

**04 JULY 2024**

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**Spike in pollution levels may raise death rates in cities with cleaner air, says study (04 June)**

- A spike in air pollution in Indian cities with cleaner air can raise death rates more than in cities with higher pollution levels.
- Increases in air pollution in Bengaluru can raise death rates more than in Delhi, despite Delhi's higher background levels of air pollution.
- Cities with higher pollution loads saw a greater fraction of annual deaths attributable to air pollution: 11.5% in Delhi vs. 4.8% in Bengaluru.
- Bengaluru's population had 30% of the daily air pollution exposure compared to an average Delhi resident.
- A multi-city analysis in India studied the health effects of short-term exposure to air pollution, published in Lancet Planet Health.
- Scientists analyzed pollution and death registry data from Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Shimla, and Varanasi.
- Nearly 30,000 deaths, or 7.2% of annual deaths in these 10 cities, were due to short-term PM2.5 exposure.
- Total daily deaths in these cities rose by 1.42% for every 10 microgram per cubic meter increase in average PM2.5 exposure over a two-day period.
- From air pollution, Delhi had about 12,000 deaths per year, and Shimla had 59 per year, the lowest among the 10 cities, between 2008 and 2019.
- The study found that the risk of mortality rose more quickly at lower PM2.5 levels but plateaued as levels increased.
- Mortality risk was very high (2.65%) even on days with PM2.5 levels below the current Indian national air quality standard of 60 microgram per cubic meter.
- The study was conducted by authors from multiple institutes in Europe and India.

## **Amphibious vessel project remains non-starter (04 July)**

- Kerala's attempt to boost post-pandemic tourism included a plan to introduce amphibious vehicles in Kollam, Kochi, and Thalassery.
- The state allocated ₹5 crore in its 2021 budget for this project, aimed at vehicles that can operate both on land and water.
- The project was initiated without a feasibility study, despite previous setbacks faced by the State Water Transport Department (SWTD) in similar ventures.
- Government sources cited feasibility issues as the reason the project has not progressed.
- Initially proposed before the pandemic, the SWTD formed a technical committee involving experts from Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) and the Irrigation department to assess feasibility.

- The committee recommended measures for implementation, including exploring manufacturing partnerships for amphibious vehicles in Kerala.
- However, the project did not receive priority amid other SWTD initiatives in subsequent years.
- This setback mirrors previous challenges faced by Kerala's Tourism Department, such as the unsuccessful seaplane project, which incurred significant costs without successful implementation.

## **Rajinder Khanna is Additional National Security Adviser (04 July)**

- The National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) has recently undergone changes while ensuring continuity.
- Pavan Kapoor, currently Secretary (West) in the External Affairs Ministry, has been appointed as the Deputy National Security Adviser (NSA).
- Rajinder Khanna, former chief of India's external intelligence agency Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), has been promoted as Additional NSA, a new position within the NSCS.
- Mr. Khanna was previously serving as Deputy NSA (T&I) since January 2018.
- These appointments indicate a continuity in leadership within the NSCS.
- T. V. Ravichandran, IPS, currently serving as Special Director in the Intelligence Bureau, has been appointed as the new Deputy NSA, replacing Mr. Khanna.
- With these changes, there will be an Additional NSA and three Deputy NSAs under NSA Ajit Doval.
- The changes follow the recent appointment of Vikram Misri as the next Foreign Secretary from July 15.
- The appointments also coincide with the anticipation of filling vacant positions such as UN Permanent Representative in New York and Ambassador to the U.S., among other key postings expected to open later this year.

# No Indian industry presence in Board of National Research Foundation

GS Paper III: S&T

NEW DELHI

The Executive and Governing Boards of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) – a high-level body conceived to give strategic direction to scientific research in India – has no representation from Indian industry, suggests a perusal of the list of members made public by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) earlier this week.

There is also no presence of State universities, which the ANRF had said would be among the major beneficiaries of the new structure.

The absence of Indian industry is glaring as the ANRF Act, passed in August 2023, was expected to galvanise research by having close to ₹36,000 crore or 70% of its five-year out-

lay of ₹50,000 crore from “non-government sources, industry & philanthropists, from domestic as well as outside sources”.

Science Minister Jitendra Singh had said this in discussions surrounding the passage of the Bill in Parliament last year.

## Appoint members

To this end, the text of the Act specifically empowered the President of the Governing Board – in this case the Prime Minister of India – to nominate or appoint up to “...five members from business organisation or industry”, into the Board.

The 15-member Governing Board, as notified by the MoST, however, has only one industrialist – Romesh Wadhvani, an American billionaire of Indian origin and former CEO and chairperson of the Sym-



The foundation seeks to promote basic research in science and engineering.

phony Technology Group. There are two other Americans with Indian roots – Manjul Bhargava, Professor, Princeton University, U.S.; and Subra Suresh, Professor at Large, Brown University and former head of the U.S. National Research Foundation, from which the ANRF draws inspiration.

Only two universities are represented in the Body by the Directors of the

Indian Institute of Science, and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

Ajay Sood, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Union government, is the Member Secretary of the governing body, with the rest of the members being the Ministers of Science, and Education, and the Secretaries of the departments under the MoST.

The ANRF replaces the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), established in 2008.

The ANRF is a significant reform in that it proposes a more expansive definition of research, which includes science, engineering, Information Technology, Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, and the Humanities – the ANRF Board has among its members Raghuvendra Tanwar, Chair, Indian Council of Historical Research.

## No Indian industry presence in Board of National Research Foundation (04 July)

- The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), aimed at directing scientific research in India, lacks representation from Indian industry on both its Executive and Governing Boards.
- This observation arises from a recent disclosure of board members by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST).
- Contrary to expectations set by the ANRF Act of August 2023, which aimed to involve industry significantly, there is no presence of Indian industry stakeholders on these boards.

- The ANRF Act envisioned a substantial portion of its funding, about ₹36,000 crore out of a five-year total of ₹50,000 crore, to come from non-government sources including industry and philanthropists.
- Science Minister Jitendra Singh emphasized this funding model during parliamentary discussions leading to the passage of the ANRF Bill.
- Additionally, state universities, which were expected to benefit significantly from the ANRF's initiatives, are also absent from the board composition as noted from the public list of members.
- **Appoint members**
- The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act allows the President of the Governing Board, who is the Prime Minister of India, to appoint up to five members from business organizations or industry.
- Despite this provision, the 15-member Governing Board of the ANRF, as notified by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), includes only one industrialist, Romesh Wadhvani, an American billionaire of Indian origin and former CEO of Symphony Technology Group.
- Other members of the ANRF Governing Board include individuals with Indian roots based in the United States: Manjul Bhargava, a professor at Princeton University, and Subra Suresh, a professor at Brown University and former head of the U.S. National Research Foundation.
- The representation from universities on the ANRF Governing Board is limited to the Directors of the Indian Institute of Science and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.
- Ajay Sood, the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Union government, serves as the Member Secretary of the ANRF Governing Body.
- The remaining members of the ANRF Governing Board consist of Ministers of Science and Education, and Secretaries from departments under the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- The ANRF replaces the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), which was established in 2008.
- The ANRF marks a significant reform by expanding the scope of research to encompass science, engineering, Information Technology, Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities.
- Raghuvendra Tanwar, Chair of the Indian Council of Historical Research, is among the members reflecting the diverse fields included within the ANRF's purview.

# Smart Cities Mission period extended till March 2025

GS Paper III:  
Infrastructure

NEW DELHI

The Centre has extended the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) under the Union Urban Development Ministry till March 31, 2025.

Under the SCM, launched in June 2015, 100 cities were chosen through a competition to be developed as smart cities. The mission envisions developing areas within selected cities in the country as model areas based on an area development plan, which is expected to have a rub-off effect on other parts of the city and nearby cities and towns.

More than 8,000 multi-sectoral projects are being developed by the 100 cities amounting to around ₹1.6 lakh crore under the SCM.

As on July 3, the 100 cities have completed 7,188 projects (90% of total pro-



Under the SCM, 100 cities were chosen through a competition to be developed as smart cities.

jects) amounting to ₹1,44,237 crore as part of the mission.

The balance 830 projects amounting to ₹19,926 crore are also in advanced stages of completion, an official statement said on Wednesday.

The mission has an allocated a budget of ₹48,000 crore for the 100 cities. As on date, ₹46,585 crore or 97% of the allocated budget has been released.

Out of these funds released to the cities, 93% have been utilised as on date.

