

TOPICS COVERED

1. Centre asks States to ensure that queer community gets equal rights in prisons (GS Paper-II: Vulnerable Section Of Society)
2. Report soon on 'financial irregularities' in Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation (GS Paper-III: Environment)
3. Bengaluru mall faces protest after farmer in dhoti denied entry (Essay GS paper IV: Ethics, GS Paper-II: Equality)
4. Nine of 13 crew members of capsized oil tanker rescued by Navy off Oman coast (GS Paper-III: Internal Security)
5. How the same ear senses murmurs and withstands deafening music (GS Paper-III: S&T)
6. Could pythons be a protein alternative? (GS Paper-III: Environment)
7. Arrest and liberty (GS Paper-II: Regulatory Bodies)
8. Choosing the right track to cut post-harvest losses (GS Paper-II)
9. In search of jobs (GS paper-III: Employment)
10. The problems with sub-caste reservations (GS Paper-II: Reservation)
11. On political representation of women (GS Paper-II: Polity)
12. What does Maharashtra's Public Security Bill stipulate? (GS Paper-II: Polity)
13. Of a gilded past and the future: Nalanda's lost glory and new-found ambitions (GS Paper-I: History)

Karnataka halts jobs Bill amid industry uproar

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah says the Bill mandating reservation for locals is 'still in an initial stage' and a decision will be taken after wide-ranging discussions; Minister allays concerns of industry heads; the provisions in the Bill cleared by the Cabinet were met with opposition from industry heads, while Kannada organisations welcomed the move

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As a draft Bill cleared by the Karnataka Cabinet mandating reservation for locals garnered adverse reactions from industry heads and trade bodies in the State, the government late on Wednesday announced that it had been "temporarily withheld" and a decision would be taken after a review.

Announcing the U-turn of his government on social media platform X on Wednesday night, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the Bill that aimed to provide reservation to Kannadigas in the private sector was "still in an initial stage". He said a decision on the Bill would be taken after wide-ranging discus-

sions on it in the next Cabinet meeting.

"The Bill is withheld until further consultations and due diligence. Industry leaders need not panic," Minister for Large and Medium Industries M.B. Patil said.

The Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024, was cleared in the Cabinet on July 15. It mandated that industries, factories, and other establishments appoint local candidates in 50% of management positions and 70% of non-management positions.

The provisions were met with stiff opposition from industry heads, while Kannada organisations welcomed the move.

Industry leaders, in-

Thorny issue

A look at the Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024

It mandates that industries, factories, and other establishments appoint local candidates in 50% of management positions and 70% of non-management positions

A local candidate is a person "who is born in the State of Karnataka and who is domiciled in the State for a period of 15 years and who is capable of speaking, reading, and writing Kannada in a legible way and has passed a required test conducted by the nodal agency"



cluding Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and Mohandas Pai, and industry bodies such as NASSCOM and FKCCI opposed the Bill.

"As a tech hub we need skilled talent and whilst the aim is to provide jobs for locals, we must not affect our leading position in

technology by this move. There must be caveats that exempt highly skilled recruitment from this policy," remarked Ms. Mazumdar-Shaw on X.

'Regressive move'

Mr. Pai, who also took to X to air his views, called the

Bill "discriminatory, regressive, and against the Constitution". He said: "This is a fascist bill as in Animal Farm, unbelievable that @INCIndia can come up with a bill like this - a govt officer will sit on recruitment committees of private sector? People have to take a language test?"

NASSCOM said it was "disappointed" and "deeply concerned", while FKCCI said that although they welcomed the aim to provide jobs for the locals, the legislation required greater consultation. Karnataka being a technical hub has been enjoying a lead position in the global technology industry and therefore the State required skilled talent to maintain this leadership, the trade body said. In this connection, it is necessary

that the proposed job quotas for Kannadigas should be reconsidered, NASSCOM argued.

Conciliatory tone

Earlier in the day, following industry responses against it, Mr. Patil and IT and Biotechnology Minister Priyank Kharge had been on the defensive. Mr. Patil promised that a team comprising the Law Minister, the IT and Biotechnology Minister, the Labour Minister, and himself would discuss the issue with the Chief Minister before passing the Bill.

