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THE HINDU NEWSPAPER

08 APRIL 2026

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PCS Special:	08 April
08A	Palak and Mukesh win gold with a World record पालक और मुकेश ने विश्व रिकॉर्ड के साथ स्वर्ण जीता



Local and vocal



Land rights movement: Indigenous protesters march during the 'Acampamento Terra Livre' or Free Land Encampment, Brazil's largest annual indigenous mobilisation that focuses on land rights and environmental protection in Brasilia, Brazil, on Tuesday.

Land rights movement: Indigenous protesters march during the 'Acampamento Terra Livre' or Free Land Encampment, Brazil's largest annual Indigenous mobilisation that focuses on land rights and environmental protection in Brasilia, Brazil, on Tuesday.



Palak and Mukesh win gold with a World record

PCS

India's Palak and Mukesh Nelavalli shattered the World record on way to winning the 10m air pistol mixed team gold at the ISSF rifle and pistol World Cup at Granada (Spain) on Tuesday. The Indian duo aggregated 487.7 to clinch the top spot, which is also a junior World record. While Palak had 243.0 in the final, Mukesh scored 244.7. China's Qianxun Yao and Kai Hu bagged the silver with 484.8 while Hungary's Veronika Major and Akos Karoly Nagy (414..9) won bronze.

चीन के कियानशुन याओ और काई हू ने 484.8 अंकों के साथ रजत पदक जीता, जबकि हंगरी की वेरोनिका मेजर और अकोस कारोली नागी (414..9) ने कांस्य पदक हासिल किया।

08A. Palak and Mukesh win gold with a World record
पालक और मुकेश ने विश्व रिकॉर्ड के साथ स्वर्ण जीता

• India's Palak and Mukesh Nelavalli shattered the World record on the way to winning the 10m air pistol mixed team gold at the ISSF rifle and pistol World Cup at Granada (Spain) on Tuesday.

भारत की पालक और मुकेश नेलावल्ली ने मंगलवार को ग्रेनाडा (स्पेन) में आयोजित ISSF राइफल और पिस्टल वर्ल्ड कप में 10 मीटर एयर पिस्टल मिश्रित टीम स्वर्ण जीतते हुए विश्व रिकॉर्ड तोड़ दिया।

• The Indian duo aggregated 487.7 to clinch the top spot, which is also a junior World record.

भारतीय जोड़ी ने 487.7 अंक हासिल कर शीर्ष स्थान प्राप्त किया, जो एक जूनियर विश्व रिकॉर्ड भी है।

• While Palak had 243.0 in the final, Mukesh scored 244.7. जहां पालक ने फाइनल में 243.0 अंक बनाए, वहीं मुकेश ने 244.7 अंक हासिल किए।

• China's Qianxun Yao and Kai Hu bagged the silver with 484.8 while Hungary's Veronika Major and Akos Karoly Nagy (414..9) won bronze.

GS Paper 1: Geography		08 April 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
08A	Renewed violence in Manipur leaves 4 dead मणिपुर में फिर से हिंसा, 4 लोगों की मौत	
08A	A civilisation will die in Iran if deal not accepted, says Trump on 'deadline' day यदि समझौता स्वीकार नहीं हुआ तो ईरान में एक सभ्यता खत्म हो जाएगी, 'डेडलाइन' के दिन ट्रंप का बयान	



Renewed violence in Manipur leaves 4 dead

GS I: Geography

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Four people, two of them minors, were killed in renewed violence in Manipur's Imphal Valley on Tuesday.

Officials in Bishnupur district said two children — a five-year-old boy and a six-month-old girl — were killed and their mother injured when suspected extremists hurled a bomb at their house in Moirang Tronglaobi. The Meitei-inhabited area is close to the hills of Kuki-Zo-dominated Churachandpur district.

Manipur Home Minister Konthoujam Govindas said five were injured (in firing by the security forces), and two of them died later.



People block a road in protest in Bishnupur district, Manipur, after two children were killed in a bomb attack on Tuesday. PTI

The Bishnupur district administration imposed restrictions on the movement of people, while the State government suspended mobile Internet services across five Imphal Valley districts for three days.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh said

that the government had decided to hand over the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

“The act appears to be the handiwork of individuals or groups with vested interests in disturbing the prevailing peace in the State,” he said.

08A. Renewed violence in Manipur leaves 4 dead

मणिपुर में फिर से हिंसा, 4 लोगों की मौत

- Four people, **two of them minors**, were killed in renewed **violence** in Manipur's **Imphal Valley** on Tuesday.
चार लोगों की मौत हो गई, जिनमें से दो **नाबालिग** थे, मंगलवार को मणिपुर के **इम्फाल घाटी** में फिर से हुई हिंसा में।
- Officials in **Bishnupur district** said two children — a **five-year-old boy** and a **six-month-old girl** — were killed and their mother injured when suspected **extremists** hurled a **bomb** at their house in **Moirang Tronglaobi**.
बिष्णुपुर जिला के अधिकारियों ने बताया कि दो बच्चे — एक **पांच साल का लड़का** और एक **छह महीने की बच्ची** — मारे गए और उनकी मां घायल हो गई जब **संदिग्ध उग्रवादियों** ने **Moirang Tronglaobi** में उनके घर पर **बम** फेंका।
- The **Meitei-inhabited area** is close to the hills of **Kuki-Zo-dominated Churachandpur district**.
यह **मैतेई आबादी वाला क्षेत्र कुकी-जो बहुल चुराचांदपुर जिला** की पहाड़ियों के पास स्थित है।
- Manipur **Home Minister Konthoujam Govindas** said five were injured (in firing by the **security forces**), and two of them died later.
मणिपुर के **गृह मंत्री कोन्थौजम गोविंदास** ने कहा कि पांच लोग **सुरक्षा बलों** की फायरिंग में घायल हुए, जिनमें से दो की बाद में मौत हो गई।
- The **Bishnupur district administration** imposed **restrictions** on the movement of people, while the State government suspended **mobile Internet services** across five **Imphal Valley districts** for three days.



बिष्णुपुर जिला प्रशासन ने लोगों की आवाजाही पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिए, जबकि राज्य सरकार ने पांच इम्फाल घाटी जिलों में तीन दिनों के लिए मोबाइल इंटरनेट सेवाएं निलंबित कर दीं।

- Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh said that the government had decided to hand over the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).
मुख्यमंत्री युमनाम खेमचंद सिंह ने कहा कि सरकार ने इस मामले को राष्ट्रीय जांच एजेंसी (NIA) को सौंपने का निर्णय लिया है।
- "The act appears to be the handiwork of individuals or groups with vested interests in disturbing the prevailing peace in the State," he said.
उन्होंने कहा, "यह घटना ऐसे व्यक्तियों या समूहों की करतूत लगती है जिनका राज्य में चल रही शांति को भंग करने में स्वार्थ निहित है।"

A civilisation will die in Iran if deal not accepted, says Trump on 'deadline' day

GS I: Geography

Stanly Johny

U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened that "a whole civilisation will die" if Iran does not accept his deal and reopen the Strait of Hormuz before his 8 p.m. Eastern Time (6.30 a.m. on Wednesday in India) deadline. Tehran, in turn, issued a warning that its response would deprive the U.S. and its allies of oil and gas for years.

U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance, who is in Hungary, said his country has "tools in our toolkit that we so far haven't decided to use" against Iran, without elaborating further. The White House later said Mr. Vance did not mean use of nuclear weapons.



Iranian children in Tehran on Tuesday mark 40 days since the fatal strike on a girls' primary school during the ongoing war. REUTERS

If the U.S. "crosses red lines, Iran's response will extend beyond the region", the Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) said in a statement on Tuesday.

The statements from both sides came as Tehran reported the U.S. and Is-

rael had already begun attacking key infrastructure.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said bridges and railways that "were used by the Revolutionary Guards" were targeted. Iran's Mehr news agency reported that U.S.

and Israel carried out strikes on Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf, which is a key export terminal for Iran's oil and gas.

The U.S. has sent a ceasefire proposal to Iran through Pakistan. Iran's Foreign Ministry has said the U.S. proposal was not acceptable. Mr. Trump has said Iran responded to his proposal but it was "not good enough". IRGC says the Strait of Hormuz would never return to its previous status.

"A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again. I don't want that to happen, but it probably will," Mr. Trump said in a social media post.

'HUMAN CHAINS'

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08A. A civilisation will die in Iran if deal not accepted, says Trump on 'deadline' day

यदि समझौता स्वीकार नहीं हुआ तो ईरान में एक सभ्यता खत्म हो जाएगी, 'डेडलाइन' के दिन ट्रंप का बयान

- U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened that "a whole civilisation will die" if Iran does not accept his deal and reopen the Strait of Hormuz before his 8 p.m. Eastern Time (6.30 a.m. on Wednesday in India) deadline.
अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने मंगलवार को चेतावनी दी कि "एक पूरी सभ्यता खत्म हो जाएगी" यदि ईरान उनके समझौते को स्वीकार नहीं करता और 8 बजे ईस्टर्न टाइम (भारत में बुधवार सुबह 6:30 बजे) की डेडलाइन से पहले हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य को फिर से नहीं खोलता।
- Tehran, in turn, issued a warning that its response would deprive the U.S. and its allies of oil and gas for years.



तेहरान ने जवाब में चेतावनी दी कि उसकी प्रतिक्रिया **अमेरिका** और उसके सहयोगियों को वर्षों तक **तेल और गैस** से वंचित कर देगी।

- **U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance**, who is in **Hungary**, said his country has “tools in our toolkit that we so far haven’t decided to use” against **Iran**, without elaborating further.
अमेरिकी उपराष्ट्रपति जे.डी. वेंस, जो **हंगरी** में हैं, ने कहा कि उनके देश के पास ऐसे “उपकरण” हैं जिन्हें अभी तक **ईरान** के खिलाफ उपयोग करने का निर्णय नहीं लिया गया है।
- The **White House** later said Mr. Vance did not mean use of **nuclear weapons**.
व्हाइट हाउस ने बाद में कहा कि श्री वेंस का मतलब **परमाणु हथियारों** के उपयोग से नहीं था।
- If the **U.S.** “crosses **red lines**, Iran’s response will extend beyond the region”, the **Iran’s Revolutionary Guards (IRGC)** said in a statement on Tuesday.
यदि **अमेरिका** “**लाल रेखाओं**” को पार करता है, तो **ईरान** की प्रतिक्रिया क्षेत्र से बाहर तक फैलेगी,” **ईरान की रिवोल्यूशनरी गार्ड्स (IRGC)** ने मंगलवार को एक बयान में कहा।
- The statements from both sides came as **Tehran** reported the **U.S.** and **Israel** had already begun attacking key **infrastructure**.
दोनों पक्षों के बयान ऐसे समय में आए जब **तेहरान** ने बताया कि **अमेरिका** और **इज़राइल** ने प्रमुख **बुनियादी ढांचे** पर हमले शुरू कर दिए हैं।
- **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** said bridges and railways that “were used by the **Revolutionary Guards**” were targeted.
इज़राइल के प्रधानमंत्री बेंजामिन नेतन्याहू ने कहा कि पुलों और रेलवे को निशाना बनाया गया जो “**रिवोल्यूशनरी गार्ड्स** द्वारा उपयोग किए जाते थे।”
- **Iran’s Mehr news agency** reported that **U.S.** and **Israel** carried out strikes on **Kharg Island** in the **Persian Gulf**, which is a key export terminal for **Iran’s oil and gas**.
ईरान की मेहर समाचार एजेंसी ने बताया कि **अमेरिका** और **इज़राइल** ने **फारस की खाड़ी** में स्थित **खार्ग द्वीप** पर हमले किए, जो **ईरान के तेल और गैस** का प्रमुख निर्यात टर्मिनल है।
- The **U.S.** has sent a **ceasefire proposal** to **Iran** through **Pakistan**.
अमेरिका ने **पाकिस्तान** के माध्यम से **ईरान** को **युद्धविराम प्रस्ताव** भेजा है।
- **Iran’s Foreign Ministry** has said the **U.S. proposal** was not acceptable.
ईरान के विदेश मंत्रालय ने कहा कि **अमेरिकी प्रस्ताव** स्वीकार्य नहीं है।
- Mr. **Trump** has said **Iran** responded to his proposal but it was “not good enough”.
श्री **ट्रंप** ने कहा कि **ईरान** ने उनके प्रस्ताव का जवाब दिया, लेकिन वह “पर्याप्त अच्छा नहीं” था।
- **IRGC** says the **Strait of Hormuz** would never return to its previous status.
IRGC का कहना है कि **हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य** कभी अपनी पहले की स्थिति में वापस नहीं आएगा।
- “A whole **civilization** will die tonight, never to be brought back again. I don’t want that to happen, but it probably will,” Mr. **Trump** said in a **social media post**.
“आज रात एक पूरी **सभ्यता** खत्म हो जाएगी, जिसे फिर कभी वापस नहीं लाया जा सकेगा। मैं नहीं चाहता कि ऐसा हो, लेकिन शायद ऐसा होगा,” श्री **ट्रंप** ने एक **सोशल मीडिया पोस्ट** में कहा।

GS Paper II: Polity		08 April 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
08A	Supreme Court begins review of 2018 ruling on Sabarimala shrine सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने सबरीमाला मंदिर पर 2018 के फैसले की समीक्षा शुरू की	
08A	Strict definitions will suppress diversity in Hinduism, Centre tells SC in Sabarimala case कठोर परिभाषाएँ हिंदू धर्म की विविधता को दबा देगी, केंद्र ने सबरीमाला मामले में सुप्रीम कोर्ट से कहा	
08A	Women cannot be seen as ‘untouchables’ for three days a month, says SC judge महिलाओं को महीने में तीन दिन ‘अछूत’ नहीं माना जा सकता, सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीश का बयान	
08A	‘Opposition failed to provide proof of charges against CEC’ ‘विपक्ष CEC के खिलाफ आरोपों के प्रमाण देने में विफल रहा’	
08A	Centre’s plan for women’s reservation follows UPA blueprint for OBC quota	



	महिलाओं के आरक्षण के लिए केंद्र की योजना UPA के OBC कोटा के ब्लूप्रिंट का अनुसरण करती है
08A	Limits of neutrality in addressing caste जाति से जुड़े मुद्दों के समाधान में तटस्थता की सीमाएँ

Supreme Court begins review of 2018 ruling on Sabarimala shrine

GS II: Polity
Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Justice B.V. Nagarathna, part of the Supreme Court Constitution Bench hearing a reference spurred by a 2018 judgment upholding the right of women of menstruating age to enter the Sabarimala shrine in Kerala, said on Tuesday that social ills cannot be branded and passed off as 'essential religious practices'.