“The mission has been getting multiple requests from some States/city government representatives to grant some more time to complete the balance 10% projects. These balance ongoing projects are in advanced stage of implementation and got delayed due to various on-ground conditions. Taking cognisance of these requests, the Government of India has extended the mission period up to March 31, 2025 to complete these balance 10% projects,” the statement said.

This extension has been informed to the cities that it would be without any additional cost, beyond the already approved financial allocation under the mission.

## Smart Cities Mission period extended till March 2025 (04 July)

- The Smart Cities Mission (SCM) initiated by the Union Urban Development Ministry has been extended until March 31, 2025.
- Launched in June 2015, the SCM selected 100 cities through a competition to be developed as smart cities.
- The mission aims to develop specific areas within these cities as model areas based on comprehensive area development plans.
- More than 8,000 multi-sectoral projects are underway across the 100 cities, totaling approximately ₹1.6 lakh crore in investment.

- As of July 3, 2024, the cities have completed 7,188 projects, amounting to ₹1,44,237 crore (90% of total projects).
- There are 830 projects still in advanced stages of completion, amounting to ₹19,926 crore.
- The mission was allocated a budget of ₹48,000 crore for the 100 cities, and ₹46,585 crore (97% of allocated budget) has been released to date.
- Of the released funds, 93% have been utilized as of the current date.
- Due to requests from State and city government representatives facing on-ground challenges, the Government of India has extended the mission period to March 31, 2025, to complete the remaining 10% of projects.
- This extension will incur no additional cost beyond the already approved financial allocation under the SCM.

## **Speaker forms committee to frame rules on oath-taking of members (04 July)**

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has formed a committee to establish rules for the "oath-taking and affirmation" of Members of Parliament (MPs).
- The aim is to ensure that any deviations from the prescribed oath-taking process can be penalized.
- Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju announced this initiative at a press conference following the first session of Parliament since the new Lok Sabha was constituted.
- Instances were noted where MPs deviated from the standard oath format. Asaduddin Owaisi, MP from Hyderabad, hailed Palestine during his oath, while Chhatra Pal Singh Gangwar, BJP MP from Bareilly, concluded his oath with "Jai Hindu Rashtra".
- Rijiju emphasized that oath-taking is a constitutional process and should not be politicized. He expressed concern over several violations observed during this session.
- Rijiju criticized the opposition for constant heckling and shouting slogans during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in the Lok Sabha, stating that while interjections are acceptable, continuous disruption is not.
- Regarding the election of a Deputy Speaker, Rijiju mentioned that no decision has been made yet.

# Cabinet committees reconstituted; NDA partners on board

GS Paper II: Polity

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Union government reconstituted various important Cabinet committees here on Wednesday.

Ministers of the Bharatiya Janata Party's National Democratic Alliance partners, Janata Dal (U), Telugu Desam Party, Janata Dal (S), Shiv Sena and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), have found place in the committees.

Most of the panels are headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to a government release on Wednesday, the Cabinet Committee on Appointments, which oversees various high-level appointments, has two members – the Prime Minister and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The Cabinet Committee on Accommodation is headed by Mr. Shah and senior BJP Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Manohar Lal Khattar and Piyush Goyal are members. Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh is a special invitee to the panel.

## Security panel

The crucial Cabinet Committee on Security is headed by the Prime Minister and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Mr. Shah, Ms. Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar are its members.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, the panel that takes decisions on allocations and disbursements, is also headed by the Prime Minister. Mr. Singh, Mr. Shah, Ms. Sitharaman, Mr. Jaishankar, Mr. Gadkari, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

## Most of the Cabinet committees are headed by the Prime Minister

and Heavy Industries and Steel Minister and JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy are its members.

The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs is headed by Mr. Singh.

Mr. Shah, Union Health Minister and BJP president JP Nadda, Ms. Sitharaman, Mr. Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Ministers K. Rammohan Naidu, Kiren Rijiju, Virendra Kumar, Jual Oram, and C.R. Patil are its members.

The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, also headed by Mr. Modi, has Rajnath Singh, Mr. Shah, Mr. Gadkari, Ms. Sitharaman, Mr. Goyal, Mr. Nadda, Mr. Naidu, Ministers Jitan Ram Manjhi, Sarbananda Sonowal, Bhupender Yadav, Annpurna Devi, Mr. Rijiju and G. Kishan Reddy as its members.

Cabinet Committee on Investment and Growth has Mr. Modi, Mr. Singh, Mr. Shah, Mr. Gadkari, Ms. Sitharaman, Mr. Goyal, Ministers Pralhad Joshi, Giriraj Singh, Ashwini Vaishnav, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Hardeep Singh Puri, and Chirag Paswan as members. Special invitees in this panel are Minister of State for Statistics Rao Inderjit Singh and Minister of Aayush Prataprao Jadhav.

The Cabinet Committee on Skill, Employment and Livelihood comprises the Prime Minister, Mr. Singh, Mr. Shah, Mr. Gadkari, Ms. Sitharaman, Mr. Vaishnav, Mr. Pradhan, Mr. Yadav, Mr. Puri, Ministers Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Mansukh Mandaviya.

## Cabinet committees reconstituted; NDA partners on board (04 July)

- The Union government reconstituted various important Cabinet committees on Wednesday.
- Ministers from BJP's National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners such as Janata Dal (U), Telugu Desam Party, Janata Dal (S), Shiv Sena, and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) have been included in these committees.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads most of these committees.
- The Cabinet Committee on Appointments, responsible for high-level appointments, includes Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah as members.
- The Cabinet Committee on Accommodation is chaired by Amit Shah. Other members include senior BJP Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Manohar Lal Khattar, and Piyush Goyal.
- Jitendra Singh, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, is a special invitee to the Cabinet Committee on Accommodation.

### Security panel

- Cabinet Committee on Security:
  - Headed by the Prime Minister.
  - Members: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, S. Jaishankar.
- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs:
  - Headed by the Prime Minister.
  - Members: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman, S. Jaishankar, Nitin Gadkari, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, HD Kumaraswamy.
- Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs:
  - Headed by Rajnath Singh.
  - Members: Amit Shah, JP Nadda, Nirmala Sitharaman, Rajiv Ranjan Singh, K. Rammohan Naidu, Kiren Rijiju, Virendra Kumar, Jual Oram, C.R. Patil.
- Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs:
  - Headed by the Prime Minister.
  - Members: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal, JP Nadda, K. Rammohan Naidu, Jitan Ram Manjhi, Sarbananda Sonowal, Bhupender Yadav, Annpurna Devi, Kiren Rijiju, G. Kishan Reddy.
- Cabinet Committee on Investment and Growth:
  - Headed by the Prime Minister.
  - Members: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal, Pralhad Joshi, Giriraj Singh, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Hardeep Singh Puri, Chirag Paswan.

- Special invitees: Rao Inderjit Singh, Prataprao Jadhav.
- Cabinet Committee on Skill, Employment and Livelihood:
  - Headed by the Prime Minister.
  - Members: Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Dharmendra Pradhan, Bhupender Yadav, Hardeep Singh Puri, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Mansukh Mandaviya.

## **India to host 46th UNESCO heritage panel session (04 July)**

- Event: 46th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.
- Host: India, held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- Dates: July 21-31.
- Participants: Over 2,500 delegates including State Parties, advisory bodies, diplomats, heritage experts, scholars, and researchers from 195 countries.
- Organizer: Archaeological Survey of India.
- Inauguration: Likely to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Agenda: UNESCO has released a provisional agenda and timetable for the meeting.
- Committee Composition: Includes representatives from 21 State Parties to the World Heritage Convention, elected by the General Assembly.

## **Spiral galaxies evolved 4 billion years sooner than expected (04 July)**

An important idea in astronomy is that as the young universe cooled, it accumulated hot gas that clumped and gravitated to form galaxies. As these early galaxies cooled, they formed hot, thick disks that ultimately became thinner and formed spiral arms. A new finding mucks up this theory

- Findings: A new study suggests there are more spiral galaxies in the early universe than previously thought.
- Age of the Universe: Approximately 13.8 billion years old.
- Galaxy Diversity: Includes spiral, elliptical, and others with or without bulges.
- Previous Belief: Astronomers previously thought spiral galaxies formed around 6 billion years ago.
- Study Source: Conducted by astronomers from the University of Missouri, USA.

- **Publication:** Published in the Astrophysical Journal Letters on June 11.
- **Galaxy Evolution:** Younger galaxies tend to be spiral, while older ones exhibit diverse shapes.
- **Challenges:** Studying older galaxies is difficult due to their fainter light.