"There is no doubt that protecting the interests of Kannadigas is of paramount importance. However, industries also need to thrive. It should be a win-win situation for both. Keeping this in mind, any

confusion will surely be addressed," he said.

Taking a similarly conciliatory tone, Mr. Kharge had said that "no detrimental rules or laws will be enforced without due consultations with stakeholders."

Kannada group upbeat

Karnataka Rakshana Vedike president T.A. Narayana Gowda, who had met the Chief Minister before the draft Bill was withheld and thanked him for the decision on reservation to Kannadigas in private firms, has come down heavily on corporate firms and industry leaders opposing it. The Kannada outfit has now said that it will wait and watch till the next Cabinet meeting on how the government takes the issue forward.

Karnataka halts jobs Bill amid industry uproar (18 July)

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah says the Bill mandating reservation for locals is 'still in an initial stage' and a decision will be taken after wide-ranging discussions; Minister allays concerns of industry heads; the provisions in the Bill cleared by the Cabinet were met with opposition from industry heads, while Kannada organisations welcomed the move

- The Karnataka Cabinet passed a draft Bill mandating reservation for locals in the private sector.
- The Bill required 50% of management positions and 70% of non-management positions to be filled by local candidates.
- Industry leaders such as Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and Mohandas Pai, along with industry bodies like NASSCOM and FKCCI, opposed the Bill.
- Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced on social media that the Bill has been temporarily withheld pending further consultations.
- Kannada organizations supported the Bill, aiming to prioritize local job opportunities, while industry leaders expressed concerns about its impact on skilled talent recruitment and the state's tech hub status.

'Regressive move'

- Mohandas Pai criticized the Bill on social media platform X, calling it "discriminatory, regressive, and against the Constitution."

- He likened the Bill to fascism and referenced George Orwell's "Animal Farm" to express disbelief at its implications, such as government officers sitting on private sector recruitment committees and language tests for applicants.
- NASSCOM expressed disappointment and deep concern over the Bill, emphasizing the need for greater consultation.
- FKCCI welcomed the aim of providing jobs for locals but stressed that the legislation needed more thorough consultation.
- Both NASSCOM and FKCCI highlighted **Karnataka's position as a leading technical hub and the necessity for skilled talent to maintain its global competitiveness.**
- NASSCOM argued that the proposed job quotas for Kannadigas should be reconsidered in light of these concerns.

Conciliatory tone

- Mr. M.B. Patil and Mr. Priyank Kharge responded to industry opposition to the Bill earlier in the day.
- Mr. Patil assured that a team including key ministers would discuss the issue with the Chief Minister before finalizing the Bill.
- He emphasized the importance of balancing the interests of Kannadigas with the need for industries to thrive, aiming for a win-win situation.
- Mr. Kharge stated that no harmful rules or laws would be implemented without adequate consultations with stakeholders.
- Karnataka Rakshana Vedike president T.A. Narayana Gowda expressed satisfaction with the government's decision to reserve jobs for Kannadigas in private firms.
- He criticized corporate firms and industry leaders opposing the Bill and announced that his organization would monitor developments until the next Cabinet meeting.

Warkari Sect

- The Warkari sect is a prominent religious movement in Maharashtra, India. Devotees of **Lord Vitthal**, also known as **Vithoba** or **Panduranga**, are referred to as Warkaris.
- Their central pilgrimage site is the **Vitthal Rakhumai Temple** located in Pandharpur, Solapur district, Maharashtra.
- This pilgrimage, known as the **Pandharpur Wari**, is a significant cultural and religious event in the state, attracting millions of devotees annually.

Historical and Cultural Background

- **Lord Vitthal:** Lord Vitthal is considered an incarnation of Lord Krishna, worshipped predominantly in Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka. He is depicted standing on a brick with hands on his hips, alongside his consort Rakhumai (Rukmini).
- **Warkari Movement:** The Warkari tradition is a devotional movement that emphasizes the worship of Lord Vitthal. It dates back to the **13th century with prominent saints like Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Eknath, and Tukaram**, who composed **abhangas (devotional songs) in Marathi**, spreading the message of devotion, equality, and love.