The Union government said the legislature, not courts, drives reform in religion, if need be.

"If social evils are given a religious colour, then the courts can intervene to distinguish [between] the two," Justice Nagarathna said.



Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the Preamble to the Constitution champions liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship.

The exchange marked the first day of hearing of a reference to evolve a 'judi-

cial policy' for constitutional courts while dealing with questions of right to religious freedom enshrined in Article 25 and a denomination's privilege to manage its own religious affairs under Article 26 of the Constitution.

"How can the courts then examine the essentiality of religious practices of a denomination which does not otherwise offend public order, morality, and health?" Mr. Mehta asked.

The focal point of the reference is how far the courts can use their plenary powers to judicially review religious practices considered "essential or core" in the name of ushering in social reform.

The Centre argued whether the judges had the

expertise to decide if a ritual or a manner of devotion was merely superstition or an essential religious practice. "The essentiality of a religious practice may not fall within the domain of judicial review", Mr. Mehta said.

"Judges are not experts in science. Yet, courts are empowered by the Evidence Act to examine the opinions of scientific experts and become an expert of experts," Justice Joy-malya Bagchi observed.

Justice M.M. Sundresh intervened to note that "the difference here is science is based on logic and religion is based on belief".

RELATED REPORTS
» PAGE 2

08A. Supreme Court begins review of 2018 ruling on Sabarimala shrine सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने सबरीमाला मंदिर पर 2018 के फैसले की समीक्षा शुरू की

- Justice B.V. Nagarathna, part of the Supreme Court Constitution Bench hearing a reference spurred by a 2018 judgment upholding the right of women of menstruating age to enter the Sabarimala shrine in Kerala, said on Tuesday that social ills cannot be branded and passed off as 'essential religious practices'.
न्यायमूर्ति बी.वी. नागरत्ना, जो सुप्रीम कोर्ट की संविधान पीठ का हिस्सा हैं, 2018 के उस फैसले से जुड़े संदर्भ की सुनवाई कर रही हैं जिसमें मासिक धर्म आयु की महिलाओं के अधिकार को केरल के सबरीमाला मंदिर में प्रवेश के लिए मान्यता दी गई थी, उन्होंने मंगलवार को कहा कि सामाजिक बुराइयों को 'आवश्यक धार्मिक प्रथाओं' के रूप में प्रस्तुत नहीं किया जा सकता।
- The Union government said the legislature, not courts, drives reform in religion, if need be. केंद्र सरकार ने कहा कि धर्म में सुधार का कार्य विधायिका करती है, न कि न्यायालय, यदि इसकी आवश्यकता हो।
- "If social evils are given a religious colour, then the courts can intervene to distinguish [between] the two," Justice Nagarathna said.
न्यायमूर्ति नागरत्ना ने कहा, "यदि सामाजिक बुराइयों को धार्मिक रंग दिया जाता है, तो न्यायालय दोनों के बीच अंतर करने के लिए हस्तक्षेप कर सकते हैं।"
- Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the Preamble to the Constitution champions liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship.



सॉलिसिटर जनरल तुषार मेहता ने कहा कि संविधान की प्रस्तावना विचार, अभिव्यक्ति, विश्वास, आस्था और पूजा की स्वतंत्रता का समर्थन करती है।

- The exchange marked the **first day of hearing** of a reference to evolve a 'judicial policy' for constitutional courts while dealing with questions of **right to religious freedom** enshrined in **Article 25** and a denomination's privilege to manage its own **religious affairs** under **Article 26** of the Constitution.

यह संवाद उस संदर्भ की सुनवाई के **पहले दिन** को दर्शाता है जिसका उद्देश्य संवैधानिक न्यायालयों के लिए एक 'न्यायिक नीति' विकसित करना है, जब वे **अनुच्छेद 25** में निहित **धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता के अधिकार** और **अनुच्छेद 26** के तहत किसी संप्रदाय के अपने **धार्मिक मामलों** के प्रबंधन के विशेषाधिकार से जुड़े प्रश्नों से निपटते हैं।

- "How can the courts then examine the **essentiality of religious practices** of a denomination which does not otherwise offend **public order, morality, and health**?" Mr. Mehta asked.

श्री मेहता ने पूछा, "ऐसी स्थिति में न्यायालय किसी संप्रदाय की **धार्मिक प्रथाओं की आवश्यकताओं** की जांच कैसे कर सकते हैं, जो अन्यथा **सार्वजनिक व्यवस्था, नैतिकता और स्वास्थ्य** का उल्लंघन नहीं करती?"

- The focal point of the reference is how far the courts can use their **plenary powers** to **judicially review religious practices** considered "**essential or core**" in the name of ushering in **social reform**.

इस संदर्भ का मुख्य बिंदु यह है कि न्यायालय **सामाजिक सुधार** लाने के नाम पर "**आवश्यक या मूल**" मानी जाने वाली **धार्मिक प्रथाओं की न्यायिक समीक्षा** करने के लिए अपनी **पूर्ण शक्तियों** का कितना उपयोग कर सकते हैं।

- The Centre argued whether the judges had the **expertise** to decide if a ritual or a manner of devotion was merely **superstition** or an **essential religious practice**.

केंद्र ने तर्क दिया कि क्या न्यायाधीशों के पास यह तय करने की **विशेषज्ञता** है कि कोई अनुष्ठान या भक्ति का तरीका केवल **अंधविश्वास** है या **आवश्यक धार्मिक प्रथा**।

- "The **essentiality of a religious practice** may not fall within the domain of **judicial review**", Mr. Mehta said.

श्री मेहता ने कहा, "किसी **धार्मिक प्रथा की आवश्यक प्रकृति** संभवतः **न्यायिक समीक्षा** के दायरे में नहीं आती।"

- "Judges are not experts in **science**. Yet, courts are empowered by the **Evidence Act** to examine the opinions of **scientific experts** and become an expert of experts," **Justice Joymalya Bagchi** observed.

न्यायमूर्ति जॉयमाल्य बागची ने कहा, "न्यायाधीश **विज्ञान** के विशेषज्ञ नहीं होते, फिर भी न्यायालयों को **साक्ष्य अधिनियम** द्वारा **वैज्ञानिक विशेषज्ञों** की राय की जांच करने और विशेषज्ञों के विशेषज्ञ बनने का अधिकार दिया गया है।"

- **Justice M.M. Sundresh** intervened to note that "the difference here is **science is based on logic** and **religion is based on belief**".

न्यायमूर्ति एम.एम. सुंदरेश ने हस्तक्षेप करते हुए कहा कि "यहां अंतर यह है कि **विज्ञान तर्क पर आधारित** है और **धर्म आस्था पर आधारित** है।"



Strict definitions will suppress diversity in Hinduism, Centre tells SC in Sabarimala case

GS II: Polity

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Union government has told the Supreme Court that a straitjacket definition of what constitutes a "religious denomination" or which religious practices are "essential" would "compress" the inherently plural nature of Hinduism expressed through diverse sects, groups, spiritual lineages, regional traditions, faith, practices, rituals, customs, and beliefs.

The Centre has made its position clear ahead of the maiden hearing of a series of writ and review petitions linked to the Sabarimala temple case scheduled to be heard by a nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant from April 7. The



A nine-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant hearing the Sabarimala temple entry issue in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

nine-judge Bench would also look into the larger question of the extent to which courts could engage in core matters of faith.

The written submissions of the Union government, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, countered the September 2018 judgment of

the Supreme Court which had held that devotees who visit the Sabarimala temple in Kerala were not a separate religious denomination called "Ayyappans" protected under Article 26 of the Constitution.

The five-judge Bench had dismissed the notion that the prohibition of wo-

men aged between 10 and 50 from entering the temple was an "ancient custom" of the religious denomination amounting to an "essential religious practice" protected under Article 25.

The 2018 judgment by a majority on the five-judge Bench concluded that there was "no identified group called 'Ayyappans'". Every Hindu devotee could visit the Sabarimala temple.

The majority verdict in the Sabarimala case had concluded that the exclusion of menstruating women from Sabarimala temple was akin to treating them as the children of a "lesser God".

The Centre said the restrictive approach of the 2018 judgment invaded in-

tra-religious diversity. Matters of faith, belief, doctrine, practice, observance, symbolism and modes of spiritual life vary from community to community.

No written codes

Drawing inflexible rules to define religious denominations and establish essential religious practices would lead to confusing results especially in religions like Hinduism which are devoid of any mandatory written codes or canonical texts. "Denominations, sects and religions with no canonical texts, and which are open to change, would find it very difficult to establish any aspects of their beliefs, practices or culture to be essential," the Centre submitted.

08A. Strict definitions will suppress diversity in Hinduism, Centre tells SC in Sabarimala case

कठोर परिभाषाएँ हिंदू धर्म की विविधता को दबा देंगी, केंद्र ने सबरीमाला मामले में सुप्रीम कोर्ट से कहा

- The Union government has told the Supreme Court that a straitjacket definition of what constitutes a "religious denomination" or which religious practices are "essential" would "compress" the inherently plural nature of Hinduism expressed through diverse sects, groups, spiritual lineages, regional traditions, faith, practices, rituals, customs, and beliefs.

केंद्र सरकार ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट से कहा है कि "धार्मिक संप्रदाय" या "आवश्यक धार्मिक प्रथाओं" की कठोर परिभाषा हिंदू धर्म की अंतर्निहित बहुलतावादी प्रकृति को "संकीर्ण" कर देगी, जो विभिन्न संप्रदायों, समूहों, आध्यात्मिक परंपराओं, क्षेत्रीय परंपराओं, आस्था, प्रथाओं, अनुष्ठानों, रीति-रिवाजों और विश्वासों में व्यक्त होती है।

- The Centre has made its position clear ahead of the maiden hearing of a series of writ and review petitions linked to the Sabarimala temple case scheduled to be heard by a nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant from April 7.

केंद्र ने 7 अप्रैल से भारत के मुख्य न्यायाधीश सूर्यकांत की अध्यक्षता वाली नौ-न्यायाधीशों की पीठ द्वारा सुनी जाने वाली सबरीमाला मंदिर मामले से जुड़ी रिट और पुनर्विचार याचिकाओं की पहली सुनवाई से पहले अपना रुख स्पष्ट कर दिया है।

- The nine-judge Bench would also look into the larger question of the extent to which courts could engage in core matters of faith.

नौ-न्यायाधीशों की पीठ यह भी देखेगी कि न्यायालय आस्था के मूल मामलों में किस हद तक हस्तक्षेप कर सकते हैं।

- The written submissions of the Union government, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, countered the September 2018 judgment of the Supreme Court which had held that devotees who visit the Sabarimala temple in Kerala were not a separate religious denomination called "Ayyappans" protected under Article 26 of the Constitution.

सॉलिसिटर जनरल तुषार मेहता द्वारा प्रस्तुत केंद्र के लिखित तर्कों ने सितंबर 2018 के सुप्रीम कोर्ट के



फैसले का विरोध किया, जिसमें कहा गया था कि केरल के सबरीमाला मंदिर के भक्त "अय्यप्पन" नामक अलग धार्मिक संप्रदाय नहीं हैं जिन्हें अनुच्छेद 26 के तहत संरक्षण प्राप्त हो।

- The five-judge Bench had dismissed the notion that the prohibition of women aged between 10 and 50 from entering the temple was an "ancient custom" of the religious denomination amounting to an "essential religious practice" protected under Article 25.

पांच-न्यायाधीशों की पीठ ने यह धारणा खारिज कर दी थी कि 10 से 50 वर्ष की महिलाओं के प्रवेश पर प्रतिबंध धार्मिक संप्रदाय की "प्राचीन परंपरा" है, जो अनुच्छेद 25 के तहत "आवश्यक धार्मिक प्रथा" है।

- The 2018 judgment by a majority on the five-judge Bench concluded that there was "no identified group called 'Ayyappans'".

2018 के फैसले में बहुमत ने कहा था कि "अय्यप्पन" नाम का कोई पहचाना गया समूह नहीं है।

- Every Hindu devotee could visit the Sabarimala temple.

हर हिंदू भक्त सबरीमाला मंदिर जा सकता है।

- The majority verdict in the Sabarimala case had concluded that the exclusion of menstruating women from Sabarimala temple was akin to treating them as the children of a "lesser God".

सबरीमाला मामले में बहुमत के फैसले ने कहा था कि मासिक धर्म वाली महिलाओं को मंदिर से बाहर रखना उन्हें "कमतर भगवान के बच्चे" जैसा मानने के समान है।

- The Centre said the restrictive approach of the 2018 judgment invaded intra-religious diversity.

केंद्र ने कहा कि 2018 के फैसले का प्रतिबंधात्मक दृष्टिकोण धर्म के भीतर की विविधता में हस्तक्षेप करता है।

- Matters of faith, belief, doctrine, practice, observance, symbolism and modes of spiritual life vary from community to community.