### **Not just hot air**

- **Early Universe Evolution:** Initially, the universe was a dense plasma containing increasing amounts of hot gas.
- **Galaxy Formation:** Clumps of matter formed and eventually gravitated to become galaxies, initially irregular in shape without disks.
- **Galaxy Evolution:** Over billions of years, these galaxies cooled, forming thick disks that later evolved into thin spiral arms.
- **New Perspective:** Recent research challenges the idea that galaxy cooling and spiral formation occurred sequentially, suggesting they happened concurrently.
- **Study Details:** Conducted by University of Missouri, using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope to identify 216 spiral galaxies dating back to 1.5 billion years after the universe's birth.
- **Methodology:** Researchers manually classified 873 galaxies as spiral or non-spiral, ensuring results were unbiased despite the crude classification method.
- **Future Directions:** Suggestions include using automatic algorithms for classification and involving more astronomers to improve data analysis and verification.

### **An underestimate comes to light**

- Researchers found that between 3 billion and 7 billion years after the Big Bang, the fraction of galaxies with spiral shapes increased significantly from about 8% to 48%.
- Previous estimates suggested a smaller increase, from 5% to 30%.
- This discovery challenges previous notions and suggests spiral galaxies were fully formed earlier than expected.
- Astronomers study galaxy formation using mathematical models on powerful computers, incorporating dark matter, gravity, and hot, dense gases.
- These simulations align with observed phenomena such as star formation, supernovae creation of elements, and black hole formation influencing galaxy evolution.

### **From simplistic to complicated**

- Astrophysicists refine their models using observations due to uncertainties in model parameters.
- The Hubble Space Telescope has provided clear images of distant celestial objects, aiding in model refinements.
- Early universe studies suggest many galaxies had disks and were actively forming stars.

- Authors of the study did not compare their observations with simulations, prompting questions from experts like Dr. Kulkarni.
- Complexity has increased in theoretical frameworks due to new findings challenging previous simplicity.
- Uncertainty remains about the link between sophisticated simulations and current observational data.
- New findings could impact understanding of star formation rates and the conditions for earth-like planet formation.
- Spiral galaxies accumulate heavier elements in their arms from dying stars, influencing star formation.
- Over time, spiral galaxies lose gas in their arms, slowing star formation, but galaxy collisions could restart this process.
- Overall, understanding galaxy formation, star formation, and planet formation cycles is becoming more complex and uncertain.

PatrioticIAS

# Trials, medical ethics and the orbit of power

## GS Paper II: Clinical Trial

**O**n January 10, 2021, Rashida Bee (representing the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmchari Sangh), Nawab Khan (representing Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha), Rachna Dhingra (representing the Bhopal Group for Information and Action) and Nausheen Khan (representing Children Against Dow Carbide) wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the then Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan. In the letter, they alleged **irregularities and ethical violations in the conduct of the clinical trial for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin (a COVID-19 vaccine) by the People's Hospital in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh and the resultant exploitation of trial participants belonging to vulnerable groups demanding stoppage, punishment and compensation.**

The letter further alleged gross violations of ethics guidelines including **violations of informed consent procedures, enrolment of vulnerable population among study participants, non-reporting of adverse events and a lack of monitoring and follow-up of study participants** among others.

The writers sought urgent intervention to stop the study at the trial site and for investigation by an independent body. What became of the letter and any consequential actions are unknown. The Indian drug regulator, **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation** had approved the vaccine candidate prior to the completion of the recruitment for the vaccine candidate's Phase III study for "Restricted Use of Covaxin under Clinical Trial Mode" – a term and process that **finds no mention in India's Drug Regulatory Framework, the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and its accompanying Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 2019.**

### Ethics committees and whistle-blowers

**One of the issues that stands out in this case is the functioning of the trial sites and their respective ethics committees.** Dr. Jacob Puliyel, a member of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court of India where the Court said "subject to the protection of privacy of individual subjects and to the extent permissible by the 2019 Rules, the relevant data which is required to be published under the statutory regime and the WHO [World Health Organization] Statement on Clinical Trials shall be made available to the public without undue delay".

The development of potential therapeutic agents is often complicated by subjective and sometimes objective violations of ethical guidelines. The role of conscientious insiders, and sometimes outsiders, who have unique knowledge of such violations is the subject of a recent book, *The Occasional Human Sacrifice - Medical Experimentation and the Price of Saying No*, by bioethicist, philosopher and whistle-blower at the University of Minnesota, Carl Elliott. The book details several such



**Dinesh S. Thakur**

a public health activist and was the whistle-blower in the case against Ranbaxy Laboratories

incidents in the western world, starting with the Tuskegee Syphilis Study to the Willowbrook Hepatitis Study.

It also looks at what happened with Protocol 126 for cancer study of bone marrow transplantation at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center and at the Eugene Sanger Radioisotope Laboratory, Cincinnati Medical Center, to study the effect of radiation on humans among others. Driven by his own experience to understand the suicide of Dan Markingson at the university, Elliot traverses some very difficult and human questions such as what makes someone speak out, the ethics of dissent, honour, respect, guilt and shame, and the concepts of dignity and integrity told through the journey of whistle-blowers. As Nancy Olivieri, a whistle-blower, recounts in her review, threats of legal action and, worse, often resulting in destroying the whistle-blower's life are far too common in such cases.

While one often wonders why such instances of moral courage are few and far between in our society, **Satyendra Dubey, Shanmugam Manjunath, Sanjiv Chaturvedi and a few other named exceptions notwithstanding, lack of strong whistle-blower protection statutes is only a part of the problem.** Unlike the United States, **India does not have a law that protects those who take great personal risks to bring wrongdoing to public notice.** The existing law, whose scope is limited to public servants to begin with, was further diluted in 2015, making it a dead letter law.

**The deeper issues which we should, but do not wrestle with are: understanding group think and organisational wrongdoing, loyalty to the ivory tower, fear of retribution, social conformity, status hierarchies and exercise of power that are so ingrained in us as a society.** Unless we study these traits among us as a society, we will never understand why someone chooses to be an **Anand Rai, the whistle-blower who exposed the Vyapam scam.**

### Innovative therapies and ethics

Back to the topic at hand, i.e., the development of life-saving medicines is a morass in our country. **While we have a vibrant industry that manufactures generic (copy-cat) drugs, developing innovative therapies has not been our cup of tea.** Development of life-saving medicines often entails balancing the risk to the patient with the projected benefit from using the therapeutic candidate. In most cases, there is not enough data to make an informed decision, which is not straightforward and requires specialised knowledge and experience. Using an approved drug that is on the market does not qualify a medical doctor to make such decisions. Drug development is a separate area of expertise. While we see green shoots of late, we do not have deep expertise in managing clinical development. Therefore, we make do with appointing medical

doctors to oversee the development of therapeutics. This requires better guardrails than we have in order to ensure that the basic tenets of ethics are not violated in the process. For example, when medical doctors who specialise in treating individual patients with specific diseases such as cardiology and paediatrics are appointed to run our pandemic response, we see absurd actions such as projecting cases to become zero during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members of subject expert committees make up things such as "emergency use authorization in clinical trial mode" and work hard to justify it with a straight face. These are glaring examples of gross violations of medical ethics in our recent past.

### Indian patients and clinical studies

The bigger issue in our country is the historic and repeated violation of informed consent when patients are enrolled in clinical studies. More than anecdotal evidence exists that poor and uneducated people are enrolled in such studies without fully informing them of potential harm from the therapeutic candidate being evaluated in a clinical study. The job of ensuring such atrocities do not occur falls to what is called an institutional ethics committee. While such committees exist on paper and in our regulations, their function and effectiveness are at best patchy.

A publication (2022) by Gayatri Saberwal *et al.* in the journal *PLOS Global Public Health* that evaluated 1,359 Phase II or III interventional studies registered in the Clinical Trials Registry-India (CTRI) identified as many as 30 problems with the way in which our ethics committees function. These include **clinical trials without any ethics committees, and trials with more sites than functional ethics committees** – for example, **three ethics committees approving one study site.** The simple takeaway from this analysis is that the primary guardrails that are supposed to be a check on abuse of medical ethics do not function in our country. This analysis says nothing about the competence of the members of the ethics committees, which was plainly obvious during the development of **Coronil during the pandemic. The biggest abuser of these regulations is a section of the industry that is actively promoted by the Ministry of AYUSH.** These poorly designed, ill-executed "clinical studies" with zero oversight are often used to provide a veneer of scientific validity to their concoctions and nothing more.

