि अगर सरकार का कार्यकाल छोटा हो जाता है, तो **मतदाता** ऐसी सरकार को **गंभीरता से नहीं लेंगे**।

Centre's move to replace post of Adviser to Chandigarh Administrator with Chief Secy. sparks row in Punjab

GS Paper II: Union Territory

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

A political controversy erupted in Punjab on Wednesday over the Centre's decision to abolish the post of the Adviser to the Chandigarh Administrator and replace it with the post of the Chief Secretary of the Union Territory, which is the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana.

The announcement came through a gazette notification on January 3 by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions.

Political parties in Punjab, including the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Congress, and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), criticised the BJP-led Centre and demanded an immediate rollback of the

Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa termed the move 'an attack on Punjab's dignity'.

decision.

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Partap Singh Bajwa of the Congress termed the development "an assault on Punjab's rightful claim over Chandigarh" and "an attack on Punjab's dignity and rights".

He said, "I strongly con-

> The Union government's decision is an attempt to weaken Punjab's claim over Chandigarh. The appointment of a Chief Secretary is meant for a State. Chandigarh is not a State, nor does it have a Chief Minister.

NEEL GARG
AAP spokesperson

demn [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi government's blatant and autocratic move to re-designate the Chandigarh Administrator's Adviser as Chief Secretary."

"This deliberate assault on Punjab's rightful claim over Chandigarh exposes Modi's agenda to weaken

Punjab and marginalise Punjabis. By bypassing Punjab in this critical decision, the BJP is once again showcasing its utter disregard for federalism and its dictatorial mindset," he added.

SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal warned the Central government against proceeding in the matter and accused it of "actively colluding" with the ruling AAP in the decision-making process.

Mr. Badal said that the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab is "a settled issue committed by two Prime Ministers of the country and endorsed by the Union Cabinet as well as by both Houses of the Parliament", following the Memorandum of Settlement on Punjab in July 1985.

Senior Akali leader Dal-

jit Singh Cheema said Chandigarh "belongs to Punjab" and demanded that the Centre reverse its decision without delay.

The AAP unit of Punjab also opposed the decision, saying it "once again exposes the anti-Punjab attitude of the Central government".

Addressing a press conference, AAP spokesperson Neel Garg said, "The decision is an attempt to weaken Punjab's claim over Chandigarh. The appointment of a Chief Secretary is meant for a State. Chandigarh is not a State, nor does it have a Chief Minister. Then why was there a need to appoint a Chief Secretary?"

"The people of Punjab won't accept the decision. The Centre must withdraw it," he added.

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चंडीगढ़ प्रशासक के सलाहकार की जगह मुख्य सचिव की नियुक्ति पर केंद्र के फैसले से पंजाब में विवाद

A political controversy erupted in Punjab over the Centre's decision to abolish the post of the Adviser to the Chandigarh Administrator and replace it with Chief Secretary of the Union Territory.

केंद्र सरकार के चंडीगढ़ प्रशासक के सलाहकार के पद को समाप्त कर मुख्य सचिव के पद की नियुक्ति के फैसले पर पंजाब में राजनीतिक विवाद शुरू हो गया।

- The announcement came through a **gazette notification on January 3** by the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions**.
  यह घोषणा **3 जनवरी** को **कार्मिक, लोक शिकायत और पेंशन मंत्रालय** द्वारा **राजपत्र अधिसूचना** के माध्यम से की गई।

- Political parties in Punjab, including **AAP, Congress, and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)**, criticised the **BJP-led Centre** and demanded an **immediate rollback** of the decision.
  पंजाब में **आप, कांग्रेस और शिरोमणि अकाली दल (एसएडी)** सहित राजनीतिक दलों ने **भाजपा सरकार** की आलोचना की और इस निर्णय को **तुरंत वापस लेने** की मांग की।

- **Partap Singh Bajwa**, Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, termed the development as **"an assault on Punjab's rightful claim over Chandigarh"** and **"an attack on Punjab's dignity and rights"**.
  पंजाब विधानसभा में विपक्ष के नेता **प्रताप सिंह बाजवा** ने इस कदम को **"पंजाब के चंडीगढ़ पर उचित दावे पर हमला"** और **"पंजाब की गरिमा और अधिकारों पर प्रहार"** कहा।

- Mr. Bajwa said, **"I strongly condemn Prime Minister Narendra Modi government's autocratic move to re-designate the Chandigarh Administrator's Adviser as Chief Secretary."**
  श्री बाजवा ने कहा, **"मैं प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार के चंडीगढ़ प्रशासक के सलाहकार को मुख्य सचिव बनाने के तानाशाही कदम की कड़ी निंदा करता हूं।"**

- He further alleged that this move **"exposes Modi's agenda to weaken Punjab"** and **"showcases BJP's disregard for federalism."**
  उन्होंने आगे आरोप लगाया कि यह कदम **"पंजाब को कमजोर करने के मोदी के एजेंडे"** को उजागर करता है और **"भाजपा की संघीय ढांचे के प्रति उपेक्षा को दर्शाता है।"**

- **SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal** warned the Central government against proceeding with the decision and accused it of **"colluding with AAP"** in the decision-making process.
  एसएडी के अध्यक्ष सुखबीर सिंह बादल ने केंद्र सरकार को इस फैसले पर आगे बढ़ने के खिलाफ चेतावनी दी और इसे **"आप के साथ मिलीभगत"** का आरोप लगाया।

- Mr. Badal said the **transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab** is **"a settled issue"** committed by **two Prime Ministers** and endorsed by the **Union Cabinet and both Houses of**

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Parliament, following the **Memorandum of Settlement on Punjab in July 1985**.

श्री बादल ने कहा कि **चंडीगढ़ को पंजाब को हस्तांतरित करना** "एक तयशुदा मुद्दा" है, जिसे **दो प्रधानमंत्रियों** ने स्वीकार किया था और **केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल और संसद के दोनों सदनों** द्वारा अनुमोदित किया गया था, **जुलाई 1985 के पंजाब समझौते के अनुसार**।

- **Senior Akali leader Daljit Singh Cheema** stated that **"Chandigarh belongs to Punjab"** and demanded the **Centre to reverse its decision without delay**.

  वरिष्ठ अकाली नेता **दलजीत सिंह चीमा** ने कहा कि **"चंडीगढ़ पंजाब का है"** और केंद्र से इस निर्णय को **बिना देरी के वापस लेने** की मांग की।

- The **Punjab unit of AAP** also opposed the decision, saying it **"exposes the anti-Punjab attitude of the Central government."**

  पंजाब आप इकाई ने भी इस निर्णय का विरोध किया, यह कहते हुए कि यह **"केंद्र सरकार के पंजाब विरोधी रवैये"** को दर्शाता है।

- Addressing a press conference, **AAP spokesperson Neel Garg** questioned the need for a Chief Secretary in **Chandigarh**, saying **"Chandigarh is not a State, nor does it have a Chief Minister."**

  एक प्रेस कॉन्फ्रेंस में, **आप प्रवक्ता नील गर्ग** ने **चंडीगढ़ में मुख्य सचिव** की आवश्यकता पर सवाल उठाया, उन्होंने कहा, **"चंडीगढ़ एक राज्य नहीं है और न ही इसका कोई मुख्यमंत्री है।"**

- He added, **"The people of Punjab won't accept the decision. The Centre must withdraw it."**

  उन्होंने कहा, **"पंजाब के लोग इस निर्णय को स्वीकार नहीं करेंगे। केंद्र को इसे वापस लेना चाहिए।"**

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Forecast for 2023 Delhi floods was inaccurate as flow of Yamuna was marred by silt, muck: Centre to NGT

GS Paper III: Environment
GS Paper III: Disaster Management

NEW DELHI

The Central Water Commission's (CWC) forecast ahead of the 2023 floods in Delhi, the worst in the national capital's history, was "not as accurate as expected", the panel has said in a report to the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

This was so, the CWC said in its January 4 report, because floodwaters could not flow freely along the Yamuna river stretch between Wazirabad and Okhla. It stated that for the flood forecasts to be accurate, river channels need to be in a "free flow condition".

However, the report added, the river flow was found to be impaired due

Floodwaters in central Delhi's ITO in July 2023. FILE PHOTO

to the "non-opening of all the gates of the ITO barrage, formation of islands of silt deposits, growth of trees in the river, and muck disposal at various locations due to construction activities across the river".

The submissions by the panel, which monitors floods in the country, came

in response to a suo motu NGT case, based on an article by *The Hindu* published last year about how the CWC had forecast Yamuna's level to "remain steady" even as it continued to rise through July 12 to reach the highest-ever level – 208.66 metres – the following day.

Forecast for 2023 Delhi Floods was Inaccurate as Flow of Yamuna was Marred by Silt, Muck: Centre to NGT

2023 दिल्ली बाढ़ की भविष्यवाणी गलत थी क्योंकि यमुना में गाद और कचरे से जल प्रवाह बाधित हुआ: केंद्र ने एनजीटी को बताया

The Central Water Commission (CWC) informed the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that its forecast before the 2023 Delhi floods was "not as accurate as expected".

केंद्रीय जल आयोग (CWC) ने राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण (NGT) को बताया कि 2023 दिल्ली बाढ़ से पहले की गई भविष्यवाणी "उम्मीद के मुताबिक सटीक नहीं" थी।

- The **2023 Delhi floods** were **the worst in the city's history**, with the Yamuna river rising to unprecedented levels.

  2023 की दिल्ली बाढ़ को **शहर के इतिहास की सबसे भीषण बाढ़** माना गया, जिसमें यमुना नदी का जलस्तर अभूतपूर्व ऊंचाई तक पहुंचा।

- In a report submitted on **January 4**, the CWC stated that the **floodwaters could not flow freely** along the **Yamuna river stretch between Wazirabad and Okhla**.

  4 जनवरी को सौंपी गई रिपोर्ट में CWC ने कहा कि **वजीराबाद से ओखला के बीच यमुना नदी का जल प्रवाह बाधित** हो गया था।

- For flood forecasts to be **accurate**, the **river channels need to be in a "free flow condition"**.

  बाढ़ की भविष्यवाणी **सटीक** होने के लिए **नदी के जल मार्ग को "मुक्त प्रवाह स्थिति" में होना चाहिए**।

- The report pointed out several reasons for the **impaired flow of the Yamuna**, including:

  रिपोर्ट में **यमुना के जल प्रवाह में बाधा** के कई कारण बताए गए:

    o **Non-opening of all gates** of the **ITO barrage**

      ITO बैराज के सभी द्वारों का नहीं खुलना

    o **Formation of silt islands**

      गाद के टापू बन जाना

    o **Growth of trees** in the river

      नदी में पेड़ों का उगना

    o **Muck disposal** at various locations due to **construction activities**

      निर्माण गतिविधियों के कारण विभिन्न स्थानों पर **कचरे का निपटान**

- The panel made these submissions in response to a **suo motu case by the NGT**, based on an article by **The Hindu**.

  पैनल ने यह प्रस्तुतिकरण **एनजीटी द्वारा दायर एक स्वतः संज्ञान मामले** में किया, जो **द हिंदू** के एक लेख पर आधारित था।

- The article highlighted how the **CWC forecast** predicted that **Yamuna's level would remain steady**, but the river **continued to rise through July 12** and reached **208.66 metres**, the **highest-ever level**, on the next day.

  लेख में यह बताया गया कि **CWC की भविष्यवाणी** के अनुसार **यमुना का जलस्तर स्थिर** रहने की उम्मीद थी, लेकिन **12 जुलाई** तक नदी का जलस्तर **बढ़ता रहा** और अगले दिन **208.66 मीटर**, जो **अब तक का सबसे ऊंचा स्तर** था, तक पहुंच गया।

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India's first battery energy storage system to go live in south Delhi's Kilokri in March

PCS
GS Paper III: Energy

NEW DELHI

India's first commercial utility-scale battery energy storage system (BESS) – an inverter that can provide electricity to a grid – from renewable energy is expected to go live in Delhi in March this year.

The 20 MW (megawatt)/40 MWh (megawatt hour) cluster of batteries, capable of providing four hours of power every day (two hours each during the day and at night), is part of the BSES Rajdhani's power sub-station in south Delh's Kilokri village.

BSES Rajdhani is the largest power distribution company in Delhi. It is a joint venture between the Reliance Group and the Delhi government.

₹120-crore project

Akash Gupta, a senior executive at BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd., told *The Hindu* that the electricity used to charge the system's batteries will come from the power company's renewable power purchase agreements. The Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission has approved the project.

The total outlay for the project is $14 million, or nearly ₹120 crore, said Saurabh Kumar, the vice president of the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP), the principal funders of the project.

A visit to the location shows that the required batteries, being procured from China, have already been tested and are ready to be shipped. These will be housed in containers at Kilokri, said Pinkesh Kumar, head of regulatory affairs at IndiGrid Ltd., the company implementing the project for the discom.

India's First Battery Energy Storage System to Go Live in South Delhi's Kilokri in March

भारत की पहली बैटरी एनर्जी स्टोरेज सिस्टम मार्च में दक्षिण दिल्ली के किलोकरी में शुरू होगी

- **India's first commercial utility-scale Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)** is expected to **go live in Delhi in March** this year.
  भारत का पहला कमर्शियल यूटिलिटी-स्केल बैटरी एनर्जी स्टोरेज सिस्टम (BESS) इस साल मार्च में दिल्ली में शुरू होने की उम्मीद है।

- The **20 MW (megawatt)/40 MWh (megawatt hour)** cluster of batteries will provide **four hours of power every day**, with **two hours each during the day and at night**.
  20 मेगावाट/40 मेगावाट घंटे की बैटरी क्लस्टर हर दिन चार घंटे बिजली प्रदान करेगी, जिसमें दिन और रात में दो-दो घंटे बिजली दी जाएगी।

- It is part of **BSES Rajdhani's power sub-station** in **Kilokri village, South Delhi**.
  यह दक्षिण दिल्ली के किलोकरी गांव में स्थित बीएसईएस राजधानी के पावर सब-स्टेशन का हिस्सा है।

- **BSES Rajdhani** is the **largest power distribution company in Delhi** and is a **joint venture between the Reliance Group and the Delhi government**.
  बीएसईएस राजधानी दिल्ली की सबसे बड़ी बिजली वितरण कंपनी है और यह रिलायंस ग्रुप और दिल्ली सरकार का एक संयुक्त उद्यम है।

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₹120-Crore Project
₹120 करोड़ का प्रोजेक्ट

- **Akash Gupta**, a senior executive at **BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd.**, told **The Hindu** that the **batteries will be charged using renewable power** under the company's **power purchase agreements**.
  आकाश गुप्ता, जो बीएसईएस राजधानी पावर लिमिटेड के वरिष्ठ अधिकारी हैं, ने द हिंदू को बताया कि इस प्रणाली की बैटरियों को नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा से चार्ज किया जाएगा।

- The **Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission** has **approved** the project.
  इस प्रोजेक्ट को दिल्ली विद्युत नियामक आयोग से मंजूरी मिल चुकी है।

- The project's total cost is **₹120 crore or $14 million**, said **Saurabh Kumar**, **vice president of the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP)**, the **principal funders of the project**.
  इस परियोजना की कुल लागत ₹120 करोड़ या $14 मिलियन है, यह बात सौरभ कुमार, जो ग्लोबल एनर्जी एलायंस फॉर पीपल एंड प्लैनेट (GEAPP) के उपाध्यक्ष हैं, ने कही।

Procurement from China
चीन से बैटरियों की खरीद

- The required **batteries are being procured from China**, and they have already been **tested and are ready to be shipped**.
  आवश्यक बैटरियां चीन से खरीदी जा रही हैं, और उनका परीक्षण हो चुका है और वे शिपिंग के लिए तैयार हैं।

- The **batteries will be housed in containers** at **Kilokri**, said **Pinkesh Kumar**, **head of regulatory affairs at IndiGrid Ltd.**, the company **implementing the project for the discom**.
  इन बैटरियों को किलोकरी में कंटेनरों में रखा जाएगा, यह बात पिंकेश कुमार, जो इंडिग्रिड लिमिटेड के रेगुलेटरी अफेयर्स प्रमुख हैं, ने कही।

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Atrocity complaint puts the spotlight on reservation debate within transgender community

GS Paper I: Society

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

As the movement for horizontal reservation for transgender people in government jobs and education picks up pace in northern India, taking cue from activists in southern States, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has now taken cognisance of an atrocity complaint against Uttar Pradesh's Transgender Welfare Board member Devika Devendra S. Manglamukhi, a strong proponent of vertical reservation, "because the Dalit trans community lives with fear in U.P. because of her", as per the complainant.

While vertical reservations would translate into a separate quota category under which all trans people would qualify, irrespective of their socio-economic category, many trans activists across the country have stressed that horizontal reservations are the need of the hour as vertical quotas ignore the layered nature of discrimination

transgender people from marginalised castes face. Horizontal reservation would ensure a percentage for trans people in each socio-economic category.

Notice issued
Based on the complaint from a Saharanpur-based Dalit trans woman activist, Yashika, the Commission for SCs issued notices to the district administration and police in Saharanpur on January 3. "Ms. Devika is known to routinely call many trans activists who support horizontal reservations and abuse and harass them. Her position on horizontal reservations is also public on her social media," Ms. Yashika told *The Hindu*.

She added that she had submitted a recording of one such call to the Commission, where Ms. Devika, whom she described as a "prominent upper caste transgender", allegedly used casteist and transphobic abuses, including deliberate misgendering.

Ms. Devika rebutted the allegations. "First, the voice in the recording is not mine as is being alleged. Second, there are no details of when the call recording is allegedly from, and third, is it legal to record calls in such a manner?" she told *The Hindu*. Ms. Devika also accused the complainant of "misusing the Constitution, and the transgender identity", and insisted that the NCSC

is "being taken for a ride". "I am also approaching the NHRC and NCSC to file a complaint," she added.

Ms. Devika continued, "The NALSA judgement (2014) calls for us to be treated as socially and educationally backward classes (SEBC). So then, being a trans woman makes me an OBC (Other Backward Class). How can the complainant call me 'upper caste' or 'Savarna'?"

In her complaint against Ms. Devika, Ms. Yashika, who also runs an Instagram page named the Bahujan Queer Collective, has called for action to be taken under relevant Sections of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs, Prevention of Atrocities) Act and the

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act. The National Commission has asked the Saharanpur district administration and police to submit Action Taken Reports by January 17.

After the NCSC issued notice on the complaint, Ms. Devika has been posting on her profile about the social work she has undertaken to uplift and empower the Valmiki community.

Since the 2014 judgment of the Supreme Court that directed governments to provide reservation to trans people in government jobs and education, the demand for quotas from the community has only grown. But an arguable ambiguity in the Supreme Court's direction, which called for transgender people to be treated as "socially and educationally backward classes of citizens", has divided opinion within the transgender community on what kind of reservations should be provided.

Ms. Devika, a trans woman herself, is of the view that the community should

instead be fighting for equality in society, and vertical reservations. In Facebook posts, most recently on Monday, she said: "We are equal, that's why we want vertical reservation for Transgenders".

'No caste discrimination'
"When trans people are abused and discriminated, it is not based on caste, it is purely based on our gender," she said.

Based on the 2014 judgment, she further insisted that a person could not continue with their socio-economic category's caste identity after identifying as a transgender person. "Because the judgment says transgender people are SEBCs, they cannot also then continue to be SC," she said.

The Supreme Court of India had in March 2023 refused to entertain a petition that asked for a clarification on the ambiguity in the 2014 direction for reservations. One interpretation of this direction has already resulted in the Madhya Pradesh govern-

ment including transgender people as a community within its State OBC list in April 2023.

This, even though High Courts, including the Karnataka High Court, Madras High Court, and more recently, the Calcutta High Court, have interpreted it differently, and directed that the community be provided horizontal reservations.

Chennai-based trans rights activist Grace Banu, who has been spearheading the movement for horizontal reservation in southern States, told *The Hindu* that Ms. Devika's interpretation and understanding of the 2014 National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) judgment is "casteist" and "reflected the dominant caste mentality" that the transgender people of the country continue to fight.

"This reading denies the reality that there are transgender people in all caste categories. How is bunching them up as OBCs serving the purpose of equality?" Ms. Banu said.

A caste atrocity complaint was registered against Uttar Pradesh's Transgender Welfare Board member Devika Devendra S. Manglamukhi, who strongly advocates for vertical reservation for transgenders.

Atrocity Complaint Puts the Spotlight on Reservation Debate Within Transgender Community

अत्याचार की शिकायत ने ट्रांसजेंडर समुदाय के भीतर आरक्षण बहस को उजागर किया

The movement for horizontal reservation for transgender people in government jobs and education is gaining momentum in northern India, inspired by activists in southern States.

सरकारी नौकरियों और शिक्षा में ट्रांसजेंडर लोगों के लिए क्षैतिज आरक्षण का आंदोलन उत्तरी भारत में तेज हो रहा है, जो दक्षिणी राज्यों के कार्यकर्ताओं से प्रेरित है।

- The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** has taken **cognisance of an atrocity complaint** against **Uttar Pradesh's Transgender Welfare Board member Devika Devendra S. Manglamukhi**, who is a **proponent of vertical reservation**.
  राष्ट्रीय अनुसूचित जाति आयोग (NCSC) ने उत्तर प्रदेश ट्रांसजेंडर कल्याण बोर्ड की सदस्य देविका देवेंद्र एस. मंगला मुखी के खिलाफ **अत्याचार की शिकायत** पर ध्यान दिया है, जो **ऊर्ध्वाधर आरक्षण** की समर्थक हैं।

- The complaint alleges that **Dalit trans community lives in fear in U.P.** because of her actions.

  शिकायत में आरोप लगाया गया है कि **उत्तर प्रदेश में दलित ट्रांस समुदाय** उनके कारण **डर के माहौल** में जी रहा है।

- **Vertical reservation** would create a **separate quota category** for all trans people, irrespective of their **socio-economic category**.

  ऊर्ध्वाधर आरक्षण सभी ट्रांस लोगों के लिए **अलग कोटा श्रेणी** बनाएगा, चाहे उनकी **सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्थिति** कुछ भी हो।

- **Horizontal reservation**, however, would ensure **a percentage for trans people** in **each socio-economic category**, addressing **intersectional discrimination**.

  क्षैतिज आरक्षण, हालांकि, **प्रत्येक सामाजिक-आर्थिक श्रेणी में ट्रांस लोगों के लिए एक प्रतिशत** सुनिश्चित करेगा और **परस्पर भेदभाव** को संबोधित करेगा।

Notice Issued
नोटिस जारी किया गया

- The **NCSC issued notices** to the **district administration and police in Saharanpur** on **January 3**, based on a complaint by **Dalit trans woman activist Yashika** from **Saharanpur**.

  NCSC ने सहारनपुर के **जिला प्रशासन और पुलिस** को **3 जनवरी** को **दलित ट्रांस महिला कार्यकर्ता यशिका** की शिकायत के आधार पर **नोटिस जारी किया**।

- Yashika claimed that **Devika routinely calls trans activists** supporting horizontal reservations and **abuses and harasses them**.

  यशिका ने दावा किया कि **देविका नियमित रूप से क्षैतिज आरक्षण का समर्थन करने वाले ट्रांस कार्यकर्ताओं को फोन करती हैं** और उन्हें गाली-गलौज और परेशान करती हैं।

- Yashika provided a **call recording** as evidence, alleging that **Devika used casteist and transphobic abuses** and **misgendered** her.

  यशिका ने **कॉल रिकॉर्डिंग** को सबूत के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया, जिसमें आरोप लगाया गया कि **देविका ने जातिवादी और ट्रांसफोबिक गालियां दीं** और **गलत जेंडर संबोधित किया**।

- **Devika Devendra Manglamukhi** denied the allegations, stating that **the voice in the recording is not hers** and **questioned the legality of recording calls**.

  देविका देवेंद्र मंगला मुखी ने आरोपों से इनकार करते हुए कहा कि **रिकॉर्डिंग में आवाज उनकी नहीं है** और **कॉल रिकॉर्डिंग की वैधता** पर सवाल उठाया।

- Devika accused Yashika of **misusing the Constitution and transgender identity**, stating that the **NCSC is being misled**.

  देविका ने यशिका पर **संविधान और ट्रांसजेंडर पहचान का दुरुपयोग करने** का आरोप लगाते हुए कहा कि **NCSC को गुमराह किया जा रहा है**।

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Devika's Response on the Caste Debate
जाति विवाद पर देविका की प्रतिक्रिया

- Devika referred to the **2014 NALSA judgment**, which declared that **trans people should be treated as socially and educationally backward classes (SEBC)**.
  देविका ने **2014 के NALSA निर्णय** का हवाला दिया, जिसमें कहा गया था कि **ट्रांस लोगों को सामाजिक और शैक्षिक रूप से पिछड़े वर्ग (SEBC)** के रूप में माना जाना चाहिए।

- She questioned how **she can be labeled as 'upper caste' or 'Savarna'**, as being a **trans woman makes her an OBC** under the **NALSA judgment**.
  उन्होंने सवाल किया कि **उन्हें 'सवर्ण' या 'ऊंची जाति' कैसे कहा जा सकता है**, क्योंकि NALSA निर्णय के तहत ट्रांस महिला होने से वह OBC हो जाती हैं।

Centre yet to wake up from its slumber on Dam Safety Act: SC

GS Paper III: Disaster Management

Court was hearing plea seeking lowering of the permissible water level at Mullaperiyar dam; 'Centre has not fully implemented the law'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday orally said the Union government was yet to wake up from its 'slumber' and fully implement a nearly five-year-old law to prevent disasters related to dams and ensure their safe functioning.

A three-judge Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant said the Dam Safety Act, 2021, was "existing on paper" after the State of Kerala argued that "nothing has been done", including the constitution of a National Committee on Dam Safety. "Despite Parliament having passed this Act, we are aghast that the Executive is yet to wake up from its slumber," Justice Dipankar Datta, on the Bench with Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, remarked.

The court was hearing a petition filed by advocate-

Safety check: Supreme Court-appointed monitoring committee members inspect Mullaperiyar dam in Kerala, on June 13, 2024.

petitioner Mathews Nedumpara, who submitted that a breach at the 129-year-old limestone-and-surkhi built Mullaperiyar dam may lead to the deaths of lakhs of people spread across five townships. The lawyer sought a lowering of the permissible water level at Mullaperiyar dam from 142 ft to 120 ft.

Section 5 of the 2021 Act mandates the constitution of the National Committee on Dam Safety within 60 days of the commencement of the Act. The committee is to be reconstituted every three years.

"Nothing has been done in the years between 2021 and 2025... The Centre did nothing on the basis of this Act," senior advocate Jaideep Gupta, appearing for Kerala, claimed.

However, Tamil Nadu, represented by senior advocate V. Krishnamurthy, informed the Bench that the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) was formed under the Act.

Centre Yet to Wake Up from Its Slumber on Dam Safety Act: SC
डैम सुरक्षा अधिनियम पर केंद्र अब भी नींद में: सुप्रीम कोर्ट

The Supreme Court on Wednesday orally remarked that the Union government has yet to wake up from its "slumber" and fully implement the Dam Safety Act, 2021, which is nearly five years old.