आस्था, विश्वास, सिद्धांत, प्रथाएँ, पालन, प्रतीक और आध्यात्मिक जीवन के तरीके समुदाय से समुदाय में भिन्न होते हैं।

No written codes

कोई लिखित संहिताएँ नहीं

- Drawing inflexible rules to define religious denominations and establish essential religious practices would lead to confusing results especially in religions like Hinduism which are devoid of any mandatory written codes or canonical texts.

Women cannot be seen as 'untouchables' for three days a month, says SC judge

GS II: Polity
Kritika Das, Kapatgopar
NEW DELHI

Women cannot be treated as "untouchables" selectively for three days a month, the Supreme Court observed on Tuesday.

Justice B.V. Nagarathna's remarks came against the backdrop of submissions referring to the erstwhile prohibition on menstruating women, barring them from entry into the Sabarimala temple. A 2018 judgment by the Supreme Court had lifted the prohibition on entry to the Kerala shrine by women in the years between menarche and menopause.

"Speaking as a woman, I can say there cannot be untouchability practised

Solicitor-General, appearing for Centre said the prohibition was sui generis to Sabarimala shrine

for three days every month, and no untouchability on the fourth day. Let us go by hard realities. Speaking as a woman, Article 17 (abolition of untouchability) cannot apply for three days and on the fourth day there is no untouchability," Justice Nagarathna said while addressing the Union government, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

The Centre expressed strong reservations against the 2018 Sabarimala judgment that compared the bar on women's entry into the temple to the practice of untouchability.

Mr. Mehta said the prohibition was not for three or four days, but was for an age group, adding that the prohibition was sui generis (unique) to the Sabarimala shrine. Other Lord Ayyappa temples, globally, were accessible to women of all ages, he said.

"There are denominational practices which we need to respect. Everything is not down to human dignity and autonomy... It is also about respecting the faith and tenets of a religion, not everything is about the taking away of dignity or bodily autonomy..." Mr. Mehta said.

कठोर नियमों के माध्यम से धार्मिक संप्रदाय और आवश्यक धार्मिक प्रथाओं को परिभाषित करना विशेष रूप से हिंदू धर्म जैसे धर्मों में भ्रमित परिणाम देगा, जिनमें कोई अनिवार्य लिखित संहिता या आधिकारिक ग्रंथ नहीं हैं।

"Denominations, sects and religions with no canonical texts, and which are open to change, would find it very difficult to establish any aspects of their beliefs, practices or culture to be essential," the Centre submitted.

"जिन संप्रदायों, पंथों और धर्मों के पास कोई आधिकारिक ग्रंथ नहीं हैं और जो परिवर्तन के लिए खुले हैं, उनके लिए अपनी मान्यताओं, प्रथाओं या संस्कृति के किसी पहलू को आवश्यक साबित करना बहुत कठिन होगा," केंद्र ने प्रस्तुत किया।

08A. Women cannot be seen as 'untouchables' for three days a month, says SC judge

महिलाओं को महीने में तीन दिन 'अछूत'



नहीं माना जा सकता, सुप्रीम कोर्ट के न्यायाधीश का बयान

- Women cannot be treated as “untouchables” selectively for three days a month, the **Supreme Court** observed on Tuesday.
महिलाओं को महीने में तीन दिन चुनिंदा रूप से “अछूत” नहीं माना जा सकता, **सुप्रीम कोर्ट** ने मंगलवार को यह टिप्पणी की।
- **Justice B.V. Nagarathna’s** remarks came against the backdrop of submissions referring to the erstwhile prohibition on **menstruating women**, barring them from entry into the **Sabarimala temple**.
न्यायमूर्ति बी.वी. नागरत्ना की यह टिप्पणी उन दलीलों की पृष्ठभूमि में आई, जिनमें **मासिक धर्म वाली महिलाओं के सबरीमाला मंदिर** में प्रवेश पर पूर्व प्रतिबंध का उल्लेख किया गया।
- A **2018 judgment** by the **Supreme Court** had lifted the prohibition on entry to the **Kerala shrine** by women in the years between **menarche and menopause**.
सुप्रीम कोर्ट के 2018 के फैसले ने **केरल के मंदिर में मेनार्चे और रजोनिवृत्ति** के बीच की महिलाओं के प्रवेश पर लगे प्रतिबंध को हटा दिया था।
- “Speaking as a woman, I can say there cannot be **untouchability** practiced for three days every month, and no untouchability on the fourth day.
“एक महिला के रूप में बोलते हुए, मैं कह सकती हूँ कि हर महीने तीन दिन **अछूत प्रथा** नहीं हो सकती और चौथे दिन **अछूत प्रथा** नहीं हो सकती।
- Let us go by hard realities.
हमें वास्तविकताओं के आधार पर चलना चाहिए।
- Speaking as a woman, **Article 17 (abolition of untouchability)** cannot apply for three days and on the fourth day there is no untouchability,” **Justice Nagarathna** said while addressing the **Union government**, represented by **Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta**.
एक महिला के रूप में, **अनुच्छेद 17 (अछूत प्रथा का उन्मूलन)** तीन दिनों तक लागू नहीं हो सकता और चौथे दिन लागू हो जाए,” **न्यायमूर्ति नागरत्ना** ने **केंद्र सरकार**, जिसका प्रतिनिधित्व **सॉलिसिटर जनरल तुषार मेहता** कर रहे थे, को संबोधित करते हुए कहा।
- The **Centre** expressed strong reservations against the **2018 Sabarimala judgment** that compared the bar on women’s entry into the temple to the practice of **untouchability**.
केंद्र सरकार ने **2018 के सबरीमाला फैसले** के खिलाफ कड़ा विरोध जताया, जिसमें महिलाओं के मंदिर में प्रवेश पर प्रतिबंध की तुलना **अछूत प्रथा** से की गई थी।
- Mr. **Mehta** said the prohibition was not for three or four days, but was for an **age group**, adding that the prohibition was **sui generis (unique)** to the **Sabarimala shrine**.
श्री **मेहता** ने कहा कि प्रतिबंध तीन या चार दिनों के लिए नहीं था, बल्कि एक **आयु वर्ग** के लिए था, और यह प्रतिबंध **सबरीमाला मंदिर** के लिए **विशिष्ट (अद्वितीय)** था।
- Other **Lord Ayyappa temples**, globally, were accessible to women of all ages, he said.
उन्होंने कहा कि अन्य **भगवान अय्यप्पा मंदिर**, विश्वभर में, सभी आयु वर्ग की महिलाओं के लिए खुले हैं।
- “There are **denominational practices** which we need to respect.
“कुछ **संप्रदायिक प्रथाएं** हैं जिनका हमें सम्मान करना चाहिए।
- Everything is not down to **human dignity and autonomy** ...
हर चीज **मानव गरिमा और स्वायत्तता** तक सीमित नहीं है...
- It is also about respecting the **faith and tenets of a religion**, not everything is about the taking away of dignity or bodily autonomy... ,” Mr. **Mehta** said.
यह **धर्म की आस्था और सिद्धांतों** का सम्मान करने के बारे में भी है, हर चीज गरिमा या शारीरिक स्वायत्तता छीनने के बारे में नहीं है...,” श्री **मेहता** ने कहा।



'Opposition failed to provide proof of charges against CEC'

GS II: Polity
Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla rejected notices moved by the Opposition MPs seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, holding that the Opposition failed to provide proof and the allegations levelled against him did not establish a *prima facie* case of "misbehaviour" as required under the Constitution.

A detailed 17-page order issued by the two presiding officers said the charges either lacked proof related to matters already adjudicated or were currently under judicial scrutiny. While the issues raised may be pertinent for political debate, the order noted that they did not meet the "high constitutional bar" necessary to initiate removal proceedings under Articles 324(5) and 124(4) of the Constitution or the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968.

The notices, submitted on March 12, were signed by 63 Rajya Sabha and 130 Lok Sabha members and contained seven charges against the CEC. Each charge was examined and rebutted in the order.

Dismissed charges

On the allegation that Mr. Kumar's appointment was "tainted" as the law governing his selection under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023 was under challenge in the Supreme Court, the Chair said the pendency of a constitutional challenge did not amount to misbehaviour. The claim that Mr. Kumar's previous postings reflected "deep executive embeddedness" was dismissed, with the order noting that many former CECs had similar administrative background without any presumption of bias.

Another charge, that the Election Commission applied different standards to the government and the Opposition, was rejected for lack of "clear demon-



Gyanesh Kumar

strable evidence" of abuse of authority. The Chair underlined the "sensitive and delicate" nature of the commission's constitutional functions.

Allegations that the commission obstructed investigations into alleged electoral fraud by refusing to share information with State authorities were also dismissed. The order noted that once a First Information Report is registered, the appropriate remedy lies before a competent court. Even if such refusal were assumed, it could not constitute grounds for the CEC's removal.

Similarly, the refusal to provide machine-readable electoral rolls to political parties was held to be in compliance with Supreme Court directions and consistent with the fundamental right to privacy recognised in the *Puttaswamy* judgment. The charge failed to cite any specific violation of electoral law, it said.

Several charges related to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar and its proposed nationwide expansion. The Chair observed that the EC has plenary powers under Article 324 and that the SIR exercise has been extensively considered by the Supreme Court, which has affirmed the commission's competence. Judicial directions aimed at improving transparency and fairness could not be construed as evidence of misbehaviour, particularly when the matter remains *sub judice*.

The allegation of contempt of court for non-compliance with the Supreme Court directions was also rejected.

08A. 'Opposition failed to provide proof of charges against CEC'

'विपक्ष CEC के खिलाफ आरोपों के प्रमाण देने में विफल रहा'

• Rajya Sabha Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla rejected notices moved by the Opposition MPs seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, holding that the Opposition failed to provide proof and the allegations levelled against him did not establish a *prima facie* case of "misbehaviour" as required under the Constitution.

राज्यसभा के सभापति सी.पी. राधाकृष्णन और लोकसभा अध्यक्ष ओम बिरला ने विपक्षी सांसदों द्वारा मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त (CEC) ज्ञानेश कुमार को हटाने के लिए दिए गए नोटिस को खारिज कर दिया, यह कहते हुए कि विपक्ष प्रमाण देने में विफल रहा और लगाए गए आरोप संविधान के तहत आवश्यक "दुराचार" का प्रथम दृष्टया मामला स्थापित नहीं करते।

• A detailed 17-page order issued by the two presiding officers said the charges either lacked proof related to matters already adjudicated or were currently under judicial scrutiny.

दोनों पीठासीन अधिकारियों द्वारा जारी 17 पृष्ठों के आदेश में कहा गया कि आरोपों में या तो पहले से निर्णीत मामलों से संबंधित प्रमाण की कमी थी या वे वर्तमान में न्यायिक जांच के अधीन हैं।

• While the issues raised may be pertinent for political debate, the order noted that they did not meet the "high constitutional bar" necessary to initiate removal proceedings under Articles 324(5) and 124(4) of the Constitution or the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968.

हालांकि उठाए गए मुद्दे राजनीतिक बहस के लिए महत्वपूर्ण हो सकते हैं, आदेश में कहा गया कि वे संविधान के अनुच्छेद 324(5) और 124(4) या न्यायाधीश (जांच) अधिनियम, 1968 के तहत हटाने की कार्यवाही शुरू करने के लिए आवश्यक "उच्च संवैधानिक मानक" को पूरा नहीं करते।

• On the allegation that Mr. Kumar's appointment was "tainted" as the law governing his selection under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023 was under challenge in the



Supreme Court, the Chair said the pendency of a **constitutional challenge** did not amount to **misbehaviour**.

श्री कुमार की नियुक्ति को "दूषित" बताने के आरोप पर, क्योंकि उनकी नियुक्ति से संबंधित **मुख्य चुनाव आयुक्त और अन्य चुनाव आयुक्त अधिनियम, 2023 सुप्रीम कोर्ट** में चुनौती के अधीन है, अध्यक्ष ने कहा कि **संवैधानिक चुनौती** लंबित होने से **दुराचार** सिद्ध नहीं होता।

- The claim that Mr. Kumar's previous postings reflected "**deep executive embeddedness**" was dismissed, with the order noting that many former CECs had similar **administrative background** without any presumption of **bias**.

यह दावा कि श्री कुमार की पिछली नियुक्तियां "**कार्यपालिका में गहरी पैठ**" दर्शाती हैं, खारिज कर दिया गया, आदेश में कहा गया कि कई पूर्व CEC का **प्रशासनिक पृष्ठभूमि** समान रही है और इससे **पक्षपात** का कोई अनुमान नहीं लगाया जा सकता।

- Another charge, that the **Election Commission** applied different standards to the **government and the Opposition**, was rejected for lack of "**clear demonstrable evidence**" of **abuse of authority**.

एक अन्य आरोप कि **चुनाव आयोग** ने **सरकार और विपक्ष** के लिए अलग-अलग मानक अपनाए, **सत्ता के दुरुपयोग** के "**स्पष्ट प्रमाण**" के अभाव में खारिज कर दिया गया।

- The Chair underlined the "**sensitive and delicate**" nature of the commission's **constitutional functions**.

अध्यक्ष ने आयोग के **संवैधानिक कार्यों** की "**संवेदनशील और नाजुक**" प्रकृति पर जोर दिया।

- Allegations that the commission obstructed investigations into alleged **electoral fraud** by refusing to share information with **State authorities** were also dismissed.

यह आरोप कि आयोग ने **राज्य प्राधिकरणों** के साथ जानकारी साझा करने से इनकार कर कथित **चुनावी धोखाधड़ी** की जांच में बाधा डाली, भी खारिज कर दिए गए।

- The order noted that once a **First Information Report** is registered, the appropriate remedy lies before a **competent court**.