If there is one message that comes out clearly in Elliott's book, it is how even well-designed and well-run systems of checks and balances on accountability are often run roughshod over by those who have the means and power. We are nowhere even close to how such systems function in the West. If we truly wish to hold wrongdoing to account, we have a very long way to go before we even get the basics right. That is, if we truly want to.

In India, the primary guardrails that are supposed to be a check on the abuse of medical ethics do not function

## Trials, medical ethics and the orbit of power (04 July)

- On January 10, 2021, representatives of various Bhopal-based organizations wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then Health Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan.

- The letter alleged irregularities and ethical violations in the clinical trial of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin at the People's Hospital in Bhopal.
- It highlighted issues like violations of informed consent procedures, enrolment of vulnerable populations, non-reporting of adverse events, and lack of monitoring and follow-up of study participants.
- The writers demanded the stoppage of the study, punishment for those responsible, and compensation for the trial participants.
- They sought an independent investigation into the matter.
- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation had approved Covaxin for restricted use under clinical trial mode before the completion of Phase III trials, a process not mentioned in India's Drug Regulatory Framework.

### **Ethics committees and whistle-blowers**

- The functioning of trial sites and their ethics committees is a significant issue.
- Dr. Jacob Puliyel filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court of India.
- The Court ruled that relevant data should be made public, while protecting individual privacy and adhering to the 2019 Rules and WHO guidelines.
- Development of therapeutic agents often involves ethical guideline violations.
- Carl Elliott's book, "The Occasional Human Sacrifice," explores ethical violations in medical experimentation and the role of whistle-blowers.
- The book covers incidents like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, Willowbrook Hepatitis Study, Protocol 126 for cancer study at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center, and radiation studies at Eugene Sanger Radioisotope Laboratory, Cincinnati Medical Center.
- Elliott examines the suicide of Dan Markingson at the University of Minnesota and explores questions about whistle-blowing, ethics of dissent, honor, respect, guilt, shame, dignity, and integrity.
- Whistle-blowers often face threats and severe consequences, including legal actions that can destroy their lives.
- Moral courage is rare in India, partly due to the lack of strong whistle-blower protection laws.
- India's existing whistle-blower protection law is limited to public servants and was weakened in 2015.
- Deeper societal issues include groupthink, organizational wrongdoing, loyalty to institutions, fear of retribution, social conformity, status hierarchies, and power dynamics.
- Understanding these societal traits is crucial to comprehending why individuals like Anand Rai, who exposed the Vyapam scam, choose to be whistle-blowers.

### **Innovative therapies and ethics**

- Development of life-saving medicines in India faces significant challenges.

- India has a strong generic drug manufacturing industry but lacks innovation in developing new therapies.
- Developing life-saving medicines involves balancing patient risk with potential benefits, requiring specialized knowledge and experience.
- Medical doctors are not necessarily qualified to oversee drug development, which is a separate area of expertise.
- India's clinical development expertise is limited, leading to the appointment of medical doctors to oversee therapeutic development.
- This practice needs better ethical guardrails to prevent violations.
- Examples of unethical actions include unrealistic projections during the COVID-19 pandemic and creating terms like "emergency use authorization in clinical trial mode."
- Such actions demonstrate significant violations of medical ethics in recent history.

#### **Indian patients and clinical studies**

- The major issue in India is the repeated violation of informed consent in clinical studies.
- Poor and uneducated individuals are often enrolled without being fully informed of potential risks.
- Institutional ethics committees are responsible for preventing such abuses, but their effectiveness is inconsistent.
- A 2022 study by Gayatri Saberwal et al. in PLOS Global Public Health identified 30 problems with ethics committees in 1,359 Phase II or III interventional studies registered in the Clinical Trials Registry–India (CTRI).
- Issues include clinical trials without ethics committees and trials with more sites than functional ethics committees.
- The analysis reveals that primary safeguards against medical ethics abuse are ineffective.
- The competence of ethics committee members is questionable, as seen during the development of Coronil during the pandemic.
- The Ministry of AYUSH promotes poorly designed, ill-executed clinical studies, providing false scientific validity to certain concoctions.
- Elliott's book highlights how systems of checks and balances can be undermined by those with power.

- India is far from having effective systems to hold wrongdoing accountable, and significant improvements are needed to get the basics right.

## **COMPLETE COURSE FOR IAS/PCS GENERAL STUDIES (GS) 2025 & 2026 PRELIMS CUM MAINS CUM INTERVIEW PROGRAMME**

**BEST OF THE DELHI, BETTER THAN DELHI**

# **Patriotic IAS**



**पैडलेगंज, गोरखपुर**

**THE APPROACH OF THIS COURSE IS TO TEACH STUDENTS VERY BASIC CONCEPTS AND ENABLE THEM TO SOLVE THE IAS/PCS PRELIMS AND MAINS QUESTIONS BY THE END OF THE CLASS LECTURE.**

### **Factory accidents, a pointer to rusty inspection reform (04 July)**

- A reactor explosion in a chemical factory in Dombivli MIDC, Maharashtra, in May 2024 resulted in deaths, injuries, and damage to nearby factories, shops, and residences.
- The Maharashtra government announced compensation for the families of the deceased and funds for treating the injured.
- Newspaper reports indicate frequent fatal industrial accidents in the area in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2023.
- The Maharashtra government failed to relocate 156 chemical factories from Dombivli MIDC to Patalganga despite deciding to do so in 2022.
- The boiler in the chemical factory was not registered under the Indian Boiler Regulations, 1950.

#### **Poor inspection**

- In 2021, Maharashtra inspected 1,551 of 6,492 hazardous factories (23.89%) and 3,158 of 39,255 registered factories (8.04%).

- Tamil Nadu's inspection rates were 17.04% for general factories and 25.39% for hazardous factories.
- Gujarat's inspection rates were 19.33% for general factories and 19.81% for hazardous factories.
- All-India inspection rates were 14.65% for general factories and 26.02% for hazardous factories (2022 data from Directorate General Factory Advice Service & Labour Institutes).
- Poor inspection rates are partly due to a shortage of personnel.
- In Maharashtra, only 48 of the 122 sanctioned officers were appointed (39.34% appointment rate).
- Gujarat had a 50.98% appointment rate, Tamil Nadu 53.57%, and all-India 67.58%.
- Sanctioned posts are inadequate; each of the 953 sanctioned inspectors would need to inspect 337 factories annually.
- In 2021, inspectors in Maharashtra had to inspect 818 factories, 589 in Gujarat, 532 in Tamil Nadu, and 499 all-India.
- Prosecution rates were 6.95% in Gujarat, 13.84% in Maharashtra, and 14.45% in Tamil Nadu.
- Weak and inefficient labour market governance through the inspection system is evident.
- Employers refer to the inspection system as "inspector-raj," implying harassment and corruption.

#### **Need for the right reforms in inspection**

- Inspectors may target and harass factories to exhibit state power and secure bribes, though this is not universal.
- The president of the Maharashtra Industry Development Association admitted that safety inspections and certifications were often done through "understanding" between auditors and factory owners or managers.
- Both employers and labor inspectors are guilty of contributing to corruption.
- Reforms of the inspection system are needed but should not be like those initiated in response to employer criticism.
- Reforms like self-certification, randomised inspections, online inspections, and third-party certification violate several articles in the International Labour Organization's Labour Inspection Convention (081), 1947.
- The ILO Convention mandates qualified and well-provided inspectors who can freely enter establishments without prior notice to ensure compliance with labor laws.
- Governments should ensure strong labor market governance by implementing the ILO Convention provisions.
- The need for increased inspections is heightened by fast-paced technological changes and the use of hazardous and chemical substances.

- Inspectors should both inspect and facilitate compliance by providing advice to employers and unions, as recognized by the ILO Convention.

#### **Penalties for the enforcer**

- Firms or trade unions that do not comply with laws are prosecuted by the state.
- When the state fails in governance, simple compensation to victims and their families is not enough.
- There should be a penal system for government and labor department officials to ensure full legal compliance.
- Repeated industrial disasters indicate the government's failure to learn from past incidents.
- The government cannot neglect its duty to ensure a safe working and living environment under the guise of reforms and a lean government.
- Meaningful reforms are needed to create an efficient and ethical labor inspectorate.