बुधवार को सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने मौखिक रूप से कहा कि केंद्र सरकार अभी तक डैम सुरक्षा अधिनियम, 2021

को पूरी तरह लागू करने में "नींद में" है, जबकि यह क़रीब पांच साल पुराना है।

- A **three-judge Bench** led by **Justice Surya Kant** noted that the **Dam Safety Act** was only "existing on paper" after **Kerala** argued that no significant steps had been taken, including the formation of a **National Committee on Dam Safety**.

  जस्टिस सूर्य कांत की अगुवाई में **तीन-जजों की बेंच** ने कहा कि **डैम सुरक्षा अधिनियम** सिर्फ़ "कागजों पर" मौजूद है। **केरल** ने दलील दी कि **राष्ट्रीय डैम सुरक्षा समिति** भी अब तक गठित नहीं की गई है।

- Justice **Dipankar Datta**, part of the Bench with **Justice Ujjal Bhuyan**, stated that the **Executive** is yet to act despite **Parliament** passing the Act.

  जस्टिस **दीपांकर दत्ता** ने, जो **जस्टिस उज्जल भुइयां** के साथ बेंच में थे, कहा कि **कार्यपालिका** अभी तक कार्रवाई नहीं कर पाई है, जबकि **संसद** ने यह अधिनियम पारित किया है।

- The court was hearing a petition filed by **Mathews Nedumpara**, who expressed concerns about the safety of the **129-year-old Mullaperiyar dam**, warning that its breach could result in **deaths of lakhs of people** across five townships.

  कोर्ट **मैथ्यूज नेडुमपारा** द्वारा दायर याचिका पर सुनवाई कर रही थी, जिन्होंने **129 साल पुराने मुल्लापेरियार डैम** की सुरक्षा पर चिंता जताई। उन्होंने कहा कि अगर यह डैम टूटता है तो **पांच टाउनशिप में लाखों लोगों की मौत** हो सकती है।

- The petitioner requested lowering the **permissible water level** at the dam from **142 ft to 120 ft**.

  याचिकाकर्ता ने डैम का **पानी स्तर 142 फीट से घटाकर 120 फीट** करने की मांग की।

- **Section 5** of the **Dam Safety Act, 2021**, mandates the creation of a **National Committee on Dam Safety** within **60 days** of the Act's commencement.

  डैम सुरक्षा अधिनियम, 2021 की **धारा 5** के तहत **60 दिनों** के भीतर **राष्ट्रीय डैम सुरक्षा समिति** का गठन अनिवार्य है।

- The committee is required to be **reconstituted every three years**, but **no action** has been taken by the Centre between **2021 and 2025**.

  इस समिति को **हर तीन साल में पुनर्गठित** किया जाना चाहिए, लेकिन **2021 से 2025** के बीच केंद्र ने कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की।

- **Senior advocate Jaideep Gupta**, appearing for **Kerala**, claimed that **no steps** had been taken to implement the Act.

  केरल के लिए पेश हुए **सीनियर एडवोकेट जयदीप गुप्ता** ने दावा किया कि अधिनियम को लागू करने के लिए **कोई कदम नहीं उठाए गए**।

- However, **Tamil Nadu**, represented by **senior advocate V. Krishnamurthy**, informed the Bench that the **National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)** had been formed under the Act.

  हालांकि, **तमिलनाडु** की ओर से **सीनियर एडवोकेट वी. कृष्णमूर्ति** ने बेंच को बताया कि अधिनियम के तहत **राष्ट्रीय डैम सुरक्षा प्राधिकरण (NDSA)** का गठन हो चुका है।

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River interlinking, the fount of environmental disaster

On December 25, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the Ken-Betwa River Link Project, which aims to solve the water scarcity in the Bundelkhand region that covers parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The project also includes the construction of a dam located within the Panna Tiger Reserve, raising concerns about its submergence. Upon completion, this project will link the supposed water surplus Ken river with the Betwa in drought-stricken Bundelkhand – an area that had 58% forest cover in 1938.

C.P. Rajendran

Adjunct Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, and an author of the book, 'The Rumbling Earth — The Story of Indian Earthquakes'

A misplaced model

This project, which costs around ₹45,000 crore, was launched despite the objections raised by experts, including members of an empowered committee appointed by the Supreme Court of India, and by circumventing the law that has strict terms for allowing hydroelectric power projects. Models of grandiose technological fixes as the solution to all water-related problems have gathered momentum. Politicians are now touting the concept of river interlinking for inter-basin water transfers as a geoengineering solution to continued water depletion in India.

The concept of inter-basin transfer was proposed 130 years ago by Sir Arthur Cotton, who designed irrigation dams in the Godavari and Krishna river valleys. M. Visvesvaraya, an early icon among Indian engineers, further refined this idea. K.L. Rao and Captain Dinshaw J. Dastur subsequently expanded the scope of this concept in 1970 and 1980. Initially termed the 'National Water Grid', this concept re-emerged as the 'River-Interlinking Project' (ILR) from the Ministry of Water Resources to transfer surplus waters from the Ganga and the Brahmaputra to water-deficient regions in central and southern India.

Following this, the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) was established in 1982 to conduct surveys and investigations, and to prepare feasibility reports for links under the National Perspective Plan. The NWDA identified 30 links for feasibility studies, divided into 14 Himalayan and 16 Peninsular river links. These links are anticipated to alleviate the impacts of floods and droughts, boost income in rural areas, and address water distress in agriculture.

The currently estimated cost of ₹5.5 lakh crore does not include the social, environmental and operational costs. Ultimately, all this will end up

The political class must note that the lofty idea of interlinking rivers overlooks the huge environmental costs and the eventual deaths of rivers and deltaic regions

as taxes on the common man. This lofty idea of interlinking the rivers, to connect surplus rivers of the country with the deficient rivers is fundamentally flawed as it overlooks the huge environmental costs and the eventual deaths of the rivers and deltaic regions.

The uncontrolled human-induced disequilibrium in natural hydrographic systems will destroy associated ecological niches with incalculable repercussions for the long-term well-being of society – an unpardonable disservice to future generations. We may also have to factor in the consequences of climate change impacting rainfall and river flow, which will aggravate the situation. It is unclear how the nation's declared commitment to mitigating human-induced climate change and river manipulation go hand in hand.

The eco-services of rivers

Policymakers ignore the point that there is no "free" surplus water in any river and simple elementary arithmetic rationalisations such as tapping the 'water lost to sea' do not consider the eco-hydrological dimensions of the issue. The supporters of these projects and the politicians do not understand or deliberately ignore viewing the river as a part of the drainage basin with constitutive ecological niches, which includes its final destination of deltaic plains, interfacing with the sea.

The eco-services of the free-flowing rivers include the flushing of silt from riverbeds to the coastal waters to form deltas. Flood water is not to be rationalised as 'surplus'. It needs to be seen as the carrier of minerals for land fertility, groundwater recharge and sustenance of biodiversity, which finally helps the livelihood of millions of marginalised people.

By diverting river water, deltaic regions are starved of water that could have helped balance saltwater from the sea. Now, however, the deltaic ecosystem will suffer from the change. The Indus Delta offers a crucial lesson. Alice Albinia, in her book, *Empires of the Indus: The Story of a River* (2008), narrates how a delta system at the mouth of the Indus – which was once "the richest in all Pakistan" – became impoverished when the British started barrage construction, which Pakistan continued after 1947.

Such examples are aplenty in India as well. The state of the downstream parts of the Narmada since the completion of the Sardar Sarovar dam is a modern example in the making.

The global examples of river channelisation have also proved to be major disasters. The channelisation of the Kissimmee river in the State of Florida, authorised by the U.S. Congress in 1954 to mitigate flooding, is an environmental disaster, resulting in the loss of wetlands. Massive resources are being spent to revive its original configuration. The current state of the Aral Sea – one of the world's largest lakes – is another example of how geoengineering projects destroy natural systems. The lake has now become a howling desert after the rivers that sustained it were diverted by irrigation projects implemented during the heady days of the Soviet Union.

The real reasons for India's water crisis

India's water crisis is spiralling out of control, primarily due to inadequate water management, poor environmental practices, law ambiguity, and corruption. A national water policy should embrace a holistic approach to watershed management, involving local citizens in monitoring the hydrological cycle and working alongside hydrologists, engineers, and biologists. The policy must incorporate effective aquifer management through the regulation of water usage. Farmers should be engaged to help devise strategies for efficient irrigation water usage. The government has limited control over wastewater management and should create innovative reuse programmes. A comprehensive study involving interdisciplinary expertise on river basins is essential before initiating significant water transfer projects.

In the book, *Let There Be Water: Israel's Solution for a Water-Starved World,* Seth M. Siegel notes that Israel's drip irrigation programmes save 25%-75% of pumped water. Israel's success story in water resource management lies in modernising irrigation techniques. This also compels farmers to use less water, fertilisers and pesticides, maintaining aquifer health at an optimum level. Along with such interventions, we must incorporate elements of vernacular practices in watershed management strategies.

Despite the current ruling regime's emphasis on 'Hindutva' and embedded Hindu belief system that extols the deityship of Indian rivers, the river interlinking project stands out as a stark contrast to such an ideology. Manipulated by dams that are in excess, mauled by human and industrial waste, and commodified for religious marketing, India's rivers are under existential threat. Who will save them?

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25 दिसंबर 2024 को प्रधानमंत्री **नरेंद्र मोदी** ने **केन-बेतवा नदी जोड़ परियोजना** की आधारशिला रखी, जिसका उद्देश्य **उत्तर प्रदेश** और **मध्य प्रदेश** के **बुंदेलखंड क्षेत्र** में **जल संकट** को हल करना है।

- The project includes the construction of a **dam** inside the **Panna Tiger Reserve**, raising concerns about its **submergence** and impact on the environment.
  इस परियोजना में **पन्ना टाइगर रिजर्व** के अंदर एक **बांध** का निर्माण शामिल है, जिससे **जलमग्न होने** और पर्यावरण पर प्रभाव को लेकर चिंताएँ उठ रही हैं।

- Upon completion, the project will link the **Ken River**, considered **water surplus**, with the **Betwa River** in **drought-prone Bundelkhand**, which had **58% forest cover in 1938**.
  इस परियोजना के पूरा होने पर **केन नदी**, जिसे **जल अधिशेष** माना जाता है, को **सूखा प्रभावित बुंदेलखंड** की **बेतवा नदी** से जोड़ा जाएगा। इस क्षेत्र में **1938 में 58% वन क्षेत्र** था।

A Misplaced Model
एक गलत मॉडल

- The project, costing around **₹45,000 crore**, was launched despite objections from **experts** and a **Supreme Court-appointed committee**.
  करीब **₹45,000 करोड़** की लागत वाली इस परियोजना को **विशेषज्ञों** और **सुप्रीम कोर्ट द्वारा नियुक्त समिति** की आपत्तियों के बावजूद शुरू किया गया।

- The law related to **hydroelectric projects** was also **circumvented** to push the project forward.
  इस परियोजना को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए **जलविद्युत परियोजनाओं** से जुड़े **कानून** को भी नजरअंदाज किया गया।

- Politicians are promoting **river interlinking** as a **geoengineering solution** to **water depletion** in India.
  राजनेता **नदियों के आपसी जोड़** को **भारत में जल की कमी** के समाधान के रूप में **भौगोलिक इंजीनियरिंग उपाय** के रूप में बढ़ावा दे रहे हैं।

Historical Background of River Interlinking
नदियों के आपसी जोड़ का ऐतिहासिक संदर्भ

- The concept of **inter-basin water transfer** was first proposed **130 years ago** by **Sir Arthur Cotton**, who designed **irrigation dams** in the **Godavari** and **Krishna river valleys**.
  130 साल पहले सर आर्थर कॉटन ने **गोदावरी** और **कृष्णा नदी घाटियों** में **सिंचाई बांधों** को डिजाइन करते हुए **बेसिन के बीच पानी स्थानांतरण** का विचार प्रस्तुत किया।

- **M. Visvesvaraya**, an iconic Indian engineer, refined this idea further.
  एम. विश्वेश्वरैया, जो एक प्रसिद्ध भारतीय इंजीनियर थे, ने इस विचार को और अधिक विकसित किया।

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- In **1970** and **1980**, **K.L. Rao** and **Captain Dinshaw J. Dastur** expanded this concept.
  1970 और **1980** में **के.एल. राव** और **कैप्टन दिनशॉ जे. दस्तूर** ने इस विचार का विस्तार किया।

- Initially called the **'National Water Grid'**, it was later renamed the **'River-Interlinking Project (ILR)'** by the **Ministry of Water Resources** to transfer **surplus water** from the **Ganga** and **Brahmaputra rivers** to **water-deficient regions**.
  पहले इसे **'नेशनल वॉटर ग्रिड'** कहा गया, जिसे बाद में **जल संसाधन मंत्रालय** द्वारा **'नदी-जोड़ परियोजना (ILR)'** का नाम दिया गया, ताकि **गंगा** और **ब्रहमपुत्र नदियों** के **अधिशेष पानी** को जल की कमी वाले क्षेत्रों में स्थानांतरित किया जा सके।

Establishment of NWDA
एनडब्ल्यूडीए की स्थापना

- The **National Water Development Agency (NWDA)** was established in **1982** to conduct **surveys**, prepare **feasibility reports**, and investigate links under the **National Perspective Plan**.
  1982 में, **नेशनल वॉटर डेवलपमेंट एजेंसी (एनडब्ल्यूडीए)** की स्थापना **राष्ट्रीय दृष्टिकोण योजना** के तहत **सर्वेक्षण** और **संभाव्यता रिपोर्ट** तैयार करने के लिए की गई।

- **NWDA** identified **30 links**, divided into **14 Himalayan** and **16 Peninsular river links**, to address **floods, droughts**, and **water distress in agriculture**.
  एनडब्ल्यूडीए ने **30 लिंक** की पहचान की, जिनमें **14 हिमालयी लिंक** और **16 प्रायद्वीपीय नदी लिंक** शामिल हैं, ताकि **बाढ़**, **सूखा** और **कृषि में जल संकट** को दूर किया जा सके।

Financial and Environmental Costs
वित्तीय और पर्यावरणीय लागत

- The total estimated cost of the **interlinking project** is **₹5.5 lakh crore**, excluding **social, environmental**, and **operational costs**.
  नदी जोड़ परियोजना की अनुमानित कुल लागत **₹5.5 लाख करोड़** है, जिसमें **सामाजिक**, **पर्यावरणीय**, और **परिचालन लागत** शामिल नहीं है।

- These costs will eventually be imposed as **taxes on the common man**.
  अंततः ये लागत **आम जनता पर कर** के रूप में लगाई जाएगी।

- The project overlooks the **huge environmental costs**, which could lead to the **deaths of rivers** and **deltaic regions**.
  यह परियोजना **बड़ी पर्यावरणीय लागतों** को नजरअंदाज करती है, जिससे **नदियों** और **डेल्टा क्षेत्रों** के **विनाश** का खतरा है।

Ecological Consequences
पारिस्थितिकीय परिणाम

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- **Human-induced disequilibrium** in **natural hydrographic systems** will destroy **ecological niches**, causing **long-term harm to society**.
  प्राकृतिक जलमंडलीय प्रणालियों में **मानवजनित असंतुलन** से **पारिस्थितिक निवास स्थान** नष्ट हो जाएंगे, जिससे **समाज को दीर्घकालिक नुकसान** होगा।

- The **impacts of climate change** on **rainfall** and **river flows** will worsen the situation.
  जलवायु परिवर्तन का **वर्षा** और **नदी प्रवाह** पर प्रभाव स्थिति को और गंभीर बना देगा।

- It remains unclear how the government's commitment to **climate change mitigation** aligns with such **river manipulation projects**.
  यह स्पष्ट नहीं है कि सरकार की **जलवायु परिवर्तन न्यूनीकरण** की प्रतिबद्धता और **नदी जोड़ परियोजनाएं** कैसे साथ-साथ चल सकती हैं।

The Eco-Services of Rivers
नदियों की पारिस्थितिक सेवाएं

- Policymakers often ignore that there is no **"free" surplus water** in rivers, and arguments like **"water lost to sea"** do not consider the **eco-hydrological dimensions** of the issue.
  नीति-निर्माता अक्सर यह नजरअंदाज कर देते हैं कि नदियों में कोई **"फ्री" अतिरिक्त पानी** नहीं होता है, और **"समुद्र में बहने वाले पानी"** जैसे तर्क **पर्यावरण-जल विज्ञान** के आयामों पर विचार नहीं करते हैं।

- Rivers must be viewed as **part of a drainage basin** with interconnected **ecological niches**, including their **deltaic plains** that interface with the sea.
  नदियों को **जल निकासी क्षेत्र** का हिस्सा मानकर देखना चाहिए, जो **पारिस्थितिक तंत्रों** से जुड़ा होता है और जो **डेल्टाई मैदानों** के माध्यम से समुद्र से जुड़ता है।

- The eco-services of **free-flowing rivers** include **flushing silt** to form **deltas**, which support **biodiversity** and **coastal ecosystems**.
  स्वतंत्र रूप से बहने वाली नदियों की पारिस्थितिक सेवाओं में **गाद को बहाकर डेल्टा बनाना** शामिल है, जो **जैव विविधता** और **तटीय पारिस्थितिकी तंत्रों** का समर्थन करता है।

- **Floodwaters** are not **surplus water** but carriers of **minerals**, helping in **land fertility**, **groundwater recharge**, and **biodiversity sustenance**, benefiting **marginalised people**.
  बाढ़ का पानी अतिरिक्त पानी नहीं है, बल्कि यह **खनिज तत्वों** को ले जाता है, जिससे **भूमि की उर्वरता**, **भूजल पुनर्भरण** और **जैव विविधता का संरक्षण** होता है, जिससे **हाशिए के लोगों** को लाभ होता है।

Impact of River Diversion on Deltaic Regions
डेल्टाई क्षेत्रों पर नदी के मोड़ने का प्रभाव

- **River diversion** leads to **deltaic regions** being **starved of water**, affecting their **saltwater balance** with the sea.

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नदी मोड़ने से डेल्टाई क्षेत्रों में **पानी की कमी** हो जाती है, जिससे समुद्र के साथ उनका **खारे पानी का संतुलन** प्रभावित होता है।

- The **Indus Delta** is a crucial example. **Alice Albinia**, in her book **"Empires of the Indus" (2008)**, explains how the **richest delta system** became **impoverished** due to **barrage construction**.

  सिंधु डेल्टा इसका एक महत्वपूर्ण उदाहरण है। **एलिस अल्बिनिया** ने अपनी किताब **"एम्पायर्स ऑफ द इंडस" (2008)** में बताया है कि **सबसे समृद्ध डेल्टा प्रणाली बैराज निर्माण** के कारण **गरीब** हो गई।

- In India, the **downstream parts of the Narmada River** have suffered since the **Sardar Sarovar Dam** was built.

  भारत में, **नर्मदा नदी के निचले हिस्से** को **सरदार सरोवर बांध** बनने के बाद से नुकसान हुआ है।

Global Examples of River Channelisation Disasters
नदियों के चैनलाइजेशन के वैश्विक आपदाओं के उदाहरण

- The **Kissimmee River channelisation** in **Florida** (authorised in **1954**) to reduce **flooding** resulted in the **loss of wetlands**, making it an **environmental disaster**.

  फ्लोरिडा में **किसिमी नदी का चैनलाइजेशन** (जिसे **1954** में **बाढ़ रोकने** के लिए अधिकृत किया गया था) ने **आर्द्रभूमि की हानि** की और यह एक **पर्यावरणीय आपदा** बन गई।

- The **Aral Sea** has turned into a **desert** due to **Soviet-era irrigation projects**, destroying **natural systems**.

  अरल सागर सोवियत युग की सिंचाई परियोजनाओं के कारण **रेगिस्तान** में बदल गया है, जिससे **प्राकृतिक तंत्र** नष्ट हो गए हैं।

The Real Reasons for India's Water Crisis
भारत के जल संकट के वास्तविक कारण

- India's **water crisis** is worsening due to **inadequate water management**, **poor environmental practices**, **legal ambiguities**, and **corruption**.

  भारत का **जल संकट अपर्याप्त जल प्रबंधन**, **खराब पर्यावरणीय प्रथाओं**, **कानूनी अस्पष्टता**, और **भ्रष्टाचार** के कारण बढ़ता जा रहा है।

- A **national water policy** should focus on **holistic watershed management** by involving **local citizens**, **hydrologists**, **engineers**, and **biologists**.

  एक **राष्ट्रीय जल नीति** को **समग्र जलक्षेत्र प्रबंधन** पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए, जिसमें **स्थानीय नागरिकों**, **जलविज्ञानी**, **इंजीनियरों**, और **जीवविज्ञानी** को शामिल किया जाए।

- **Aquifer management** must be regulated, and **farmers** should be engaged in devising **efficient irrigation strategies**.

  भूजल भंडार प्रबंधन को नियमित किया जाना चाहिए, और **किसानों** को **कुशल सिंचाई रणनीतियों** के निर्माण में शामिल किया जाना चाहिए।

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Israel's Success in Water Management
इज़राइल की जल प्रबंधन में सफलता

- **Seth M. Siegel**, in his book **"Let There Be Water"**, highlights **Israel's drip irrigation system**, which saves **25%-75%** of **pumped water**.
  सेथ एम. सीगल ने अपनी किताब **"लेट देयर बी वाटर"** में बताया कि **इज़राइल की ड्रिप सिंचाई प्रणाली 25%-75%** तक **पंप किए गए पानी** की बचत करती है।
- **Modern irrigation techniques** compel **farmers** to use less **water**, **fertilisers**, and **pesticides**, maintaining **aquifer health**.
  आधुनिक सिंचाई तकनीकें किसानों को कम **पानी**, **उर्वरक**, और **कीटनाशकों** के उपयोग के लिए मजबूर करती हैं, जिससे **भूजल भंडार की सेहत** बनी रहती है।

Contradiction with Hindutva Ideology
हिंदुत्व विचारधारा के साथ विरोधाभास

- Despite the **current regime's emphasis** on **Hindutva**, the **river interlinking project** contradicts the **Hindu belief system** that views rivers as **deities**.
  हालांकि **वर्तमान शासन** का **हिंदुत्व** पर जोर है, लेकिन **नदी जोड़ने की परियोजना हिंदू मान्यता प्रणाली** के विपरीत है, जो नदियों को **देवता** मानती है।
- India's **rivers** are **threatened** due to **excessive dam constructions**, **pollution**, and **commodification for religious purposes**.
  भारत की **नदियां अत्यधिक बांध निर्माण**, **प्रदूषण**, और **धार्मिक उद्देश्यों के लिए व्यापारिकरण** के कारण **खतरे में** हैं।

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Growth chill
The economy's sputtering necessitate urgent fiscal actions

The National Statistics Office (NSO) has confirmed emerging fears about the economy's evidently sluggish trajectory through this year in its first Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimates for 2024-25. While the election-focused first quarter hit public capital spending, the second quarter (Q2) was marred by weak demand and still underwhelming public capex, dragging GDP growth to a seven-quarter low of 5.4%. The Centre and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which were projecting that India would log a fourth year of 7%-plus growth, had pared their hopes to 'about 6.5%' and 6.6%, respectively. This was predicated on a bump-up of about 7% in the second half of the year to offset the first half's 6% rise. The NSO, slightly less sanguine, expects GDP to grow at a four-year low pace of 6.4%, from 8.2% in 2023-24, with just agriculture seen rising significantly faster than last year. Manufacturing and mining growth may virtually halve, and though services sectors seem relatively better off, there is some concern of momentum loss. Purchasing Managers' Indices averaged lower than Q2 through Q3, for both manufacturing and services. The NSO expects private consumption to rebound 7.3% this year from just 4% last year. But Q3 trends do not indicate a significant lift-off in urban demand. So, this could be a tad optimistic despite inflation easing slightly since October.

The Finance Ministry has sought to link the demand slowdown to a "combination of monetary policy stance and macroprudential measures by the central bank". Slow wage growth has also been blamed for cramped household demand. The NSO's projection of gross fixed capital formation growth slipping to 6.4% this year from 9% in 2023-24 indicates that private capex – that is contingent on domestic and global demand – remains weak while public capex goals are unlikely to be met. Of course, these early NSO projections are largely conjured up for informing the Union Budget formulation, and some upgrades may happen later, but most economists see significant downside risks for now. Nomura economists, for instance, who have been arguing that India is in the grip of a cyclical slowdown for a while, reckon growth will end up around 6%, implying a flat-lined second half. With the global outlook also shrouded in uncertainty, winter seems to be here for India's economy. How far behind spring lags will depend on policymakers' actions, and inactions. The Union Budget 2025-26 needs to move from incremental tinkering to tailoring reforms and fiscal actions that can bring India's growth back to the 7% mark, if not 8%, at the earliest. If that entails some hard calls such as slashing income, fuel and consumption taxes, along with import tariffs, so be it. Just pining for interest rate cuts will not suffice anymore.

Growth Chill: The Economy's Sputtering Engines Necessitate Urgent Fiscal Actions

विकास की सुस्ती: ठहरती अर्थव्यवस्था को चाहिए तत्काल वित्तीय कदम

The National Statistics Office (NSO) has confirmed fears about the sluggish trajectory of the economy through its first GDP estimates for 2024-25.

राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय (NSO) ने 2024-25 के पहले GDP अनुमान के माध्यम से अर्थव्यवस्था की धीमी गति की आशंकाओं की पुष्टि की है।

- The **first quarter** of the financial year witnessed weak **public capital spending** due to an election focus.

पहली तिमाही में चुनावी फोकस के कारण **सार्वजनिक पूंजीगत खर्च** कमजोर रहा।

- In the **second quarter (Q2)**, **weak demand** and underwhelming public capital expenditure dragged **GDP growth to a seven-quarter low of 5.4%**.

दूसरी तिमाही (Q2) में **मांगे की कमी** और कमजोर **सार्वजनिक पूंजीगत खर्च** के कारण **GDP वृद्धि सात तिमाही के निचले स्तर 5.4%** पर आ गई।

- The **Centre** and **RBI** had initially projected **7%+ growth** but later revised it to **around 6.5%** and **6.6%**, respectively.

केंद्र सरकार और **RBI** ने पहले **7% से अधिक की वृद्धि** का अनुमान लगाया था, लेकिन बाद में इसे **लगभग 6.5% और 6.6%** कर दिया।

- The NSO now expects GDP growth to be **6.4% for 2024-25**, significantly lower than the **8.2% in 2023-24**.

NSO ने अब **2024-25 के लिए GDP वृद्धि 6.4%** रहने का अनुमान लगाया है, जो कि **2023-24 में 8.2%** की वृद्धि से काफी कम है।

- **Agriculture** is expected to grow faster, but **manufacturing** and **mining** may witness **growth halving** compared to the previous year.