आदेश में कहा गया कि एक बार **एफआईआर** दर्ज हो जाने पर उचित उपाय **सक्षम न्यायालय** के समक्ष होता है।

- Even if such refusal were assumed, it could not constitute grounds for the CEC's removal.

भले ही ऐसा इनकार मान लिया जाए, यह CEC को हटाने का आधार नहीं बन सकता।

- Similarly, the refusal to provide **machine-readable electoral rolls** to political parties was held to be in compliance with **Supreme Court directions** and consistent with the **fundamental right to privacy** recognised in the **Puttaswamy judgment**.

इसी प्रकार, राजनीतिक दलों को **मशीन-पठनीय मतदाता सूची** देने से इनकार को **सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्देशों** के अनुरूप और **पुट्टास्वामी फैसले** में मान्यता प्राप्त **गोपनीयता के मौलिक अधिकार** के अनुरूप माना गया।

- The charge failed to cite any **specific violation of electoral law**, it said.

आदेश में कहा गया कि आरोप में **चुनावी कानून** के किसी **विशिष्ट उल्लंघन** का उल्लेख नहीं किया गया।



Centre's plan for women's reservation follows UPA blueprint for OBC quota

GS II: Polity
NEWS ANALYSIS

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The Centre is proposing a 50% expansion in the size of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to accommodate 33% reservation for women ahead of the 2029 general election. The math is such that incumbent lawmakers will be assured that their pathway to seeking re-election will not be narrowed due to a new social accommodation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said during a campaign meeting in Kerala that assured representation for women would be achieved by creating additional seats. The government plans to increase the size of the Lok Sabha from 543 to 816 (a 50% increase in seats). There will be 273 additional seats, and 273, which is 33% of 816, will be reserved for women. The same math will apply at the State level too. For instance, Kerala will have its Lok Sabha seats increased



The late Arjun Singh designed the formula for OBC reservation in higher education.

from 20 to 30 with 10 seats reserved for women, Uttar Pradesh from 80 to 120, with 40 for women. The existing Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe reservation of 15% and 7% each will have one-third of them reserved for women of respective groups.

Enlarging the size of the pie before carving out a new social accommodation is not unprecedented. It was exactly in this manner that the UPA-I government implemented reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in higher education in 2005-06 and it was a formula designed by then Education Minister Arjun Singh. He cham-

pioned the expansion of reservation in higher education through the 93rd Constitutional Amendment Act and the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006, that mandated a 27% reservation for OBCs in central higher educational institutions (such as IITs, IIMs, and Central universities). To accommodate this, the government implemented a 54% expansion of seats over a three-year period, starting from the 2008-09 academic session, ensuring the number of seats available for the general category did not decline.

'Win-win' formula

Until then, the SC and ST reservations added up to 22.5% of the seats, and the rest were general category seats. The proposal was to accommodate OBC reservation without impacting the absolute number of general seats. The math in that situation meant that the total capacity of Central higher education institutions had to expand by

54% for the general category numbers to remain the same. In the pre-OBC reservation era, general category had 78 seats out of each 100, which remained the same when the total grew to 154, of which 49.5% was reserved.

In other words, what was 78% of 100 earlier, became 50.5% of 154. This avoided any decline in the number of seats for general category students while accommodating the OBC students by expanding the pie. Singh defended the reservation policy as a win-win for all stakeholders, as investment in higher education expanded massively, with several new IITs, IIMs and AIIMS coming up, and the intake of students increasing by 54% for the bulging youth population of the country.

The BJP formula of linking additional seats in the Lok Sabha for women's reservation takes a leaf out of the Arjun Singh playbook. Expansion in seats in higher education was long overdue then, as it is for the legislatures now.

08A. Centre's plan for women's reservation follows UPA blueprint for OBC quota

महिलाओं के आरक्षण के लिए केंद्र की योजना UPA के OBC कोटा के ब्लूप्रिंट का अनुसरण करती है

- The Centre is proposing a 50% expansion in the size of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to accommodate 33% reservation for women ahead of the 2029 general election.
केंद्र लोकसभा और राज्य विधानसभाओं के आकार में 50% वृद्धि का प्रस्ताव दे रहा है ताकि 2029 के आम चुनाव से पहले महिलाओं के लिए 33% आरक्षण सुनिश्चित किया जा सके।
- The math is such that incumbent lawmakers will be assured that their pathway to seeking re-election will not be narrowed due to a new social accommodation.
यह गणित ऐसा है कि वर्तमान सांसदों/विधायकों को यह आश्वासन मिलेगा कि पुनर्निर्वाचन का उनका रास्ता नए सामाजिक समायोजन के कारण संकीर्ण नहीं होगा।
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said during a campaign meeting in Kerala that assured representation for women would be achieved by creating additional seats.
प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने केरल में एक चुनावी बैठक के दौरान कहा कि महिलाओं के लिए सुनिश्चित प्रतिनिधित्व अतिरिक्त सीटें बनाकर हासिल किया जाएगा।
- The government plans to increase the size of the Lok Sabha from 543 to 816 (a 50% increase in seats).
सरकार लोकसभा का आकार 543 से 816 करने की योजना बना रही है (सीटों में 50% वृद्धि)।
- There will be 273 additional seats, and 273, which is 33% of 816, will be reserved for women.
कुल 273 अतिरिक्त सीटें होंगी, और 816 का 33% यानी 273 सीटें महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षित होंगी।



- The same math will apply at the **State level** too.
यही गणित **राज्य स्तर** पर भी लागू होगा।
- For instance, **Kerala** will have its Lok Sabha seats increased from **20 to 30** with **10 seats reserved for women**, **Uttar Pradesh** from **80 to 120**, with **40 for women**.
उदाहरण के लिए, **केरल** में लोकसभा सीटें **20 से बढ़कर 30** होंगी, जिनमें **10 सीटें महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षित** होंगी, जबकि **उत्तर प्रदेश** में **80 से 120** सीटें होंगी, जिनमें **40 महिलाओं के लिए** होंगी।
- The existing **Scheduled Caste (SC)** and **Scheduled Tribe (ST)** reservation of **15% and 7%** each will have **one-third reserved for women** of respective groups.
मौजूदा **अनुसूचित जाति (SC)** और **अनुसूचित जनजाति (ST)** के **15% और 7%** आरक्षण में से **एक-तिहाई सीटें संबंधित वर्ग की महिलाओं के लिए आरक्षित** होंगी।
- Enlarging the size of the **pie** before carving out a new **social accommodation** is not unprecedented.
नई **सामाजिक व्यवस्था** लागू करने से पहले कुल आकार (**पाई**) को बढ़ाना अभूतपूर्व नहीं है।
- It was exactly in this manner that the **UPA-I government** implemented reservation for **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** in higher education in **2005-06** and it was a formula designed by then **Education Minister Arjun Singh**.
ठीक इसी प्रकार **UPA-I सरकार** ने **2005-06** में उच्च शिक्षा में **अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग (OBC)** के लिए आरक्षण लागू किया था, और यह फार्मूला तत्कालीन **शिक्षा मंत्री अर्जुन सिंह** द्वारा तैयार किया गया था।
- He championed the expansion of **reservation in higher education** through the **93rd Constitutional Amendment Act** and the **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006**, that mandated a **27% reservation for OBCs** in central higher educational institutions (such as **IITs, IIMs, and Central universities**).
उन्होंने **93वां संविधान संशोधन अधिनियम** और **केंद्रीय शैक्षणिक संस्थान (प्रवेश में आरक्षण) अधिनियम, 2006** के माध्यम से **उच्च शिक्षा में आरक्षण** के विस्तार का समर्थन किया, जिसमें केंद्रीय संस्थानों (जैसे **IIT, IIM और केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय**) में **OBC के लिए 27% आरक्षण** अनिवार्य किया गया।
- To accommodate this, the government implemented a **54% expansion of seats** over a **three-year period**, starting from the **2008-09 academic session**, ensuring the number of seats available for the **general category** did not decline.
इसे समायोजित करने के लिए सरकार ने **2008-09 शैक्षणिक सत्र** से शुरू होकर **तीन वर्षों में 54% सीटों का विस्तार** किया, जिससे **सामान्य वर्ग** की सीटों की संख्या में कोई कमी नहीं आई।

'Win-win' formula 'विन-विन' फॉर्मूला

- Until then, the **SC and ST reservations** added up to **22.5%** of the seats, and the rest were **general category seats**.
तब तक **SC और ST आरक्षण** मिलाकर **22.5%** सीटें थीं, और बाकी **सामान्य वर्ग** की सीटें थीं।
- The **math** in that situation meant that the total capacity of **Central higher education institutions** had to expand by **54%** for the general category numbers to remain the same.
उस स्थिति में गणित यह था कि **केंद्रीय उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों** की कुल क्षमता को **54% बढ़ाना** होगा ताकि सामान्य वर्ग की संख्या समान बनी रहे।
- In the pre-OBC reservation era, **general category** had **78 seats out of each 100**, which remained the same when the total grew to **154**, of which **49.5% was reserved**.
OBC आरक्षण से पहले **सामान्य वर्ग** के पास **100 में 78 सीटें** थीं, जो कुल **154 होने पर भी समान रहीं**, जिसमें से **49.5% आरक्षित** थीं।
- In other words, what was **78% of 100** earlier, became **50.5% of 154**.
दूसरे शब्दों में, जो पहले **100 का 78%** था, वह **154 का 50.5%** बन गया।
- This avoided any decline in the number of seats for **general category students** while accommodating the **OBC students** by expanding the pie.
इससे **सामान्य वर्ग के छात्रों** की सीटों में कमी नहीं आई और **OBC छात्रों** को भी समायोजित किया गया क्योंकि कुल संख्या बढ़ा दी गई।



Limits of neutrality in addressing caste

GS II: Polity

MQB

The interim stay by the Supreme Court on the UGC Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulation, 2026, as reported by the Supreme Court Observer, arrives at a pivotal moment. These regulations emerged from *Abeda Salim Tadvi v Union of India*, a pending case before the Supreme Court concerning caste-based discrimination and student suicides in higher educational institutions. The case highlights institutional failures in creating an equal and inclusive learning space.

When discussing caste discrimination in higher education, it is essential to clarify what is being addressed. The 2026 regulations under 3(c) define "caste-based discrimination" as discrimination based on caste or tribe against members of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. This specificity is not exclusionary; rather, it is necessary to recognise caste as a continuing structure of marginalisation rather than isolated incidents.

Why neutrality fails

The definition has been criticised for excluding 'general category' students, with suggestions to adopt a caste-neutral definition that includes them, in line with Article 14 of the Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law. However, this reasoning misunderstands both how caste discrimination operates in practice and how equality is understood under the Constitution.

The Constitution does not mandate an abstract, one-size-fits-all neutrality. Article 15 not only prohibits discrimination but also empowers the State to make "special provisions" for socially and educationally backward classes, SCs and STs to ensure substantive equality. Equality, in this framework, is substantive rather than formal.



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Formal equality assumes that discrimination operates symmetrically and that all social groups require identical protection. However, caste discrimination is structural, embedded in graded hierarchies that shape access to dignity, resources, and institutional power. Including "general category" groups into a caste-neutral definition risks collapsing this structural inequality into a universal grievance framework, where systemic oppression is equated with isolated interpersonal bias. Such neutrality does not expand protection; it dilutes the law's ability to address caste as a system of power.

For decades, SC and ST students have experienced social exclusion, unequal treatment, humiliation, and institutional bias. In several cases, such structural discrimination has led to mental distress and suicides. These realities, reflected in the pending case under which the equity regulations were formulated, show that the framework is grounded in systemic concerns, not isolated incidents.

A caste-neutral definition would flatten unequal social positions into a formal notion of sameness that the Constitution itself does not endorse. Articles 14 and 15 permit differential treatment precisely to remedy historical and social disadvantage. Treating caste-based oppression as symmetrical across groups disregards the hierarchies through which caste operates and shifts the focus away from structural exclusion to abstract individual grievances. Therefore, defining caste-based discrimination through historically marginalised groups is not arbitrary. It recognises that discrimination operates through power structures that advantage some while disadvantaging others. This is not "reverse discrimination," but an acknowledgement that equality requires fairness in practice. A caste-neutral approach would obscure these structural

realities and weaken the law's capacity to address caste-based exclusion in higher education.

Enforcement matters more

The equity regulations in higher education, including a focused definition of caste-based discrimination, are not meant to exclude others from protection. Rather, they aim to create a baseline of dignity and inclusion for those who have historically been excluded. This approach aligns with Articles 14 and 15, which allow differential treatment to remove disadvantage and achieve substantive equality. In a society shaped by caste, constitutional equality cannot be achieved through context-blind neutrality.

More importantly, the question is how effectively they may function on the ground. The failure to address caste-based discrimination lies largely in weak implementation and poor institutional accountability.

Instead of diluting the scope of the UGC regulations, the focus should be on strengthening them – by ensuring independent complaint mechanisms, time-bound inquiries, transparency in outcomes, and clear consequences for institutional non-compliance. The UGC guidelines must be supported by monitoring, regular audits, and meaningful oversight. A framework meant to prevent caste-based harm cannot succeed unless institutions are made answerable for how they respond to discrimination in practice.

Shifting the debate away from enforcement and towards abstract concerns about neutrality risks missing the core issue. For students facing everyday exclusion, the question is not inclusive definitional purity, but whether the system will respond when discrimination occurs. Strengthening the functioning of the UGC framework is therefore essential to fulfilling the constitutional promise of equality and dignity in higher education.