## **A voidable tragedy (04 July)**

#### **Gatherings should be tightly regulated to prevent Hathras-type stampedes**

- A stampede at a religious congregation in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, resulted in over 120 deaths.
- The incident is part of a series of similar tragedies in the past 20 years.
- Approximately one lakh people gathered to hear preacher Suraj Pal, also known as Narayan Sakar Hari or "Bhole Baba".
- Reports indicate over 2.5 lakh participants were present, despite the venue's capacity of 80,000.
- Most victims were women and children from economically vulnerable sections seeking spiritual solace.
- Potential causes of the stampede include overcrowding and attempts by some to collect soil from around the preacher's feet.
- The Uttar Pradesh administration's response was inadequate, with visuals showing bodies outside post-mortem facilities and desperate kin.
- There was an insufficient number of ambulances and medical staff.
- The preacher and his aides reportedly left the site during the panic.
- Tragedies like the stampede in Hathras could have been avoided with proactive steps by a vigilant administration.
- Authorities across states often fail to learn from past incidents or utilize available technology and communication effectively.
- Besides taking stringent action against those responsible, the Uttar Pradesh administration should ensure just compensation funded by the organizers.

- The incident highlights poor management of large crowds and underscores the need for officials to ensure organizers can handle gatherings of any size.
- Local authorities and organizers should conduct drills before such events to prepare for emergencies.
- Political executives, bureaucrats, and event organizers must recognize that each life lost affects a family deeply.
- Arrangements for mass gatherings should prioritize the safety and well-being of attendees.

04<sup>th</sup> July 2024

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

GS Paper III: Disaster Management

**Question:** Discuss the systemic failures that led to the tragic stampede at a religious congregation in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh. What measures should be adopted by administrations to prevent such incidents in the future? (250 words/15 Marks)

प्रश्न: उत्तर प्रदेश के हाथरस में एक धार्मिक समागम में हुई दुखद भगदड़ के लिए जिम्मेदार व्यवस्थागत विफलताओं पर चर्चा करें। भविष्य में ऐसी घटनाओं को रोकने के लिए प्रशासन को क्या उपाय अपनाने चाहिए? (250 शब्द/15 अंक)

**Answer Structure:**

- Introduce with a briefly outline the context of the stampede at the religious congregation in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh.
- Discuss the factors that contributed to the stampede, such as overcrowding and inadequate crowd management.
- Highlight the role of the administration's preparedness and response, including deficiencies in medical facilities and emergency services.
- Then Recommend proactive steps that administrations should take to prevent such incidents.
- Conclude by stressing the importance of learning from past tragedies to ensure public safety and effective management of large gatherings.

**ANSWER**

The stampede at a religious congregation in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh, resulting in the loss of over 120 lives, underscores critical failures in crowd management and emergency preparedness. The congregation, attended by more than 2.5 lakh people, far exceeding the venue's capacity of 80,000, turned tragic due to overcrowding and lapses in administrative response.

**Factors that contributed to the stampede and large scale casualty**

- Lack of preparedness and inadequate emergency infrastructure.

- Images of bodies outside overcrowded hospitals and insufficient ambulances highlighted the severe shortcomings in the state's public health system.
- Furthermore, reports of the preacher and his aides leaving the scene while people were in distress underscored the lack of leadership and responsibility during the crisis.

**To prevent such incidents in the future, administrations must adopt proactive measures:**

- **Capacity Management and Oversight:**
  - **Venue Assessments:** Conduct rigorous assessments to determine and enforce venue capacities based on safety standards.
  - **Monitoring and Compliance:** Regularly monitor events to ensure compliance with capacity limits and safety regulations.
- **Emergency Preparedness:**
  - **Medical Infrastructure:** Enhance nearby medical facilities with sufficient ambulances, medical personnel, and emergency supplies.
  - **Communication Systems:** Establish robust communication channels between organizers, emergency responders, and local authorities for swift coordination during crises.
- **Crowd Control and Safety Protocols:**
  - **Educational Campaigns:** Educate the public on crowd behavior, safety protocols, and emergency procedures.
  - **Crowd Management Teams:** Deploy trained personnel for effective crowd control to prevent overcrowding and manage emergencies effectively.
- **Accountability and Governance:**
  - **Regulatory Framework:** Strengthen regulatory oversight over event organizers, ensuring adherence to safety standards and penalizing non-compliance.
  - **Investigative Rigor:** Conduct thorough investigations into incidents, holding accountable those responsible for lapses in safety and emergency response.
- **Community Engagement and Support:**
  - **Victim Support:** Ensure prompt and adequate compensation to victims' families, funded by event organizers as a measure of accountability.
  - **Simulation Drills:** Conduct regular simulation exercises involving stakeholders to simulate emergency scenarios and refine response protocols.

Thus, the tragedy in Hathras serves as a grim reminder of the consequences of inadequate planning and response during mass gatherings. Administrations must prioritize public safety, learn from past incidents, and implement comprehensive measures to prevent future tragedies. By addressing capacity issues, improving emergency preparedness, and enforcing stringent regulations, administrations can mitigate risks and ensure the safety and well-being of citizens attending such events.

## Of accommodation

### Treasury benches and the Opposition must uphold parliamentary tradition

The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha and the corresponding session of Rajya Sabha were notable for the renewed spirit of parliamentary debate on display, notwithstanding the excessive combativeness and avoidable grandstanding by the government and the Opposition. Echoes of the election campaign continued too, as Rahul Gandhi, in his debut as the designated Leader of Opposition (LoP), mounted an aggressive critique of the NDA government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Mr. Modi in turn called into question the track record and intentions of the Congress, and Mr. Gandhi's capacity. Both sides categorically declared fealty to the Constitution of India, while accusing each other of trying to undermine it. They also crossed swords over Hinduism and its political role. The rise of a strong Opposition – with no designated LoP earlier – and the return of coalition politics as the leading party lacks an absolute majority may restore the role of Parliament. The increase in Opposition numbers can help restore healthy traditions such as more Bills getting scrutinised by parliamentary standing committees. A robust Opposition can also act as an effective restraint on the government, preventing it from bulldozing opposition with its legislative agenda. The 17th Lok Sabha not only earned the dubious distinction of having seen the suspension of the most number of Opposition MPs (146 in a single session, including Rajya Sabha MPs) but also functioned without a Deputy Speaker, a post usually reserved for the Opposition. To underscore this point, the INDIA bloc predicated its support for Om Birla as the Speaker only on the condition that the government agreed to offer it the deputy chair. The stalemate eventually led to an election between Mr. Birla and Kodikunnil Suresh (Congress), which Mr. Birla won through a voice vote. The Opposition did not press for a division and rich parliamentary tradition was followed, with Mr. Modi, leader of the House, and Mr. Gandhi, LoP, escorting Mr. Birla to his Chair.

The roles of the Lok Sabha Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman gain additional prominence. The Opposition has urged them to be even-handed. The Opposition has also questioned the expunging of portions of Mr. Gandhi's speech from the records by the Speaker. The threshold for removing parts of what is spoken in the House from official records should be very high. Following the deviation from the standard format by several members, the Speaker has constituted a committee to frame rules for oath-taking. Parliamentary speeches could do with more humour and less diatribe, but the fact that there was an expanded debate is encouraging. The Treasury and Opposition benches must understand that their place in the highest seat of democracy is to represent the people who sent them there. They must find a common sense of purpose and function in a spirit of accommodation.

## Of accommodation (04 July)

### Treasury benches and the Opposition must uphold parliamentary tradition

- The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha and corresponding session of Rajya Sabha featured lively parliamentary debates.
- Rahul Gandhi, as Leader of Opposition for the first time, criticized the NDA government and PM Modi aggressively.
- PM Modi responded by questioning Congress's track record and intentions, as well as Gandhi's capacity.
- Both sides affirmed their commitment to the Constitution while accusing each other of undermining it.
- Debates also focused on Hinduism's political role and ideological differences.
- The return of a strong Opposition and coalition politics due to the ruling party's lack of absolute majority may restore Parliament's role.
- A larger Opposition can facilitate scrutiny of bills by parliamentary standing committees and act as a check on the government's legislative agenda.
- The 17th Lok Sabha faced criticism for suspending a record number of Opposition MPs and for not appointing a Deputy Speaker, usually held by the Opposition.
- The election of Om Birla as Speaker saw conditions set by the Opposition, eventually resolved through a voice vote without division.
- PM Modi and Rahul Gandhi demonstrated parliamentary tradition by escorting Birla to his Chair, despite political differences.
- The roles of the Lok Sabha Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman have become more significant, with calls from the Opposition for impartiality.
- There is criticism over the expunging of parts of Rahul Gandhi's speech from parliamentary records, prompting demands for a high threshold for such actions.
- A committee has been formed by the Speaker to establish rules for oath-taking after deviations from standard procedures.
- There is a push for parliamentary speeches to include more humor and less hostility, reflecting a desire for constructive debates.