कृषि क्षेत्र में तेज वृद्धि की उम्मीद है, लेकिन **उद्योग** और **खनन** क्षेत्रों में वृद्धि **आधी** हो सकती है।

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- The **services sector** looks relatively better, but **Purchasing Managers' Indices** indicate a **momentum loss** in both **manufacturing and services** in the **third quarter (Q3)**.
  सेवा क्षेत्र अपेक्षाकृत बेहतर दिखता है, लेकिन **खरीद प्रबंधक सूचकांक (PMI)** के अनुसार **तीसरी तिमाही (Q3)** में **उद्योग** और **सेवा** दोनों क्षेत्रों में गति कम हो रही है।

- The **NSO expects private consumption** to grow by **7.3%** this year, up from **4% last year**, but **Q3 trends** suggest **urban demand** remains **weak**.
  NSO को उम्मीद है कि इस वर्ष **निजी खपत 7.3%** बढ़ेगी, जो कि पिछले वर्ष के **4%** से अधिक है, लेकिन **तीसरी तिमाही** के रुझान **शहरी मांग** में **कमजोरी** दिखाते हैं।

Finance Ministry's View on Demand Slowdown

वित्त मंत्रालय का मांग में कमी पर नजरिया

- The **Finance Ministry** attributes the **demand slowdown** to a **combination of monetary policy stance** and **macroprudential measures** by the **RBI**.
  वित्त मंत्रालय ने **मांग में कमी** के लिए **मौद्रिक नीति के रुख** और **RBI के मैक्रोप्रूडेंशियल उपायों** को जिम्मेदार ठहराया है।

- **Slow wage growth** is also cited as a reason for **cramped household demand**.
  मंद वेतन वृद्धि को भी **घरेलू मांग** में कमी का एक कारण बताया गया है।

- The **NSO's projection** of **gross fixed capital formation growth slipping to 6.4%** from **9% in 2023-24** indicates **private capital expenditure (capex)** remains weak.
  NSO का अनुमान है कि **सकल स्थिर पूंजी निर्माण वृद्धि 6.4%** पर आ सकती है, जो कि **2023-24 में 9%** थी, जो **निजी पूंजीगत खर्च (कैपेक्स)** में कमजोरी को दर्शाता है।

Economists' Concerns and Nomura's Projections

अर्थशास्त्रियों की चिंताएं और नोमुरा का अनुमान

- **Most economists** see **significant downside risks** to growth.
  अधिकांश अर्थशास्त्री वृद्धि को लेकर **महत्वपूर्ण जोखिम** देख रहे हैं।

- **Nomura economists** estimate **India's GDP growth** may end up around **6% for 2024-25**, implying a **flat-lined second half**.
  नोमुरा अर्थशास्त्रियों ने अनुमान लगाया है कि **भारत की GDP वृद्धि 2024-25 में लगभग 6%** हो सकती है, जो **दूसरे अर्धभाग में ठहराव** को दर्शाता है।

- The **global outlook remains uncertain**, which may further affect India's economic trajectory.
  वैश्विक दृष्टिकोण अनिश्चित बना हुआ है, जो **भारत की आर्थिक गति** को और प्रभावित कर सकता है।

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Way Forward: Union Budget 2025-26 Recommendations

आगे का रास्ता: केंद्रीय बजट 2025-26 की सिफारिशें

- The **Union Budget 2025-26** should **move beyond incremental changes** and focus on **reforms** and **fiscal actions** to bring growth back to **7%-8%**.
  केंद्रीय बजट 2025-26 को **छोटे सुधारों** से आगे बढ़कर **सुधारों** और **वित्तीय कदमों** पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए ताकि वृद्धि **7%-8%** के स्तर पर वापस लाई जा सके।

- The government should consider **cutting income, fuel, and consumption taxes**, along with **import tariffs**, to boost demand and growth.
  सरकार को **आयकर**, **ईंधन कर**, और **खपत कर** कम करने के साथ-साथ **आयात शुल्क** घटाने पर विचार करना चाहिए ताकि मांग और वृद्धि को बढ़ावा दिया जा सके।

- **Interest rate cuts** alone will not be sufficient to drive growth.
  केवल **ब्याज दर में कटौती** ही वृद्धि को बढ़ावा देने के लिए पर्याप्त नहीं होगी।

The right to food and the struggle with the PDS

In 2023, there was a report discussing the right to food in the context of Jharkhand. Similarly, a few days ago, there was another report that was in the context of Odisha. These reports highlighted something alarming – that a substantial number of households have been removed from the rolls of the Public Distribution System (PDS). This disturbing situation is not limited to Jharkhand and Odisha. Bihar, another State in the east-central region, has its own PDS tragedy.

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Bureaucratic hurdles are a reason why a substantial number of households have found themselves removed from PDS rolls in parts of north, central and east India

The example of the Musahar community
Bihar was blighted by a supply crisis, when rations were needed the most, at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, there are communities which continue to be in want of a stable supply of ration. This is more notable among extremely marginalised communities such as the Musahars. This is a community that has been pushed beyond the edge of destitution by the socio-politics of caste. Its struggle with the PDS emerges as a significant symptom of the same.

A number of Musahar households in Patna district do not have an active ration card. Even if they do have one, there is another problem – the card does not have the names of all the family members.

There are also several people who have lost access to their monthly supply of ration ever since biometric verification was made mandatory at fair price shops (FPS). In such cases, the individuals concerned are forced to get a new ration card as after verification it emerges that their names have been struck off the PDS rolls. The ruling dispensation and its over the top marketing of 'smart cities' clearly posits before us the disconnect between the government and the people most in need of state welfare.

Problems with the PDS are not limited to enrolment and access. There is also the flow of corruption through the veins of the system. Households enrolled with the PDS have reported that FPS dealers have been releasing only four kilograms of food grain/person when a below poverty line (BPL) household which has a Priority Household (PHH) ration card is entitled to five kilograms a person. The four kilograms of grain being issued is rice, which is the lowest quality of 'Usna' rice. No amount of wheat is issued.

Documentation that has no legal basis
Coming back to the issue of enrolment in PDS. The Government of Bihar offers its citizens the option to file a ration card application using a paper-based application form or by filling in an online application form through its e-PDS portal. The first option requires the Aadhaar details of the applicant and their family members. The second option requires an extra set of documents, namely caste certificate, income certificate, and residence certificate. Even when the applicant uses the first method, the officials eventually demand these certificates.

The demand for such documents is not exclusive to Bihar. Jharkhand also makes such a demand while Uttar Pradesh makes it mandatory to provide an income certificate, and Madhya Pradesh requires the submission of proof of residence.

The requirements of these certificates do not have any legal basis. Neither the National Food Security Act (NFSA) of 2013 nor the PDS control order of 2015 explicate the requirement of such documents. An officer from the Food and Consumer Protection Department in Bihar has confirmed that the requirement of those certificates is an oversight in the online system. Here again we see that in the race towards

digitisation and e-governance, governments have shed all and any conception of governance and citizen welfare.

The issue of exploitation
It is notable, and most unfortunate, that the government, which has complete awareness of its systemic flaws, has made no attempt at systemic change and that people continue to be crushed under the weight of official indifference. To make matters worse, this hubris of power has provided the perfect conditions for the creation of a market of exploitation.

Most of the people, especially in the Musahar community, who seek to avail the benefits of PDS, neither have the resources nor the knowledge to interact with online processes. This situation has been aggressively exploited by middlemen who charge a sum that is north of ₹3,000 to have a ration card made. Within this market of exploitation, it is not uncommon to hear that neither document was issued nor the middleman traceable after payment.

Amidst the myriad challenges, if the people are somehow able to file their application, there is still no guarantee that they will get their ration card. While the 2015 order states that ration card should be issued within 30 days of the application being filled, there are cases of people whose applications have been pending for long – between four to 18 months. These applications are not for an entitlement which goes above and beyond the diurnal needs of a person. They are for the basic means of subsistence. It has been 24 years since the right to food was recognised as a fundamental right in the case, *People's Union of Civil Liberties vs Union of India*. Since then, governments have wound bureaucratic red tape around it so tightly that it is choking the very people it was meant for.

The Right to Food and the Struggle with the PDS
खाद्य अधिकार और सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली (PDS) के साथ संघर्ष

In 2023, a report discussed the right to food in the context of Jharkhand. A similar report recently highlighted the same issue in Odisha, indicating that many households were removed from the PDS rolls.

2023 में झारखंड के संदर्भ में खाद्य अधिकार पर एक रिपोर्ट आई थी। हाल ही में ऐसी ही एक रिपोर्ट ओडिशा में भी आई, जिसमें यह बताया गया कि कई परिवारों के नाम पीडीएस सूची से हटा दिए गए हैं।

- This problem is not limited to Jharkhand and Odisha. **Bihar** is also facing its **own PDS crisis**, especially during the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
  यह समस्या सिर्फ **झारखंड** और **ओडिशा** तक सीमित नहीं है। **बिहार** को भी **कोविड-19 महामारी** के दौरान **पीडीएस संकट** का सामना करना पड़ा।

The Example of the Musahar Community
मुसहर समुदाय का उदाहरण

- During the pandemic, many communities in Bihar, especially the **Musahar community**, suffered due to a lack of **ration supply**.
  महामारी के दौरान बिहार के कई समुदायों, विशेष रूप से **मुसहर समुदाय**, को **राशन आपूर्ति की कमी** का सामना करना पड़ा।
- Many Musahar households in **Patna district** either do not have an **active ration card** or have **missing family members' names** on the card.
  पटना जिले के कई मुसहर परिवारों के पास या तो **सक्रिय राशन कार्ड नहीं** है, या कार्ड में **परिवार के सभी सदस्यों के नाम नहीं** हैं।
- After the introduction of **mandatory biometric verification**, many people lost **access to ration**, and their names were **removed from PDS rolls**.
  अनिवार्य बायोमेट्रिक सत्यापन शुरू होने के बाद कई लोग **राशन प्राप्त करने के अधिकार से वंचित हो गए**, और उनके नाम **पीडीएस सूची से हटा दिए गए।**

Disconnect Between Governance and Welfare
शासन और कल्याण के बीच disconnect

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- The government is focusing more on **marketing 'smart cities'**, while **ignoring basic welfare needs** like the **PDS system**.
सरकार का ध्यान **'स्मार्ट सिटी'** के प्रचार पर अधिक है, जबकि वह **पीडीएस जैसी बुनियादी जरूरतों की अनदेखी** कर रही है।

Issues of Corruption in PDS
पीडीएस में भ्रष्टाचार की समस्या

- Many **FPS dealers** provide **only 4 kg of rice** per person instead of the **5 kg** entitlement under the **Priority Household (PHH)** ration card.
कई **फेयर प्राइस शॉप (FPS) डीलर** प्रति व्यक्ति को **5 किलोग्राम के बजाय केवल 4 किलोग्राम चावल** देते हैं, जो **प्राथमिक परिवार (PHH) कार्ड** के तहत मिलना चाहिए।
- The **rice quality** distributed is often **poor Usna rice**, and **no wheat** is issued.
वितरित चावल की **गुणवत्ता बहुत खराब होती है (उसना चावल)**, और **गेहूं बिल्कुल नहीं दिया जाता**।

Documentation Without Legal Basis
कानूनी आधार के बिना दस्तावेजों की मांग

- In Bihar, applicants need to submit **Aadhaar details**, **caste certificate**, **income certificate**, and **residence certificate** for **ration card applications**.
बिहार में राशन कार्ड के लिए आवेदन करने के लिए **आधार विवरण**, **जाति प्रमाणपत्र**, **आय प्रमाणपत्र**, और **निवास प्रमाणपत्र** जमा करने की आवश्यकता होती है।
- Neither the **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** nor the **PDS Control Order, 2015** mandates these documents.
राष्ट्रीय खाद्य सुरक्षा अधिनियम (NFSA), 2013 और **पीडीएस नियंत्रण आदेश, 2015** में इन दस्तावेजों की **कोई अनिवार्यता नहीं है**।
- An official from **Bihar's Food and Consumer Protection Department** confirmed that this is an **oversight in the online system**.
बिहार के खाद्य और उपभोक्ता संरक्षण विभाग के एक अधिकारी ने पुष्टि की कि यह **ऑनलाइन प्रणाली की खामी** है।

Exploitation in the PDS System
पीडीएस प्रणाली में शोषण की समस्या

- Many **marginalised communities**, such as the **Musahar community**, do not have the **knowledge or resources** to access **online PDS services**.
कई **वंचित समुदायों**, जैसे **मुसहर समुदाय**, के पास **ऑनलाइन पीडीएस सेवाओं** का उपयोग करने के लिए **ज्ञान या संसाधन नहीं** हैं।

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- **Middlemen** charge **₹3,000 or more** to help people get **ration cards**, but they often **disappear after taking the money**.
  दलाल **₹3,000 या उससे अधिक** की राशि लेकर लोगों की **राशन कार्ड बनाने में मदद** करते हैं, लेकिन वे अक्सर **पैसे लेकर गायब हो जाते हैं।**

Pending Applications for Ration Cards
लंबित राशन कार्ड आवेदन

- As per the **2015 PDS Control Order**, a **ration card** should be issued within **30 days** of the **application**.
  पीडीएस नियंत्रण आदेश, 2015 के अनुसार, **आवेदन के 30 दिनों** के भीतर **राशन कार्ड जारी किया जाना चाहिए।**
- However, many people's **applications remain pending** for **4 to 18 months**.
  लेकिन कई लोगों के **आवेदन 4 से 18 महीनों** तक **लंबित हैं।**

Right to Food as a Fundamental Right
खाद्य का अधिकार मौलिक अधिकार के रूप में

- In **2001**, in the **People's Union of Civil Liberties vs Union of India** case, the **Supreme Court** recognised the **right to food** as a **fundamental right**.
  2001 में पीपुल्स यूनियन ऑफ सिविल लिबर्टीज बनाम भारत संघ मामले में, **सुप्रीम कोर्ट** ने **खाद्य अधिकार** को **मौलिक अधिकार** के रूप में मान्यता दी।
- Despite this, **governments have created bureaucratic hurdles**, making it **difficult for people** to access **basic necessities**.
  इसके बावजूद, **सरकारों ने नौकरशाही बाधाएं खड़ी कर दी हैं**, जिससे लोगों के लिए **मूलभूत आवश्यकताएं प्राप्त करना मुश्किल** हो गया है।

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Cripple and scuttle

Governments are discouraging the exercise of the right to information

Nearly two decades after the passage of the Right to Information Act, it is quite apparent that governments, at least sections of it, are uncomfortable with the idea of transparency and empowerment associated with it. Amendments to dilute its efficacy and attempts to defeat it by delaying or denying information have been quite common for years. Another way to scuttle the law is to cripple the functioning of information commissions at the central and State levels. The issue has surfaced again, with the Supreme Court of India questioning the large number of vacancies in the central and some State Information Commissions. These commissions hear appeals from members of the public who have been denied access to information or have failed to elicit a response from designated information officers in various departments and institutions. A Division Bench has taken note of the fact that there are eight vacancies in the posts of Information Commissioners in the Central Information Commission (CIC), while 23,000 appeals are pending before it. In fact, some State-level Information Commissions are almost defunct for want of members to hear the public. Any court is bound to ask, as the Court has now done, how an institution can be of any use if it does not have persons to perform the required duties under the law.

The Court has sought to impart some urgency to the matter by directing the Department of Personnel and Training to spell out in two weeks the timelines for completing the selection process and notifying the appointments of the eight Information Commissioners in the CIC. It has also asked for details about the search committee and the list of applicants for the posts. Similarly, States that have initiated the appointment process but without any definite timeline have been asked to complete the process within a specified time. However, this may not be enough to bring about a revival in the fulfilment of the original purpose of the Act. Besides filling up vacancies, not all governments have complied with a Court verdict of 2019 that called for proactive efforts to fill up vacancies in time by advertising them early. The CIC's post was stripped of its autonomy some years ago when the government removed the fixed five-year tenure and made it open-ended. Not much has been done to appoint candidates from various walks of life, as retired civil servants continue to be chosen, a point noted by the Bench in the latest hearing. It is inevitable that a large number of vacancies will result in a huge backlog and ultimately discourage the people from seeking information. It is difficult not to conclude that this is what those in power want.

Cripple and Scuttle
क़ैद और नष्ट करना

Governments are discouraging the exercise of the right to information
सरकारें सूचना के अधिकार के प्रयोग को हतोत्साहित कर रही हैं।

- Nearly **two decades** after the passage of the **Right to Information (RTI) Act**, governments remain uncomfortable with transparency and empowerment associated with it.
सूचना का अधिकार (RTI) अधिनियम पारित हुए लगभग **दो दशक** बाद भी सरकारें इसके साथ जुड़ी पारदर्शिता और सशक्तिकरण के विचार को लेकर सहज नहीं हैं।

- There have been **amendments** to dilute its efficacy and attempts to **delay or deny information**.
इसे कमजोर करने के लिए **संशोधन** किए गए हैं और जानकारी में **देरी या इनकार** के प्रयास किए गए हैं।

- Another way to **scuttle** the law is by **crippling the functioning of information commissions** at the central and state levels.
कानून को **नष्ट** करने का एक और तरीका **केंद्रीय और राज्य सूचना आयोगों** के कामकाज को **अक्षम** बनाना है।

Supreme Court Intervention
सुप्रीम कोर्ट का हस्तक्षेप

- The **Supreme Court of India** has raised concerns about the **large number of vacancies** in Information Commissions.
भारत के सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने सूचना आयोगों में **बड़ी संख्या में खाली पदों** को लेकर चिंता जताई है।

- There are **eight vacancies** in the **Central Information Commission (CIC)**, with over **23,000 appeals pending**.
केंद्रीय सूचना आयोग (CIC) में **आठ पद खाली** हैं और **23,000 से अधिक अपीलें लंबित** हैं।

- Some **State Information Commissions** are almost **defunct** due to a lack of members.

कुछ **राज्य सूचना आयोग सदस्यों की कमी** के कारण लगभग **अक्रिय** हो गए हैं।

Court's Directions
कोर्ट के निर्देश

- The Court directed the **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** to provide a **timeline** for completing the selection process and filling the **eight vacant posts** in the CIC.
  कोर्ट ने **कार्मिक और प्रशिक्षण विभाग (DoPT)** को चयन प्रक्रिया पूरी करने और CIC के **आठ रिक्त पदों** को भरने के लिए **समयसीमा** प्रदान करने का निर्देश दिया।

- States that have started the **appointment process** without a specific timeline have been asked to complete it within a specified time.
  जिन राज्यों ने **नियुक्ति प्रक्रिया** शुरू कर दी है, लेकिन कोई **विशिष्ट समयसीमा** नहीं दी है, उन्हें इसे **निर्धारित समय** में पूरा करने को कहा गया है।

Pending Issues
लंबित मुद्दे

- Many governments have not complied with the **2019 Supreme Court verdict**, which required proactive measures to **fill vacancies in time**.
  कई सरकारों ने **2019 के सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले** का पालन नहीं किया है, जिसमें समय पर **रिक्तियों को भरने** के लिए सक्रिय कदम उठाने की आवश्यकता थी।

- The **CIC's autonomy** was reduced when the government removed the **fixed five-year tenure** and made it **open-ended**.
  सरकार ने **पांच साल की निश्चित अवधि** को हटाकर और इसे **असीमित अवधि** का बना कर **CIC की स्वायत्तता** कम कर दी।

- **Retired civil servants** continue to be appointed to these posts, instead of individuals from **various walks of life**, as the Court had suggested.
  इन पदों पर अब भी **सेवानिवृत्त सिविल सेवकों** की नियुक्ति हो रही है, जबकि कोर्ट ने **विभिन्न क्षेत्रों** के लोगों को नियुक्त करने का सुझाव दिया था।

Impact on RTI
RTI पर प्रभाव

- A large number of **vacancies** has led to a **huge backlog of appeals**, ultimately **discouraging people** from seeking information.
  बड़ी संख्या में **रिक्तियों** के कारण अपीलों का **बड़ा बैकलॉग** हो गया है, जो अंततः लोगों को जानकारी मांगने से **हतोत्साहित** करता है।

- It is evident that some in power prefer to keep **information inaccessible** to avoid transparency and accountability.

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यह स्पष्ट है कि कुछ शक्तियां **जानकारी को अप्राप्त** रखना पसंद करती हैं ताकि **पारदर्शिता और जवाबदेही** से बचा जा सके।

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China's long game in Africa

In 2022, when China established its first political training school in Tanzania, the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Leadership School, its motivation was unambiguous. With an estimated cost of $40 million, the school was a tool for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to shape the future political leaders of Africa following the Chinese principles of governance.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the 120 official members of the school's first cohort were from countries with long-standing historical ties to China. These countries continue to be ruled by the liberation parties that came into power through their pre-independence struggles. The countries include South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania. In fact, these six countries, along with Botswana, are also part of the Former Liberation Movements of Southern Africa, an informal coalition meant to help one another address governance challenges and stay in power.

Clearly, the move by China to establish the political school is meant to strengthen its relationship and increase its influence among the policymakers of these countries. The political school is another platform for the leaders of these ruling liberation parties to enhance their governance capabilities through shared educational resources. This is also an example of China's broader strategy to shape Africa's political landscape by promoting its governance model based on the centrality of the ruling party and its control over the state.

Game of influence
There are several ways for a country to assert its influence. One way could be mediation or fostering dialogue among the concerned parties to facilitate positive conversations. This also helps in building a strong global image for the mediator country. Historically, the U.S. has been the most influential international

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China's long game in Africa is not just about economic influence or military strength. It is also about the subtle art of diplomacy and influence

mediator. However, China is increasingly asserting itself in this role, as seen in its involvement in resolving the Saudi Arabia-Iran and Niger-Benin disputes.

As China seeks to establish an alternative world order – often complementary to, and sometimes in contrast with, the Western-led global system – it recognises the importance of Africa's support in various multilateral forums. Africa, with 55 countries, is a significant player in international relations. And so, Beijing is intensifying its efforts to build strong ties with Africa as part of its broader strategy to shift the global balance in its favour.

However, China's engagement in Africa's politics is not a recent phenomenon. Beijing has supported African independence movements, military endeavours, and governance structures. It has also helped develop African economies through investments in infrastructure and industrial projects. This historical relationship continues to be strong, as China intensifies its focus on strengthening ties with Africa's ruling parties.

'Study tours' have remained a key part of China's public diplomacy with Africa. Every year, hundreds of African officials visit China for lectures at universities, visits to provincial governments, and cultural exchanges designed to familiarise them with Chinese traditions and governance practices.

Only now has China's game plan to influence African political elites expanded through the introduction of political schools. During the 8th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in 2021, China acknowledged its ties to over 100 political parties across 51 African countries.

China's growing influence in Africa is evident not only in the establishment of new educational institutions but also in the deepening of its political relationships. Kenya, for example, has expressed its interest in having a leadership school that would be

financed by and modelled on the CCP's Central Party School. These efforts are accompanied by investments in infrastructure. China funded the construction of Kenya's new foreign ministry headquarters, as the two countries were celebrating 60 years of diplomatic relations.

China is not only constructing new institutions, but also refurbishing many existing ones. For instance, China funded the renovation of the Herbert Chitepo School of Ideology in Zimbabwe. Through such initiatives, it aims to establish a governance model similar to its own, based on strong, centralised party systems that offer stability and control. This highlights the effectiveness of building reciprocal relationships, particularly in countries where leadership stability and centralisation are highly valued.

Chinese diplomacy in Africa
China's approach to Africa is built on decades of patient diplomacy. While the Nyerere Leadership School represents a significant milestone, it is only one piece of China's broader strategy to embed itself deeply within Africa's political fabric. China's long-term goal is to promote a Sino-centric world order in which it plays a central role in shaping global governance structures.

However, China is also mindful of potential regime changes in Africa. It knows the importance of nurturing opposition parties to safeguard its interests in case political shifts occur. By establishing political schools and cultivating bonds with ruling and opposition parties, China is ensuring that its influence is intact regardless of political transitions.

China's long game in Africa is not just about economic influence or military strength. It is also about the subtle art of diplomacy and influence. Through its strategic investments in Africa's political future, China is ensuring that it remains a key player in shaping Africa's governance structures for years to come.

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China's Long Game in Africa
अफ्रीका में चीन की लंबी रणनीति

In 2022, China established its first political training school in Tanzania, named the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Leadership School, with an estimated cost of $40 million.