The UGC guidelines must be supported by monitoring, regular audits, and meaningful oversight

08A. Limits of neutrality in addressing caste
जाति से जुड़े मुद्दों के समाधान में तटस्थता की सीमाएँ



- The interim stay by the Supreme Court on the **UGC Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulation, 2026** arrives at a pivotal moment.
सुप्रीम कोर्ट द्वारा यूजीसी समानता संवर्धन विनियम, 2026 पर अंतरिम रोक एक महत्वपूर्ण समय पर आई है।
- These regulations emerged from **Abeda Salim Tadvi v Union of India**, a pending case before the Supreme Court concerning **caste-based discrimination** and **student suicides**.
ये विनियम अबेदा सलीम तडवी बनाम भारत संघ मामले से उत्पन्न हुए हैं, जो जाति आधारित भेदभाव और छात्र आत्महत्या से संबंधित है।
- The case highlights **institutional failures** in creating an **equal and inclusive learning space**.
यह मामला संस्थागत विफलताओं को दर्शाता है जो समान और समावेशी शिक्षा वातावरण बनाने में असफल रही हैं।
- When discussing **caste discrimination in higher education**, it is essential to clarify what is being addressed.
उच्च शिक्षा में जाति भेदभाव पर चर्चा करते समय यह स्पष्ट करना आवश्यक है कि क्या संबोधित किया जा रहा है।
- The 2026 regulations define **“caste-based discrimination”** under 3(c) as **discrimination against SC, ST, and OBC**.
2026 के विनियमों में 3(c) के तहत “जाति आधारित भेदभाव” को एससी, एसटी और ओबीसी के खिलाफ भेदभाव के रूप में परिभाषित किया गया है।
- This specificity is necessary to recognise caste as a **continuing structure of marginalisation**.
यह विशिष्टता आवश्यक है ताकि जाति को निरंतर हाशिए पर रखने वाली संरचना के रूप में पहचाना जा सके।

Why neutrality fails

तटस्थता क्यों विफल होती है

- The definition has been criticised for excluding **“general category” students**.
इस परिभाषा की आलोचना “सामान्य वर्ग” के छात्रों को बाहर रखने के लिए की गई है।
- Some suggest adopting a **caste-neutral definition** under **Article 14**.
कुछ लोग अनुच्छेद 14 के तहत जाति-तटस्थ परिभाषा अपनाने का सुझाव देते हैं।
- However, this misunderstands how **caste discrimination operates** and how **equality is interpreted**.
हालांकि, यह जाति भेदभाव के कार्य करने के तरीके और समानता की व्याख्या को गलत समझता है।
- The Constitution does not mandate **abstract neutrality**.
संविधान सैद्धांतिक तटस्थता को अनिवार्य नहीं करता।
- **Article 15** allows the State to make **special provisions for backward classes, SCs and STs**.
अनुच्छेद 15 राज्य को पिछड़े वर्गों, एससी और एसटी के लिए विशेष प्रावधान बनाने की अनुमति देता है।
- This ensures **substantive equality**, not just formal equality.
यह वास्तविक समानता सुनिश्चित करता है, केवल औपचारिक समानता नहीं।
- **Formal equality** assumes all groups need identical protection.
औपचारिक समानता यह मानती है कि सभी समूहों को समान सुरक्षा की आवश्यकता है।
- But **caste discrimination is structural and hierarchical**.
लेकिन जाति भेदभाव संरचनात्मक और श्रेणीबद्ध होता है।
- It affects access to **dignity, resources, and institutional power**.
यह गरिमा, संसाधनों और संस्थागत शक्ति तक पहुंच को प्रभावित करता है।
- Including **general category in a neutral framework** risks equating systemic oppression with **individual bias**.
सामान्य वर्ग को तटस्थ ढांचे में शामिल करना प्रणालीगत उत्पीड़न को व्यक्तिगत पक्षपात के बराबर कर देता है।
- Such neutrality **dilutes the law’s effectiveness**.
ऐसी तटस्थता कानून की प्रभावशीलता को कमजोर करती है।



- For decades, **SC/ST students** have faced **social exclusion and institutional bias**.
दशकों से एससी/एसटी छात्र सामाजिक बहिष्कार और संस्थागत पक्षपात का सामना कर रहे हैं।
- In many cases, this has led to **mental distress and suicides**.
कई मामलों में इससे मानसिक तनाव और आत्महत्या हुई है।
- These realities show that the issue is **systemic, not isolated**.
ये वास्तविकताएँ दिखाती हैं कि यह समस्या प्रणालीगत है, न कि अलग-थलग घटनाएँ।
- A **caste-neutral definition** would flatten unequal social positions into a formal notion of sameness that the **Constitution** itself does not endorse.
एक जाति-तटस्थ परिभाषा असमान सामाजिक स्थितियों को एक औपचारिक समानता में बदल देगी, जिसे संविधान स्वयं स्वीकार नहीं करता।
- **Articles 14 and 15** permit differential treatment precisely to remedy **historical and social disadvantage**.
अनुच्छेद 14 और 15 ऐतिहासिक और सामाजिक वंचनाओं को दूर करने के लिए भिन्न व्यवहार की अनुमति देते हैं।
- This approach aligns with **Articles 14 and 15** and promotes **substantive equality**.
यह दृष्टिकोण अनुच्छेद 14 और 15 के अनुरूप है और वास्तविक समानता को बढ़ावा देता है।
- In a caste-based society, equality cannot be achieved through **context-blind neutrality**.
जाति आधारित समाज में समानता संदर्भ-विहीन तटस्थता से प्राप्त नहीं की जा सकती।
- More importantly, the issue is how effectively these regulations function on the **ground level**.
अधिक महत्वपूर्ण यह है कि ये विनियम जमीनी स्तर पर कितने प्रभावी हैं।
- The failure lies in **weak implementation** and poor **institutional accountability**.
विफलता का कारण कमजोर कार्यान्वयन और कमजोर संस्थागत जवाबदेही है।
- Instead of diluting UGC regulations, focus should be on **strengthening enforcement mechanisms**.
यूजीसी विनियमों को कमजोर करने के बजाय ध्यान प्रवर्तन तंत्र को मजबूत करने पर होना चाहिए।
- This includes **independent complaint mechanisms** and **time-bound inquiries**.
इसमें स्वतंत्र शिकायत तंत्र और समयबद्ध जांच शामिल होनी चाहिए।
- It also requires **transparency in outcomes** and **clear consequences** for violations.
इसके लिए परिणामों में पारदर्शिता और उल्लंघनों के लिए स्पष्ट दंड आवश्यक है।
- The **UGC guidelines** must be supported by **monitoring, audits, and oversight**.
यूजीसी दिशानिर्देशों को निगरानी, ऑडिट और पर्यवेक्षण द्वारा समर्थित किया जाना चाहिए।
- A **framework** cannot succeed unless institutions are made **accountable**.
कोई भी ढांचा तब तक सफल नहीं हो सकता जब तक संस्थानों को जवाबदेह न बनाया जाए।

GS Paper II: International Relations		08 April 2026
TOPICS COVERED		
08A	Bangladesh Foreign Minister arrives in Delhi, meets Doval बांग्लादेश के विदेश मंत्री दिल्ली पहुंचे, डोभाल से मुलाकात की	
08A	Russia, China veto UN resolution on reopening Strait of Hormuz रूस और चीन ने हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य खोलने पर UN प्रस्ताव को वीटो किया	



Bangladesh Foreign Minister arrives in Delhi, meets Doval

GS II: IR

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman arrived here on Tuesday. This is the first high-level bilateral visit from Bangladesh in more than a year, although Mr. Rahman, who was National Security Adviser in the interim government of that country, had travelled to Delhi in November 2025 for a regional meeting.

Mr. Rahman met National Security Adviser Ajit Doval for dinner on Tuesday in a start to his official interactions.

During his stay here, from April 7 to 9, Mr. Rahman is expected to hold several other meetings with top officials of the Indian government, including his counterpart, Union External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

"India and Bangladesh

share warm and historic ties anchored in strong people-to-people relations. The visit will further bolster India-Bangladesh partnership," Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry, said, welcoming Mr. Rahman, who is accompanied by Humayun Kobir, Foreign Affairs Adviser to Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

Mr. Rahman and Mr. Kobir were received by B. Shyam, Joint Secretary of the External Affairs Ministry's Bangladesh-Myanmar division, and the High Commissioner of Bangladesh, Riaz Hamidullah.

A lunch meeting will be hosted for Mr. Rahman at Hyderabad House on Wednesday by Mr. Jaishankar.

Mr. Rahman will also meet Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

08A. Bangladesh Foreign Minister arrives in Delhi, meets Doval बांग्लादेश के विदेश मंत्री दिल्ली पहुंचे, डोभाल से मुलाकात की

• **Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman arrived here on Tuesday.**

बांग्लादेश के विदेश मंत्री खलीलुर रहमान मंगलवार को यहां पहुंचे।

• **This is the first high-level bilateral visit from Bangladesh in more than a year,** although Mr. Rahman, who was **National Security Adviser** in the interim government of that country, had travelled to Delhi in **November 2025** for a regional meeting.

यह एक वर्ष से अधिक समय में बांग्लादेश की ओर से **पहली उच्च-स्तरीय द्विपक्षीय यात्रा** है, हालांकि श्री रहमान, जो उस देश की अंतरिम सरकार में **राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा सलाहकार** थे, **नवंबर 2025** में एक क्षेत्रीय बैठक के लिए दिल्ली आए थे।

• A lunch meeting will be hosted for Mr. Rahman at **Hyderabad House** on Wednesday by Mr. Jaishankar.

बुधवार को **हैदराबाद हाउस** में श्री जयशंकर द्वारा श्री रहमान के लिए दोपहर के भोजन का आयोजन किया जाएगा।

• Mr. Rahman will also meet **Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal** and **Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri**.

श्री रहमान **वाणिज्य मंत्री पीयूष गoyal** और **पेट्रोलियम मंत्री हरदीप सिंह पुरी** से भी मुलाकात करेंगे।

UNITED NATIONS

Russia, China veto UN resolution on reopening Strait of Hormuz



REUTERS

GS II: IR

Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution on Tuesday on reopening the Strait of Hormuz, a text already diluted to remove Gulf states' desired green light to use force to protect the key shipping lane. The draft resolution prepared by Bahrain received 11 votes in favour, two against and two abstentions. AFP

08A. Russia, China veto UN resolution on reopening Strait of Hormuz

रूस और चीन ने हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य खोलने पर UN प्रस्ताव को वीटो किया

• **Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution** on Tuesday on reopening the **Strait of Hormuz**, a text already **diluted** to remove **Gulf states'** desired green light to use **force** to protect the key **shipping lane**.

रूस और चीन ने मंगलवार को **संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद** के प्रस्ताव को वीटो कर दिया, जो **हॉर्मुज़ जलडमरूमध्य** को फिर से खोलने से संबंधित था, जबकि प्रस्ताव को पहले ही **कमज़ोर** कर दिया गया था ताकि **खाड़ी देशों** को महत्वपूर्ण **समुद्री मार्ग** की सुरक्षा के लिए **बल प्रयोग** की अनुमति न दी जाए।

• The **draft resolution** prepared by **Bahrain** received **11 votes in favour, two against and two abstentions**.

बहरीन द्वारा तैयार किए गए **मसौदा प्रस्ताव** को **11 समर्थन मत, 2**

विरोध मत और 2 अनुपस्थित (abstentions) मिले।

GS Paper III: Economy

08 April 2026

TOPICS COVERED

08A Share of West Asia oil imports rose to 54% just before war
युद्ध से ठीक पहले पश्चिम एशिया से तेल आयात की हिस्सेदारी 54% तक बढ़ी



08A A mid welfare pitch, Kerala ranks highest in most indicators
मध्यम कल्याणकारी नीति के साथ केरल अधिकांश सूचकों में शीर्ष पर

Share of West Asia oil imports rose to 54% just before war

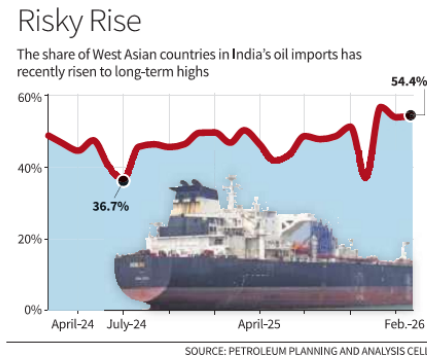
Latest govt. data show India imported nearly 91% of its crude oil requirement in February 2026, a historic high; Of this, more than half came from West Asia, supplies that are now constrained

GS III: Economy
T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India entered the energy crisis brought on by the Iran war particularly susceptible to disruptions in West Asia, the latest government data show. Not only was India importing nearly 91% of its crude oil requirements as of February 2026, a historic high, but more than 54% of these imports came from West Asian countries — their second-highest share in nearly 3.5 years.

The analysis by *The Hindu* of data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry shows that the volume of India's total oil imports in February 2026 increased nearly 33% to 205.3 lakh tonnes over February last year.

That is, India imported a third more oil in February 2026 than it did a year earlier. Further, according to data with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, India's oil imports accounted for 90.8% of the total oil processed by In-



dian refineries in February 2026, up from an already historically-high 90.2% in the first half of 2025-26.

Not only has India's dependence on oil imports risen, but it has also recently increased its dependence on the West Asian region. This has come as it had, until the outbreak of the war in West Asia, sought to reduce Russian oil imports in line with demands from the U.S. Russia's share in the volume of oil India im-

ports rose to 26.5% in February 2026, but was still significantly lower than the peak of 40.2% it had reached in May last year.

On the other hand, the share of oil imports from India's West Asian sources — Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar — rose to a combined 54.4% in February 2026. Apart from December 2025, when this figure hit 56.8%, this was their highest share since September 2022.

However, those sources are now constrained due to the war, with officials in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry confirming to *The Hindu* that India's oil imports from Russia have increased "big time" in March 2026, but this time without the benefit of the discount Russia was earlier providing. The official data on India's oil imports in March will be released in early May.