Pandharpur Wari Pilgrimage

- **Timing:** The most significant pilgrimage occurs during **Ashadhi Ekadashi** (usually in June or July) and Kartiki Ekadashi (usually in November). These are the eleventh days of the waxing moon in the Hindu months of Ashadha and Kartik, respectively.
- **Procession (Dindi):** The pilgrimage involves processions called 'Dindis,' where devotees, often barefoot, carry the palanquins (palkhis) of the saints from their respective towns to Pandharpur. The most notable are the palkhis of Saint Dnyaneshwar from Alandi and Saint Tukaram from Dehu.



Blending crowd: Warkaris or devotees of Lord Vitthal go around the Vitthal Rakhumai Temple at Pandharpur in Solapur district of Maharashtra on the occasion of Ashadi Ekadashi on Wednesday. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Centre asks States to ensure that queer community gets equal rights in prisons

GS Paper II: Vulnerable Section of Society

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Centre has asked States/Union Territories to ensure that members of the queer community (LGBTQ+) get equal rights in prison and there is no discrimination in access to goods and services, especially prison visitation rights.

In a note to Home Secretaries and Heads of Prisons, the Ministry of Home Affairs said it had come to the notice of the Ministry

that members of the queer community (LGBTQ+) were often discriminated against because of their gender identity or sexual orientation and faced violence and disrespect.

Referring to the Model Prison Manual, 2016, the MHA said “every prisoner shall be allowed reasonable facilities for seeing or communicating with, his/her family members, relatives, friends and legal advisers for the preparation of an appeal or for procuring bail or for arranging the

management of his/her property and family affairs.”

Also, the inmate should be allowed to have interviews with his/her family members, relatives, friends and legal advisers once in a fortnight.

The number of persons who may interview a prisoner at one time should ordinarily be limited to three. Interviews with female prisoners should, if practicable, take place in the female enclosure/ward. “It is reiterated that

these provisions equally apply to the members of queer community and they can meet a person of their choice without any discrimination or judgement.”

The MHA asked the prison authorities to sensitise the concerned officials at all levels to ensure that all persons were treated equally in a fair and just manner and no person, especially those belonging to the queer community, were discriminated against in any manner whatsoever.

Centre asks States to ensure that queer community gets equal rights in prisons (18 July)

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has instructed States/Union Territories to ensure equal rights for members of the queer community (LGBTQ+) in prisons.
- The directive aims to eliminate discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation, ensuring access to goods, services, and prison visitation rights without bias.
- The MHA referred to the Model Prison Manual, 2016, which mandates reasonable facilities for prisoners to communicate with family, legal advisers, and manage personal affairs.
- Prisoners, including LGBTQ+ individuals, are entitled to interviews with family, relatives, friends, and legal advisers once in a fortnight, with a limit of three visitors at a time.
- Female prisoners should ideally have interviews in female enclosures/wards.
- The MHA emphasized that these provisions apply equally to LGBTQ+ individuals, emphasizing non-discrimination and non-judgmental treatment.
- Prison authorities are urged to sensitize officials at all levels to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all prisoners, especially those from the queer community.

Muharram at Charminar



Annual affair: A Muharram procession in progress near Charminar in Hyderabad on Wednesday to commemorate the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammed. NAGARA GOPAL

Bengaluru mall faces protest after farmer in dhoti denied entry

Essay

GS Paper IV: Ethics

GS Paper II: Equality

Fakeerappa, a septuagenarian farmer who went to a mall in Bengaluru with his son to watch a movie at a multiplex, was allegedly denied entry owing to his attire – a dhoti and a white shirt. The alleged incident occurred at G.T. Mall on Tuesday.

His son Nagaraj recorded the conversation with the security supervisor at the entrance of the mall. The supervisor can be heard saying that the rules of the mall do not allow entry to people wearing a dhoti and that he would al-

low the farmer if he wore pants.

Speaking to mediapersons later, Mr. Fakeerappa said, “How can people from the village let go of our *panche* (dhoti)?”