2022 में, चीन ने तंजानिया में मवालिमु जूलियस न्येरे नेतृत्व स्कूल के नाम से पहला राजनीतिक प्रशिक्षण स्कूल स्थापित किया, जिसकी अनुमानित लागत 40 मिलियन डॉलर थी।

- The school aims to shape the future **political leaders of Africa** following **Chinese principles of governance**.
  - यह स्कूल **चीनी शासन सिद्धांतों** के अनुसार अफ्रीका के भविष्य के **राजनीतिक नेताओं** को तैयार करने का लक्ष्य रखता है।
- The **first cohort** of **120 official members** were from six countries with **long-standing ties to China**: **South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania**.
  - पहले **120 आधिकारिक सदस्यों** का समूह **दक्षिण अफ्रीका, मोजाम्बिक, अंगोला, नामीबिया, ज़िम्बाब्वे और तंजानिया** जैसे देशों से था, जिनके साथ चीन के **ऐतिहासिक संबंध** हैं।
- These countries continue to be ruled by **liberation parties** that came to power through **pre-independence struggles**.
  - ये देश अभी भी **स्वतंत्रता संग्राम** के दौरान सत्ता में आई **मुक्ति पार्टियों** द्वारा शासित हैं।
- The school strengthens China's relationship with **policymakers** and promotes its **governance model** based on the **centrality of the ruling party**.
  - यह स्कूल चीन के **नीति-निर्माताओं** के साथ संबंधों को मजबूत करता है और **सत्तारूढ़ पार्टी की प्रधानता** पर आधारित अपने **शासन मॉडल** को बढ़ावा देता है।

Game of Influence प्रभाव का खेल

- Countries can assert influence by **mediating disputes** and **fostering dialogue** among parties, which helps build a **global image**.
  - देश **विवादों को सुलझाने** और **संवाद को बढ़ावा देने** के माध्यम से अपना **वैश्विक छवि** बना सकते हैं।
- Historically, the **U.S.** has been the most **influential international mediator**, but China is now stepping into this role.
  - ऐतिहासिक रूप से, **संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका** सबसे **प्रभावशाली अंतर्राष्ट्रीय मध्यस्थ** रहा है, लेकिन अब चीन इस भूमिका में कदम रख रहा है।

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- Examples of China's mediation include **Saudi Arabia-Iran** and **Niger-Benin disputes**.
  - ○ चीन की मध्यस्थता के उदाहरण **सऊदी अरब-ईरान** और **नाइजर-बेनिन विवाद** हैं।
- China seeks to establish an **alternative world order**, recognising the importance of Africa's support in **multilateral forums**.
  - ○ चीन एक **वैकल्पिक विश्व व्यवस्था** स्थापित करना चाहता है और **बहुपक्षीय मंचों** में अफ्रीका के समर्थन को महत्वपूर्ण मानता है।

China's Historical Engagement with Africa अफ्रीका के साथ चीन का ऐतिहासिक जुड़ाव

- China's involvement in Africa is not new; it has supported **independence movements**, **military endeavours**, and **governance structures**.
  - ○ अफ्रीका में चीन की भागीदारी नई नहीं है; उसने **स्वतंत्रता आंदोलनों**, **सैन्य प्रयासों**, और **शासन संरचनाओं** का समर्थन किया है।
- China has invested in **infrastructure** and **industrial projects** to help develop **African economies**.
  - ○ चीन ने **अफ्रीकी अर्थव्यवस्थाओं** के विकास के लिए **इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर** और **औद्योगिक परियोजनाओं** में निवेश किया है।

Public Diplomacy and Study Tours सार्वजनिक कूटनीति और अध्ययन यात्राएं

- **Study tours** are a key part of China's **public diplomacy** with Africa. Hundreds of **African officials** visit China annually for **lectures, government visits, and cultural exchanges**.
  - ○ **अध्ययन यात्राएं** अफ्रीका के साथ चीन की **सार्वजनिक कूटनीति** का एक महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा हैं। हर साल सैकड़ों **अफ्रीकी अधिकारी** चीन में **व्याख्यानों, सरकारी यात्राओं और सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान** के लिए जाते हैं।
- In **2021**, during the **8th Forum on China-Africa Cooperation**, China acknowledged ties with **over 100 political parties** across **51 African countries**.
  - ○ 2021 में **चीन-अफ्रीका सहयोग के 8वें मंच** के दौरान, चीन ने **51 अफ्रीकी देशों** में **100 से अधिक राजनीतिक दलों** के साथ संबंधों को स्वीकार किया।
- China's growing influence is seen in the establishment of new **educational institutions** and the deepening of **political relationships**.
  - ○ नए **शैक्षिक संस्थानों** की स्थापना और **राजनीतिक संबंधों** को गहरा करने में चीन का बढ़ता प्रभाव देखा जा सकता है।

Examples of Chinese Investments चीनी निवेश के उदाहरण

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- **Kenya** expressed interest in a **leadership school** modelled on the **CCP's Central Party School**.
  - केन्या ने **चीनी कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी के केंद्रीय पार्टी स्कूल** पर आधारित **नेतृत्व स्कूल** में रुचि व्यक्त की।
- China funded **Kenya's new foreign ministry headquarters**, celebrating **60 years of diplomatic relations**.
  - चीन ने **केन्या के नए विदेश मंत्रालय मुख्यालय** का वित्तपोषण किया, जो **60 वर्षों के राजनयिक संबंधों** का उत्सव था।
- China refurbished the **Herbert Chitepo School of Ideology** in **Zimbabwe**.
  - चीन ने **जिम्बाब्वे** में **हर्बर्ट चितेपो विचारधारा स्कूल** का पुनर्निर्माण किया।

Chinese Diplomacy in Africa अफ्रीका में चीनी कूटनीति

- China's approach to Africa is built on **decades of patient diplomacy**.
  - अफ्रीका के प्रति चीन का दृष्टिकोण **दशकों की धैर्यपूर्ण कूटनीति** पर आधारित है।
- The **Nyerere Leadership School** represents a **milestone** but is only one part of China's broader strategy.
  - **न्येरे नेतृत्व स्कूल** एक **महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धि** का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है लेकिन यह चीन की व्यापक रणनीति का केवल एक हिस्सा है।
- China's long-term goal is to promote a **Sino-centric world order** and play a central role in **global governance structures**.
  - चीन का दीर्घकालिक लक्ष्य एक **चीनी-केंद्रित विश्व व्यवस्था** को बढ़ावा देना और **वैश्विक शासन संरचनाओं** में केंद्रीय भूमिका निभाना है।
- China understands the importance of **nurturing opposition parties** to safeguard its interests during **political transitions**.
  - चीन **राजनीतिक बदलावों** के दौरान अपने हितों की रक्षा के लिए **विपक्षी दलों** को प्रोत्साहित करने के महत्व को समझता है।
- By **establishing political schools** and cultivating **bonds with ruling and opposition parties**, China ensures **long-term influence** in African politics.
  - **राजनीतिक स्कूलों की स्थापना** और **सत्तारूढ़ एवं विपक्षी दलों** के साथ संबंध बनाने के माध्यम से, चीन अफ्रीकी राजनीति में **दीर्घकालिक प्रभाव** सुनिश्चित करता है।

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The Centre's share in States' revenue has surged in the last decade

GS Paper II: Center State Relations

The falling efficiency of States in collecting more taxes has deepened their dependency on the Centre

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DATA POINT

Samreen Wani

Over the last decade, States have been relying more and more on transfers and grants from the Centre.

In the last decade (FY16 to FY25), 23-30% of the total revenue of States was collected from the Centre as transfers. However, in the 2000s and the first half of 2010, the share was 20-24%. Also, close to 65-70% of the non-tax revenue of States was collected from the Centre as grants in the last decade compared to the 2000s and the first half of the 2010s when the share was lower at 55-65%.

States have also not done enough to efficiently collect taxes to increase their own tax revenue. In addition, revenue from non-tax revenue, other than Central grants, has been diminishing.

The combination of these factors has meant that the dependency of States on Central funds has risen in recent years.

Chart 1 shows the share of States' own tax revenue, non-tax revenue, and Central transfers in their total revenue. For over a decade now, States' own tax revenue as a share of their total revenue has remained considerably below the 50% mark, while in the 2000s and in the early 2010s, it had crossed the 50% mark for many years or remained close to it. Own tax revenue of States includes money raised through stamp duty, registration fees, motor vehicle tax, and other taxes, along with the State component in Goods and Services Tax (GST), or State GST (SGST).

Moreover, the share of non-tax revenue in States' total revenue is likely to go below the 24% mark in FY25 for the first time in the past 25 years. Non-tax revenue of States includes grants from the Centre, earnings from social, fiscal, economic, and general services rendered by the States, interest receipts, and dividends/profits from State public sector enterprises.

While the share of own tax revenue and non-tax revenue of States has reduced, the share of transfers from the Centre has increased (23-30% in the last decade compared to 20-24% in the 15 years before that). This is depicted in **Chart 1.**

Kausik K. Bhadra, PFM consultant, UNICEF, says, "While expenditure responsibilities have been rapidly spiralling, the nearly stagnant own tax revenue mobilisation impedes the States' counter-cyclical expansionary fiscal measures in a sustained manner to boost aggregate demand in the economy."

Mr. Bhadra adds that the share of own tax revenue in States' total revenue is largely driven by SGST. While SGST accounted for 15% of the States' total revenue in FY18, it currently makes up about 22%. This is shown in **Chart 2.** Consequently, the share of own tax revenue, without the contribution from SGST, has declined from 34% to 28%.

This means that not only is the share of States' own tax revenue consistently below the 50% mark, but also an increasing share of it is derived from SGST. It is important to note that the SGST is earned based on rates set by the GST Council and these rates have remained a bone of contention. In the past, Finance Ministers of many Opposition-ruled States including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal have spoken out against the Council's decisions.

Chart 3 shows a detailed split of States' non-tax revenue. It depicts the share of grants from the Centre, earnings from services, interest receipts, and dividends/profits from State public sector enterprises in the States' non-tax revenue. Interest receipts have not exceeded 5% of non-tax revenues in the last decade compared to the 2000s and first half of 2010 when it formed 5-9% of non-tax revenue. Moreover, the share of dividends and profits garnered from State public sector enterprises has remained under 1%.

Earnings from services rendered, such as public health (social service) and power (economic service), did not cross the 30% mark in the last decade. It is only estimated to cross the mark in FY25. Compare this to the 2000s and first half of 2010 when it crossed the mark for many years.

While the share of interest receipts and earnings from services has come down, the share of grants from the Centre has increased (65-70% in the last decade compared to 55-60% in the 15 years before that). This is shown in **Chart 3.**

Charts 1, 2 and 3 when read together show that the Centre is playing a major role in the revenue earned by the States. However, it is also true that many States are not efficiently collecting taxes using avenues at their disposal.

Table 4 shows the ratio of select States' own tax revenue to its GSDP. The trend shows a marked decline in this ratio in six States in particular.

For Tamil Nadu, the own tax revenue to GSDP ratio has gradually declined from 7.72% in FY13-15 to 6.17% in FY 22-24. This has also been the case in Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh, too. While the ratio has risen in Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Odisha, and Uttarakhand, it has remained stagnant in other States.
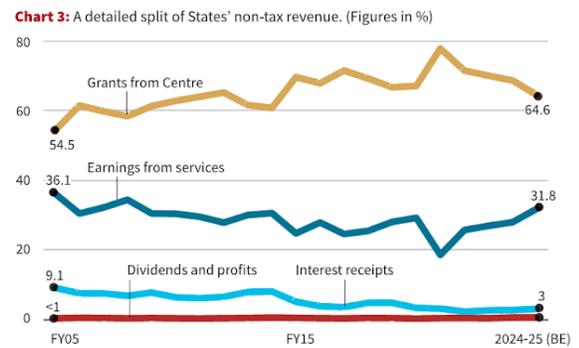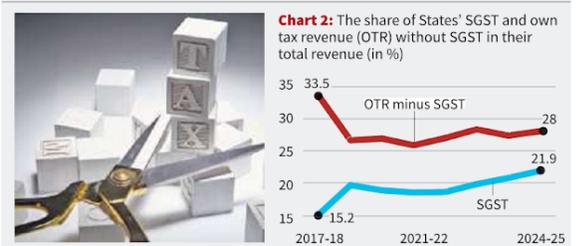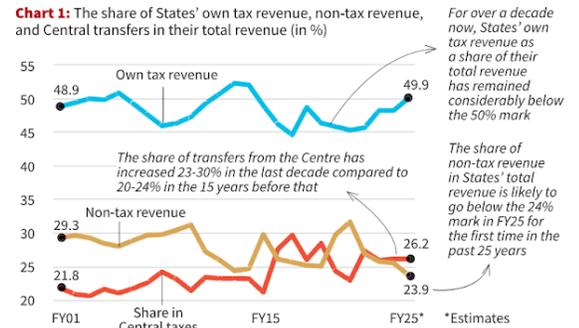
"Various States have undertaken a number of measures to improve tax collection from stamp duty, registration fees, and motor vehicle tax. This could likely be considered inadequate and sporadic efforts since these two taxes lack a high degree of technical efficiency according to a number of studies," Mr. Bhadra says.

He adds that "the own tax revenue mobilisation efforts at the State level seems to be falling short of upholding the redistributive macroeconomic implications of tax policies."

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Diminishing States' own revenues

The data for the charts were taken from the RBI's State Finances Report. It also includes The Hindu's calculations

Chart 1: The share of States' own tax revenue, non-tax revenue, and Central transfers in their total revenue (in %)

For over a decade now, States' own tax revenue as a share of their total revenue has remained considerably below the 50% mark

The share of non-tax revenue in States' total revenue is likely to go below the 24% mark in FY25 for the first time in the past 25 years

Own tax revenue — 48.9 ... 49.9

The share of transfers from the Centre has increased 23-30% in the last decade compared to 20-24% in the 15 years before that

Non-tax revenue — 29.3 ... 26.2

Share in Central taxes — 21.8 ... 23.9

FY01 ... FY15 ... FY25* *Estimates

Chart 2: The share of States' SGST and own tax revenue (OTR) without SGST in their total revenue (in %)

OTR minus SGST — 33.5 ... 28

SGST — 15.2 ... 21.9

2017-18 ... 2021-22 ... 2024-25

Chart 3: A detailed split of States' non-tax revenue. (Figures in %)

Grants from Centre — 54.5 ... 64.6

Earnings from services — 36.1 ... 31.8

Dividends and profits — 9.1 / <1 ... 3

Interest receipts

FY05 ... FY15 ... 2024-25 (BE)

Table 4: Shows the ratio of select States' own tax revenue to their GSDP (in %). FY17, FY21 and FY24 are revised estimates. FY25 is budget estimates

State	FY13-15	FY16-18	FY19-21	FY22-24
Tamil Nadu	7.72%	6.67%	6.20%	6.17%
Karnataka	7.69%	6.94%	6.27%	6.29%
Bihar	6.04%	6.25%	5.44%	5.75%
Delhi	5.71%	5.26%	4.51%	4.75%
Kerala	7.00%	6.81%	6.28%	6.70%
Madhya Pradesh	7.74%	7.01%	6.01%	6.11%

The Centre's Share in States' Revenue Has Surged in the Last Decade

पिछले दशक में राज्यों के राजस्व में केंद्र की हिस्सेदारी बढ़ी है

- Over the last decade (*FY16 to FY25*), **23-30% of States' total revenue** was collected from **transfers from the Centre**.

  पिछले दशक (*FY16 से FY25*) में राज्यों के कुल राजस्व का **23-30% हिस्सा केंद्र से स्थानांतरण** के रूप में प्राप्त हुआ।

- In the **2000s and early 2010s**, this share was **lower at 20-24%**.

  2000 के दशक और शुरुआती 2010 के दशक में यह हिस्सा **20-24%** था।

- **65-70% of the non-tax revenue** of States in the last decade came from **grants by the Centre**, whereas in the **2000s and early 2010s**, it was **55-65%**.

  पिछले दशक में राज्यों की गैर-कर राजस्व का **65-70% हिस्सा केंद्र से अनुदान** के रूप में आया, जबकि **2000 के दशक और शुरुआती 2010 के दशक** में यह **55-65%** था।

States' Declining Own Tax Revenue and Dependency on the Centre
राज्यों के अपने कर राजस्व में गिरावट और केंद्र पर निर्भरता बढ़ी

- **States' own tax revenue** as a share of their total revenue has remained **below 50%** for over a decade, whereas it **crossed 50%** in the **2000s and early 2010s**.

  राज्यों के **अपने कर राजस्व का हिस्सा** पिछले एक दशक से उनके कुल राजस्व का **50% से कम** है, जबकि यह **2000 के दशक और शुरुआती 2010 के दशक** में **50% से अधिक** था।

- **Own tax revenue** includes **stamp duty, registration fees, motor vehicle tax, and SGST** (State Goods and Services Tax).

  स्वयं का कर राजस्व में **स्टांप ड्यूटी, पंजीकरण शुल्क, मोटर वाहन कर, और SGST** (राज्य वस्तु एवं सेवा कर) शामिल हैं।

- **Non-tax revenue's share** in total revenue is expected to fall **below 24%** in **FY25**, the lowest in the last **25 years**.

  कुल राजस्व में **गैर-कर राजस्व** का हिस्सा **FY25 में 24% से नीचे** जाने की संभावना है, जो पिछले **25 वर्षों में सबसे कम** है।

SGST's Role in States' Revenue
राज्यों के राजस्व में SGST की भूमिका

- **SGST** accounted for **15% of States' total revenue in FY18**, which has now risen to **22%**.

  FY18 में SGST ने राज्यों के कुल राजस्व का **15%** हिस्सा बनाया था, जो अब बढ़कर **22%** हो गया है।

- Without SGST, the share of **States' own tax revenue** has declined from **34% to 28%**.

  SGST को हटाकर देखें तो राज्यों के **अपने कर राजस्व का हिस्सा 34% से घटकर 28%** हो गया है।

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Centre's Role in States' Non-Tax Revenue
राज्यों के गैर-कर राजस्व में केंद्र की भूमिका

- In the last decade, **65-70% of States' non-tax revenue** came from **grants from the Centre**, compared to **55-60%** in the **2000s and early 2010s**.
  पिछले दशक में राज्यों के **गैर-कर राजस्व का 65-70% हिस्सा** केंद्र से **अनुदान** के रूप में आया, जबकि **2000 के दशक और शुरुआती 2010 के दशक** में यह **55-60%** था।

- The share of **interest receipts** in non-tax revenue has fallen **below 5%** in the last decade, compared to **5-9%** earlier.
  गैर-कर राजस्व में **ब्याज प्राप्तियों** का हिस्सा पिछले दशक में **5% से कम** हो गया है, जबकि पहले यह **5-9%** था।

- **Dividends and profits** from **State public sector enterprises** have remained **below 1%** of non-tax revenue in the last decade.
  राज्य **सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के उपक्रमों** से **लाभांश और मुनाफा** पिछले दशक में **1% से कम** रहा है।

State-Specific Trends in Own Tax Revenue to GSDP Ratio
राज्यों के अपने कर राजस्व और GSDP के अनुपात में प्रवृत्तियाँ

- **Tamil Nadu's own tax revenue to GSDP ratio** has declined from **7.72% in FY13-15** to **6.17% in FY22-24**.
  तमिलनाडु के **अपने कर राजस्व और GSDP अनुपात** में गिरावट आई है, जो **FY13-15 में 7.72%** से घटकर **FY22-24 में 6.17%** हो गया है।

- Similar trends were observed in **Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Delhi**, and **Madhya Pradesh**.
  इसी तरह के रुझान **कर्नाटक, केरल, बिहार, दिल्ली**, और **मध्य प्रदेश** में देखे गए।

- However, the ratio has **increased** in **Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Odisha**, and **Uttarakhand**.
  हालांकि, यह अनुपात **महाराष्ट्र, मणिपुर, मेघालय, ओडिशा**, और **उत्तराखंड** में **बढ़ा** है।

Challenges in Tax Collection by States
राज्यों के कर संग्रह में चुनौतियाँ

- States have made efforts to improve **tax collection from stamp duty, registration fees, and motor vehicle tax**, but these efforts are **inadequate**.
  राज्य **स्टांप ड्यूटी, पंजीकरण शुल्क, और मोटर वाहन कर से कर संग्रह** में सुधार के प्रयास कर रहे हैं, लेकिन ये प्रयास **अपर्याप्त** हैं।

- **Technical inefficiency** in these taxes is one of the reasons for the **low collection rates**.
  इन करों में **तकनीकी अक्षमता** कम संग्रह दर का एक कारण है।

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Expert Opinion on State Revenue Mobilisation
राज्य राजस्व जुटाने पर विशेषज्ञ की राय

- **Kausik K. Bhadra**, PFM consultant at **UNICEF**, says that **States' stagnant own tax revenue** limits their ability to take **expansionary fiscal measures**.
  कौशिक के. भद्र, जो **UNICEF** में **PFM सलाहकार** हैं, कहते हैं कि राज्यों के **स्थिर अपने कर राजस्व** के कारण वे **विस्तारवादी वित्तीय उपाय** नहीं कर पा रहे हैं।

- He also highlights that the **redistributive macroeconomic implications** of tax policies are **not being upheld** by the States.
  वे यह भी बताते हैं कि कर नीतियों के **पुनर्वितरणीय मैक्रोइकोनॉमिक प्रभावों** को राज्यों द्वारा **अपर्याप्त रूप से लागू** किया जा रहा है।

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Why is deciphering the Indus script important?

Why has Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a $1-million prize to anyone who deciphers the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation? Has any work in recent times pointed to the possible cultural contact between the Indus Valley and south India?

GS Paper I: Indus Valley Civilization

EXPLAINER

T. Ramakrishnan

The story so far:

On January 5, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a $1-million prize for experts or organisations in the event of their success in deciphering the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC). He made the announcement at the inauguration of an international conference to mark the centenary of the IVC discovery, which was disclosed through an article published in September 1924 by the then Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) John Marshall. That the Chief Minister of a southern State in the country had made such an announcement was due to the possible Dravidian connection with the IVC. Notwithstanding the political dimension of the Dravidian concept, historians, archaeologists and linguistic scholars have been debating over the Dravidian hypothesis ever since the publication of Marshall's article.

How do scholars define the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC)?

The IVC, also called the Harappan Civilisation, spanned 2,000 sites across 1.5 million sq. km. in the territories of modern-day India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan during the Bronze Age (3000-1500 BCE). It had a wider geographical area than the combined areas of its contemporary civilisations – Egyptian and Mesopotamian. Talking of the IVC's importance, Pakistan's veteran archaeologist Ahmad Hasan Dani, in the December 1973 issue of *UNESCO Courier*, observed that the Valley lies across "ancient migration routes from central and western Asia to India." The IVC introduced urban life for the first time in the valley when similar civilisations had developed on the banks of the Nile and the Tigris-Euphrates valleys.

Why is deciphering the Indus script important?

Other scripts encountered in the contemporary Mesapotomian and Egyptian civilisations had been deciphered in a more satisfying manner, But, the non-decipherment of the Indus script prevents scholars from providing a complete picture of Harappan culture, which is why scholars tend to call it a "mystery script."

What is the Dravidian hypothesis?

The Indus script carries proto-Dravidian references – this is the position of scholars including Suniti Kumar Chatterji, Father Heras, Yri Valentinovich Knorozov, Walter Fairservis, Iravatham Mahadevan, Kamil Zvelebil, Krishnamurti and Asko Parpola – which can be found in the latest study on Indus signs and graffiti marks of Tamil Nadu.

The IVC "is non-Aryan and pre-Aryan," argued Mahadevan in his article published in *The Hindu* on May 3, 2009. Attributing "solid archaeological and linguistic evidence," the scholar, who passed away in 2018, emphasised that "the Indus script is a writing system encoding the language of the region (most probably Dravidian)". Ruling out Aryan authorship of the civilisation, he hastened to add that this did not automatically make it Dravidian. Yet, "there is substantial linguistic evidence favouring the Dravidian theory: the survival of Brahui, a Dravidian language in the Indus region; the presence of Dravidian

Decoding language: Seals with the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Buried secrets: Different structures are exposed in a trench at Rakhigarhi, a Harappan site in Haryana, in 2022. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

loanwords in the Rigveda; the substratum influence of Dravidian on the Prakrit dialects; and computer analysis of the Indus texts revealing that the language had only suffixes (like Dravidian), and no prefixes (as in Indo-Aryan) or infixes (as in Munda)," Mahadevan wrote. As the Dravidian models of decipherment had still little in common except certain basic features, "it is obvious that much more work remains to be done before a generally acceptable solution emerges," according to him.

What does the latest work have to offer?

Commissioned by the Tamil Nadu government's State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA), the study, which is morphological in nature, reveals that nearly 90% of the graffiti marks found during excavations at archaeological sites in the State have parallels to those found in the Indus Valley Civilisation. "...the exact shapes and their variants found both independently and in composite forms vividly indicate that they were not accidental. It is believed that the Indus script or signs would have not disappeared without any trace[s], rather they would have transformed or evolved into different forms," concludes K. Rajan, formerly professor with Pondicherry University and academic-research advisor to the TNSDA, and R. Sivanantham, joint director in the department, who carried out the study.

Defining the terms "graffiti" and "script," the duo, in a monograph, explain that all the recognisable scratches engraved on the ceramics in south India and, to some extent, on Indus ceramics are identified as graffiti. The ones engraved on seals and other metal objects of the IVC are designated as script. Even though both were written by the same people, they were differentiated and documented as script and graffiti. "However, the extensive comparative study of graffiti marks and Indus scripts evidently suggests that both are undeciphered signs," the two scholars observe.

Which project has preceded the work?

The findings of a two-year-long project of the TNSDA, called 'Documentation and Digitisation of Graffiti and Tamili (Tamil-Brāhmī) Inscribed Potsherds of Tamil Nadu', have formed the basis of the monograph.

Aimed at documenting, compiling and analysing the graffiti bearing potsherds and Tamili inscribed potsherds unearthed in archaeological excavations of the State, the project, launched during 2022-23, seeks to compare those graffiti marks with the Indus script to explore whether any cultural relationship existed between the two.

The datasets from the project suggested that 15,184 graffiti-bearing potsherds were reported from 140 sites in the State and nearly 14,165 sherds were documented. Of them, nearly 2,107 signs had been morphologically categorised within a group of 42 base signs, 544 variants and 1,521 composites. Any additional strokes added to the base signs were considered variants of the base signs while a group of signs containing more than one base sign was regarded as a composite sign. "Several signs

encountered in Tamil Nadu had exact parallels in the Indus scripts. Likewise, some signs had near parallels. These signs probably evolved from the base signs. Out of 42 base signs and their variants, nearly 60% of them found their parallels in the Indus script," the document explains.

How has the question of cultural contact between the IVC and south India been explored by the work?

The monograph talks of a "possibility of cultural exchanges." Even though the occurrences of identical graffiti marks in south India suggest a kind of cultural contact, one needs more material evidence and tangible data to support or strengthen the view.

The recent chronometric dates indicate that when the Indus Valley experienced the Copper Age, south India experienced the Iron Age. "In this sense, the Iron Age of South [sic] India and the Copper Age of Indus are contemporary." If that is so, there is a "possibility of cultural exchanges either through direct or intermediate zones," the authors of the monograph point out.

The document goes on to state that the occurrence of a large number of carnelian and agate beads and high-tin bronze objects, particularly from Iron Age graves, give a clue about the contact, as carnelian, agate, copper and tin have to come from the north or elsewhere. Besides semiprecious stones and copper, a few more cultural items are required to prove the existence of contact "convincingly," the authors state, calling for future explorations, excavations, scientific investigations and historical linguistic analysis.

THE GIST

▼ The IVC, also called the Harappan Civilisation, spanned 2,000 sites across 1.5 million sq. km. in the territories of modern-day India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan during the Bronze Age (3000-1500 BCE). It had a wider geographical area than the combined areas of its contemporary civilisations — Egyptian and Mesopotamian.

▼ Commissioned by the Tamil Nadu government's State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA), a study, which is morphological in nature, reveals that nearly 90% of the graffiti marks found during excavations at archaeological sites in Tamil Nadu have parallels to those found in the Indus Valley Civilisation.

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Why is deciphering the Indus script important?

सिंधु लिपि को समझना क्यों महत्वपूर्ण है?

Why has Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a $1-million prize to anyone who deciphers the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation? Has any work in recent times pointed to the possible cultural contact between the Indus Valley and south India?

तमिलनाडु के मुख्यमंत्री एम.के. स्टालिन ने सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता की लिपि को समझने वाले को 1 मिलियन डॉलर का पुरस्कार देने की घोषणा क्यों की है? क्या हाल के दिनों में किसी काम ने सिंधु घाटी और दक्षिण भारत के बीच संभावित सांस्कृतिक संपर्क की ओर इशारा किया है?

Tamil Nadu's $1 Million Prize for Deciphering the Indus Valley Script
तमिलनाडु द्वारा सिंधु घाटी लिपि को समझने के लिए 1 मिलियन डॉलर का पुरस्कार

- On January 5, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **M.K. Stalin** announced a **$1-million prize** for experts or organizations who successfully decipher the scripts of the **Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC)**.

  5 जनवरी को तमिलनाडु के मुख्यमंत्री **एम.के. स्टालिन** ने **सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता (IVC)** की लिपि को सफलतापूर्वक समझने वाले विशेषज्ञों या संगठनों के लिए **1 मिलियन डॉलर का पुरस्कार** घोषित किया।

- The announcement was made at the inauguration of an international conference marking the centenary of the IVC's discovery, which was first disclosed in **September 1924** by **John Marshall**, the then Director-General of the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.

  यह घोषणा **1924 के सितंबर** में **जॉन मार्शल**, जो उस समय भारतीय पुरातत्व सर्वेक्षण (ASI) के महानिदेशक थे, द्वारा सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता की खोज के **शताब्दी समारोह** के उद्घाटन के दौरान की गई थी।

- The connection to the Dravidian hypothesis was highlighted by the Chief Minister, due to possible links between the Dravidian people and the IVC.

  मुख्यमंत्री द्वारा **ड्राविड़ियन सिद्धांत** के संदर्भ को उठाया गया, क्योंकि संभवत: **ड्राविड़ियन लोगों** और सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता के बीच संबंध हो सकते हैं।

- Scholars, archaeologists, and linguists have debated the **Dravidian hypothesis** ever since the publication of Marshall's article.