Expensive oil
The data show that not only was India importing a large quantity of oil in the lead up to the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, but that it was also benefiting from a crash in prices. The price of the Indian basket of crude oil in February 2026 stood at \$69 per barrel.

Prices had averaged about \$78 in the previous financial year.

The Indian basket comprises a weighted average of prices of different grades of oil in Oman and Dubai, along with the price of Brent.

08A. Share of West Asia oil imports rose to 54% just before war
युद्ध से ठीक पहले पश्चिम एशिया से तेल आयात की हिस्सेदारी 54% तक बढ़ी

• Latest govt. data show India imported nearly **91% of its crude oil requirement in February 2026, a historic high;** Of this, more than half came from **West Asia**, supplies that are now constrained.

ताज़ा सरकारी आंकड़ों के अनुसार, भारत ने **फरवरी 2026** में अपनी **कच्चे तेल की आवश्यकता** का लगभग

91% आयात किया, जो एक **ऐतिहासिक उच्च स्तर** है; इसमें से आधे से अधिक **पश्चिम एशिया** से आया, जिसकी आपूर्ति अब बाधित है।

• **Not only was India importing nearly 91% of its crude oil requirements as of February 2026, a historic high, but more than 54% of these imports came from West Asian countries — their second-highest share in nearly 3.5 years.**

फरवरी 2026 तक भारत अपनी कच्चे तेल की आवश्यकता का लगभग **91%** आयात कर रहा था, जो एक ऐतिहासिक उच्च स्तर है, और इनमें से **54% से अधिक** आयात **पश्चिम एशियाई देशों** से था — जो लगभग **3.5 वर्षों** में दूसरा सबसे अधिक हिस्सा है।

- Further, according to data with the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**, India's oil imports accounted for **90.8%** of the total oil processed by Indian refineries in February 2026, up from an already historically-high **90.2%** in the first half of **2025-26**.

इसके अलावा, **पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय** के आंकड़ों के अनुसार, फरवरी 2026 में भारत के रिफाइनरियों द्वारा प्रोसेस किए गए कुल तेल का **90.8%** आयातित था, जो **2025-26** की पहली छमाही के **90.2%** से भी अधिक है।

- यह तब हुआ जब पश्चिम एशिया में युद्ध शुरू होने तक भारत **अमेरिका** की मांगों के अनुरूप **रूसी तेल आयात** को कम करने का प्रयास कर रहा था।
- **Russia's share in the volume of oil India imports rose to 26.5% in February 2026, but was still significantly lower than the peak of 40.2% it had reached in May last year.**
फरवरी 2026 में भारत के तेल आयात में **रूस** की हिस्सेदारी **26.5%** हो गई, लेकिन यह पिछले वर्ष **मई** में पहुंचे **40.2%** के शिखर से काफी कम है।
- On the other hand, the **share of oil imports from India's West Asian sources — Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar — rose to a combined 54.4%** in February 2026.
दूसरी ओर, भारत के **पश्चिम एशियाई स्रोतों — इराक, सऊदी अरब, यूएई, कुवैत और कतर** — से तेल आयात की हिस्सेदारी फरवरी 2026 में मिलाकर **54.4%** हो गई।



Amid welfare pitch, Kerala ranks highest in most indicators

The growing economy has outperformed other States in social, educational, and health parameters

GS III: Economy

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy
Nitika Francis

Kerala is set to hold its Legislative Assembly elections on April 9, and the results will be announced on May 3. The stage is set for a tight competition between the incumbent Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF), with the NDA trying to make inroads into the State's Assembly constituencies this year.

The three competing political fronts have released election manifestos which bet heavily on welfare via pensions. An analysis of key indicators shows that Kerala fares better than most in several indicators spanning health, economy, and education.

Table 1 shows Kerala's ranking among other States in select economic indicators and its actual value as per the latest year. Kerala has demonstrated solid economic growth over the past decade, and ranked seventh among 23 States in per capita net State domestic product.

Data shows that economic development permeates Kerala's rural population as well. The average daily wage rate in the State is ₹868, the highest among all States.

The State also ranks second among others in terms of Human Development Index (HDI), which takes health, education, and standard of living into account.

Table 2 shows Kerala's rank across various health indicators. As per data from the National Family Health Survey for 2021-22, Kerala recorded an Infant Mortality Rate of 4.4, the lowest in India. The nationwide average was nearly eight times this figure, 35.2. Kerala also recorded the lowest Maternal Mortality Ratio in the country.

The State recorded low shares of women aged 15-19 who have begun childbearing. About 93% of surveyed women in Kerala also

have access to hygienic methods of menstrual protection. When it comes to children, only about 78% of Kerala's child population have received all basic vaccinations, ranking 12th out of 29 States. However, it has the second-lowest share of children aged 0-5 years whose growth is stunted, closely following Sikkim.

Kerala is also a frontrunner when it comes to education-related indicators (**Table 3**). The State ranks among the top-performing States for the Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) in elementary education (%). This indicator, as per the World Bank, refers to the number of pupils of the school-age group for primary education, enrolled either in primary or secondary education as a share of the total population in that age group.

Similarly, the State's Gross enrolment ratio in higher secondary is higher than the all-India average of 57.6%. It is one of the top three States for this indicator. GER refers to total enrolment in a particular level of school education, regardless of age, as a share of the population of the official age group for a given level of school education.

With a ratio of 1.44, the State ranks first among 29 States on the Gender Parity Index in education (GPI). The indicator is the ratio of female to male students enrolled at a specific level of education.

The State is among the top-performing States for infrastructure indicators (**Table 4**). As per data, the share of urban households living in kachha houses in the State is null, less than the country's average of 0.9%. It ranks second among 28 States with respect to Internet teledensity in rural areas.

But Kerala lagged a little behind on environment-related indicators. The State was among the top 10 States that generated high amounts of plastic waste per thousand population. It was also one of the top nine States in terms of per capita fossil fuel consumption. (With inputs from Devyanshi Bihani)

Report card

The data for the tables were sourced from the National Family Health Survey (2021-22) and the NITI Aayog SDG India Index (2023-24)

TABLE 1: Kerala's values and ranks in terms of Human Development Index and economic indicators

Indicator	Kerala's value	Kerala's rank	India average	Top States/U.T.s
Human Development Index (2023)	0.86	2 out of 29	0.732	Goa (0.862), Kerala (0.86), Delhi (0.837)
Per Capita net domestic product (₹)	3,08,338	7 out of 23	2,05,324	Delhi (4,93,024), Telangana (3,87,623), Karnataka (3,80,906)
Average daily wage rates in rural areas (₹)	868.7	1 out of 18	398	Kerala (868.7), T.N. (573.2), Himachal Pradesh (516)

TABLE 2: Kerala's values and ranks across various indicators related to health

Indicator	Kerala's value	Kerala's rank (out of 29)	India average	Top States/U.T.s
Share of women aged 15-19 who have begun childbearing (%)	2.4%	1	6.8%	Uttarakhand (2.4%), Kerala (2.4%), Goa (2.7%)
Infant mortality rate	4.4	1	35.2	Kerala (4.4), Goa (5.6), Sikkim (11.2)
Share of population with unimproved sanitation facility (%)	0.2%	2	19.3%	Mizoram (0.1%), Kerala (0.2%), Sikkim (0.3%)
Share of children aged 0-5 years whose growth is stunted (%)	23%	2	36%	Sikkim (22%), Kerala (23%), Manipur (23%)
Share of children with all basic vaccinations	78%	12	77%	Odisha (91%), T.N. (89%), H.P. (89%)
Women using a hygienic method of menstrual protection (%)	93.3%	6	77.6%	T.N. (98.4%), Delhi (97.1%), Goa (96.8%)
Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 1,00,000 live births)	19	1	97	Kerala (19), Maharashtra (33), Telangana (43)
Households with at least one member covered by a health scheme (%)	57.8%	10	41%	Rajasthan (87.8%), A.P. (80.2%), Goa (73.1%)

TABLE 3: Kerala's values and ranks across various indicators related to education

Indicator	Kerala's value	Kerala's rank (out of 29)	India average	Top States/U.T.s
Share of women (aged 15-49) who have done no schooling (%)	0.8%	1	22.6%	Kerala (0.8%), Mizoram (5.3%), Goa (5.5%)
Share of men (aged 15-49) who have done no schooling (%)	2.3%	1	10.7%	Kerala (2.3%), Goa (3.2%), Mizoram (3.4%)
Drop out rate (%)	5.5%	6	12.6%	Manipur (1.3), H.P. (1.5), T.N. (4.5)
Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) in elementary education (%)	100%	1	96.5%	Multiple States (100%)
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher secondary (%)	85%	3	57.6%	Delhi (94.9%), H.P. (94.1%), Kerala (85%)
Gender Parity Index (GPI) for higher education	1.44	1	N/A	Kerala (1.44), H.P. (1.33), Nagaland (1.28)

TABLE 4: Kerala's values and ranks across various indicators related to environment and infrastructure

Indicator	Kerala's value	Kerala's rank	India average	Top States/U.T.s
Plastic waste generated per 1,000 population (tonnes/annum)	3.39	10 out of 23	3.04	Goa (18.93), Delhi (16.9), Telangana (12.57)
Per capita fossil fuel consumption (in kg.)	191.61	9 out of 21	166.43	Haryana (341.95), Gujarat (339.23), Himachal Pradesh (271.79)
Percentage of urban households living in kachha houses (%)	0%	1 out of 29	0.9%	Kerala (0%), Haryana (0.2%), Maharashtra (0.2%)
Internet subscribers per 100 population in rural areas	160.19	2 out of 28	38.33	Goa (174.98), Kerala (160.19), Sikkim (104.35)

08A. A mid welfare pitch, Kerala ranks highest in most indicators

मध्यम कल्याणकारी नीति के साथ केरल अधिकांश सूचकों में शीर्ष पर

- The growing economy has outperformed other States in social, educational, and health parameters

बढ़ती अर्थव्यवस्था ने सामाजिक, शैक्षिक और स्वास्थ्य मानकों में अन्य राज्यों को पीछे छोड़ा है

- An analysis shows Kerala performs better in health, economy, and education indicators. विश्लेषण से पता चलता है कि केरल स्वास्थ्य, अर्थव्यवस्था और शिक्षा सूचकों में बेहतर प्रदर्शन करता है।

- Kerala ranked 7th among 23 States in per capita NSDP.

केरल प्रति व्यक्ति एनएसडीपी में 23 राज्यों में 7वें स्थान पर है।

- The average daily wage in Kerala is ₹868, the highest among all States.

केरल में औसत दैनिक मजदूरी ₹868 है, जो सभी राज्यों में सबसे अधिक है।

- The State ranks second in the Human Development Index (HDI).

राज्य मानव विकास सूचकांक (HDI) में दूसरे स्थान पर है।



- HDI includes **health, education, and standard of living**.
एचडीआई में स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा और जीवन स्तर शामिल हैं।
- Kerala recorded an Infant Mortality Rate of 4.4, the lowest in India.**
केरल में शिशु मृत्यु दर 4.4 दर्ज की गई, जो भारत में सबसे कम है।
- The national average was **35.2**, nearly eight times higher.
राष्ट्रीय औसत 35.2 था, जो लगभग आठ गुना अधिक है।
- Kerala also recorded the lowest **Maternal Mortality Ratio**.
केरल में मातृ मृत्यु अनुपात भी सबसे कम है।
- About **93% of women** have access to **hygienic menstrual protection**.
लगभग 93% महिलाओं को स्वच्छ मासिक धर्म सुरक्षा उपलब्ध है।
- Only about **78% of children** have received full basic vaccinations.
लगभग 78% बच्चों को पूर्ण टीकाकरण मिला है।
- Kerala ranks **12th out of 29 States** in vaccination coverage.
टीकाकरण में केरल 29 राज्यों में 12वें स्थान पर है।
- ANER measures school-age children enrolled in **primary or secondary education**.
एनईआर उन बच्चों को मापता है जो प्राथमिक या माध्यमिक शिक्षा में नामांकित हैं।
- Kerala's **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** is higher than India's **57.6% average**.
केरल का सकल नामांकन अनुपात (GER) भारत के 57.6% औसत से अधिक है।
- It is among the **top three States** in GER.
यह GER में शीर्ष तीन राज्यों में शामिल है।
- Kerala ranks first in Gender Parity Index (GPI) with a ratio of 1.44.**
केरल लैंगिक समानता सूचकांक (GPI) में 1.44 के अनुपात के साथ प्रथम स्थान पर है।
- GPI measures the ratio of female to male enrolment.**
जीपीआई महिला और पुरुष नामांकन अनुपात को मापता है।
- Kerala ranks second in rural internet teledensity.**
केरल ग्रामीण इंटरनेट टेलीघनत्व में दूसरे स्थान पर है।
- However, Kerala lags in **environmental indicators**.
हालांकि, केरल पर्यावरण सूचकों में पीछे है।

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TOPICS COVERED		
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08A	Energy from space	

'Earthset' boulevard



The other side: An 'earthset', where earth dips beyond the lunar horizon, as seen from the Orion spacecraft of the Artemis II lunar flyby mission on Monday. The four astronauts on NASA's flyby mission on Monday marked the furthest humans have been from the planet. AFP

The other side: An 'earthset', where earth dips beyond the lunar horizon, as seen from the Orion spacecraft of the Artemis II lunar flyby mission on Monday. The four astronauts on NASA's flyby mission on Monday marked the furthest humans have been from the planet.



Fast breeder nuclear reactor at Kalpakkam takes 'critical' leap forward

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Marking a significant step forward in India's nuclear power programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, via a post on social media platform X late on Monday said that the prototype fast breeder reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam, Chennai, had achieved "criticality". This means that the nuclear reaction in the reactor had become safely self-sustaining, and was on its way to being able to produce electricity.