Activists from Kannada organisations staged a protest in front of the mall on Wednesday, with many wearing dhoti and entering the mall as an act of dissent. The farmer was also brought to the mall, where representatives of the mall’s management apologized to him publicly. Earlier in the day, the security supervisor who did not allow Mr. Fakeerappa, also apologized for his actions.

Bengaluru mall faces protest after farmer in dhoti denied entry (18 July)

- Fakeerappa, a septuagenarian farmer, was denied entry to a multiplex in Bengaluru's G.T. Mall for wearing a dhoti and a white shirt.
- The incident occurred when he tried to watch a movie with his son.
- His son Nagaraj recorded the conversation with the security supervisor, who stated that the mall's rules prohibit entry to people wearing dhotis.
- Fakeerappa expressed his disappointment, questioning why traditional attire like the dhoti was not accepted.
- Kannada activists protested outside the mall the following day, many wearing dhotis as a sign of solidarity and dissent.
- Representatives of the mall's management publicly apologized to Fakeerappa during the protest.
- The security supervisor involved also apologized for denying entry to Fakeerappa based on his attire.

Report soon on ‘financial irregularities’ in Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation (18 July)

- The Kerala Finance Inspection wing, under the State Finance Department, is investigating alleged financial irregularities in the Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation (PTCF) under the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Thekkady.

Report soon on ‘financial irregularities’ in Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation

GS Paper III: Environment

The Hindu Bureau
IDUKKI

The Kerala Finance Inspection wing under the State Finance Department will submit a detailed report on the alleged financial irregularities in the Periyar Tiger Conservation Foundation (PTCF) under the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Thekkady. According to officials, the inspection was based on the request of the Minister for Forest and Wildlife A.K. Saseendran. The Kerala Non-Gazetted Employees Association (NGEA) recently filed a complaint with the Forest Minister stating that many financial irregularities have occurred within the



One with nature: People seen at the Periyar Tiger Reserve in Thekkady. JOMON PAMPAVALLEY

foundation over the years. According to the officials, the PTCF was formed in 2004 within the Periyar Tiger Reserve to assist with the protection activities of the tiger reserve. The in-

come from tourism and other activities was deposited in the government treasury until 2012. In 2013, through a government order, the revenue from the reserve was di-

rected to be deposited in the State Bank of India (SBI) Kumily branch. In its complaint, the association alleged that there were no government audits of the foundation and that officials made illegal purchases without tender process. The complaint also stated that officials conducted civil works without tender process under the Eco Development Committee banner and handed over the money to contractors.

Mr. Saseendran told *The Hindu* that he deputed a team to probe the allegations against the foundation. “I am waiting for the report and, based on the report, will take further action,” he said.

- Minister for Forest and Wildlife A.K. Saseendran initiated the inspection based on a complaint filed by the Kerala Non-Gazetted Employees Association (NGEA).

- The PTCF, established in 2004 within the Periyar Tiger Reserve, manages funds generated from tourism and other activities.
- Until 2012, revenue from the reserve was deposited in the government treasury; from 2013 onwards, it was directed to the State Bank of India (SBI) Kumily branch.
- The NGEA complaint alleges lack of government audits, illegal purchases without tender processes, and civil works conducted without tenders under the Eco Development Committee.
- Minister Saseendran has dispatched a team to investigate the allegations and is awaiting their

report before deciding on further actions.

Periyar National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary (PNP)

- Location: Districts: Pathanamthitta and Idukki, Kerala, India
- Type: Protected area, Elephant and Tiger reserve
- Area: 925 km² (357 sq mi), with 305 km² (118 sq mi) declared as Periyar National Park in 1982
- Major Watershed: Periyar and Pamba Rivers

Geography:

- Location: Cardamom Hills and Pandalam Hills of the south Western Ghats, near the Tamil Nadu border.
- Elevation: Ranges from 100 m to over 2,000 m (Kottamala Peak, 2,019 m).
- Reservoir: Periyar Lake (31 km²), formed by Mullaperiyar Dam (1895)

Vegetation:

- Forest Types: Tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist deciduous, montane grasslands, savannas, eucalyptus stands, wetlands, lake, and river ecosystems
- Plant Diversity: Grasses: 171 species and Orchids: 140 species
- Notable Flora: Teak, rosewoods, terminalia, sandalwoods, mangoes, jamun, tamarind, banyans, sacred fig, kino tree, bamboos, Diospyros bourdillonii, Hopea parviflora, Dipterocarpus indicus, Semecarpus travancoricus, Nageia wallichiana (South Indian conifer)
- Endemic Flora: Habenaria periyarensis, Syzygium periyarensis
- Medicinal Plant: Gloriosa lily
- Surrounding Areas: Tea, cardamom, and coffee plantations

Fauna:

- Key Species: Bengal tigers (40 counted in 2017), Asian elephants, white tigers, gaur, sambar, wild pig, Indian giant squirrel, Travancore flying squirrel, jungle cat, Dhole, sloth bear, Nilgiri tahr, lion-tailed macaque, Nilgiri langur, Salim Ali's fruit bat, stripe-necked mongoose, Nilgiri marten
- Endemic Birds: Malabar grey hornbill, Nilgiri wood pigeon, blue-winged parakeet, Nilgiri flycatcher, crimson-backed sunbird, white-bellied redstart, black-necked stork
- Newly Recorded Species (2016): Eurasian woodcock, steppe gull, grey-necked bunting, paddyfield warbler
- Reptiles: 45 species
- Snakes: 30 species (including king cobra, Malabar pit viper, striped coral snake)
- Lizards: 13 species
- Turtles: 2 species

Nine of 13 crew members of capsized oil tanker rescued by Navy off Oman coast

GS Paper III:
Internal Security
NEW DELHI

Indian Navy's mission-deployed warship *INS Teg*, assisting in a search-and-rescue (SAR) operation after the Comoros-flagged oil tanker *MV Prestige Falcon* capsized off the Oman coast, rescued nine crew members – eight Indians and one Sri Lankan, the Navy said late on Wednesday.

The tanker has a 16-member crew – 13 Indians and three Sri Lankans.

The vessel capsized about 25 nautical miles southeast of Ras Madrakah in Oman on July 15. Rescue efforts in coordination with Oman authorities have been in progress since the morning of July 16. The efforts by Indian and Omani assets are being



The warship *INS Teg* engaging in a search for the capsized oil tanker *MV Prestige Falcon* off the Oman coast on Wednesday. X @INDIANNNAVY

undertaken in challenging weather conditions as the area is experiencing rough sea and strong winds, the Navy said on Wednesday.

The Navy's long-range maritime reconnaissance

aircraft P8I is also assisting in the search for survivors.

Efforts under way

“Stealth frigate *INS Teg* deployed in the region and undergoing Operational

Turnround (OTR), was sailed at short notice to render SAR assistance. SAR efforts are progressing in coordination with Omani authorities and assets, in rough seas and strong

winds,” a defence source said on Wednesday. “Indian Navy's P8I is also assisting in the search for survivors.”

Another source said the vessel transmitted a distress call around 10 p.m. on July 14 off the coast of Oman.

According to marine traffic portals, the vessel departed the Al Hamriyah port in the UAE on July 9 and was headed to the Aden port in Yemen and was scheduled to arrive there on July 18.

Indian naval ships on deployment in the Gulf of Aden and the region regularly visit Oman ports for OTR, and P-8I long range maritime patrol aircraft have also been visiting Oman for the purpose, extending their reach and endurance.

Nine of 13 crew members of capsized oil tanker rescued by Navy off Oman coast (18 July)

- Indian Navy's warship *INS Teg*, deployed in the region, rescued nine crew members from the *MV Prestige Falcon* after it capsized off the Oman coast.
- The tanker, carrying a crew of 16 members (13 Indians and 3 Sri Lankans), capsized about 25 nautical miles southeast of Ras Madrakah in Oman on July 15.
- Rescue efforts began on July 16 in coordination with Omani authorities amid challenging weather conditions, including rough seas and strong winds.
- Indian Navy's P8I long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft is aiding in the search and rescue operations.
- *INS Teg*, initially deployed for Operational Turnround (OTR), was redirected for the SAR mission.
- The distressed vessel sent a distress call on July 14 while en route from Al Hamriyah port in the UAE to Aden port in Yemen, scheduled to arrive on July 18.
- Indian naval ships and P-8I aircraft regularly operate in the Gulf of Aden and visit Oman ports, enhancing their operational capabilities and reach in the region.