  ड्राविड़ियन सिद्धांत पर विद्वानों, पुरातत्वज्ञों और भाषाविदों के बीच बहस तब से चल रही है, जब से मार्शल का लेख प्रकाशित हुआ था।

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What is the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC)?

सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता (IVC) क्या है?

- The IVC, also known as the **Harappan Civilisation**, covered **2,000 sites** across **1.5 million sq. km** in modern-day **India, Pakistan**, and **Afghanistan** during the **Bronze Age (3000-1500 BCE)**.

  सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता, जिसे **हड़प्पा सभ्यता** भी कहा जाता है, ने आधुनिक **भारत, पाकिस्तान**, और **अफ़ग़ानिस्तान** में 1.5 मिलियन वर्ग किमी में फैले **2000 साइट्स** को कवर किया, जो **ताम्र युग (3000-1500 ईसा पूर्व)** के दौरान था।

- The IVC had a wider geographical spread than its contemporary civilizations, such as **Egyptian** and **Mesopotamian** civilisations.

  सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता का भौगोलिक विस्तार अपनी समकालीन सभ्यताओं जैसे **मिस्र** और **मेसोपोटामिया** सभ्यताओं से अधिक था।

- Pakistan's veteran archaeologist **Ahmad Hasan Dani** observed in **December 1973** that the Valley lay across "ancient migration routes from central and western Asia to India."

  पाकिस्तान के प्रख्यात पुरातत्वज्ञ **अहमद हसन दानी** ने **दिसंबर 1973** में देखा कि यह घाटी "प्राचीन प्रवासन मार्गों" के बीच स्थित है, जो **केंद्र और पश्चिम एशिया से भारत** तक जाते थे।

- The IVC introduced urban life to the valley, similar to other civilizations like those on the banks of the **Nile** and **Tigris-Euphrates** rivers.

  सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता ने घाटी में शहरी जीवन की शुरुआत की, जैसे अन्य सभ्यताएँ **नाइल** और **टिगरिस-युफ्रेट्स** नदियों के किनारों पर विकसित हुई थीं।

Why is Deciphering the Indus Script Important?

सिंधु लिपि को समझना क्यों महत्वपूर्ण है?

- The Indus script remains a "mystery script" as it has never been fully deciphered, preventing scholars from giving a complete picture of **Harappan culture**.

  सिंधु लिपि "रहस्यमय लिपि" बनी हुई है क्योंकि इसे पूरी तरह से समझा नहीं जा सका, जिससे विद्वानों को **हड़प्पा संस्कृति** की पूरी तस्वीर देने में कठिनाई होती है।

- Other contemporary scripts, like those of **Mesopotamian** and **Egyptian** civilizations, were deciphered in a more satisfying manner.

  अन्य समकालीन लिपियाँ, जैसे **मेसोपोटामिया** और **मिस्र** सभ्यताओं की, अधिक संतोषजनक तरीके से समझी जा चुकी हैं।

What is the Dravidian Hypothesis?

ड्राविड़ियन सिद्धांत क्या है?

- The **Indus script** has **proto-Dravidian** references, according to scholars like **Suniti Kumar Chatterji**, **Father Heras**, **Yuri Valentinovich Knorozov**, **Walter Fairservis**, **Iravatham Mahadevan**, **Kamil Zvelebil**, **Krishnamurti**, and **Asko Parpola**.

  इंडस लिपि में प्रोटो-ड्राविड़ियन संदर्भ हैं, जैसा कि **सुनिति कुमार चट्टर्जी**, फादर हेरेस, यूरी

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वलेन्टिनोविच नोरोजोव, **वाल्टर फेयरसर्विस**, **इरावतम महादेवन**, **कामिल ज़्वेलेबिल**, **कृष्णमूर्ति**, और **आस्को पारपोला** जैसे विद्वानों का मानना है।

- Mahadevan, in his article published in **The Hindu** on **May 3, 2009**, argued that the IVC was **non-Aryan** and **pre-Aryan**, and he supported the **Dravidian hypothesis** with substantial archaeological and linguistic evidence.

  महादेवन ने **3 मई 2009** को **द हिन्दू** में प्रकाशित अपने लेख में कहा कि सिंधु घाटी सभ्यता **अरण्य-पूर्व** और **प्राचीन-अरण्य** थी, और उन्होंने महत्वपूर्ण पुरातात्विक और भाषाई प्रमाणों के आधार पर **द्राविड़ियन सिद्धांत** का समर्थन किया।

- He cited evidence like the **survival of Brahui** (a Dravidian language in the Indus region), **Dravidian loanwords in the Rigveda**, and **linguistic influence on Prakrit dialects**.

  उन्होंने **ब्राहुई की उत्तरजीविता** (जो सिंधु क्षेत्र की एक द्राविड़ियन भाषा है), **ऋग्वेद में द्राविड़ियन उधारी शब्दों**, और **प्राकृत बोलियों पर द्राविड़ियन प्रभाव** जैसे प्रमाण दिए।

- Mahadevan also mentioned that computer analysis of the Indus texts revealed the language had **suffixes** (like Dravidian languages) but no **prefixes** (as in Indo-Aryan languages).

  महादेवन ने यह भी उल्लेख किया कि सिंधु लेखों का कंप्यूटर विश्लेषण यह दर्शाता है कि भाषा में स suf िक्स थे (जैसे द्राविड़ियन भाषाओं में) लेकिन कोई **प्रिफिक्स** नहीं थे (जैसे **इंडो-आर्यन** भाषाओं में)।

- However, he emphasized that more work is needed before a generally acceptable solution to the decipherment emerges.

  हालांकि, उन्होंने यह भी जोर दिया कि लिपि को समझने के लिए एक सामान्य रूप से स्वीकृत समाधान सामने आने से पहले और अधिक काम की आवश्यकता है।

What Does the Latest Work Have to Offer?
नवीनतम कार्य में क्या प्रस्तुत किया गया है?

- Commissioned by the **Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA)**, the **morphological** study reveals that nearly **90%** of the **graffiti marks** found during excavations in Tamil Nadu have parallels with those found in the **Indus Valley Civilisation**.

  तमिलनाडु के **राज्य पुरातत्व विभाग (TNSDA)** द्वारा आयोगित यह **रूपात्मक** अध्ययन यह दर्शाता है कि तमिलनाडु में खुदाई के दौरान पाए गए **ग्राफिटी चिन्हों** का **90%** इंडस घाटी सभ्यता के चिन्हों से मेल खाते हैं।

- **K. Rajan**, former professor at **Pondicherry University**, and **R. Sivanantham**, joint director of TNSDA, who carried out the study, conclude that the Indus script or signs must have transformed into different forms over time.

  अध्ययन करने वाले **K. राजन**, जो **पुदुचेरी विश्वविद्यालय** के पूर्व प्रोफेसर हैं, और **R. शिवानंथम**, जो TNSDA के संयुक्त निदेशक हैं, निष्कर्ष पर पहुँचते हैं कि इंडस लिपि या चिन्ह समय के साथ विभिन्न रूपों में बदल गए होंगे।

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- The study defines **"graffiti"** as recognizable scratches on ceramics, while **"script"** refers to inscriptions on seals and metal objects in the IVC.
  अध्यान **"ग्राफिटी"** को मिट्टी के बर्तनों पर पहचाने जा सकने वाले खरोंचों के रूप में परिभाषित करता है, जबकि **"लिपि"** को इंडस घाटी सभ्यता के मुहरों और धातु वस्तुओं पर अंकित लेखन के रूप में परिभाषित किया गया है।

- Both **graffiti** and **script** were written by the same people, but they were differentiated and documented as **graffiti** and **script**.
  ग्राफिटी और **लिपि** दोनों को एक ही लोगों द्वारा लिखा गया था, लेकिन उन्हें **ग्राफिटी** और **लिपि** के रूप में अलग-अलग दर्ज किया गया और दस्तावेजीकृत किया गया था।

- The comparative study suggests that both **graffiti marks** and **Indus scripts** are **undeciphered signs**.
  तुलनात्मक अध्ययन यह सुझाव देता है कि **ग्राफिटी चिन्ह** और **इंडस लिपि** दोनों **असमझे गए चिन्ह** हैं।

Which Project Has Preceded the Work?
कौन सा प्रोजेक्ट इस कार्य से पूर्व हुआ है?

- The findings of a two-year-long project called **'Documentation and Digitisation of Graffiti and Tamili Inscribed Potsherds of Tamil Nadu'** formed the basis for the monograph.
  दो साल के एक प्रोजेक्ट का नाम **'तमिलनाडु के ग्राफिटी और तमिली अंकित मृदभांडों का दस्तावेजीकरण और डिजिटलीकरण'** था, जिसके निष्कर्षों ने मोनोग्राफ का आधार तैयार किया।

- The project, launched during **2022-23**, aimed at documenting, compiling, and analyzing **graffiti-bearing potsherds** and **Tamili inscribed potsherds** from Tamil Nadu's archaeological sites, to compare them with the Indus script.
  2022-23 के दौरान शुरू किए गए इस प्रोजेक्ट का उद्देश्य **ग्राफिटी युक्त मृदभांडे** और **तमिली अंकित मृदभांडे** को दस्तावेजीकृत करना, संकलित करना और विश्लेषण करना था, ताकि उन्हें इंडस लिपि से तुलना की जा सके।

- **15,184 graffiti-bearing potsherds** were reported from **140 sites**, with **14,165 sherds documented**.
  15,184 ग्राफिटी युक्त मृदभांडे 140 स्थलों से रिपोर्ट किए गए थे, जिनमें से **14,165 मृदभांडे दस्तावेजीकृत** किए गए थे।

- Among these, nearly **2,107 signs** were morphologically categorized into **42 base signs**, **544 variants**, and **1,521 composites**.
  इनमें से लगभग **2,107 चिन्हों** को रूपात्मक रूप से **42 मूल चिन्हों**, **544 रूपांतरों**, और **1,521 संयुक्त रूपों** में श्रेणीकृत किया गया था।

- **60%** of the **42 base signs** and their variants found parallels in the Indus script.
  42 मूल चिन्हों और उनके रूपांतरों में से लगभग **60%** ने इंडस लिपि में समानताएँ पाईं।

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How Has the Question of Cultural Contact Between the IVC and South India Been Explored by the Work?

IVC और दक्षिण भारत के बीच सांस्कृतिक संपर्क के सवाल की जांच इस कार्य में कैसे की गई है?

- The monograph discusses the "possibility of cultural exchanges" between the IVC and south India.

  मोनोग्राफ में IVC और दक्षिण भारत के बीच "सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान की संभावना" पर चर्चा की गई है।

- It points out that identical **graffiti marks** in south India suggest some **cultural contact**, but more material evidence is needed to support this.

  यह यह बताते हुए कि दक्षिण भारत में समान **ग्राफिटी चिन्ह** कुछ **सांस्कृतिक संपर्क** को दर्शाते हैं, लेकिन इसे समर्थन देने के लिए अधिक भौतिक साक्ष्य की आवश्यकता है।

- Recent **chronometric dates** suggest that when the Indus Valley was in the **Copper Age**, south India was in the **Iron Age**, indicating contemporary periods.

  हाल ही में प्राप्त **कालमापी (क्रोनोमेट्रिक) तिथियाँ** यह सुझाती हैं कि जब सिंधु घाटी **ताम्र युग** में थी, तब दक्षिण भारत **लौह युग** में था, जो समकालिक कालों को दर्शाता है।

- There is a "possibility of cultural exchanges" either through **direct** or **intermediate zones**.

  यह "सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान की संभावना" हो सकती है, चाहे वह **प्रत्यक्ष** या **मध्यवर्ती क्षेत्रों** के माध्यम से हो।

- The presence of **carnelian** and **agate beads** and **high-tin bronze objects**, particularly in **Iron Age graves**, suggests contact, as these materials would have come from the north.

  कार्नेलियन और **एगेट की मणियाँ** और **उच्च टिन वाले कांस्य वस्त्र** विशेष रूप से **लौह युग के समाधियों** में, संपर्क का संकेत देते हैं, क्योंकि ये सामग्री उत्तर से आई हो सकती हैं।

- However, to **convincingly** prove contact, additional **cultural items** are needed, requiring **future explorations, excavations, scientific investigations**, and **historical linguistic analysis**.

  हालांकि, संपर्क को **विश्वसनीय** रूप से साबित करने के लिए अतिरिक्त **सांस्कृतिक वस्त्रों** की आवश्यकता है, और इसके लिए **भविष्य में अन्वेषण, खुदाई, वैज्ञानिक जांच**, और **ऐतिहासिक भाषाई विश्लेषण** की आवश्यकता है।

How the UAPA, a draconian law, is wrecking lives

The UAPA prohibits a judge from granting bail if, on a perusal of the police diary or the police report, the judge is of the opinion that there are 'reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation is ... prima facie true'

On January 7, Delhi police opposed the bail pleas of activists Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam and others, who are accused in the 2020 north-east Delhi riots case. These activists have been jailed under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967. In this article, dated August 7, 2022, Gautam Bhatia talks about how the UAPA brings in elements of a trial into a bail hearing.

On March 24, a Sessions Court in Delhi denied bail to Umar Khalid as part of a set of cases that have commonly come to be known as "the Delhi riots cases". The case of the police was that Mr. Khalid was one of the conspirators behind the February 2020 violence in Delhi, which had claimed more than 50 lives. For this, Mr. Khalid, along with many others, was charge-sheeted under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967, and jailed pending trial. Mr. Khalid has been in jail for over 500 days. The trial has not yet begun.

Much has been written about the serious problems with the manner in which the Delhi Police has conducted its investigation, and prosecution of the Delhi riots: in particular, its selective targeting of activists who were involved with the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019, which was the alleged trigger for the violence, while refraining from prosecuting individuals who are on record delivering incendiary speeches. The denial of bail to Mr. Khalid highlights an equally serious problem: the broken nature of India's criminal justice system.

Bail hearing becomes trial

First, consider these facts. Mr. Khalid's bail application was filed in July 2021. The order denying bail was passed eight months later, after multiple hours-long hearings, multiple adjournments, and three deferrals of the order itself. It is important to ask why an application for bail took so many hearings and eight months to decide: in criminal law, the purpose of bail is to ensure that an individual is not unjustly denied their liberty while the trial against them is still proceeding and their guilt has not yet been established. As such, in normal circumstances, courts are supposed to consider whether an accused is a flight risk, or is likely to tamper with evidence or intimidate witnesses. If neither of those dangers exist, there is no purpose in denying an individual their freedom before their guilt has been established in a court. This, in other words, is the real meaning of the hoary phrase 'innocent until proven guilty'.

This is where the notorious UAPA comes in. Shorn of legalese, the UAPA prohibits a judge from granting an individual bail if, on a perusal of the police diary or the police report, the judge is of the opinion that there are "reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation is ... prima facie true." The effect of this, as the criminal legal scholar Abhinav Sekhri has pointed out, is that the UAPA introduces elements of the criminal trial into the question of bail. There are traces of this in the Indian Penal Code as well, for bail under serious non-UAPA offences. This hints at a larger problem with the criminal justice system, of which the UAPA is only the starkest example. Questions of guilt or innocence are meant to be determined at the end of a trial, after evidence has been sifted, witnesses examined and cross-examined, and arguments completed. The question of guilt or innocence at the stage of bail short-circuits that essential procedure.

But that is not the only problem with turning bail hearings into mini-trials. The problem is also that this mini-trial – to borrow a colourful phrase from the U.S. Supreme Court – licenses "one side ... to fight freestyle, while requiring the other to follow the Marquis of Queensberry Rules (i.e., the rules of professional boxing)". What the judge has before them is entirely one side of the case: the police version. In a trial, the defence would be entitled to cross-examine the prosecution's witnesses, determine inconsistencies in their testimony, examine its own witnesses, present its own evidence, and otherwise demonstrate that the case against the accused has not been made out beyond reasonable doubt. In a bail hearing, the defence can do none of that. The starting point of the bail hearing is the presumption that everything in the police report is true. Based on that presumption, all the two sides can then argue about is whether according to these "facts", the legal ingredients of the offence are fulfilled – or, in some rare cases, about whether the facts themselves are self-contradictory or flat-out implausible, so that no reliance can be placed on them even at the stage of bail. To use an analogy, it is like holding a debate between two sides, stopping it after one side finishes, allowing the other side to pose two or three questions but not say anything more, and then deciding whether the motion passes or falls.

Such a system might possibly be defensible in a situation where criminal justice was swift, efficient, and trustworthy. If, for example, criminal trials habitually concluded within six months, it might just be possible to argue that in terrorism cases, six months of pretrial incarceration is a painful but proportionate price to pay (in my opinion, it is still unjustifiable, but there is at least a case to be made). However, that is not the case in India: a UAPA trial takes years – often more than 10 years. In such a situation, the court's decision on bail, de facto, becomes the decision on the case: the denial of bail means that a person is likely to spend a decade or more behind bars, as the trial winds on. And given the UAPA's abysmally low conviction rates, the trial will likely end in acquittal.

This, thus, explains why bail hearings take so long, and are so convoluted (although there is still little excuse for the eight-month-long process in Mr. Khalid's case). Both the defence and the prosecution know that the outcome of the bail hearing is, for all practical effects, the outcome of the case itself. The result of the denial of bail is, functionally, the same as the result of a finding of guilt: a decade-plus in jail. But, as we have seen, while the denial of bail is effectively a finding of guilt, it has none of the safeguards that the criminal law puts into place before an actual finding of guilt. The accused is first gagged from contesting the police's version and is then condemned for not being able to disprove the police's case.

Rank injustice

In a notorious judgment in *National Investigation Agency v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali* (2019), the Supreme Court made a bad situation even worse by forbidding the lower courts from scrutinising in depth even the police case. This leads to absurd situations like Mr. Khalid's bail order.

A reading of the bail order shows that the court reproduces various allegations against Mr. Khalid – some of them hearsay, and therefore inadmissible during the trial, and some extremely implausible; dismisses the defence's challenges to them without any engagement; and then denies bail. Lawyers and legal scholars may disagree over whether the UAPA actually requires the courts to become stenographers for the prosecution, even under existing legal doctrine. The point, however, is that for all the reasons we have discussed above, the result is rank injustice.

Reforming the criminal justice system is the task of many years. In the immediate future, however, it is at least possible to curtail the manner in which the UAPA plays havoc with the lives of so many individuals.

Striking down or reading down its bail prohibitions and subjecting the police case to stricter scrutiny during bail hearings would be a start. It remains to be seen whether the judiciary has the will and the inclination to do so.

Gautam Bhatia is a Delhi-based lawyer.

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How the UAPA, a draconian law, is wrecking lives

कैसे यूएपीए, एक कठोर कानून, जीवन को बर्बाद कर रहा है

The UAPA prohibits a judge from granting bail if, on a perusal of the police diary or the police report, the judge is of the opinion that there are 'reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation is … prima facie true'

यूएपीए किसी न्यायाधीश को जमानत देने से रोकता है, यदि पुलिस डायरी या पुलिस रिपोर्ट के अवलोकन के बाद न्यायाधीश की राय है कि 'यह मानने के लिए उचित आधार हैं कि आरोप प्रथम दृष्टया सत्य है'

Denial of Bail to Umar Khalid
उमर खालिद को जमानत का इंकार

- On **March 24**, a **Sessions Court** in **Delhi** denied bail to **Umar Khalid** in the cases related to the **Delhi riots** of **February 2020**, which had claimed more than **50 lives**.
  24 मार्च को **दिल्ली** की एक **सत्र न्यायालय** ने **उमर खालिद** को फरवरी **2020** में हुए **दिल्ली दंगों** से संबंधित मामलों में जमानत देने से इंकार कर दिया, जिसमें **50 से अधिक लोगों** की जानें गई थीं।
- Mr. Khalid, along with others, was charged under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)**, 1967, and has been in jail for over **500 days**, pending trial.
  उमर खालिद, अन्य लोगों के साथ, **अवैध गतिविधि (निरोध) अधिनियम (UAPA)**, 1967 के तहत आरोपित किए गए थे और वे **500 से अधिक दिनों** से जेल में हैं, जबकि मुकदमा अभी तक शुरू नहीं हुआ है।

Serious Problems with Delhi Police Investigation
दिल्ली पुलिस की जांच में गंभीर समस्याएँ

- There have been **serious concerns** about the way the **Delhi Police** has conducted its investigation and prosecution in the **Delhi riots**, particularly its **selective targeting** of activists involved in the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA)** protests.
  दिल्ली पुलिस द्वारा **दिल्ली दंगों** की जांच और अभियोजन करने के तरीके को लेकर **गंभीर चिंताएँ** उठी हैं, विशेष रूप से **नागरिकता (संशोधन) अधिनियम (CAA)** के विरोध में शामिल कार्यकर्ताओं को **चयनात्मक रूप से लक्षित** करने को लेकर।
- The police refrained from prosecuting individuals who made **incendiary speeches**, while targeting **activists** who protested against the CAA, which was alleged to be the **trigger for the violence**.

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पुलिस ने उन व्यक्तियों के खिलाफ अभियोजन से बचने का फैसला किया, जिन्होंने **उत्तेजक भाषण** दिए, जबकि **कार्यकर्ताओं** को निशाना बनाया, जिन्होंने CAA के खिलाफ विरोध किया, जिसे **हिंसा का कारण** माना गया था।

- The denial of bail to **Mr. Khalid** highlights a more serious issue: the **broken** nature of India's **criminal justice system**.
  उमर खालिद को जमानत का इंकार एक और गंभीर मुद्दे को उजागर करता है: भारत के **अपराध न्याय प्रणाली** का टूटना।

Bail Hearing Becomes a Trial
जमानत सुनवाई एक मुकदमे में बदल जाती है

- Mr. Khalid's **bail application** was filed in **July 2021**, and the order denying bail was passed **eight months later**, after multiple **hearings**, **adjournments**, and **deferrals**.
  उमर खालिद की **जमानत अर्जी जुलाई 2021** में दायर की गई थी, और जमानत का आदेश **आठ महीने बाद** दिया गया, जिसमें कई **सुनवाई**, **विलंब** और **विलंबित आदेश** हुए।
- The purpose of bail in criminal law is to ensure that an individual is not unjustly denied liberty while the trial is still ongoing.
  अपराध कानून में जमानत का उद्देश्य यह सुनिश्चित करना है कि किसी व्यक्ति को उनके मुकदमे के दौरान उनकी **स्वतंत्रता** को **अत्याचार से न** रोका जाए।
- Normally, courts assess whether an accused is a **flight risk**, or if they might **tamper with evidence** or **intimidate witnesses**. If not, bail should not be denied.
  सामान्य रूप से, अदालतें यह मूल्यांकन करती हैं कि क्या आरोपी **भागने का जोखिम** है, या क्या वे **साक्ष्यों से छेड़छाड़** कर सकते हैं या **गवाहों को डराने** का प्रयास कर सकते हैं। अगर ऐसा कुछ नहीं है, तो जमानत नहीं रोकी जानी चाहिए।
- The principle of being **"innocent until proven guilty"** means that a person should not be deprived of their freedom before their guilt is established.
  "निर्दोष जब तक दोषी साबित न हो" का सिद्धांत यह है कि किसी व्यक्ति को उनकी **दोषिता साबित होने** से पहले उनकी स्वतंत्रता से वंचित नहीं किया जाना चाहिए।

The Role of the UAPA in Bail Hearings
जमानत सुनवाई में UAPA की भूमिका

- The **UAPA** prohibits granting bail if the judge believes there are **reasonable grounds** for believing the accusation is **prima facie true**, based on police reports.
  UAPA यह रोकता है कि अगर न्यायाधीश को पुलिस रिपोर्टों के आधार पर यह विश्वास हो कि आरोप **प्रारंभिक रूप से सत्य** हैं, तो जमानत नहीं दी जा सकती।
- The UAPA introduces elements of the **criminal trial** into bail hearings, blurring the lines between bail and trial.
  UAPA जमानत सुनवाई में **अपराध मुकदमा** के तत्वों को शामिल करता है, जिससे जमानत और मुकदमे के बीच की रेखा धुंधली हो जाती है।

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- The **Indian Penal Code** also reflects this issue, as serious non-UAPA offenses sometimes include similar conditions for bail.
  भारतीय दंड संहिता में भी यह समस्या दिखाई देती है, क्योंकि गंभीर गैर-UAPA अपराधों के लिए कभी-कभी जमानत के लिए समान शर्तें होती हैं।

- Questions of guilt or innocence are supposed to be decided at the **end of the trial**, after all evidence has been examined, witnesses cross-examined, and arguments completed.
  दोषिता या निर्दोषिता के सवालों का निर्णय **मुकदमे के अंत** में किया जाना चाहिए, जब सभी साक्ष्य जांचे जा चुके हों, गवाहों की **विपरीत परीक्षा** हो चुकी हो और बहस समाप्त हो चुकी हो।

Consequences of Turning Bail Hearings into Trials
जमानत सुनवाई को मुकदमे में बदलने के परिणाम

- Turning bail hearings into **mini-trials** undermines the fundamental principle of the justice system, where guilt or innocence is determined only after proper trial proceedings.
  जमानत सुनवाई को **सूक्ष्म-मुकदमों** में बदलने से न्याय प्रणाली के मूल सिद्धांत को कमजोर किया जाता है, जहां दोषिता या निर्दोषिता का निर्णय केवल उचित मुकदमा प्रक्रियाओं के बाद ही किया जाता है।

- This process also leads to **delays** in deciding bail, making it a prolonged, complex process instead of a timely resolution.
  यह प्रक्रिया जमानत के निर्णय में भी **विलंब** का कारण बनती है, जिससे यह एक लंबी, जटिल प्रक्रिया बन जाती है, बजाय इसके कि इसे समय पर हल किया जाए।

Supreme Court — licenses "one side … to fight freestyle, while requiring the other to follow the Marquis of Queensberry Rules"
सुप्रीम कोर्ट – "एक पक्ष को फ्रीस्टाइल में लड़ने की अनुमति देता है, जबकि दूसरे को मारक्विस ऑफ क्वीनसबेरी नियमों (अर्थात, पेशेवर मुक्केबाजी के नियमों) का पालन करने के लिए कहता है"

- In a **trial**, the defence would be allowed to **cross-examine** prosecution witnesses, check for inconsistencies in their testimony, examine its own witnesses, present its evidence, and demonstrate that the case against the accused is not beyond reasonable doubt.
  मुकदमे में, बचाव पक्ष को अभियोजन के गवाहों की **प्रति-जांच** करने, उनके बयान में असंगतताओं की जांच करने, अपने गवाहों को जांचने, अपनी गवाहियां पेश करने और यह दिखाने की अनुमति होती है कि आरोपी के खिलाफ मामला **संदेह से परे** नहीं है।

- In a **bail hearing**, the defence is not allowed to do any of these things. The starting point is the presumption that everything in the **police report** is true.
  जमानत सुनवाई में, बचाव पक्ष को इनमें से कुछ भी करने की अनुमति नहीं होती। प्रारंभिक बिंदु यह है कि **पुलिस रिपोर्ट** में सब कुछ सत्य माना जाता है।

- The defence can only argue about whether the **legal ingredients** of the offence are met based on the police report, or in some rare cases, if the facts themselves are self-contradictory or implausible.