"Today India takes a defining step in its civil nuclear journey advancing the second stage of its nuclear programme...the PFBR at Kalpakkam has attained criticality...it is a decisive step towards harnessing our vast thorium reserves," Mr. Modi posted.

While it will be some months before the PFBR is powered up to its full capacity, and even longer before it produces useful electricity, multiple experiments have to be conducted at low power to check if it's running as expected, which must be evaluated by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board before it grants a go-ahead for commercial power operation, this the beginning of the second stage of India's nuclear programme.

Since it was first formally approved as a project by the government in 2003, the PFBR at Kalpakkam has taken over two decades to reach this stage.

PFBR as a bridge

India's nuclear reactors are heavily dependent on imported uranium. The country's three-stage programme, conceived in the

1950s, envisages being able to be independent of imported uranium, creating its own stockpile of suitable uranium, and eventually harnessing thorium, of which it has vast stores. The PFBR development serves as an essential bridge.

"This is a historic moment," Anil Kakodkar, Member, Atomic Energy Commission and former head of the Department of Atomic Energy, told *The Hindu*, adding, "What this means is that we are now on our way to extract 80-100 times more energy from a given quantity of uranium."

The PFBR is a 500 MW sodium-cooled, pool-type fast breeder reactor designed by the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research and built by Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited, both op-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi witnesses initiation of core loading of indigenous prototype fast breeder reactor at Kalpakkam. PTI

erating under the Department of Atomic Energy.

Uranium powerhouse
India's pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWR) burn up uranium to produce electricity and small quantities of plutonium. However, less than 1% of the energy from this uranium (that can be used as heat and make electricity)

is extracted from these reactors. The 'depleted' uranium in India isn't considered 'waste' but is re-processed and stored. It, however, cannot be used back in the existing PHWRs.

"The PFBR reactor is designed to use the 'spent' uranium from the PHWR as well as produce more plutonium. We are no longer

using fresh, mined uranium here. As a thumb rule, this means that the 1% energy extracted can go up to nearly 10% for a single cycle and for every additional cycle 10% more. The efficiency of the uranium that is mined goes up substantially, Ravi Grover, Member, Atomic Energy Commission, told *The Hindu*.

"The burn-up or the energy extracted goes from about 8,000 units (in a PHWR) to nearly 100,000 units," Mr. Grover said.

Two more reactors

India's current plan, Mr. Grover said, was to construct two more PFBR at Kalpakkam, though this would only be following a proper assessment of the performance of the PFBR for a year. In the current scheme of things, the PFBR

will produce only "marginally more" plutonium.

"Our current priority is to use the uranium that we have far more efficiently. There is a reprocessing plant to come up on site at Kalpakkam which will use the processed spent fuel from the PFBR and for the two future PFBR. The PFBR will use depleted uranium from the Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors or PHWRs.

In the future, we will use thorium, but that is still a long time away, and what kind of reactors we will use for that, we need more work and have to wait and watch," he said, adding, "These reactors are self-sustaining but as and when we need more plutonium in the future, the design has to be optimised to extract more plutonium."

Currently, India has a fleet of 18-20 PHWRs that

use natural uranium as fuel and produce plutonium-239 (Pu-239) as a by-product in spent fuel. India's full fleet of 23 nuclear reactors have a combined capacity of 7.48 GW. India hopes to have 100 GW by 2047 and this is premised on a larger fleet of Bharat Small Modular Reactors (which are scaled down PHWR) that are in the pipeline.

A significant technological challenge that has led to delays in the PFBR is the use of liquid sodium as a coolant to manage the extremely high heat from fissioning uranium atoms in the PFBR. In India's current reactors, the heat is largely absorbed by 'heavy water', or in some cases, ordinary water. Once fully operational, the PFBR is expected to generate 500 MW of electricity, with a design life of 40 years.

08A. Fast breeder nuclear reactor at Kalpakkam takes 'critical' leap forward कलपक्कम में फास्ट ब्रीडर परमाणु रिएक्टर ने 'क्रिटिकल' स्तर पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रगति की

- **Prototype fast breeder reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam, Chennai, had achieved "criticality".**
भारत के परमाणु ऊर्जा कार्यक्रम में एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रगति को दर्शाते हुए, प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने सोमवार देर रात सोशल मीडिया प्लेटफॉर्म X पर कहा कि चेन्नई के कलपक्कम स्थित प्रोटोटाइप फास्ट ब्रीडर रिएक्टर (PFBR) ने "क्रिटिकलिटी" प्राप्त कर ली है।
- **This means that the nuclear reaction in the reactor had become safely self-sustaining, and was on its way to being able to produce electricity.**
इसका अर्थ है कि रिएक्टर में परमाणु प्रतिक्रिया सुरक्षित रूप से आत्मनिर्भर हो गई है और अब यह बिजली उत्पादन की दिशा में आगे बढ़ रहा है।
- **"Today India takes a defining step in its civil nuclear journey advancing the second stage of its nuclear programme...the PFBR at Kalpakkam has attained criticality...it is a decisive step towards harnessing our vast thorium reserves," Mr. Modi posted.**
"आज भारत ने अपने सिविल परमाणु कार्यक्रम की यात्रा में एक निर्णायक कदम उठाया है, जिससे इसके दूसरे चरण को आगे बढ़ाया जा रहा है...कलपक्कम का PFBR क्रिटिकलिटी प्राप्त कर चुका है...यह हमारे विशाल थोरियम भंडार के उपयोग की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम है," श्री मोदी ने कहा।
- While it will be some months before the PFBR is powered up to its full capacity, and even longer before it produces useful electricity, multiple experiments have to be conducted at low power to check if it's running as expected, which must be evaluated by the **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board** before it grants a go-ahead for commercial power operation, this the beginning of the second stage of India's nuclear programme.
हालांकि PFBR को अपनी पूरी क्षमता तक पहुंचने में कुछ महीने लगेंगे और उपयोगी बिजली उत्पादन में उससे भी अधिक समय लगेगा, लेकिन कम शक्ति पर कई प्रयोग करने होंगे, जिनका मूल्यांकन **परमाणु ऊर्जा नियामक बोर्ड** द्वारा किया जाएगा, इसके बाद ही वाणिज्यिक संचालन की अनुमति मिलेगी, यह भारत के परमाणु कार्यक्रम के दूसरे चरण की शुरुआत है।
- Since it was first formally approved as a project by the government in **2003**, the PFBR at Kalpakkam has taken over two decades to reach this stage.
जब इसे **2003** में सरकार द्वारा परियोजना के रूप में स्वीकृति मिली, तब से कलपक्कम का PFBR इस स्तर तक पहुंचने में दो दशक से अधिक समय ले चुका है।



PFBR as a bridge PFBR एक सेतु के रूप में

- India's nuclear reactors are heavily dependent on imported **uranium**.
भारत के परमाणु रिएक्टर आयातित यूरेनियम पर अत्यधिक निर्भर हैं।
- The **country's three-stage programme, conceived in the 1950s, envisages being able to be independent of imported uranium, creating its own stockpile of suitable uranium, and eventually harnessing thorium**, of which it has vast stores.
देश का तीन-चरणीय कार्यक्रम, जिसकी परिकल्पना 1950 के दशक में की गई थी, आयातित यूरेनियम से स्वतंत्र होने, अपना भंडार बनाने और अंततः थोरियम का उपयोग करने की योजना बनाता है।
- The PFBR development serves as an essential bridge.
PFBR का विकास एक महत्वपूर्ण सेतु का कार्य करता है।
- What this means is that we are now on our way to extract **80-100 times more energy from a given quantity of uranium**.
"यह एक ऐतिहासिक क्षण है," अनिल काकोडकर, परमाणु ऊर्जा आयोग के सदस्य ने कहा, "इसका अर्थ है कि अब हम यूरेनियम की एक निश्चित मात्रा से **80-100 गुना अधिक ऊर्जा** प्राप्त करने की दिशा में हैं।"
- The **PFBR is a 500 MW sodium-cooled, pool-type fast breeder reactor** designed by the **Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research** and built by **Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited**, both operating under the Department of Atomic Energy.
PFBR एक **500 मेगावाट** क्षमता वाला सोडियम-शीतित, पूल-प्रकार का रिएक्टर है, जिसे **इंदिरा गांधी परमाणु अनुसंधान केंद्र** ने डिजाइन किया और **भारतीय नाभिकीय विद्युत निगम लिमिटेड** ने बनाया है।

Uranium powerhouse यूरेनियम ऊर्जा केंद्र

- India's pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWR) burn up uranium to produce electricity and small quantities of plutonium.**
भारत के PHWR यूरेनियम का उपयोग करके बिजली और थोड़ी मात्रा में प्लूटोनियम उत्पन्न करते हैं।
- However, less than **1%** of the energy from this uranium is extracted from these reactors.
हालांकि इस यूरेनियम से केवल **1%** से भी कम ऊर्जा निकाली जाती है।
- The 'depleted' uranium in India isn't considered 'waste' but is reprocessed and stored.
भारत में क्षीण यूरेनियम को कचरा नहीं माना जाता बल्कि पुनः संसाधित किया जाता है।
- It, however, cannot be used back in the existing PHWRs.**
हालांकि इसे मौजूदा PHWR में उपयोग नहीं किया जा सकता।
- "The PFBR reactor is designed to use the 'spent' uranium from the PHWR as well as produce more plutonium.**
PFBR रिएक्टर को PHWR से प्राप्त उपयोग किए गए यूरेनियम का उपयोग करने और अधिक प्लूटोनियम बनाने के लिए डिजाइन किया गया है।
- We are no longer using fresh, mined uranium here.
हम यहां नया खनन किया गया यूरेनियम उपयोग नहीं कर रहे हैं।
- As a thumb rule, this means that the **1% energy extracted can go up to nearly 10% for a single cycle and for every additional cycle 10% more.**
इसका अर्थ है कि **1% ऊर्जा** एक चक्र में लगभग **10%** तक बढ़ सकती है।
- The efficiency of the uranium that is mined goes up substantially, **Ravi Grover** said.
खनन किए गए यूरेनियम की दक्षता में काफी वृद्धि होती है, **रवि ग्रोवर** ने कहा।
- "The burn-up or the energy extracted goes from about 8,000 units to nearly 100,000 units,"** Mr. Grover said.
ऊर्जा निष्कर्षण लगभग **8,000 यूनिट** से बढ़कर लगभग **100,000 यूनिट** तक पहुंच जाता है।

Two more reactors दो और रिएक्टर



- India's current plan was to construct two more PFBR at Kalpakkam. भारत की वर्तमान योजना कलपक्कम में दो और PFBR बनाने की है।
- **Currently, India has a fleet of 23 nuclear reactors with a combined capacity of 7.48 GW.** वर्तमान में भारत के पास 23 परमाणु रिएक्टर हैं जिनकी कुल क्षमता 7.48 गीगावाट है।
- **India hopes to have 100 GW by 2047.** भारत 2047 तक 100 गीगावाट क्षमता प्राप्त करने की आशा करता है।
- **A significant technological challenge is the use of liquid sodium as a coolant.** एक प्रमुख तकनीकी चुनौती तरल सोडियम का उपयोग है।
- **Once fully operational, the PFBR is expected to generate 500 MW of electricity, with a design life of 40 years.** पूरी तरह चालू होने पर PFBR से 500 मेगावाट बिजली उत्पन्न होगी और इसकी डिजाइन आयु 40 वर्ष होगी।

Energy from space

CS III: S&T



Q: What is space-based solar power?

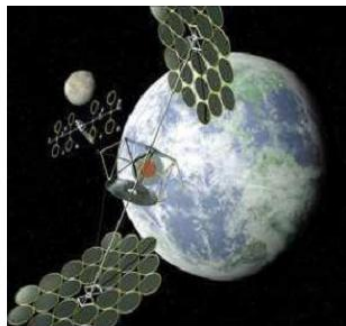
A: The Shimizu Corporation in Japan has proposed a belt of power plants sitting along the moon's

equator, which is 11,000 km long, called the "Lunar Ring". According to the company's plans, robots can build this mega-structure from lunar soil. The facilities will collect solar energy from the sun and beam it to the earth as microwaves.

If space-based solar power sounds like science fiction, it is exactly that. The concept involves launching large arrays of satellites to collect sunlight 24/7, and beaming the energy to the earth as microwave radiation. The corporation's plans are slightly different — they involve facilities on the lunar surface rather than in earth orbit — but otherwise involve the same physics.

Unfortunately for supporters of the idea, there are daunting hurdles. The cost of space-based solar is staggering. Even if rocket launch prices drop significantly, engineers must still transport thousands of tonnes of hardware into orbit (or the moon). Building a single functional power plant is an unprecedented logistical feat. Once operational, the system must beam power through the atmosphere, a process that will lose significant energy as heat.

In orbit, a single collision with space debris could cripple a billion-dollar array, turning it into junk. Maintenance



A conceptual illustration of a satellite collecting solar energy in earth orbit and beaming it down as microwaves. NASA

will also be extremely expensive on the moon.

Terrestrial solar and battery storage are also getting cheaper and more efficient every year, making it hard to justify a complex and risky orbital or lunar facility. For now, space-based solar remains an idea trapped in poor economics.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'

08A. Energy from space

What is space-based solar power? स्पेस-आधारित सौर ऊर्जा क्या है?

- The Shimizu Corporation in Japan has proposed a belt of power plants sitting along the moon's equator, which is 11,000 km long, called the "Lunar Ring".

उत्तर: जापान की शिमिजु कॉर्पोरेशन ने चंद्रमा के विषुवत रेखा के साथ स्थित 11,000 किमी लंबी बिजली संयंत्रों की एक श्रृंखला का प्रस्ताव दिया है, जिसे "लूनर रिंग" कहा जाता है।

- According to the company's plans, robots can build this mega-structure from lunar soil.