- Both the government and Opposition are reminded of their duty to represent the people and find common ground in democratic processes.

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Patriotic

# An overview of the French elections

GS Paper II: International Relations

Why did French President Emmanuel Macron decide to dissolve parliament and call for snap elections? How did the far-right National Rally become so popular? How are the two rounds of elections conducted in France? Why have left-wing parties also formed a bloc?

## EXPLAINER

Joan Sony Cherian

### The story so far:

The first phase of the French elections conducted on June 30, after President Emmanuel Macron's sudden decision to dissolve parliament, has placed the far-right National Rally (RN) and its allies in the lead with a 33% vote share. The New Popular Front, a left-wing coalition, came second with 28%, while Mr. Macron's centrist bloc got only 20.7% of the vote share. The second phase will be held on July 7.

### Why elections now?

On June 9, Mr. Macron stated that he was dissolving parliament, three years too soon, observing that "France needs a clear majority if it is to act in serenity and harmony". This announcement came after his bloc's devastating defeat at the hands of the RN in the European Parliament elections. While the decision came as a shock to most of his party members and allies, Marine Le Pen, the RN leader, welcomed the decision, claiming, "we're ready for it".

Experts say Mr. Macron's decision was an attempt to stop the rise of the RN. His gamble was that the French public, faced with the choice of having a far-right party in power, would consolidate against the right-wing wave. However, if that was indeed the reasoning, it seems as if Mr. Macron placed the wrong bet. Almost all opinion polls by major outlets were predicting a lead for the RN (but short of an absolute majority), while Mr. Macron's approval ratings hit rock-bottom to 36%, as per a Toluna-Harris Interactive poll.

The sudden call for elections and the high stakes involved in the race has energised the electorate, with the Interior Ministry stating that 59.4% of registered voters had cast a ballot as of 5 p.m. on June 30, as compared to the 39.4% at the same time two years ago.

### How are elections in France conducted?

There are 577 seats in the French parliament, which include 13 overseas districts and 11 constituencies that represent French citizens abroad. So to hold an absolute majority in parliament, a party needs 289 seats.

The first phase of the elections is equivalent to a qualifying round wherein candidates must at least get 12.5% of locally registered votes in order to stay in the race and not get eliminated. If a candidate gets more than half of the total votes cast in the first round itself, they will automatically win. If not, candidates who have met the qualifying criteria will move on to the second phase. At this stage of the elections, 'horse-trading' is a common practice wherein parties form blocs among themselves and drop candidates in constituencies which may split the vote and favour a rival party/alliance.

The 2024 snap elections are mainly a three-way battle between the RN and its allies, the New Popular Front, the left-wing coalition which include the Socialists, the Greens, the Communists and France Unbowed, and Ensemble, which is Mr. Macron's bloc.

### What is at stake?

The RN, founded as the National Front (FN), was established by Ms. Le Pen's father, Jean Marie Le Pen. The FN was an offshoot of a fascist organisation created as a reaction against the Algerian war, the formation of the Fifth French republic and the protests of May 1968 in France.



A polarised nation: People hold up a sign which reads "All anti-fascists" as a protest against the National Rally party, following partial results in the first round of the elections at the Place de la Republique in Paris, France on June 30. REUTERS

However, under Ms. Le Pen, the party has undergone a significant rebranding wherein she has sought to whitewash the party's fascist roots as well as her father's Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism. By changing the name of the party from FN to RN, Ms. Le Pen also softened the organisation's once hardcore policies such as leaving the EU and opting out of the euro, the region's currency.

Additionally, ever since the Russia-Ukraine war and the subsequent energy crisis, the party has actively distanced itself from Russian President Vladimir Putin with whom Ms. Le Pen once kept close ties.

However, in other aspects, the RN is as far-right as it always was. The policy of 'national priority', which the RN espouses, gives French citizens the first choice when it comes to social housing, employment and social benefits – a scheme which goes against the French Constitution. Similarly, the RN is completely opposed to immigration. It calls for the deportation of all 'illegal' immigrants and strict border controls, and characterises immigrants as destroying the 'European way of life'. The party has also promised to abolish citizenship by birth to children born to parents of foreign descent.

Thus, the RN has risen to popularity within the French republic due to fears of culture clashes, a cost-of-living crisis and Mr. Macron's unpopular policies such as increasing the age of retirement. It increased its seat share in the French

parliament from seven to 89 in 2022 and now hopes for it to jump as high as anywhere between 240 to 300 seats. Moreover, the party has also been able to tap into the electorate in the provincial towns and villages of southern France, mostly composed of blue-collar workers who have often felt neglected by the political elites of Paris.

Mr. Macron's political gamble could potentially lead to France being ruled by a far-right party for the first time since the end of the Second World War. Already there have been reports of a rise in racist attacks, along with anti-far-right protests in many parts of Paris on June 30, some of which ended in violence and arson. The political uncertainty has stoked fear in immigrants and minority communities, particularly among Muslim groups who have often been attacked by the RN.

### What happens next?

As the date for registering the final list of candidates who will be contesting from various constituencies is over, more than 200 candidates from the centre and left alliances have dropped out of the race in order to consolidate votes against the RN.

The sudden formation of the New Popular Front (a reference to the 1936 Popular Front where Socialists and Communists allied against far-right rioters), is part of a practice known as the "republican front", wherein centrist and left parties' team up to keep right-wing parties out of power. However, whether the 'front' will hold this time is

questionable, especially considering the presence of leftist leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a controversial figure who was accused of anti-Semitism by his rivals.

The president of the RN and its Prime Ministerial candidate, Jordan Bardella, has stated that he won't enter into an alliance with any of the other blocs. He said he didn't want to be the "President's assistant" and that he would rather be a 'cohabitation Prime Minister' as accorded by the French Constitution. A cohabitation is where the President is part of one party and Parliament is ruled by a party not of the President's. Here, domestic policy is governed by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet while defence and foreign policy are handled by the President's office. Mr. Bardella, like his patron Ms. Le Pen, promises that he would prioritise French citizens and bring more purchasing power into their hands by reducing VAT on essential products such as fuel, food, etc.

The last time a snap election was called was in 1997, when centre-right President Jacques Chirac dissolved the National Assembly to consolidate his party's dominance after a slew of unpopular policies surrounding fiscal austerity. However, his gamble backfired as a new left-wing government came to power inadvertently entering him into a cohabitation alliance. By next week, one would know whether Mr. Macron's decision will also go the same way, and whether his party will be, as Ms. Le Pen stated, "wiped out" by the RN.

## THE GIST

The first phase of the French elections conducted on June 30, after President Emmanuel Macron's sudden decision to dissolve parliament, has placed the far-right National Rally (RN) and its allies in the lead with a 33% vote share.

The RN has risen to popularity within the French republic due to fears of culture clashes, a cost-of-living crisis and Mr. Macron's unpopular policies such as increasing the age of retirement.

As the date for registering the final list of candidates who will be contesting from various constituencies is over, more than 200 candidates from the centre and left alliances have dropped out of the race in order to consolidate votes against the RN.

## **An overview of the French elections (04 July)**

**Why did French President Emmanuel Macron decide to dissolve parliament and call for snap elections? How did the far-right National Rally become so popular? How are the two rounds of elections conducted in France? Why have left-wing parties also formed a bloc?**

- In the first phase of the French elections on June 30, the far-right National Rally (RN) and its allies led with a 33% vote share.
- The New Popular Front, a left-wing coalition, came second with 28%.
- President Emmanuel Macron's centrist bloc received 20.7% of the vote share.
- The second phase of the elections will be held on July 7.

### **Why elections now?**

- On June 9, President Macron announced the dissolution of parliament, three years early, citing the need for a clear majority.
- The announcement followed his bloc's defeat by the RN in the European Parliament elections.
- Marine Le Pen, RN leader, welcomed the decision, while Macron's party members were shocked.
- Experts believe Macron aimed to counter the rise of the RN, hoping the public would unite against the far-right.
- Opinion polls predicted a lead for the RN, with Macron's approval rating at 36% according to Toluna-Harris Interactive.
- Voter turnout was high, with 59.4% of registered voters casting ballots by 5 p.m. on June 30.
- The French parliament has 577 seats, requiring 289 for an absolute majority.
- In the first phase, candidates must secure at least 12.5% of locally registered votes to advance.
- Candidates winning more than half of the total votes in the first round win automatically; otherwise, qualifying candidates move to the second phase.
- The 2024 snap elections involve a three-way battle between the RN and its allies, the New Popular Front, and Macron's bloc, Ensemble.