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बचाव पक्ष केवल यह तर्क कर सकता है कि **अपराध के कानूनी तत्व** पुलिस रिपोर्ट के आधार पर पूरे होते हैं या कुछ दुर्लभ मामलों में, क्या तथ्य स्वयं में **विरोधाभासी** या **अविश्वसनीय** हैं।

Such a system might possibly be defensible if criminal justice were swift, efficient, and trustworthy
ऐसी व्यवस्था शायद तब बचाई जा सकती है यदि आपराधिक न्याय तेज़, प्रभावी और विश्वसनीय हो

- If criminal trials in India were completed within **six months**, it could be argued that **pretrial incarceration** for terrorism cases is a painful but proportionate price to pay.
  अगर भारत में आपराधिक मुकदमे **छह महीनों** के भीतर समाप्त हो जाते, तो यह तर्क दिया जा सकता था कि आतंकवाद के मामलों में **प्रीट्रायल कारावास** एक दर्दनाक लेकिन उचित कीमत है।
- However, **UAPA trials** take **years**, often over **10 years**. In such cases, a bail decision effectively becomes the decision on the case.
  हालांकि, **UAPA मुकदमे वर्षों** तक चलते हैं, अक्सर **10 सालों** से अधिक। ऐसे मामलों में, जमानत का निर्णय प्रभावी रूप से मामले पर निर्णय बन जाता है।
- Denial of bail in such cases means the individual is likely to spend a decade or more in jail before a trial.
  ऐसे मामलों में जमानत का **इंकार** यह दर्शाता है कि व्यक्ति को मुकदमे के पहले **दस साल** या उससे अधिक समय तक जेल में रहना पड़ सकता है।

This explains why bail hearings take so long and are convoluted
यह बताता है कि जमानत सुनवाई इतनी लंबी क्यों और जटिल क्यों होती है

- Both **defence** and **prosecution** know that the **outcome of the bail hearing** is effectively the **outcome of the case**.
  बचाव पक्ष और **अभियोजन पक्ष** दोनों जानते हैं कि जमानत सुनवाई का **परिणाम** प्रभावी रूप से **मामले का परिणाम** होता है।
- The result of denying bail is functionally the same as a finding of **guilt** — **a decade-plus in jail**.
  जमानत का इंकार **दोषिता** के फैसले के समान होता है – **दस साल से अधिक जेल** में।
- However, the denial of bail lacks the **safeguards** present in a full trial before a **guilty verdict**.
  हालाँकि, जमानत का इंकार **सुरक्षात्मक उपायों** की कमी है जो एक **दोषी निर्णय** से पहले पूरे मुकदमे में होते हैं।
- The accused is denied the right to contest the **police version** and is condemned for not disproving it.
  आरोपी को **पुलिस के संस्करण** से मुकाबला करने का अधिकार नहीं दिया जाता है और उसे इसे **गलत साबित** न करने के लिए दोषी ठहराया जाता है।

Rank injustice
गंभीर अन्याय

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- In the **National Investigation Agency v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali (2019)** case, the **Supreme Court** worsened the situation by **forbidding lower courts** from scrutinizing the police case.

  राष्ट्रीय अन्वेषण एजेंसी बनाम ज़ाहूर अहमद शाह वटाली (2019) मामले में, **सुप्रीम कोर्ट** ने स्थिति को और खराब कर दिया जब उसने **निचली अदालतों** को पुलिस के मामले की गहराई से जांच करने से **रोक दिया।**

- This results in **absurd situations** like Mr. Khalid's bail order, where the court **dismisses the defence's challenges** without engagement.

  यह **अविवेकपूर्ण स्थितियाँ** उत्पन्न करता है जैसे कि **उमर खालिद** का जमानत आदेश, जहां अदालत **बचाव के आरोपों** को बिना किसी मंतव्य के **नकार देती है।**

Reforming the criminal justice system is a long-term task
अपराध न्याय प्रणाली में सुधार एक दीर्घकालिक कार्य है

- Reforming the system is a **task of many years**. In the short term, **curtailing the UAPA's impact** on individuals' lives is possible.

  प्रणाली में सुधार **कई वर्षों का कार्य** है। तात्कालिक रूप में, **UAPA के प्रभाव** को व्यक्तियों के जीवन पर कम करना संभव है।

- **Striking down or reading down** the UAPA's **bail prohibitions** and subjecting the **police case** to stricter scrutiny during bail hearings would be a good start.

  UAPA के जमानत प्रतिबंधों को **रद्द** या **कम करके पढ़ना** और जमानत सुनवाई के दौरान **पुलिस मामले** को अधिक कठोरता से जांचना एक अच्छा प्रारंभ होगा।

- It remains to be seen whether the **judiciary** has the **will** and **inclination** to make these changes.

  यह देखा जाना बाकी है कि क्या **न्यायपालिका** में इन परिवर्तनों को करने की **इच्छा** और **झुकाव** है।

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As ISRO chief, V. Narayanan will have to hit the ground running

The space agency has lined up major projects such as Gaganyaan human spaceflight, Chandrayaan-4 and Bharatiya Antariksha Station; days after he takes over on January 14, the space agency will launch GSLV Mk-II/IRNSS-1 K mission

GS Paper III: S&T

Tiki Rajwi
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

V. Narayanan, rocket and spacecraft propulsion expert, will take over as the Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on January 14, with the retirement of the current chief of the space agency, S. Somanath. India's space sector is in a reform mode, and the space agency has lined up major projects such as the Gaganyaan human spaceflight, the Chandrayaan-4 mission and the development of the country's own space station.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Wednesday, Dr. Narayanan, who has been heading the ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) since January 2018, described his upcoming assignment as a "great responsibility" and a "great opportunity to follow in the footsteps of stalwarts who led the ISRO over the decades".

Given the ISRO's busy calendar for 2025, Dr. Narayanan is aware that he has little or no time to get going. "Towards January-end, we have the GSLV Mk-II/IRNSS-1 K mission. We also have lined up the first of the uncrewed flights of the Gaganyaan programme, the G-1 mission, as well as a commercial launch using the LVM3 launch vehicle," he said. "These apart, there are several experiments related to the Gaga-

On an upward trajectory: V. Narayanan with a model of the Chandrayaan-3 moon lander. M PERIASAMY

nyaan programme. So you see, we have our hands full."

High-profile programmes on the ISRO's to-do list include the Chandrayaan-4 moon mission, the development of the space station, Bharatiya Antariksha Station, a second mission to Mars, and the maiden Venus Orbiter Mission. While all of these may not happen during Dr. Narayanan's tenure, the space agency has kicked off preparations.

The Appointments Committee of the Union Cabinet has decided that Dr. Narayanan will take over as Secretary, Department of Space, and Chairman, Space Commission, "for a period of two years" from January 14.

Dr. Narayanan, born in-

> Today, all the spacefaring nations truly understand our abilities and strengths. Strength respects strength
>
> **V. NARAYANAN**
> ISRO Chairman designate

to a humble farming family in Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, brings a wealth of experience to the Chairman's post, having joined the space agency in 1984 and worked in one of its core areas – rocket propulsion.

Dr. Narayanan said increasing India's presence in space tops his list of priorities. He said the space sector reforms set in motion a few years ago by

opening it up to private players will play a vital role in this area.

"If you look at societal and strategic applications, today we have about 53 satellites in orbit. We need many more for communication, navigation and earth observation purposes. The ISRO on its own cannot meet this requirement. The reforms will help in this area. We have been giving opportunities to the private sector and the start-up ecosystem," he said.

Dr. Narayanan drew attention to India's plans to expand its share in the global economy from 2% to 10%. "So far, we have not concentrated much on the space economy aspect. We need to have our due share, though. We are targeting 10%," he said.

He reiterated the importance that the ISRO places on collaboration with other space agencies. "In our development stage as a space agency, indeed there was support. Today, all the spacefaring nations truly understand our abilities and strengths. Strength respects strength," he said.

Village upbringing
Dr. Narayanan was born to C. Vanniyaperumal, a farmer, and S. Thangammal, a homemaker, at Melakattuvilai, a village in Kanniyakumari district. He has three brothers and two sisters. Young Narayanan and his siblings studied in a

Tamil-medium school near their home. It was when he was in Class 9 that their home got an electricity connection. He was a Class 10 topper in his school. Dr. Narayanan is married to Kavitharaj N.K. The couple has a daughter, Divyaa, and a son, Kalesh.

He is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. He obtained his M.Tech. in cryogenic engineering with a first rank in 1989 and a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering in 2001.

As a rocket propulsion expert, Dr. Narayanan has done important work on major ISRO missions and programmes, including cryogenic technology; the moon (Chandrayaan 1, 2 and 3), Mars (Mangalyaan) and Aditya-L1 (to study the sun) missions; and the upcoming Gaganyaan programme during a career spanning four decades.

On joining the ISRO on February 1, 1984, he initially worked on solid propulsion at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre here. In 1989, he moved to the LPSC to work on cryogenic propulsion. "His contributions made India one among six countries in the world to have the complex and high-performance cryogenic propulsion systems and made it self-reliant in this area. He has finalised the Propulsion Road Map of ISRO for the next 20 years [2017-2037]," the LPSC has noted.

इसरो प्रमुख के रूप में वी. नारायणन को जमीनी स्तर पर काम करना होगा

The space agency has lined up major projects such as Gaganyaan human spaceflight, Chandrayaan-4 and Bharatiya Antariksha Station; days after he takes over on January 14, the space agency will launch GSLV Mk-II/IRNSS-1 K mission

अंतरिक्ष एजेंसी ने गगनयान मानव अंतरिक्ष यान, चंद्रयान-4 और भारतीय अंतरिक्ष स्टेशन जैसी प्रमुख परियोजनाओं की योजना बनाई है; 14 जनवरी को पदभार संभालने के कुछ दिनों बाद, अंतरिक्ष एजेंसी जीएसएलवी एमके-II/आईआरएनएसएस-1के मिशन लॉन्च करेगी।

V. Narayanan to Take Over as ISRO Chairman on January 14
वी. नारायणन 14 जनवरी को इसरो के अध्यक्ष का पद संभालेंगे

- **V. Narayanan**, a **rocket and spacecraft propulsion expert**, will take over as the **Chairman of ISRO** on **January 14** with the retirement of the current chief **S. Somanath**.
  वी. नारायणन, जो एक **रॉकेट और अंतरिक्ष यान प्रणोदन विशेषज्ञ** हैं, **14 जनवरी** को वर्तमान प्रमुख **एस. सोमनाथ** के सेवानिवृत्त होने पर **इसरो के अध्यक्ष** का पद संभालेंगे।
- India's space sector is in a **reform mode**, with major projects lined up, such as **Gaganyaan human spaceflight**, **Chandrayaan-4 mission**, and the development of India's own space station.
  भारत का अंतरिक्ष क्षेत्र **सुधार मोड** में है, जिसमें प्रमुख परियोजनाएं, जैसे **गगनयान मानव अंतरिक्ष उड़ान**, **चंद्रयान-4 मिशन**, और भारत का अपना अंतरिक्ष स्टेशन विकसित करना शामिल हैं।

Dr. Narayanan's Upcoming Responsibilities at ISRO
डॉ. नारायणन की आने वाली जिम्मेदारियां इसरो में

- Dr. Narayanan, who has been heading the **ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC)** since **January 2018**, described his new role as a "**great responsibility**" and "**great opportunity** to follow in the footsteps of ISRO stalwarts".
  डॉ. नारायणन, जो **जनवरी 2018** से **इसरो के तरल प्रणोदन प्रणाली केंद्र (LPSC)** के प्रमुख रहे हैं, ने अपनी नई भूमिका को "**महान जिम्मेदारी**" और "**महान अवसर**" के रूप में वर्णित किया, ताकि वह इसरो के दिग्गजों के पदचिन्हों पर चल सकें।
- With **ISRO's busy calendar** for **2025**, Dr. Narayanan is aware of the urgency, with several missions lined up, including **GSLV MkII/IRNSS-1 K mission**, the **G-1 mission** of the **Gaganyaan programme**, and a commercial launch using **LVM3 launch vehicle**.

2025 के लिए **इसरो के व्यस्त कैलेंडर** के साथ, डॉ. नारायणन इस तत्कालता से अवगत हैं, जिसमें कई मिशन निर्धारित हैं, जैसे **GSLV MkII/IRNSS-1 K मिशन**, **गगनयान कार्यक्रम** का **G-1 मिशन**, और **LVM3 लॉन्च वाहन** का उपयोग करके एक वाणिज्यिक लॉन्च।

- There are also several experiments related to the **Gaganyaan programme** that will be a priority.
  गगनयान कार्यक्रम से संबंधित कई प्रयोग भी प्राथमिकता में होंगे।

High-Profile ISRO Programmes in the Pipeline
इसरो की प्रमुख योजनाएँ पाइपलाइन में

- High-profile programmes include **Chandrayaan-4**, the development of **Bharatiya Antariksha Station (India's Space Station)**, a **second mission to Mars**, and the **maiden Venus Orbiter Mission**.
  प्रमुख योजनाओं में **चंद्रयान-4**, **भारतीय अंतरिक्ष स्टेशन (भारती अंतरिक्ष स्टेशन)** का विकास, **मंगल पर दूसरा मिशन**, और **प्रारंभिक शुक्र ग्रह ऑर्बिटर मिशन** शामिल हैं।

- While these may not all happen during Dr. Narayanan's tenure, preparations have already started.
  हालांकि ये सभी योजनाएँ डॉ. नारायणन के कार्यकाल के दौरान नहीं हो सकतीं, फिर भी तैयारियाँ पहले ही शुरू हो चुकी हैं।

Appointment and Background of Dr. Narayanan
डॉ. नारायणन की नियुक्ति और पृष्ठभूमि

- The **Appointments Committee of the Union Cabinet** has decided that Dr. Narayanan will take over as **Secretary, Department of Space**, and **Chairman, Space Commission** for a period of **two years** starting **January 14**.
  केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल की नियुक्ति समिति ने यह निर्णय लिया है कि डॉ. नारायणन **अंतरिक्ष विभाग के सचिव** और **अंतरिक्ष आयोग के अध्यक्ष** के रूप में **14 जनवरी** से **दो वर्षों** की अवधि के लिए कार्यभार संभालेंगे।

- Dr. Narayanan was born into a **humble farming family** in **Kanniyakumari district**, Tamil Nadu. He joined ISRO in **1984** and worked in one of its core areas — **rocket propulsion**.
  डॉ. नारायणन का जन्म **तमिलनाडु के कन्नियाकुमारी जिले** के एक **सरल किसान परिवार** में हुआ था। उन्होंने **1984** में इसरो जॉइन किया और इसके एक महत्वपूर्ण क्षेत्र – **रॉकेट प्रणोदन** में काम किया।

Dr. Narayanan's Academic and Professional Journey
डॉ. नारायणन का शैक्षिक और पेशेवर सफर

- Dr. Narayanan completed his **M.Tech** in **cryogenic engineering** with **first rank** in **1989** and a **Ph.D. in aerospace engineering** in **2001**.

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डॉ. नारायणन ने **1989** में **क्रायोजेनिक इंजीनियरिंग** में **पहली रैंक** से **M.Tech** और **2001** में **एयरोस्पेस इंजीनियरिंग** में **Ph.D.** की डिग्री प्राप्त की।

- He has contributed to major ISRO missions, including **cryogenic technology**, **Chandrayaan missions**, **Mangalyaan**, and **Aditya-L1 (to study the sun)**.

  उन्होंने प्रमुख इसरो मिशनों में योगदान दिया, जैसे **क्रायोजेनिक प्रौद्योगिकी**, **चंद्रयान मिशन**, **मंगलयान**, और **आदित्य-L1 (सूर्य का अध्ययन करने के लिए)**।

Significant Contributions and Career Milestones

महत्वपूर्ण योगदान और करियर के मील पत्थर

- Dr. Narayanan worked on **solid propulsion** at the **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre** and later moved to **LPSC** in **1989** to work on **cryogenic propulsion**.

  डॉ. नारायणन ने **विक्रम साराभाई स्पेस सेंटर** में **सॉलिड प्रणोदन** पर काम किया और बाद में **1989** में **LPSC** में **क्रायोजेनिक प्रणोदन** पर काम करने के लिए स्थानांतरित हो गए।

- He played a key role in making India one of the six countries with **high-performance cryogenic propulsion systems**, making the country self-reliant in this area.

  उन्होंने भारत को दुनिया के छह देशों में से एक बनाया, जिनके पास **उच्च प्रदर्शन वाले क्रायोजेनिक प्रणोदन प्रणालियाँ** हैं, और देश को इस क्षेत्र में आत्मनिर्भर बना दिया।

- He finalized the **Propulsion Road Map of ISRO** for the period **2017-2037**.

  उन्होंने **ISRO के प्रणोदन रोडमैप** को **2017-2037** के लिए अंतिम रूप दिया।

India ready to support Maldives in enhancing its defence preparedness, says Rajnath Singh

GS Paper II: India-Maldives

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

India has handed over defence equipment and stores to the Maldives on the request of the Maldivian government, the Defence Ministry said on Wednesday as New Delhi also reaffirmed its readiness to support Male in capability enhancement for defence preparedness as per its national priorities.

This was conveyed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during talks with his visiting Maldivian counterpart, Mohammed Ghassan Maumoon.

"Raksha Mantri (Defence Minister) reaffirmed India's readiness to support the Maldives in capability enhancement for de-

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Maldivian counterpart Mohammed Ghassan Maumoon, in New Delhi. R V MOORTHY

fence preparedness, including provisioning of defence platforms & assets to augment its capacities, as per its national priorities and in line with New Delhi's 'Neighborhood First' policy and the vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region)," the Ministry said in a statement.

Mr. Maumoon appreciated India's historical role as the "first responder" for the Maldives and thanked New Delhi for assisting Male in augmenting the modern infrastructural capacities and training of defence and security personnel, the statement said.

Stating that the talks were fruitful, Mr. Singh said in a post on X, "Several issues pertaining to deepening defence cooperation were discussed which would also help in enhancing the capability of Maldives National Defence Forces. Today's discussions will add new vigour to India-Maldives relations."

During the talks, the two Ministers comprehensively reviewed various aspects of bilateral defence and security cooperation, the statement said. They also reasserted the firm commitment to work closely in realising the joint vision for India-Maldives comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership. This is the first visit by the Maldivian Defence Minister to India since the new government came to power in the island nation.

Sources said they discussed the Ekatha Harbour project for the MNDF Coast Guard, for which the foundation stone was laid by Mr. Singh and then Maldivian counterpart, Mariya Didi, during an official visit in May 2023. The development of the Coast Guard Harbour and repair facility at Sifavaru is one of the biggest grant-in-aid projects of India.

Earlier, the visiting Minister laid a wreath at the National War Memorial. He was also accorded a tri-service guard of honour.

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India ready to support Maldives in enhancing its defence preparedness, says Rajnath Singh

राजनाथ सिंह ने कहा कि भारत मालदीव की रक्षा तैयारियों को बढ़ाने में सहायता करने के लिए तैयार है

India Hands Over Defence Equipment to the Maldives
भारत ने मालदीव को रक्षा उपकरण सौंपे

- **India** has handed over **defence equipment** and stores to the **Maldives** on the request of the Maldivian government.
  भारत ने मालदीव सरकार की मांग पर **रक्षा उपकरण** और सामान **मालदीव को** सौंपे।
- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** reaffirmed India's readiness to support the Maldives in **defence preparedness** and capability enhancement as per its national priorities.
  रक्षा मंत्री राजनाथ सिंह ने भारत की तैयारियों को फिर से पुष्टि की, जो **मालदीव** को **रक्षा तैयारियों** और क्षमता संवर्धन में समर्थन देने के लिए है, जैसा कि मालदीव की राष्ट्रीय प्राथमिकताओं के अनुसार है।
- This support includes provisioning of **defence platforms and assets** to augment **Maldives' defence capabilities**.
  इस समर्थन में **रक्षा प्लेटफॉर्म और संपत्तियां** शामिल हैं, ताकि **मालदीव की रक्षा क्षमताओं** को बढ़ाया जा सके।

India-Maldives Defence Talks and Collaboration
भारत-मालदीव रक्षा वार्ता और सहयोग

- During talks with **Maldivian Defence Minister Mohammed Ghassan Maumoon**, **Rajnath Singh** reaffirmed **India's support** to enhance **Maldives' defence capabilities**.
  रक्षा मंत्री राजनाथ सिंह ने **मालदीव के रक्षा मंत्री मोहम्मद घसन मऊमून** के साथ वार्ता के दौरान **मालदीव की रक्षा क्षमताओं** को बढ़ाने में **भारत का समर्थन** फिर से पुष्टि किया।
- Mr. Maumoon appreciated **India's historical role** as the "**first responder**" to **Maldives** and thanked India for its assistance in enhancing infrastructure and training **Maldivian defence personnel**.
  मि. मऊमून ने **भारत की ऐतिहासिक भूमिका** की सराहना की, जिसे **मालदीव** के लिए "**पहला जवाबदाता**" माना जाता है और भारत का आभार व्यक्त किया, जो **मालदीव के रक्षा कर्मियों** के बुनियादी ढांचे और प्रशिक्षण को बढ़ावा देने में मदद कर रहा है।

India-Maldives Defence Cooperation and Future Engagement
भारत-मालदीव रक्षा सहयोग और भविष्य में संलग्नता

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- Mr. Singh mentioned that the talks were **fruitful** and addressed several issues aimed at deepening **defence cooperation**, which will also enhance the capabilities of **Maldives National Defence Forces (MNDF)**.

  मि. सिंह ने कहा कि वार्ता **सकारात्मक** रही और कई मुद्दों पर चर्चा की गई, जिसका उद्देश्य **रक्षा सहयोग** को गहरा करना था, जो **मालदीव राष्ट्रीय रक्षा बलों (MNDF)** की क्षमताओं को भी बढ़ाएगा।

- The discussions are expected to add **new vigour** to **India-Maldives relations**.

  इन चर्चाओं से **भारत-मालदीव संबंधों** में **नई ताकत** जुड़ने की उम्मीद है।

Comprehensive Review of Bilateral Defence Cooperation
दो-तरफा रक्षा सहयोग की समग्र समीक्षा

- Both **Defence Ministers** comprehensively reviewed various aspects of **bilateral defence and security cooperation**.

  दोनों **रक्षा मंत्रियों** ने **दो-तरफा रक्षा और सुरक्षा सहयोग** के विभिन्न पहलुओं की समग्र समीक्षा की।

- They reaffirmed their **commitment** to working closely on **India-Maldives economic and maritime security partnership**.

  उन्होंने **भारत-मालदीव आर्थिक और समुद्री सुरक्षा साझेदारी** को साकार करने में अपने **प्रतिबद्धता** को फिर से पुष्टि की।

Visit of Maldivian Defence Minister to India
मालदीव के रक्षा मंत्री का भारत दौरा

- This is the **first visit** by the **Maldivian Defence Minister** to **India** since the new government came to power in the island nation.

  यह **मालदीव के रक्षा मंत्री** का **भारत** का **पहला दौरा** है, जब से **नई सरकार** ने द्वीपीय देश में सत्ता संभाली है।

- The Ministers discussed the **Ekatha Harbour project** for **MNDF Coast Guard**, for which the **foundation stone** was laid by Mr. Singh and Maldivian counterpart **Mariya Didi** in **May 2023**.

  मंत्रियों ने **MNDF कोस्ट गार्ड** के लिए **एकता हार्बर परियोजना** पर चर्चा की, जिसका **नींव पत्थर मई 2023** में मि. सिंह और मालदीव की समकक्ष **मारीया दीदी** द्वारा रखा गया था।

India's Grant-in-Aid Projects for Maldives
भारत की मालदीव के लिए अनुदान परियोजनाएँ

- The development of the **Coast Guard Harbour and repair facility** at **Sifavaru** is one of the **biggest grant-in-aid projects** of India.

  सिफवारू में **कोस्ट गार्ड हार्बर और मरम्मत सुविधा** का विकास भारत की **सबसे बड़ी अनुदान परियोजनाओं** में से एक है।

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Maldivian Defence Minister's Visit to National War Memorial
मालदीव के रक्षा मंत्री का राष्ट्रीय युद्ध स्मारक पर दौरा

- Earlier, the visiting **Maldivian Defence Minister** laid a **wreath** at the **National War Memorial**.

  पहले, दौरे पर आए **मालदीव के रक्षा मंत्री** ने **राष्ट्रीय युद्ध स्मारक** पर **माला चढ़ाई**।

- He was also accorded a **tri-service guard of honour**.

  उन्हें **तीन-सेवा गार्ड ऑफ ऑनर** भी दिया गया।

'India's digital policies, talent getting global recognition'

The IT Minister says the country is crafting balanced policies on data protection, online fact-checking, children on social media, and AI regulations while insisting that society and law have to walk in tandem; he says U.S.-based tech firms operating in India must comply with our law on data transfer restrictions; now the global IT industry is also looking at us as a potential demand centre, he adds

GS Paper III: Digital Technology

INTERVIEW

Ashwini Vaishnaw

Varghese K. George
Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

In the past, global IT firms saw India as a way to save costs, but they are now seeing the country as a leading source of talent and demand, Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw says. He speaks on the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules and AI regulation. Excerpts:

What can we expect in the coming months with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules in terms of further consultation and implementation?

The consultations so far have been extensive, and people are by and large okay with the provisions. I don't see too many amendments coming in the final notification beyond some

tweaks. We have also worked on the entire digital implementation framework of the DPDP Act, so that the Data Protection Board of India's portal is ready, and implementation will happen in a totally digital way.

We would like to notify it as soon as we can, and of course we'll give a good transition period to the industry to move to a new regime. I think we should see the implementation of this Act starting somewhere in the middle of this year.

In the event that government organisations are in breach of standards in the DPDP Rules, will they also be liable to the same penalties and consequences?

Of course. In this country, we have a system where the law stands the same for everybody. The law is supreme.

How do you respond to concerns on the Data Protection Board of India's autonomy?

The law has been drafted

in a way to ensure the functioning and autonomy of the Board. What will be a big challenge will be getting the right people who understand law, digital technology, the financial implications, societal implications. We are working on awareness programmes.

Why are submissions in the Rules' consultation process not public, as they are in those held by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India?

You cannot compare TRAI's consultation process with a lawmaking consultation. Lawmaking is a sovereign act enabled by the Constitution. Laws are made in a very structured manner. TRAI consultations are regulations for the industry.

The Rules hint at data transfer restrictions abroad. Does this conflict with other countries' laws, especially for U.S. firms doing business here?

The laws passed by the Parliament of India will be ap-

plicable to every entity, from every geography that is providing services here.

On Tuesday, Meta announced that they are moving away from professional fact-checkers to community-led fact-checking. The IT Rules had provisions on fact-checking bodies for general news and news on the government...

This whole point proves that the stand that we had taken was the right one, that the owner or the generator of the information, or the person who is well placed to fact check in a particular sector on a particular subject is the right person to do so. [On legal

challenges to fact-checking requirements:] Let the courts decide. This is a very logical way to proceed, and there is no bias in this entire thought process.

On Monday, a subcommittee under the IndiaAI Mission put out a draft framework for AI governance. What is the government's view on tackling AI regulation?