कंपनी की योजना के अनुसार, रोबोट इस विशाल संरचना को चंद्रमा की मिट्टी से बना सकते हैं।

- The facilities will collect solar energy from the sun and beam it to the earth as microwaves.

ये सुविधाएँ सूर्य से सौर ऊर्जा एकत्र करेंगी और उसे माइक्रोवेव के रूप में पृथ्वी तक भेजेगी।

- If space-based solar power sounds like science fiction, it is exactly that. यदि स्पेस-आधारित सौर ऊर्जा विज्ञान कथा जैसी लगती है, तो यह वास्तव में वैसी ही है।

- The concept involves launching large arrays of satellites to collect sunlight 24/7, and beaming the energy to the earth as microwave radiation.

इस अवधारणा में बड़े पैमाने पर उपग्रहों को प्रक्षेपित करना शामिल है जो 24/7 सूर्य प्रकाश एकत्र करते हैं और ऊर्जा को माइक्रोवेव विकिरण के रूप में पृथ्वी तक भेजते हैं।

- The corporation's plans are slightly different — they involve facilities on the lunar surface rather than in earth orbit — but otherwise involve the same physics. कंपनी की योजना थोड़ी अलग है — इसमें पृथ्वी की कक्षा के बजाय चंद्रमा की सतह पर सुविधाएँ शामिल हैं — लेकिन इसमें वही भौतिक सिद्धांत लागू होते हैं।
- Unfortunately for supporters of the idea, there are daunting hurdles. दुर्भाग्यवश इस विचार के समर्थकों के लिए कई बड़ी चुनौतियाँ मौजूद हैं।
- The cost of space-based solar is staggering. स्पेस-आधारित सौर ऊर्जा की लागत अत्यधिक है।



- In orbit, a single collision with **space debris** could cripple a billion-dollar array, turning it into junk.
कक्षा में, अंतरिक्ष मलबे से एक टक्कर भी अरबों डॉलर की प्रणाली को नष्ट कर सकती है।
- **Terrestrial solar** and battery storage are also getting cheaper and more efficient every year, making it hard to justify a complex and risky orbital or lunar facility.
स्थलीय सौर ऊर्जा और बैटरी भंडारण हर साल सस्ते और अधिक कुशल होते जा रहे हैं, जिससे जटिल और जोखिमपूर्ण अंतरिक्ष या चंद्रमा आधारित प्रणाली को उचित ठहराना कठिन हो जाता है।
- For now, **space-based solar** remains an idea trapped in poor economics.
फिलहाल, **स्पेस-आधारित सौर ऊर्जा** एक ऐसी अवधारणा बनी हुई है जो कमजोर आर्थिक व्यवहार्यता में फंसी हुई है।

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A member of Saudi Arabia's state-run Saudi Falcons Club holds saker falcons before their release into the wild as part of a population restoration programme together with Kazakh partners, at Altyn-Emel National Park, Kazakhstan on March 29.

Falcons (Family: Falconidae)

- Falcons are birds of prey belonging to the Family Falconidae and Genus Falco.
- They are among the most efficient aerial predators, known for high-speed flight, sharp vision, and ecological importance.
- Found across all continents except Antarctica, falcons play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem balance.
- They possess a distinctive tomial tooth (notch in beak) used to kill prey.
- They have exceptional eyesight and can detect prey from long distances.
- Unlike eagles, falcons kill prey using beak instead of talons.



A member of Saudi Arabia's state-run Saudi Falcons Club holds saker falcons before their release into the wild as part of a population restoration programme together with Kazakh partners, at Altyn-Emel National Park, Kazakhstan on March 29, 2024.

Habitat and Distribution

- Falcons occupy diverse ecosystems such as mountains, cliffs, grasslands, deserts, coastal areas, and urban cities.
- In India, they are found in the Himalayan region, Gangetic plains, Western Ghats, and coastal belts.
- Urban adaptation is observed in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru.

Ecological Role

- Falcons act as apex aerial predators.
- They regulate populations of small birds, rodents, and insects.
- They serve as bio-indicators of environmental health.
- They help maintain food chain stability and biodiversity balance.

Adaptations for Survival

- Falcons use high-speed stoop (dive) for hunting.
- Their streamlined body reduces air resistance.
- They have strong chest muscles for sustained flight.
- Their keen binocular vision helps in precise targeting.

Fastest Animal on Earth

- The Peregrine Falcon is the fastest animal on Earth.
- It can reach speeds of 300–389 km/h during hunting dives.

Conservation Status (Important for Exams)

- Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) has IUCN status Least Concern (LC).
- It is listed under CITES Appendix I.
- It is protected under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 Schedule IV.
- Laggar Falcon (*Falco jugger*) has IUCN status Near Threatened (NT).



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- It is listed under CITES Appendix I.
- It is protected under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 Schedule IV.

Major Threats

- Falcons face threats from habitat loss due to urbanization and deforestation.
- **Use of pesticides like DDT caused eggshell thinning.**
- Illegal hunting and trapping for falconry trade is a concern.

Electrocution from power lines also affects populations.

PATRIOTIC IAS



On India's updated climate pledges

India's announcement of its revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement prompts scrutiny of its existing climate mitigation actions and the need to factor in the country's developmental costs alongside those of meeting its climate commitments

GS III: Environment

MOB

FULL CONTEXT

T. Javaraman

India's announcement of its revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement – the term applied to the mitigation and other climate action targets that countries voluntarily commit to under the agreement – represents a considered step forward when India's energy and development policies are encountering serious headwinds. It is clear that the government has opted for continuity and incremental advance with respect to India's earlier NDCs. It is also clearly confident that its commitments will nevertheless be more than adequate in relation to its equitable share of global climate action, in keeping with climate justice and within its expected commitments as a developing nation.

Three climate goals

As the press communique after the Cabinet approval of the updated NDCs noted, there are three specific enhancements that have been committed. The first is an increase in the reduction of emissions intensity of its GDP, from 45% below 2005 levels by 2030 to 47% below 2005 levels by 2035. The second is ensuring that 60% of installed capacity for power generation is from non-fossil fuel sources, while the third is the enhancement of forest and tree cover carbon sinks to 3.5 - 4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent above 2005 levels.

India's climate policies are best understood in the context of its structural constraints as a lower middle income developing country, that determine its available choices for climate action. Over the last three decades, these constraints have not substantially changed, which is also why India continues to insist on the relevance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). But apart from these, given the structure of the Paris Agreement that requires renewed and enhanced commitments to climate mitigation every five years, short-term considerations have also begun to have a considerable weight in the formulation of the NDCs. The rapid deterioration of the global environment for climate action over the last year has undoubtedly brought this issue to the fore.

Enthusiasm for climate action

Structural constraints have not, however, dampened enthusiasm for climate action in India, both at the level of the Centre and the State governments. There is a considerable range of activities designed to set India on the path to low-carbon development, drawing significant public and private sector efforts and resources, including electric vehicles, enhancement of energy efficiency, promotion and deployment of non-fossil fuel sources of electricity generation, new technologies such as green hydrogen and more recently, the active promotion of carbon capture and storage efforts.

But given India's developmental levels today, it is clearly premature for India to convert all such efforts into the significantly more onerous and accountable commitments that are the NDCs, the progress towards which is to be reported every two years in the Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) to the UNFCCC.

A section of global and domestic public opinion has raised the issue of the



A drone view of solar panels and the NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation) power plant in Solapur, Maharashtra. REUTERS

adequacy of India's NDCs relative to a global temperature goal of 1.5 degree warming above pre-industrial levels (the more ambitious part of the Paris Agreement's goals). Some have downplayed the new targets, one commentator going so far as to call it "a walk in the park". Others call for increased generation from renewables as the metric and not installed capacity. Even some sections of opinion that have welcomed the NDCs, appear nevertheless to be uncertain on whether these new commitments are genuinely the best that India can make at this time.

The cost of going green

All the above variants of the "India can (must) do more argument" ignore some critical realities that contextualise India's climate actions. Given that India's natural energy source is overwhelmingly coal, it is inaccurate to view improvements in emissions efficiency of GDP and the corresponding bending of its emissions trajectory as a "natural" corollary of India's growth story. Priority to electricity from renewable sources comes with significant costs, including backing down readily available and often cheaper or comparably priced coal-based thermal power, further tilting a playing field that privileges renewable energy to sustain our climate commitments.

Renewable energy (RE) projects including utility scale battery storage have begun to make their appearance in India's power sector. But the corresponding scaling up of India's battery storage capacity, required for ensuring the stability of generation even from the proposed 2030 RE targets will run into a few trillion rupees at least. Part of such expansion would have to be funded by the government, deploying resources that would have been utilised in other sectors. At the very least, the deployment of such large-scale battery systems is not immediately feasible. The most globally

widespread option of energy storage in reverse pumped hydropower systems, has very limited scope in India at present. Additionally, environmental concerns, and water needs for competing uses such as irrigation, as well as the regulatory challenges faced by all large hydro projects are likely to preclude any rapid expansion.

Optimistic RE projections, not only in India but even globally, have run into the lack of transmission capacity and the challenges of grid balancing, with the associated costs often omitted when referring to the cost-effectiveness of RE power.

Since, for India, coal is the mainstay of power generation when solar and wind cease, unlike the large-scale gas and hydro available elsewhere, the full utilisation of the available RE capacity will inevitably have to be "curtailed", while adding to the operation and maintenance costs for thermal power operated in this cyclical fashion. These add further to the true cost that India bears for the pursuit of its climate commitments.

Improving energy efficiency in other sectors is also being pursued vigorously, including the introduction of mandatory emissions intensity targets in key industries. The early ramp up of electric vehicles, while the jump from BSIV to BSVI vehicle emissions standards was just coming into place, was another leap-frog moment, whose cost to the economy must not be underestimated. Since the 26th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change at Glasgow, every Central government budget has seen a range of initiatives and resource commitment across various aspects of climate mitigation. Indeed, a major knowledge gap today is that while future costs of increased mitigation action are routinely calculated, the cost burden attached to India's mitigation initiatives undertaken so far, in the absence of any significant climate finance, have yet to be

estimated in a reliable manner.

Accounting for India's developmental future

At a more over-arching level, India's mitigation challenge cannot be based on a simple extrapolation of the current structural features and trends of its economy.

India's developmental future needs room for further large-scale growth in manufacturing and industry, expansion in the provision of goods and services to its population at adequate levels beyond the minimum, and an urban transition that has only just begun. In this context, the "India can do more" arguments that rely on such extrapolation of economic trends and the persistence of current structural features, miss the urgent need to hedge India's developmental future.

India cannot commit its NDCs to preserving the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, when the goal is rapidly slipping out of reach. This a trend that India cannot reverse, given that its per capita emissions are a third of the global average. Even otherwise, under the voluntary emissions reduction NDCs of the Paris Agreement, the benefits of India's reduction in emissions below any business-as-usual baseline, are distributed primarily to the big emitters globally, due to their inadequate efforts, and proportionately less to India, especially when the largest historical emitter has walked out of all climate treaties and seeks to dismantle climate action both at home and abroad.

India's climate commitments have to be strategic and circumspect, while its NDCs are formulated in informed self-awareness of its, to use the language of the Paris Agreement, "national circumstances." (T. Javaraman is with the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. Views expressed are personal.)

THE GIST

India's climate policies are best understood in the context of its structural constraints as a lower middle-income developing country, which shape its choices for climate action.

The country has implemented several decarbonisation initiatives, including electric vehicles, deployment of non-fossil fuel power sources, and technologies such as green hydrogen.

However, India needs room for further large-scale growth in manufacturing and industry, which must be factored in alongside the future costs of its climate commitments.

08A. On India's updated climate pledges
भारत की अद्यतन जलवायु प्रतिबद्धताओं पर



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- The first goal is increasing reduction in **emissions intensity of GDP to 47% below 2005 levels by 2035**.
पहला लक्ष्य जीडीपी की उत्सर्जन तीव्रता को 2005 स्तर से 2035 तक 47% कम करना है।
- The second goal is ensuring **60% power capacity from non-fossil fuels**.
दूसरा लक्ष्य 60% बिजली क्षमता को गैर-जीवाश्म ईंधनों से सुनिश्चित करना है।
- The third goal is enhancing **carbon sinks through forests and tree cover to 3.5–4 billion tonnes CO₂ equivalent**.
तीसरा लक्ष्य वनों और वृक्ष आवरण के माध्यम से कार्बन सिंक को 3.5–4 अरब टन CO₂ समकक्ष तक बढ़ाना है।
- Efforts include **electric vehicles, energy efficiency, and renewable energy expansion**.
इन प्रयासों में इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन, ऊर्जा दक्षता और नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा विस्तार शामिल हैं।
- India is also promoting **green hydrogen and carbon capture technologies**.
भारत हरित हाइड्रोजन और कार्बन कैप्चर तकनीकों को भी बढ़ावा दे रहा है।
- **Some critics question the adequacy of India's NDCs for the 1.5°C global target**.
कुछ आलोचक 1.5°C वैश्विक लक्ष्य के संदर्भ में भारत के NDCs की पर्याप्तता पर सवाल उठाते हैं।
- Scaling battery storage will cost **trillions of rupees**.
बैटरी भंडारण बढ़ाने में लाखों करोड़ रुपये खर्च होंगे।
- **Pumped hydropower storage** has limited scope in India.
पम्पड हाइड्रो स्टोरेज की भारत में सीमित संभावनाएँ हैं।
- Regulatory challenges also slow **hydropower projects**.
नियामकीय बाधाएँ हाइड्रो परियोजनाओं को धीमा करती हैं।
- The transition from **BS-IV to BS-VI standards** was costly.
बीएस-IV से बीएस-VI मानकों में बदलाव महंगा था।