### **What is at stake?**

- The RN, formerly the National Front (FN), was founded by Jean Marie Le Pen, Marine Le Pen's father.
- The FN originated from a fascist organization reacting to the Algerian war, the formation of the Fifth French Republic, and the May 1968 protests.
- Marine Le Pen rebranded the party, distancing it from its fascist roots, her father's Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism.

- She changed the party's name to RN and softened policies like leaving the EU and the euro.
- The RN distanced itself from Russian President Vladimir Putin after the Russia-Ukraine war and the energy crisis.
- The RN maintains far-right policies, including 'national priority' for French citizens in housing, employment, and benefits, opposing immigration, and advocating for the deportation of 'illegal' immigrants and strict border controls.
- The RN increased its parliamentary seats from seven to 89 in 2022 and hopes to reach 240 to 300 seats.
- The RN's rise is attributed to fears of cultural clashes, the cost-of-living crisis, and Macron's unpopular policies like raising the retirement age.
- The RN has gained support in southern France's provincial towns and villages, primarily from blue-collar workers.
- Macron's dissolution of parliament could lead to a far-right government for the first time since World War II.
- There have been reports of increased racist attacks, anti-far-right protests in Paris, and fear among immigrants and minority communities, especially Muslims.

#### **What happens next?**

- Over 200 candidates from center and left alliances have dropped out to consolidate votes against the RN.
- The New Popular Front was formed, referencing the 1936 Popular Front alliance against the far-right.
- The "republican front" is a practice where centrist and left parties team up to keep right-wing parties out of power.
- The success of the 'front' is uncertain due to the controversial leftist leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon.
- RN President and Prime Ministerial candidate, Jordan Bardella, refuses to ally with other blocs and prefers to be a 'cohabitation Prime Minister.'
- Bardella promises to prioritize French citizens and increase purchasing power by reducing VAT on essentials.
- The last snap election in 1997 saw President Jacques Chirac's gamble backfire, leading to a left-wing government and a cohabitation alliance.
- The outcome of Macron's decision to dissolve parliament will be known soon, with RN potentially gaining significant power.

# Till Russia do us part? NATO at 75, an enduring alliance

GS Paper II:  
International  
Relations

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation came into being on April 4, 1949. Writers explain the complex structure of this alliance, after it began life as the 'Atlantic Alliance'. After NATO's failures in Afghanistan, Russia's aggression has given new momentum to the alliance, making it feel relevant

Shoumojit Banerjee

In Gen. Sir John Hackett's terrifying alternate fiction, *The Third World War* (1978), which describes a world locked in nuclear conflict, a deliberate provocation against the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) powers in Europe causes WWII. Though NATO wins the war, it's a **pyrrhic victory**.

In H.G. Wells mould, *The Third World War* was a 'Shape of Things to Come' for the nuclear age, and leagues apart from dreary military publications on NATO, and an exciting way to understand the complex structures of this alliance, which turned 75 this year since its formation on April 4, 1949.

NATO began life as the 'Atlantic Alliance' in 1949 with 12 states including the U.S. and Canada, as well as the U.K., France, Belgium among others in Europe as its founding members with the aim to deter Soviet Union expansion under Stalin (NATO today has 31 members). U.S. President Harry Truman's administration feared that the dictator wanted to expand his empire as Stalin's iron fist fell on countries in eastern and central Europe 'liberated' by the Red Army from Nazi Germany where puppet Communist regimes were installed following the Second World War.

NATO's purpose was encapsulated in a famous quip attributed to the alliance's first secretary general, Baron Hastings 'Pug' Ismay, who described it thus: "to keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

In *Deterring Armageddon*, a sweeping biography of NATO, Peter Apps notes that the world's longest military alliance has outlasted its historic rival, the ancient Athenian-dominated Delian League, formed against the Persians in 478 BC and

dissolved 74 years later following the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 BC.

## Eye on minutiae

In fluid prose, Apps brings to life personalities dimmed by the march of history and turns the spotlight on obscure diplomatic details. For instance, a March 1954 proposal by the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov to Politburo honchos Georgy Malenkov and Nikita Khrushchev urged the Soviet Union to take diplomatic and political initiative by applying for NATO membership!

The book is full of choice anecdotes and aperçus: Apps wryly notes that for Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme military command of NATO provided a welcome escape from the boredom of peacetime university administration.

The third and fourth week of June 1948 saw a series of momentous events that directly lent impetus to the formation and growth of NATO. After the Western Allies introduced the new German currency, the Deutsche Mark (DM), in the British, French and American zones, **Stalin cut off road and rail access to the western sector of Berlin on June 24, marking the start of the Berlin blockade**. This in turn led to the incredible **Berlin airlift (June 26) which saw Allied airplanes supplying Berliners with essentials (from foodstuffs to coal) for an incredible 323 days**.

Yet, relations between the Western European powers and America have been riven by tensions, right from the formation of NATO.

## The launch of NATO

In a splendid chapter in *The Atlantic and its Enemies* (2010), maverick historian Norman Stone charts the formation of the NATO system. As Stone says, while there had already been a military alliance

between the British and the French in the Treaty of Dunkirk in 1947, it was marked by distrust of the Americans.

It was the ratcheting Soviet threat beginning with the **Soviet-backed Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 that saw a 'Brussels Pact' being formed the very next month**. This pact brought in the Low countries with a committee of defence ministers and staff under the British war hero, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery.

The stage was set for the creation of the Atlantic Alliance as "old wartime alliances came to life," says Stone. A key point, as the edifice for future NATO coordination between countries was built upon the coordination plans laid by Eisenhower and his military colleagues from Allied countries during his time as Supreme Allied Commander during D-Day (the start of the liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany) in the Second World War.

## Secret armies

Despite all the grand rhetoric about democratic ideology, NATO was not made up of democratic states – Salazar's Portugal was part of it. Soviet skulduggery in Central Europe was matched by NATO and the CIA in the form of secret 'stay-behind armies' (the Gladio network, consisting of military operatives, and involving the mafia with tacit support from the Vatican) which attempted to undermine left-wing regimes.

What then makes NATO different from other alliances of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, which were rife with **mutual suspicion and rank opportunism?**

For analytical clarity, Wallace Thies' *Why NATO Endures* (2009) is a must-read. The book debunks the frequent 'NATO-in-crisis' myth as well. Thies

observes that the absence of divisive ideological issues was reflected in the conduct of 18th century wars, which were mainly about **balance of power**. This meant every state could be considered a potential ally, while a parity in power ensured that no one had a decisive edge. **Moreover, the absence of any bonds of affinity or affection between allies meant that alliance members generally had few qualms about sacrificing their partners' interests for the sake of their own.**

Two diplomatic classics offer a template to understand pre-NATO alliances: Walter L. Dorn's 1940 work *Competition for Empire* offers the example of England and Austria during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), characterising them as "unsuitable allies." The iconoclastic A.J. P. Taylor's *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* (1954) is splendid on the cynical motives of the alliances formed between 1848 to the end of World War I in 1918. Taylor observes the disastrous coordination between the 'Triple Entente' countries (the U.K., France, and Russia) before the start of the 1914 war. "From the moment the war opened, the French, uncertain that Russia really would or could perform what she had promised, began exhorting their ally to hurry [on to Berlin]," quips Taylor, in one of his classic aphorisms.

According to Thies, **unlike the members of pre-1939 alliances, who often sought to keep each other in the dark regarding their capabilities and their intentions, NATO members opted for integration and transparency in their defence efforts to a degree never before achieved in the history of alliances.**

And yet, the alliance survived. After NATO's failures in Afghanistan, Russia's aggression has given new momentum to the alliance, making it feel relevant.

## Till Russia do us part? NATO at 75, an enduring alliance (04 July)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation came into being on April 4, 1949. Writers explain the complex structure of this alliance, after it began life as the 'Atlantic Alliance'. After NATO's failures in Afghanistan, Russia's aggression has given new momentum to the alliance, making it feel relevant

- Gen. Sir John Hackett's "The Third World War" describes a nuclear conflict provoked against NATO, resulting in a pyrrhic victory.
- The book provides an engaging way to understand NATO's complex structures.