AI has three major dimensions. First, the power that it brings for solving our very complex problems, which we must harness. Second, the potential harms it can cause. And third, the opportunities it creates for our companies, our youth and startups,

that we should not block.

That's why our Principal Scientific Adviser has taken this initiative under the honourable Prime Minister's guidance, to create a holistic plan for the country, to create a good regulatory framework which develops trust, and balances innovation and regulation. We will finalise the draft after getting inputs.

Do you think that innovation and strict rules are necessarily in conflict?

They're not. The reason I say this is because some geographies have actually put so much emphasis on the regulation part that the innovation potential there has reduced; and there are some geographies which do not want any regulation, they simply want 100% innovation.

We are actually trying to place ourselves somewhere between the two.

And I think the world is noticing; in informal meetings, people are saying that this is the right template which the world should follow. There is an impact [of big tech and social media]

on institutions which have been built over centuries, and most societies are today worried that the institutions are weakened because of the misinformation and the fake news.

So everywhere, society is looking for the right balance between absolute free speech and the right mix of regulation.

The Rules do not outright ban social media for children, like some countries are doing, but require authentication of parental consent.

Here again, we have taken a very nuanced approach and our approach is that these are things which must evolve, and the society must create a consensus around these subjects. Society and the law have to walk in tandem.

The Digital India Act has been planned to replace the Information Technology Act, 2000. Are we still moving in that direction?

We have to overhaul the

entire digital framework. We began with the two horizontal laws, the Telecommunication Act, 2023 and the DPDP Act, 2023, which cut across all the sectors and have an impact on all sectors. There will be certain verticals which are specific to sectors, and we are working on this whole comprehensive framework.

Microsoft this week announced $3 billion in India investments, and there were deals announced with the IT Ministry and private firms. What role does the private sector have in our AI ambitions?

All players in the industry have a big role to play in our growth story. We see a very clear trend that the competitiveness of our talent is very well accepted, and so is the certainty of our policies. So now the global IT industry, which was earlier looking at India mostly from a cost and talent arbitrage perspective, is also looking at India as a potential demand centre.
(Full interview on newsth.live/vaishnaw)

'India's digital policies, talent getting global recognition'

'भारत की डिजिटल नीतियों, प्रतिभाओं को मिल रही वैश्विक पहचान'

The IT Minister says the country is crafting balanced policies on data protection, online fact-checking, children on social media, and AI

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regulations while insisting that society and law have to walk in tandem; he says U.S.-based tech • rms operating in India must comply with our law on data transfer restrictions; now the global IT industry is also looking at us as a potential demand centre, he adds

आईटी मंत्री ने कहा कि देश डेटा संरक्षण, ऑनलाइन तथ्य-जांच, सोशल मीडिया पर बच्चों और एआई विनियमन पर संतुलित नीतियां तैयार कर रहा है, जबकि समाज और कानून को एक साथ चलना होगा; उन्होंने कहा कि भारत में काम करने वाली अमेरिकी-आधारित प्रौद्योगिकी फर्मों को डेटा ट्रांसफर प्रतिबंधों पर हमारे कानून का पालन करना चाहिए; उन्होंने कहा कि अब वैश्विक आईटी उद्योग भी हमें संभावित मांग केंद्र के रूप में देख रहा है।

India's Digital Personal Data Protection Rules and AI Regulation
भारत के डिजिटल व्यक्तिगत डेटा संरक्षण नियम और ए.आई. नियमन

- **Ashwini Vaishnaw**, the Union Minister of **Electronics and Information Technology**, explains that global IT firms once saw **India** as a way to save costs but now view it as a **leading source of talent** and **demand**.
  अश्विनी वैष्णव, केंद्रीय **इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स और सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री**, बताते हैं कि वैश्विक आईटी कंपनियां पहले **भारत** को लागत बचाने के तरीके के रूप में देखती थीं, लेकिन अब इसे **प्रतिभा** और **मांग** का एक प्रमुख स्रोत मानती हैं।

Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules Implementation
डिजिटल व्यक्तिगत डेटा संरक्षण (DPDP) नियमों का क्रियान्वयन

- **Consultations** for the **DPDP Rules** have been extensive, and most people are in agreement with the provisions. **Ashwini Vaishnaw** expects only minor **tweaks** in the final notification.
  DPDP नियमों के लिए **परामर्श** व्यापक रूप से किए गए हैं, और अधिकांश लोग उनके प्रावधानों से सहमत हैं। **अश्विनी वैष्णव** को अंतिम अधिसूचना में केवल कुछ छोटे **संशोधनों** की उम्मीद है।
- The **Data Protection Board of India's portal** is ready for digital implementation, and the **DPDP Act** will be implemented in a **fully digital way**.
  डेटा संरक्षण बोर्ड ऑफ इंडिया का पोर्टल डिजिटल क्रियान्वयन के लिए तैयार है, और **DPDP अधिनियम** को **पूरी तरह से डिजिटल तरीके** से लागू किया जाएगा।
- The **DPDP Act** is expected to be implemented around the **middle of this year**, with a **transition period** for the industry.
  DPDP अधिनियम को **इस वर्ष के मध्य** के आस-पास लागू किया जाने की उम्मीद है, और उद्योग को इसके लिए **संक्रमण काल** दिया जाएगा।

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Penalties for Breaching DPDP Rules
DPDP नियमों का उल्लंघन करने पर दंड

- **Government organizations** will be liable to the same penalties and consequences as any other entity if they breach **DPDP Rules**.
  सरकारी संगठनों को भी यदि वे **DPDP नियमों** का उल्लंघन करते हैं तो उन्हें वही दंड और परिणाम भुगतने होंगे जो किसी अन्य संस्था को होंगे।
- **Ashwini Vaishnaw** emphasized that the **law is supreme** and applies equally to everyone in the country.
  अश्विनी वैष्णव ने यह जोर दिया कि **कानून सर्वोच्च है** और यह देश में सभी पर समान रूप से लागू होता है।

Autonomy of the Data Protection Board of India
डेटा संरक्षण बोर्ड ऑफ इंडिया की स्वायत्तता

- The **law** ensures the **autonomy** of the **Data Protection Board of India**. The challenge is to get the right people who understand **law**, **digital technology**, and **societal implications**.
  कानून डेटा संरक्षण बोर्ड ऑफ इंडिया की स्वायत्तता सुनिश्चित करता है। चुनौती यह है कि ऐसे सही लोग मिलें जो **कानून**, **डिजिटल प्रौद्योगिकी**, और **सामाजिक प्रभावों** को समझते हों।
- **Awareness programmes** are being worked on to address these challenges.
  इन चुनौतियों को संबोधित करने के लिए **जागरूकता कार्यक्रम** पर काम किया जा रहा है।

Consultation Process for DPDP Rules
DPDP नियमों के लिए परामर्श प्रक्रिया

- **Submissions** in the **DPDP Rules consultation** are not public because lawmaking consultations are different from industry regulations like those conducted by **TRAI**.
  DPDP नियमों के लिए परामर्श में दिए गए **प्रस्ताव सार्वजनिक नहीं किए जाते हैं, क्योंकि कानून निर्माण परामर्श **TRAI** द्वारा किए गए उद्योग नियमन से अलग होते हैं।
- **Lawmaking is a sovereign act** enabled by the **Constitution**, while TRAI consultations are for industry regulations.
  कानून बनाना एक **संप्रभु कृत्य** है जो **संविधान** द्वारा सक्षम होता है, जबकि TRAI परामर्श उद्योग नियमन के लिए होते हैं।

Data Transfer Restrictions Abroad in DPDP Rules
DPDP नियमों में विदेशों में डेटा स्थानांतरण प्रतिबंध

- **India's laws** will apply to every entity, regardless of location, providing services in the country, including **U.S. firms** doing business in India.

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भारत के कानून सभी संस्थाओं पर लागू होंगे, चाहे वे किसी भी स्थान से हों, जो भारत में सेवाएं प्रदान कर रहे हैं, जिनमें **यू.एस. कंपनियां** भी शामिल हैं।

Fact-Checking Provisions and Meta's Announcement
तथ्य-चेकिंग प्रावधान और मेटा की घोषणा

- **Meta** announced shifting from professional **fact-checkers** to **community-led fact-checking**. The **IT Rules** had provisions on fact-checking for general and government-related news.
  मेटा ने **व्यावसायिक तथ्य-निर्धारणकर्ताओं** से **समुदाय-प्रेरित तथ्य-निर्धारण** की ओर रुख करने की घोषणा की। **आईटी नियमों** में सामान्य और सरकारी समाचारों के लिए तथ्य-चेकिंग के प्रावधान थे।

- **Ashwini Vaishnaw** supported the idea that those who are **well placed** to fact-check a specific issue in a particular sector are the right ones for the job.
  अश्विनी वैष्णव ने इस विचार का समर्थन किया कि जो लोग किसी विशिष्ट क्षेत्र में किसी विशिष्ट मुद्दे की तथ्य-निर्धारण के लिए **सही जगह पर** हैं, वे इसके लिए सही व्यक्ति हैं।

AI Governance and Regulation in India
भारत में ए.आई. शासन और नियमन

- **AI** has three major dimensions: its power to solve complex problems, its potential harms, and the opportunities it creates for **Indian companies, youth, and startups**.
  ए.आई. के तीन प्रमुख आयाम हैं: जटिल समस्याओं को हल करने की इसकी शक्ति, इसके संभावित खतरे, और यह जो **भारतीय कंपनियों, युवाओं, और स्टार्टअप्स** के लिए अवसर उत्पन्न करता है।

- **India's Principal Scientific Adviser** is leading an initiative to create a **holistic plan** for AI regulation under the guidance of the **Prime Minister**.
  भारत के प्रमुख वैज्ञानिक सलाहकार प्रधानमंत्री की मार्गदर्शन में ए.आई. नियमन के लिए एक **समग्र योजना** बनाने की पहल कर रहे हैं।

- A **regulatory framework** for AI will be developed to balance **innovation** and **regulation**.
  ए.आई. के लिए एक नियामक ढांचा विकसित किया जाएगा ताकि **नवाचार** और **नियमन** के बीच संतुलन बनाए रखा जा सके।

Innovation vs. Strict Rules in AI
ए.आई. में नवाचार और कठोर नियमों के बीच संतुलन

- Innovation and strict rules are not necessarily in conflict. Some regions focus so much on **regulation** that **innovation** suffers, while others avoid regulation entirely.

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नवाचार और कठोर नियम जरूरी नहीं कि संघर्ष में हों। कुछ क्षेत्र इतने ज्यादा **नियमन** पर जोर देते हैं कि **नवाचार** प्रभावित होता है, जबकि अन्य नियमन से पूरी तरह बचते हैं।

- **India** aims to balance these two aspects, and the world is noticing it as the **right template** for others to follow.
  भारत इन दोनों पहलुओं के बीच संतुलन बनाने की कोशिश कर रहा है, और दुनिया इसे दूसरों के लिए **सही रूपरेखा** के रूप में देख रही है।

Digital India Act and Overhaul of IT Framework
डिजिटल इंडिया अधिनियम और आईटी ढांचे का पुनर्निर्माण

- The **Digital India Act** is planned to replace the **Information Technology Act, 2000**, as part of a comprehensive overhaul of the **digital framework**.
  डिजिटल इंडिया अधिनियम को **सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी अधिनियम, 2000** को बदलने के लिए योजना बनाई गई है, जो **डिजिटल ढांचे** के समग्र पुनर्निर्माण का हिस्सा है।
- The government has already introduced two horizontal laws: the **Telecommunication Act, 2023** and the **DPDP Act, 2023**, with more sector-specific laws in development.
  सरकार ने पहले ही दो क्षैतिज कानून पेश किए हैं: **दूरसंचार अधिनियम, 2023** और **DPDP अधिनियम, 2023**, और अन्य क्षेत्र-विशेष कानूनों का विकास किया जा रहा है।

Role of Private Sector in India's AI Ambitions
भारत की ए.आई. महत्वाकांक्षाओं में निजी क्षेत्र की भूमिका

- **Private sector** plays a significant role in India's growth story, as the country's **talent** and **policy certainty** are highly valued globally.
  निजी क्षेत्र भारत की विकास कहानी में एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है, क्योंकि देश की **प्रतिभा** और **नीति की स्पष्टता** वैश्विक स्तर पर अत्यधिक सराही जाती है।
- The global IT industry is now viewing **India** not just for **cost and talent arbitrage** but also as a potential **demand centre**.
  वैश्विक आईटी उद्योग अब **भारत** को केवल **लागत और प्रतिभा का लाभ** प्राप्त करने के रूप में नहीं, बल्कि एक संभावित **मांग केंद्र** के रूप में देख रहा है।

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SC to take up pleas challenging CEC and EC appointment law in February

GS Paper II: Constitutional Bodies

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar's retirement in February brought back into focus before the Supreme Court on Wednesday the need to fast-track a decision on the legality of a new law dealing with the appointment of Election Commissioners which gives the Union government a dominant role.

Justice Surya Kant, heading a three-judge Bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and K.V. Viswanathan, highlighted that the test regarding the validity of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act, 2023 would hinge on whether the court's authority to pronounce binding decisions under Article 141 of the Constitution could be circumvent-

The petitioners pointed to the retirement of CEC Rajiv Kumar to advance hearing. FILE PHOTO

ed or diluted by a law. "The real test here is between the court's opinion and exercise of legislative powers," he said.

The petitions in question raised the pivotal legal question whether Parliament possessed the authority to promulgate a Gazette notification or ordinance to nullify or amend a Constitution Bench judgment.

The petitioners, including the NGO Association

for Democratic Reforms and activist Jaya Thakur, have said that the law was introduced in December 2023 to dilute a Constitution Bench judgment of the Supreme Court in the Anoop Baranwal case on March 2, 2023.

Validity of Section 7(1)
The petitions have primarily challenged the validity of Section 7(1) of the statute. Section 7(1) mandates that the President will appoint the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners on the recommendation of a Selection Committee of the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition in the House of the People and a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

The judgment had directed the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners to be appointed by the Presi-

dent on the advice tendered by a Selection Committee of Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha/leader of the single largest party in Opposition and the Chief Justice of India.

The Constitution Bench had explained that a committee of diverse heads was necessary to protect the "fierce independence, neutrality and honesty" of the institution of the Election Commission and to end government monopoly and "exclusive control" over appointments to the highest poll body.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, for the petitioners, urged the court to fix an early date, saying the validity of the law has to be decided before the next crucial appointments to the EC. "Hear it next week," he suggested.

However, Justice Kant said the case could likely be heard on February 4.

Retirement of Chief Election Commissioner and Legal Challenge on Election Commissioners Appointment Law
मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त की सेवानिवृत्ति और चुनाव आयुक्तों की नियुक्ति कानून पर कानूनी चुनौती

- **Rajiv Kumar**, the **Chief Election Commissioner**, will retire in **February**. This has brought the **legality of a new law** regarding the appointment of Election Commissioners into focus.

  राजीव कुमार, **मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त**, **फरवरी** में सेवानिवृत्त होंगे। इसने चुनाव आयुक्तों की नियुक्ति से संबंधित **नए कानून की वैधता** को सुप्रीम कोर्ट के सामने लाया है।

- The law **gives the Union government a dominant role** in the appointment of Election Commissioners.

  यह कानून चुनाव आयुक्तों की नियुक्ति में **केंद्र सरकार को प्रमुख भूमिका** देता है।

Supreme Court's Test on the Validity of the Law
सुप्रीम कोर्ट का कानून की वैधता पर परीक्षण

- Justice **Surya Kant**, leading a three-judge Bench, emphasized that the test would hinge on whether the law could **circumvent or dilute** the court's authority under **Article 141** of the Constitution.

  न्यायमूर्ति **सूर्या कांट**, तीन न्यायाधीशों की पीठ की अध्यक्षता करते हुए, इस बात पर बल दिया कि यह परीक्षण इस बात पर निर्भर करेगा कि क्या यह कानून संविधान के **अनुच्छेद 141** के तहत अदालत की अधिकारिता को **हटाने या कमजोर करने** में सक्षम है।

- The real test is the **conflict between the court's opinion** and the **exercise of legislative powers**.

  वास्तविक परीक्षण **अदालत की राय** और **विधायी शक्तियों के उपयोग** के बीच **संघर्ष** है।

Petitions and Legal Question on Parliament's Authority
याचिकाएं और संसद की प्राधिकरण पर कानूनी सवाल

- The **petitions** raised the question of whether Parliament had the authority to promulgate a **Gazette notification** or **ordinance** to nullify or amend a **Constitution Bench judgment**.

  याचिकाओं ने यह सवाल उठाया कि क्या संसद के पास **गजट अधिसूचना** या **आदेश** जारी करने का अधिकार है, जिससे **संविधान पीठ के निर्णय** को रद्द या संशोधित किया जा सके।

- The petitions, including one from the **NGO Association for Democratic Reforms** and activist **Jaya Thakur**, argue that the law was introduced in **December 2023** to dilute the **Anoop Baranwal case judgment** from **March 2, 2023**.

  NGO असोसिएशन फॉर डेमोक्रेटिक रिफॉर्म्स और कार्यकर्ता **जया ठाकुर** द्वारा दायर याचिकाएं, यह तर्क देती हैं कि यह कानून **दिसंबर 2023** में **आनूप बरनवाल मामले के फैसले** को कमजोर करने के लिए पेश किया गया था, जो **2 मार्च 2023** को सुप्रीम कोर्ट द्वारा दिया गया था।

Challenge to Section 7(1) of the New Law
नए कानून के अनुच्छेद 7(1) पर चुनौती

- The **primary challenge** is to **Section 7(1)** of the statute, which mandates the **President** to appoint the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners based on

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recommendations from a **Selection Committee**.

नए कानून के **अनुच्छेद 7(1)** को मुख्य चुनौती दी गई है, जो **राष्ट्रपति** को चुनाव आयुक्तों और मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त की नियुक्ति के लिए **चयन समिति** के सुझाव पर आधारित करता है।

- The **Selection Committee** includes the **Prime Minister**, the **Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha**, and a **Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister**.

  चयन समिति में **प्रधानमंत्री**, **लोकसभा में विपक्ष के नेता**, और **प्रधानमंत्री द्वारा नामित एक केंद्रीय कैबिनेट मंत्री** शामिल हैं।

- The **Anoop Baranwal case judgment** had directed that the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners should be appointed on the advice of a committee including the **Chief Justice of India**.

  आनूप बरनवाल मामले का निर्णय में निर्देश दिया गया था कि चुनाव आयुक्तों और मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त की नियुक्ति **भारत के मुख्य न्यायधीश** सहित एक समिति की सलाह पर की जाए।

Purpose of the Constitution Bench Judgment
संविधान पीठ के निर्णय का उद्देश्य

- The **Constitution Bench** had emphasized that a diverse committee was necessary to protect the **independence**, **neutrality**, and **honesty** of the **Election Commission**.

  संविधान पीठ ने यह महत्वपूर्ण बताया था कि एक विविध समिति का गठन आवश्यक है ताकि **चुनाव आयोग की स्वतंत्रता**, **नपक्षता**, और **ईमानदारी** को संरक्षित किया जा सके।

- The judgment aimed to **end government monopoly** and exclusive control over appointments to the **Election Commission**.

  निर्णय का उद्देश्य था कि सरकार के **एकाधिकार** और चुनाव आयोग में नियुक्तियों पर **विशेष नियंत्रण** को समाप्त किया जाए।

Petitioners Urge Early Hearing
याचिकाकर्ताओं ने त्वरित सुनवाई की अपील की

- Advocate **Prashant Bhushan**, representing the petitioners, urged the court to set an **early date** for hearing, as the validity of the law must be decided before **crucial appointments** to the **Election Commission**.

  प्रशांत भूषण, याचिकाकर्ताओं के वकील, ने अदालत से **जल्दी तारीख** निर्धारित करने की अपील की, क्योंकि इस कानून की वैधता को **महत्वपूर्ण नियुक्तियों** से पहले तय करना होगा।

- He suggested that the case be heard as soon as **next week**.

  उन्होंने सुझाव दिया कि इस मामले की सुनवाई **अगले हफ्ते** होनी चाहिए।

Possible Hearing Date Set for February 4
संभवतः 4 फरवरी को सुनवाई की तारीख तय

- **Justice Surya Kant** indicated that the case might be heard on **February 4**.

  न्यायमूर्ति सूर्या कांत ने संकेत दिया कि इस मामले की सुनवाई **4 फरवरी** को हो सकती है।

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Filmmaker and poet Pritish Nandy passes away at 73

फिल्म निर्माता और कवि प्रीतिश नंदी का 73 वर्ष की आयु में निधन

PCS

Filmmaker and poet Pritish Nandy passes away at 73

Poet, painter, film producer and former parliamentarian Pritish Nandy passed away at 73 on Wednesday. Actor Anupam Kher paid tribute in a post on X, calling Mr. Nandy a fearless artist and a source of strength during his struggling years. A noted magazine editor and literary voice, Mr. Nandy established his production banner, Pritish Nandy Communications, in the 1990s. Nandy was given the Padma Shri in 1977 for his contributions to Indian literature. He also hosted the DD show called *The Pritish Nandy Show*. He was awarded the Karmaveer Puraskar in 2008. Nandy is survived by his wife, Rina, and children Kushan, Ishita and Rangita.

Poet, Painter, Film Producer, and Former Parliamentarian Pritish Nandy Passes Away
कवि, चित्रकार, फिल्म निर्माता और पूर्व सांसद प्रीतिश नंदी का निधन

- **Pritish Nandy**, the poet, painter, film producer, and former parliamentarian, passed away at the age of **73** on **Wednesday**.
  प्रीतिश नंदी, कवि, चित्रकार, फिल्म निर्माता और पूर्व सांसद, 73 वर्ष की आयु में **बुधवार** को निधन हो गए।
- Actor **Anupam Kher** paid tribute to Mr. Nandy, calling him a **fearless artist** and a **source of strength** during his struggling years.
  अभिनेता **अनुपम खेर** ने श्री नंदी को श्रद्धांजलि अर्पित की, उन्हें **निडर कलाकार** और उनके संघर्ष के दिनों में **शक्ति का स्रोत** बताया।
- Mr. Nandy was a noted **magazine editor** and **literary voice** in India.
  श्री नंदी भारत में प्रसिद्ध **पत्रिका संपादक** और **साहित्यिक आवाज** थे।
- He established his production banner, **Pritish Nandy Communications**, in the **1990s**.
  उन्होंने **1990 के दशक** में अपनी उत्पादन कंपनी **प्रीतिश नंदी कम्युनिकेशंस** की स्थापना की।
- Mr. Nandy was awarded the **Padma Shri** in 1977 for his contributions to **Indian literature**.
  श्री नंदी को **1977** में **भारतीय साहित्य** में उनके योगदान के लिए **पद्म श्री** से सम्मानित किया गया।
- He also hosted the **DD show** called **The Pritish Nandy Show**.
  उन्होंने **डीडी शो** की मेज़बानी भी की, जिसे **द प्रीतिश नंदी शो** कहा जाता था।
- Mr. Nandy was awarded the **Karmaveer Puraskar** in 2008.
  श्री नंदी को **2008** में **कर्मवीर पुरस्कार** से नवाजा गया।

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- He is survived by his wife, **Rina**, and children **Kushan**, **Ishita**, and **Rangita**.
  वे अपनी पत्नी **रीना** और बच्चों **कुशन**, **इशिता** और **रंगिता** द्वारा जीवित हैं।

India balancing on twin pillars of technology, tradition: Jaishankar

At the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, External Affairs Minister says the nation's quest is unique because development is based on a democratic framework; he lauded the youth, at home and abroad, for contribution to innovations in every sector
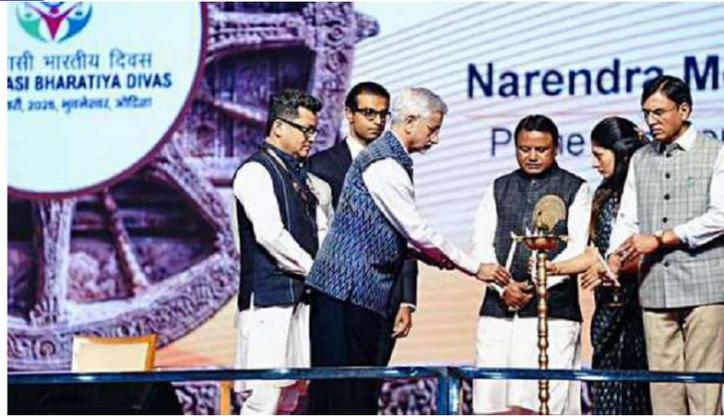
GS Paper II: Indian Diaspora

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

India is progressing within a democratic framework, balancing on the twin pillars of technology and tradition, said External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday.

"We are today well on the way to address long-standing challenges to build a modern, inclusive and progressive society. Our quest is unique because the largest nation in the world is developing in that manner in a democratic framework. The mantra of that journey is to advance, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi says, on the two legs of technology and tradition," Mr. Jaishankar remarked.

The youth of the country can be the defining factor in the pace of that endeavour and the realisation of the goals, he added.

Mr. Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the PBD on Thursday.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Odisha CM Mohan Majhi and Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday. ANI

Stating that the thought behind holding a Youth PBD was to recognise the special contribution that young minds make, at home and abroad, Mr. Jaishankar said, "At a time when so many key developments in the world are being shaped by this younger generation – whether we talk of AI and EV, innovation or start-ups, space or drones, sports, chess, cricket – there is all the more reason to do so."

"The very country that was predicted to go under ended up supplying vaccines and medicines to the entire world. A different but equally telling example is what we see in the realm of space, where there is a growing competition internationally. Our Chandrayaan-3 landing, the Aditya L1 observatory and the proposed Gaganyaan mission are powerful inspirations," the Union Minister said.

"In a digital era, the scale of UPI transactions speaks volumes, both of our infrastructure and of our mindsets. The new India, with 90,000 start-ups and 100-plus unicorns, has calling cards like Drone Didi, Atal Tinkering Labs, hackathons, green hydrogen mission and nano-fertilizers," he said.

Guest of honour Dev Pragad, a person of Indian origin and chief executive officer of *Newsweek*, narrated how diligent effort had enabled a turnaround of the American media organisation that he helms.

Odisha in focus
Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi took the opportunity to showcase the State's strength in mineral resources, tourism and human resources.

"While Odisha's past is steeped in history, its present is defined by transformation and progress. Today, Odisha stands as a leader in mining and industries such as steel and aluminium, while also emerging as a hub for sports, IT and skill development," Mr. Majhi said.

At a business session on the sidelines of PBD 2025, Mr. Jaishankar focused on the 3Ts – Trade, Technology, and Tourism – as critical drivers of Odisha's growth.

He lauded the State's rich natural and cultural advantages, which position it as a hub for global trade, a fertile ground for technological innovation, and a premier tourism destination.

भारत प्रौद्योगिकी और परंपरा के दोहरे स्तंभों पर संतुलन बना रहा है: जयशंकर

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At the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, External A• airs Minister says the nation's quest is unique because development is based on a democratic framework; he lauded the youth, at home and abroad, for contribution to innovations in every sector

युवा प्रवासी भारतीय दिवस पर विदेश मंत्री ने कहा कि देश की खोज अनूठी है क्योंकि विकास लोकतांत्रिक ढांचे पर आधारित है; उन्होंने हर क्षेत्र में नवाचारों में योगदान के लिए देश और विदेश के युवाओं की सराहना की

India's Progress within a Democratic Framework, Says S. Jaishankar
स. जयशंकर ने कहा, लोकतांत्रिक ढांचे में भारत की प्रगति

- **S. Jaishankar**, the External Affairs Minister, stated that India is progressing within a **democratic framework**, balancing on the twin pillars of **technology and tradition** at the **Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)** in **Bhubaneswar** on **Wednesday**.
  स. जयशंकर, विदेश मंत्री ने कहा कि भारत **लोकतांत्रिक ढांचे में** प्रगति कर रहा है, जो **प्रौद्योगिकी और परंपरा** के दो स्तंभों पर संतुलित है, **युवाओं के प्रवासी भारतीय दिवस (PBD)** में **भुवनेश्वर** में **बुधवार** को।

- India is working to address **longstanding challenges** and build a **modern, inclusive, and progressive society**.
  भारत **दीर्घकालिक चुनौतियों** को हल करने और एक **आधुनिक, समावेशी और प्रगतिशील समाज** बनाने के लिए काम कर रहा है।

- The unique quest of India is that the **largest nation** in the world is developing in a **democratic framework**.
  भारत की विशिष्ट यात्रा यह है कि **दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा देश** लोकतांत्रिक ढांचे में विकसित हो रहा है।

- According to **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, the mantra for this journey is to advance on the two legs of **technology and tradition**.
  प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के अनुसार, इस यात्रा का मंत्र है **प्रौद्योगिकी और परंपरा** के दो पैरों पर आगे बढ़ना।

- The youth of the country can define the pace of this endeavor and help realize its goals.
  देश के युवा इस प्रयास की गति को परिभाषित कर सकते हैं और इसके लक्ष्यों की प्राप्ति में मदद कर सकते हैं।

- **Prime Minister Modi** is scheduled to inaugurate the **PBD** on **Thursday**.
  प्रधानमंत्री मोदी गुरुवार को **PBD** का उद्घाटन करने वाले हैं।

- The aim behind holding a **Youth PBD** was to recognize the **special contribution** of young minds, both at home and abroad.

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युवाओं के प्रवासी भारतीय दिवस (Youth PBD) का उद्देश्य युवा दिमागों के **विशेष योगदान** को पहचानना था, चाहे वे देश में हों या विदेश में।

- The younger generation is shaping key global developments like **AI**, **EVs**, **innovation**, **start-ups**, **space**, **drones**, **sports**, **chess**, and **cricket**.
  युवाओं की पीढ़ी **एआई**, **ईवी**, **नवाचार**, **स्टार्ट-अप्स**, **अंतरिक्ष**, **ड्रोन**, **खेल**, **शतरंज** और **क्रिकेट** जैसे वैश्विक विकासों को आकार दे रही है।

- **India**, a country once predicted to collapse, ended up supplying **vaccines and medicines** to the entire world.
  भारत, जिसे कभी पतन का अनुमान था, अंततः पूरी दुनिया को **वैक्सीन्स और दवाएं** आपूर्ति करने में सक्षम हुआ।

- Examples of India's growing space power include **Chandrayaan-3**, the **Aditya L1 observatory**, and the proposed **Gaganyaan mission**.
  भारत की बढ़ती अंतरिक्ष शक्ति के उदाहरणों में **चंद्रयान-3**, **आदित्य L1 वेधशाला**, और प्रस्तावित **गगनयान मिशन** शामिल हैं।

- In the **digital era**, the scale of **UPI transactions** showcases both India's infrastructure and its evolving mindsets.
  डिजिटल युग में, **यूपीआई लेन-देन** का पैमाना भारत की **इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर** और उसके बदलते मानसिकता को दर्शाता है।

- India now has **90,000 start-ups** and more than **100 unicorns** with initiatives like **Drone Didi**, **Atal Tinkering Labs**, **hackathons**, **green hydrogen mission**, and **nano-fertilizers**.
  भारत के पास अब **90,000 स्टार्ट-अप्स** और **100 से अधिक यूनिकॉर्न** हैं, जिनमें **ड्रोन दीदी**, **अटल टिंकरिंग लैब्स**, **हैकाथॉन्स**, **ग्रीन हाइड्रोजन मिशन** और **नैनो-फर्टिलाइज़र्स** जैसी पहलकदमी शामिल हैं।

- **Dev Pragad**, the guest of honor and CEO of **Newsweek**, spoke about the turnaround of the American media organization he leads.
  देव प्रधान, मान्य अतिथि और **न्यूज़वीक** के सीईओ, ने उस अमेरिकी मीडिया संगठन के पुनर्निर्माण के बारे में बताया जिसे वे नेतृत्व करते हैं।

- Odisha's **Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi** highlighted the state's strength in **mineral resources**, **tourism**, and **human resources**.
  ओडिशा के **मुख्यमंत्री मोहन चरण महजी** ने राज्य की ताकत को **खनिज संसाधनों**, **पर्यटन**, और **मानव संसाधनों** में उजागर किया।

- Odisha is a leader in **mining**, **steel**, and **aluminium industries**, and is emerging as a hub for **sports**, **IT**, and **skill development**.
  ओडिशा **खनन**, **स्टील**, और **एल्यूमिनियम उद्योगों** में एक प्रमुख राज्य है, और **खेल**, **आईटी**, और **कौशल विकास** के लिए एक केंद्र के रूप में उभर रहा है।

- At a business session, **Jaishankar** emphasized the **3Ts** — **Trade**, **Technology**, and **Tourism** — as critical drivers of Odisha's growth.

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एक व्यापार सत्र में, **जयशंकर** ने ओडिशा की वृद्धि के लिए **3टी — वाणिज्य**, **प्रौद्योगिकी**, और **पर्यटन** — को महत्वपूर्ण चालक के रूप में रेखांकित किया।

- He praised Odisha's rich **natural** and **cultural advantages**, positioning it as a hub for **global trade**, a fertile ground for **technological innovation**, and a premier **tourism destination**.

उन्होंने ओडिशा के **प्राकृतिक** और **सांस्कृतिक लाभों** की सराहना की, इसे **वैश्विक व्यापार, प्रौद्योगिकी नवाचार** और एक प्रमुख **पर्यटन स्थल** के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया।

Prioritise studies on oilseeds, rice, pulses hybrids, says official

GS Paper III: Agriculture

NEW DELHI

Endorsing the use of hybrid seeds to increase crop production and reduce import dependency, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister P.K. Mishra said here on Wednesday that hybrid research has to produce products that have higher productivity than open-pollinated seed varieties.

Inaugurating a three-day national symposium on hybrid technology for enhanced crop productivity, Dr. Mishra gave the examples of rice, pulses and oilseeds, and said they need high priority in hybrid research.

"We need to bring hybrid pigeon pea to market and scale it up. This will help in bridging availability gap in pulses. Similarly, in oilseeds too, we should increase productivity using hybrids. This is a priority

PM's Principal Secretary says hybrid seeds have to be affordable to smallholder farmers

for the country," he said.

The senior bureaucrat said hybrids have to be affordable to smallholder farmers. "If research can make farmers save hybrid seeds from one season to another season without losing heterosis, as they do with open-pollinated crops, it would be a great scientific contribution to increasing farmers incomes," Dr. Mishra said.

He added that there was an urgent need for adopting hybrid technologies to ensure food and nutritional security for the country's growing population.

He said the percentage of workforce dependent on agriculture still stands as high as 37%.

Prioritise studies on oilseeds, rice, pulses hybrids, says official

तिलहन, चावल, दालों के संकर पर अध्ययन को प्राथमिकता दी जानी चाहिए: अधिकारी

Endorsing Hybrid Seeds for Increased Crop Production
फसल उत्पादन बढ़ाने के लिए हाइब्रिड बीजों को बढ़ावा देना

- **P.K. Mishra**, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, endorsed the use of **hybrid seeds** to increase crop production and reduce **import dependency**.

प्रधानमंत्री के प्रधान सचिव, पी.के. मिश्रा ने **हाइब्रिड बीजों** के उपयोग को फसल उत्पादन बढ़ाने और **आयात निर्भरता** कम करने के लिए समर्थन दिया।

- He emphasized that **hybrid research** should produce seeds with **higher productivity** compared to **open-pollinated seed varieties**.

उन्होंने कहा कि **हाइब्रिड अनुसंधान** को ऐसे बीजों का उत्पादन करना चाहिए जिनकी **उत्पादकता खुली-परागण बीज किस्मों** की तुलना में अधिक हो।

- Inaugurating a **three-day national symposium** on **hybrid technology** for enhanced crop productivity, Dr. Mishra highlighted the importance of **rice**, **pulses**, and **oilseeds** in hybrid research.

फसल उत्पादकता बढ़ाने के लिए हाइब्रिड प्रौद्योगिकी पर तीन दिवसीय राष्ट्रीय संगोष्ठी का

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उद्घाटन करते हुए, डॉ. मिश्रा ने हाइब्रिड अनुसंधान में **चावल**, **दालें** और **तेलबीज** की महत्ता को उजागर किया।

- He stressed the need to bring **hybrid pigeon pea** to the market to help bridge the **availability gap** in pulses.
  उन्होंने **हाइब्रिड अरहर (पिगन पी)** को बाज़ार में लाने की आवश्यकता पर जोर दिया ताकि **दालों की उपलब्धता में अंतर** को कम किया जा सके।

- Similarly, he advocated for increasing the **productivity** of **oilseeds** using hybrid seeds.
  समान रूप से, उन्होंने **तेलबीजों** की **उत्पादकता** बढ़ाने के लिए हाइब्रिड बीजों के उपयोग की वकालत की।

- Dr. Mishra highlighted that the use of hybrids should be affordable for **smallholder farmers**.
  डॉ. मिश्रा ने कहा कि हाइब्रिड का उपयोग **छोटे किसान** के लिए सस्ती कीमत पर होना चाहिए।

- He emphasized that if research can make it possible for farmers to save **hybrid seeds** from one season to another without losing **heterosis**, it would be a major scientific contribution to increasing farmers' incomes.
  उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि यदि शोध यह सुनिश्चित कर सके कि किसान एक मौसम से दूसरे मौसम में **हाइब्रिड बीज** बचा सकें बिना **हेटेरोसिस** खोए, तो यह किसानों की आय बढ़ाने के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण वैज्ञानिक योगदान होगा।

- Dr. Mishra stressed the **urgent need** to adopt hybrid technologies to ensure **food** and **nutritional security** for the country's growing population.
  डॉ. मिश्रा ने **देश की बढ़ती जनसंख्या** के लिए **खाद्य** और **पोषण सुरक्षा** सुनिश्चित करने के लिए हाइब्रिड प्रौद्योगिकियों को अपनाने की **तत्काल आवश्यकता** पर जोर दिया।

- He mentioned that the percentage of the workforce dependent on **agriculture** still stands at **37%**.
  उन्होंने बताया कि **कृषि** पर निर्भर **श्रमिकों** का प्रतिशत अभी भी **37%** है।

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Homes destroyed, thousands flee as wildfires tear through Los Angeles

Two killed, 70,000 face evacuation orders while 28,000 structures under threat; flames race towards neighbourhoods home to California's rich and famous; Vice-President Kamala Harris's home among those that fall under evacuation zones

PCS

Associated Press
LOS ANGELES

Multiple massive wildfires tore across the Los Angeles area with devastating force on Wednesday, destroying more than 1,000 structures and killing at least two persons as desperate residents escaped through flames, ferocious winds and towering clouds of smoke.

Three major blazes were burning in the metropolitan area, from the Pacific Coast inland to Pasadena, home of the famed Rose Parade. With thousands of firefighters already attacking the flames, the Los Angeles Fire De-

Fire fury: A home engulfed in flames during the Eaton fire in the Altadena area of Los Angeles in California on Wednesday. AFP

partment put out a plea for off-duty firefighters to help, and weather conditions were too windy for firefighting aircraft to fly, further hampering the fight. Fire officials hoped

to get the flights up later Wednesday.

In addition to the two deaths, Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone said many others were hurt in the fires,

which threatened at least 28,000 structures.

At least 70,000 people were ordered to evacuate, officials said. The flames marched toward highly populated and affluent neighborhoods home to California's rich and famous. Hollywood stars, including Mark Hamill, Mandy Moore and James Woods, were among those forced to flee.

The home of Vice President Kamala Harris was included in an evacuation zone, although no one was there, according to a spokesperson.

California's wildfire season typically begins in June or July and runs through October, according to the

Western Fire Chiefs Association, but January wildfires are not unprecedented.

The season is beginning earlier and ending later due to rising temperatures and decreased rainfall tied to climate change, according to recent data. Rains that usually end fire season are often delayed, meaning fires can burn through the winter months, the association said.

Recent dry winds have contributed to warmer-than-average temperatures in Southern California, where there's been very little rain so far this season. Southern California hasn't seen more than 0.25 cm of rain since early May.

Homes destroyed, thousands flee as wildfires tear through Los Angeles

लॉस एंजिल्स में जंगली जानवरों के हमले में हजारों घर नष्ट हो गए, हजारों लोग मारे गए

Two killed, 70,000 face evacuation orders while 28,000 structures under threat; flames race towards neighbourhoods home to California's rich and famous; Vice-PresidentKamala Harris's home among those that fall under evacuation zones

दो लोगों की मौत, 70,000 लोगों को घर खाली करने के आदेश, जबकि 28,000 इमारतें खतरे में; कैलिफोर्निया के अमीर और मशहूर लोगों के घरों की ओर लोग दौड़े; उपराष्ट्रपति कमला हैरिस का घर भी उन इलाकों में शामिल है जो निकासी क्षेत्रों में आते हैं

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Massive Wildfires in Los Angeles Area
लॉस एंजिल्स क्षेत्र में बड़े पैमाने पर जंगल की आग

- **Multiple massive wildfires** tore across the **Los Angeles area** on Wednesday, **destroying more than 1,000 structures** and killing at least **two persons**.
  बुधवार को लॉस एंजिल्स क्षेत्र में कई बड़े पैमाने पर जंगल की आग भड़क उठी, जिससे **1,000 से अधिक संरचनाएं** नष्ट हो गईं और कम से कम **दो लोग** मारे गए।

- Residents were forced to escape through flames, **ferocious winds**, and **towering clouds of smoke**.
  निवासियों को **आग के गोले**, **तेज़ हवाओं** और **धुएं के विशाल बादलों** से बचकर भागने पर मजबूर होना पड़ा।

- Three major fires were burning in the **metropolitan area**, stretching from the **Pacific Coast** inland to **Pasadena**, home of the famous **Rose Parade**.
  तीन प्रमुख आग **महानगरीय क्षेत्र** में जल रही थीं, जो **पैसिफिक कोस्ट** से लेकर **पासाडेना** तक फैली हुई थीं, जो प्रसिद्ध **गुलाब परेड** का घर है।

- The **Los Angeles Fire Department** issued a plea for off-duty firefighters to assist as weather conditions were too windy for firefighting aircraft.
  लॉस एंजिल्स फायर डिपार्टमेंट ने ऑफ-ड्यूटी दमकल कर्मियों से मदद की अपील की क्योंकि मौसम की स्थिति हवाई अग्निशमन विमानों के लिए बहुत तेज़ हवाओं वाली थी।

- Fire officials hoped to resume flights later on **Wednesday**.
  दमकल अधिकारियों ने **बुधवार** को बाद में विमानों की उड़ान फिर से शुरू करने की उम्मीद जताई।

- In addition to the two deaths, **Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone** said that many others were injured, and the fires threatened at least **28,000 structures**.
  दो मौतों के अलावा, **लॉस एंजिल्स काउंटी फायर चीफ एंथनी मारोन** ने कहा कि कई अन्य घायल हो गए, और आग ने कम से कम **28,000 संरचनाओं** को खतरे में डाल दिया।

- At least **70,000 people** were ordered to evacuate.
  कम से कम **70,000 लोगों** को evacuate करने का आदेश दिया गया।

- The flames advanced toward **highly populated and affluent neighborhoods** including the homes of **Hollywood stars** like **Mark Hamill**, **Mandy Moore**, and **James Woods**.
  आग की लपटें **घनी आबादी वाले और समृद्ध इलाकों** की ओर बढ़ रही थीं, जिसमें **हॉलीवुड सितारे** जैसे **मार्क हैमिल**, **मंडी मूर**, और **जेम्स वुड्स** के घर शामिल थे।

- The home of **Vice President Kamala Harris** was also in an evacuation zone, but no one was there at the time.
  उप राष्ट्रपति कमला हैरिस का घर भी एक **evacuation zone** में था, लेकिन उस समय वहां कोई नहीं था।

- California's wildfire season typically starts in **June or July** and ends in **October**, but **January wildfires** are not unprecedented.

कैलिफ़ोर्निया का जंगल की आग का मौसम सामान्यत: **जून या जुलाई** में शुरू होता है और **अक्टूबर** में समाप्त होता है, लेकिन **जनवरी में जंगल की आग** कोई असामान्य घटना नहीं है।

- The season is starting earlier and ending later due to **rising temperatures** and **decreased rainfall** linked to **climate change**.

  मौसम **बढ़ती तापमान** और **वृष्टि में कमी** के कारण पहले शुरू हो रहा है और बाद में समाप्त हो रहा है, जो **जलवायु परिवर्तन** से जुड़ा हुआ है।

- Rains that usually end the fire season are often delayed, allowing fires to burn through the **winter months**.

  जो बारिश सामान्यत: आग के मौसम को समाप्त करती हैं, वे अक्सर देर से होती हैं, जिससे आग **सर्दियों के महीनों** में भी जलती रहती है।

- Recent **dry winds** have contributed to **warmer-than-average temperatures** in **Southern California**, with very little rain since **early May**.

  हाल की **सूखी हवाओं** ने **दक्षिणी कैलिफ़ोर्निया** में **औसत से अधिक गर्म तापमान** में योगदान किया है, जहां **मई के शुरूआत** से अब तक बहुत कम बारिश हुई है।

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Fluoride, which also occurs naturally in varying levels, helps restore minerals lost to acid breakdown in teeth. AP

Review asserts link between fluoride levels and IQ loss

Agence France Presse

GS Paper III: S&T

A divisive new study out on January 6 in a US medical journal could reignite debate over fluoride's safety in water, linking higher exposure levels to lower IQ in children.

Published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Pediatrics it has sparked pushback from some scientists who criticise the study's methods, defend the mineral's proven dental benefits, and warn the findings may not directly apply to typical water fluoridation levels.

Its release comes as US President-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office. His health secretary nominee, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., is a vocal critic of fluoridated water, which currently serves nearly two-thirds of the US population.

Researchers from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences reviewed 74 studies on fluoride exposure and children's IQ conducted in 10 countries, including India.

The same scientists helped formulate an official government recommendation in August that there is "moderate confidence" that higher levels of fluoride are linked to lower IQ scores.

Now, the team led by Kyla Taylor said the analysis found a "statistically significant association" between fluoride exposure and reduced IQ scores.

The review estimated that for every 1 mg/L increase in urinary fluoride, children's IQ drops by 1.63 points.

Fluoride's neurotoxicity at high doses is well known, but the controversy lies in the study's suggestion that exposure below 1.5 mg/L – currently the World Health Organisation's safety limit – may also affect children's IQ.

However, the paper doesn't clarify how much lower than 1.5 mg/L could be dangerous.

Steven Levy, a member of the national fluoride committee for the American

The review estimated that for every 1 mg/L increase in urinary fluoride, children's IQ drops by 1.63 points

Dental Association, raised significant concerns about the study's methodology.

He pointed out that 52 of the 74 studies reviewed were rated "low quality" by the authors themselves but were still included in the analysis.

"Almost all of the studies have been done in other settings where there are other contaminants, other things we call confounding factors," he told AFP, citing coal pollution in China as an example.

Levy also questioned the study's use of single-point urine samples instead of 24-hour collections, which provide greater accuracy, as well as the challenges in reliably assessing young children's IQ.

With so many uncertainties, Levy argued in an editorial accompanying the study that current policies "should not be affected by the study findings."

That said, the journal also published an editorial commending the study for its methodological rigour.

The benefits of water fluoridation are well documented. Introduced in the US in 1945, it quickly reduced cavities in children and tooth loss in adults, earning recognition from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.

Fluoride, which also occurs naturally in varying levels, helps restore minerals lost to acid breakdown in teeth and reduces acid production by cavity-causing bacteria.

However, with fluoride toothpastes widely available since the 1960s, some research suggests diminishing returns.

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Review asserts link between fluoride levels and IQ loss

समीक्षा में हाइड्रोजन के स्तर और IQ हानि के बीच संबंध का दावा किया गया है

Divisive New Study on Fluoride's Safety
फ्लोराइड की सुरक्षा पर विवादास्पद नई अध्ययन

- A new study published on **January 6** in the **Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Pediatrics** links **higher fluoride exposure** to **lower IQ** in children.
  6 जनवरी को **Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Pediatrics** में प्रकाशित एक नए अध्ययन ने बच्चों में **फ्लोराइड के उच्च स्तर** को **कम IQ** से जोड़ा है।

- The study has sparked **criticism** from some scientists who defend fluoride's **dental benefits** and warn that the findings may not apply to typical **water fluoridation levels**.
  इस अध्ययन ने कुछ वैज्ञानिकों से **आलोचना** प्राप्त की है, जो फ्लोराइड के **दंत चिकित्सा लाभों** का समर्थन करते हैं और चेतावनी देते हैं कि ये निष्कर्ष सामान्य **पानी में फ्लोराइड स्तर** पर लागू नहीं हो सकते हैं।

- The release coincides with **Donald Trump** preparing to take office as **President-elect**. His **health secretary nominee**, **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**, is a vocal critic of **fluoridated water**, which currently serves **nearly two-thirds of the US population**.
  यह अध्ययन **डोनाल्ड ट्रंप** के **राष्ट्रपति-चुनाव** के रूप में पदभार ग्रहण करने के साथ मेल खाता है। उनके **स्वास्थ्य सचिव के उम्मीदवार**, **रॉबर्ट एफ. केनेडी जूनियर**, पानी में **फ्लोराइड** के विरोधी हैं, जो वर्तमान में **अमेरिका की दो-तिहाई जनसंख्या** को सेवा प्रदान करता है।

- Researchers from the **National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences** reviewed **74 studies** on **fluoride exposure** and children's IQ in **10 countries**, including **India**.
  National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences के शोधकर्ताओं ने **10 देशों** में **फ्लोराइड के संपर्क** और बच्चों के IQ पर आधारित **74 अध्ययन** की समीक्षा की, जिसमें **भारत** भी शामिल है।

- The researchers found a "**statistically significant association**" between fluoride exposure and **reduced IQ** scores.
  शोधकर्ताओं ने **फ्लोराइड के संपर्क** और **IQ में कमी** के बीच एक "**सांख्यिकीय रूप से महत्वपूर्ण संबंध**" पाया।

- The review estimated that for every **1 mg/L increase** in **urinary fluoride**, children's IQ drops by **1.63 points**.
  समीक्षा ने अनुमान लगाया कि हर **1 mg/L वृद्धि** के लिए **मूत्र में फ्लोराइड** के स्तर में, बच्चों का IQ **1.63 अंक** घटता है।

- Fluoride's **neurotoxicity** at **high doses** is well-known, but the controversy lies in the study's suggestion that exposure below **1.5 mg/L** (the **WHO safety limit**) may also affect children's IQ.

  फ्लोराइड की **तंत्रिका विषाक्तता उच्च खुराक** पर अच्छी तरह से ज्ञात है, लेकिन विवाद इस अध्ययन में है जो यह सुझाव देता है कि **1.5 mg/L** से कम का **संगठन सुरक्षा सीमा** भी बच्चों के IQ को प्रभावित कर सकता है।

- The paper does not clarify how much lower than **1.5 mg/L** could be dangerous.

  यह पेपर यह स्पष्ट नहीं करता कि **1.5 mg/L** से कम कितना खतरनाक हो सकता है।

- **Steven Levy**, a member of the **American Dental Association's national fluoride committee**, raised concerns about the study's **methodology**.

  Steven Levy, जो **American Dental Association के राष्ट्रीय फ्लोराइड समिति** के सदस्य हैं, ने अध्ययन की **विधि** पर चिंता व्यक्त की।

- Levy pointed out that **52 of the 74 studies** reviewed were rated **"low quality"** but were still included in the analysis.

  लेवी ने यह बताया कि **74 अध्ययन** में से **52** को **"कम गुणवत्ता"** का माना गया था, फिर भी उन्हें विश्लेषण में शामिल किया गया था।

- He also questioned the use of **single-point urine samples** instead of **24-hour collections**, which provide greater accuracy.

  उन्होंने **24 घंटे के संग्रह** के बजाय **सिंगल-पॉइंट मूत्र नमूनों** के उपयोग पर भी सवाल उठाया, क्योंकि यह अधिक सटीकता प्रदान करते हैं।

- Levy further argued that **young children's IQ** is difficult to assess accurately.

  लेवी ने आगे तर्क किया कि **छोटे बच्चों का IQ** सही तरीके से मापना मुश्किल है।

- Despite uncertainties, Levy argued that current **policies** should not be affected by the study's findings.

  अनिश्चितताओं के बावजूद, लेवी ने तर्क किया कि वर्तमान **नीतियों** को इस अध्ययन के निष्कर्षों से प्रभावित नहीं होना चाहिए।

- The journal also published an editorial praising the study for its **methodological rigor**.

  पत्रिका ने इस अध्ययन की **विधिक कठोरता** के लिए एक संपादकीय भी प्रकाशित किया।

- The benefits of **water fluoridation** are well-documented. Introduced in the **US in 1945**, it quickly reduced **cavities in children** and **tooth loss in adults**, earning recognition from the **CDC** as one of the **greatest public health achievements** of the **20th century**.

  पानी में फ्लोराइड डालने के लाभ अच्छे से प्रलेखित हैं। **अमेरिका में 1945** में पेश किया गया, इसने जल्दी ही **बच्चों में सड़न** और **वयस्कों में दांतों का नुकसान** कम किया, जिससे **CDC** से **20वीं सदी** की **महानतम सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य उपलब्धियों** में से एक के रूप में पहचान प्राप्त हुई।

- Fluoride, which also occurs naturally, helps **restore minerals lost** to acid breakdown in teeth and **reduces acid production** by cavity-causing bacteria.

  फ्लोराइड, जो स्वाभाविक रूप से भी पाया जाता है, **दांतों में अम्लीय टूट-फूट** से खो गए खनिजों को **पुनर्स्थापित करने** में मदद करता है और **कीड़े पैदा करने वाले बैक्टीरिया** द्वारा **अम्ल उत्पादन** को कम करता है।

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However, with **fluoride toothpaste** widely available since the **1960s**, some research suggests **diminishing returns**.

हालांकि, **1960 के दशक** से व्यापक रूप से उपलब्ध **फ्लोराइड टूथपेस्ट** के साथ, कुछ शोध यह संकेत देते हैं कि इसके **लाभ में कमी** हो रही है।

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