- NATO was formed on April 4, 1949, initially called the 'Atlantic Alliance,' with 12 founding members including the U.S., Canada, U.K., and France.
- Its purpose was to deter Soviet expansion under Stalin, who established puppet Communist regimes in eastern and central Europe post-WWII.
- NATO's mission was famously described as "to keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."
- Peter Apps, in "Deterring Armageddon," notes NATO is the world's longest military alliance, outlasting the ancient Delian League formed against Persians.

#### **Eye on minutiae**

- Peter Apps' "Deterring Armageddon" highlights historical personalities and diplomatic details, including a 1954 proposal by Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov for the USSR to join NATO.
- The book includes anecdotes, such as Dwight D. Eisenhower finding NATO command a welcome escape from peacetime university administration.
- June 1948 events like the introduction of the Deutsche Mark by Western Allies and the Berlin blockade by Stalin, leading to the Berlin airlift, were pivotal in NATO's formation.
- Tensions between Western European powers and America existed from NATO's start.
- Historian Norman Stone's "The Atlantic and its Enemies" details NATO's formation, noting the 1947 Treaty of Dunkirk between Britain and France and the 1948 Brussels Pact following the Soviet-backed Communist coup in Czechoslovakia.
- The Atlantic Alliance was built upon wartime coordination plans by Eisenhower and his military colleagues during WWII's D-Day.

#### **Secret armies**

- NATO included non-democratic states, such as Salazar's Portugal.
- NATO and the Soviet Union both engaged in secret operations to undermine opposing regimes, illustrated by NATO's Gladio network.
- Wallace Thies' book "Why NATO Endures" debunks the "NATO-in-crisis" myth and highlights the absence of divisive ideological issues in 18th-century wars.
- Pre-NATO alliances, like those during the War of the Austrian Succession and the Triple Entente before WWI, were characterized by mutual suspicion and opportunism.
- Unlike pre-1939 alliances, NATO members pursued unprecedented levels of integration and transparency in their defense efforts.

- Despite failures in Afghanistan, Russia's recent aggression has revitalized NATO's relevance and made it feel pertinent again.

# COMPLETE COURSE FOR IAS/PCS GENERAL STUDIES (GS) 2025 & 2026 PRELIMS CUM MAINS CUM INTERVIEW PROGRAMME

BEST OF THE DELHI, BETTER THAN DELHI

# Patriotic IAS



पैडलेगंज, गोरखपुर

THE APPROACH OF THIS COURSE IS TO TEACH STUDENTS VERY BASIC CONCEPTS AND ENABLE THEM TO SOLVE THE IAS/PCS PRELIMS AND MAINS QUESTIONS BY THE END OF THE CLASS LECTURE.

**Question 1:** With reference to the Acting Chief Justice, consider the following statements:

1. The appointment of an Acting Chief Justice is mentioned under Article 223 of the Indian Constitution.
2. The Acting Chief Justice's tenure is fixed and cannot be extended.
3. The Chief Justice of India plays no direct role in the appointment of an Acting Chief Justice.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- a) 1 only                      b) 1 and 3 only  
c) 2 and 3 only              d) 1, 2, and 3

**Question 2:** Consider the following statements:

1. The Acting Chief Justice can be appointed for only the High Courts.

**Answer:** b) 1 and 3 only

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1** is correct. Article 223 of the Indian Constitution deals with the appointment of an Acting Chief Justice.
- **Statement 2** is incorrect. The tenure of an Acting Chief Justice is not fixed and can be extended as per the requirement.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect. The Chief Justice of India can make recommendations regarding the appointment of an Acting Chief Justice.

**Answer:** d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Explanation:**

<p>2. The Acting Chief Justice of a High Court can be appointed by the Chief Justice of India.</p> <p><b>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) 1 only b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement 1 is incorrect. The Acting Chief Justice can be appointed for both the High Courts and the Supreme Court of India.</li> <li>• Statement 2 is incorrect. The Acting Chief Justice of a High Court is appointed by the President of India, not by the Chief Justice of India.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 3:</b> Consider the following statements about the Smart Cities Mission:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Smart Cities Mission was launched in 2015.</li> <li>2. The Mission aims to develop 100 cities across the country making them citizen-friendly and sustainable.</li> <li>3. The funding for the Smart Cities Mission is entirely borne by the Central Government.</li> </ol> <p><b>Which of the above statements is/are correct?</b></p> <p>a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 2, and 3</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> a) 1 and 2 only</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1</b> is correct. The Smart Cities Mission was launched by the Government of India in 2015.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2</b> is correct. The Mission aims to develop 100 cities to be more citizen-friendly and sustainable.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 3</b> is incorrect. The funding for the Smart Cities Mission is shared between the Central Government and the State Governments, typically in a 50:50 ratio.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 4:</b> Consider the following statements regarding the implementation of the Smart Cities Mission:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Smart Cities Mission promotes the use of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models for project implementation.</li> <li>2. Each Smart City is required to establish a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to implement the mission at the city level.</li> </ol> <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>a) 1 only                      b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2              d) Neither 1 nor 2</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> c) Both 1 and 2</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct:</b> The Smart Cities Mission promotes the use of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models to leverage private sector expertise and investment.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is correct:</b> Each Smart City is required to establish a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to implement the mission at the city level, ensuring focused and effective implementation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 5:</b> Consider the following components under the Smart Cities Mission:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Smart Energy Management</li> <li>2. Smart Water Management</li> <li>3. Urban Mobility</li> <li>4. High-rise Building Construction</li> </ol> <p>Which of the components given above are included in the Smart Cities Mission?</p> <p>a) 1, 2, and 3 only b) 2, 3, and 4 only</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> a) 1, 2, and 3 only</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Component 1 is included:</b> Smart Energy Management is part of the mission to enhance energy efficiency.</li> <li>• <b>Component 2 is included:</b> Smart Water Management is also included to ensure efficient water supply and usage.</li> </ul>

<p>c) 1, 3, and 4 only d) 1, 2, 3, and 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Component 3 is included:</b> Urban Mobility, focusing on efficient and sustainable transport systems, is a key component of the mission.</li> <li>• <b>Component 4 is not specifically included:</b> While building infrastructure is important, the focus is not specifically on high-rise buildings but rather on smart and sustainable urban development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 6:</b> Consider the following statements about the Cabinet Committee on Appointments (CCA):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Cabinet Committee on Appointments is responsible for appointments to key positions in the central government and public sector undertakings.</li> <li>2. The Prime Minister of India chairs the Cabinet Committee on Appointments.</li> <li>3. The CCA has the final authority on all appointments without the need for any other consultation.</li> </ol> <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>a) 1 only                      b) 1 and 2 only c) 2 and 3 only              d) 1, 2, and 3</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> b) 1 and 2 only <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct:</b> The CCA is responsible for making key appointments in the central government and public sector undertakings.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is correct:</b> The Prime Minister of India chairs the CCA.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 3 is incorrect:</b> While the CCA has significant authority, many appointments also require consultation and approval from other bodies or authorities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 7:</b> Consider the following statements about the scope of the Cabinet Committee on Appointments (CCA):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The CCA oversees the appointments of top bureaucrats in various ministries and departments.</li> <li>2. The CCA is involved in the appointment of governors in states.</li> <li>3. The CCA makes decisions regarding the appointment of heads of public sector banks.</li> </ol> <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 2, and 3</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> c) 1 and 3 only <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct:</b> The CCA oversees the appointments of top bureaucrats in various ministries and departments.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is incorrect:</b> The appointment of governors in states is typically made by the President of India, based on the advice of the central government, not solely by the CCA.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 3 is correct:</b> The CCA makes decisions regarding the appointment of heads of public sector banks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Question 8:</b> Consider the following statements regarding blue-collar workers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blue-collar workers are primarily involved in manual labor.</li> <li>2. Blue-collar workers typically require formal education and advanced degrees for employment.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Answer:</b> a) 1 and 3 only <b>Explanation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statement 1 is correct:</b> Blue-collar workers are primarily involved in manual labor and jobs that require physical work.</li> <li>• <b>Statement 2 is incorrect:</b> Blue-collar workers typically do not require formal education and</li> </ul>

3. The term "blue-collar" originated in the early 20th century in the United States.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 only
- d) 1, 2, and 3

advanced degrees; they often need vocational training or on-the-job training.

- **Statement 3 is correct:** The term "blue-collar" originated in the early 20th century in the United States to describe manual laborers who wore blue uniforms.

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