- *INS Teg* (F45) is the fourth **Talwar-class frigate** constructed for the Indian Navy.
- Built by the **Yantar shipyard in Kaliningrad, Russia**.
- Commissioned to Navy service on 27 April 2012.
- Belongs to the Talwar class of frigates, which are modified Krivak III-class frigates built by Russia.
- Uses stealth technologies and a special hull design to ensure a reduced radar cross section.
- Much of the equipment on the ship is Russian-made, but a significant number of systems of Indian origin have also been incorporated.
- Main differences between *Teg* and the earlier Talwar-class ships:
 - Use of BrahMos missiles in place of the Klub-N missiles.
 - Use of AK-630 instead of Kashtan in the earlier ships.
- First of the three frigates built in Russia as a follow-up order to the first batch of Talwar-class frigates.

Olympics

Previous Olympics (Summer)

- **Tokyo, Japan:** The 2020 Summer Olympics were held in Tokyo from July 23 to August 8, 2021 (postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

Present Olympics (Summer)

- **Paris, France:** The 2024 Summer Olympics are scheduled to be held in Paris from July 26 to August 11, 2024.

Next Olympics (Summer)

- **Los Angeles, USA:** The 2028 Summer Olympics are scheduled to be held in Los Angeles from July 14 to July 30, 2028.

Previous Olympics (Winter)

- **Beijing, China:** The 2022 Winter Olympics were held in Beijing from February 4 to February 20, 2022.

Present Olympics (Winter)

- **Milano-Cortina, Italy:** The 2026 Winter Olympics are scheduled to be held in Milano-Cortina from February 6 to February 22, 2026.

Next Olympics (Winter)

- The location for the 2030 Winter Olympics has not been decided as of now.

States cannot tinker with the Scheduled Castes List, says SC

GS Paper II: Polity

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held that the States cannot tinker with the Scheduled Castes List notified under Article 341 of the Constitution.

“Any inclusion or exclusion of any caste, race or tribe or part of or group within the castes, races or tribes has to be, by law, made by the Parliament, and not by any other mode or manner,” a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and P.K. Mishra said while clarifying on the law.

The judgment by the top court came in a challenge by Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Vichar Manch, Patna, to a July 1, 2015 notification issued by the Bihar government, on the basis of the recommendation of the State Backward Classes Commission to merge the Extremely Backward Class (EBC) of Tanti-Tantwa with the Scheduled Caste of Pan/Sawasi

in the Scheduled Castes List. The merger would enable the Tanti-Tantwa to claim the benefits of Scheduled Castes.

Justice Nath, who authored the judgment, pronounced the 2015 resolution as “patently illegal and erroneous”.

“The State government had no competence/authority/power to tinker with the lists of Scheduled Castes published under Article 341 of the Constitution,” Justice Nath concluded in the July 15 verdict.

The court said the State Backward Commission, in the first place, had jurisdiction to recommend the joining of a caste or group with a notified Scheduled Caste community.

“Even if it makes such a recommendation, right or wrong, the State has no authority to proceed to implement the same when it was fully aware that the Constitution does not permit it to do so,” Justice Nath observed.

Patrioti

Could pythons be a protein alternative? (18 July)

- Thousands of pythons in central Thailand are bred for their skins, used in high-end fashion items like belts and handbags.
- Some experts believe python meat could be more valuable than their skins due to global meat demand and environmental considerations.
- Pythons are resilient to high temperatures and drought, reproduce quickly, and grow fast with minimal food consumption.
- Research suggests python farming could offer a sustainable response to global food insecurity.
- Studies show pythons can survive for long periods without food or water without losing condition.
- Python meat has a texture similar to chicken, low in saturated fats, but it has not gained widespread international popularity.
- Meat from grazing animals, like beef, has a significant environmental impact according to the UN.
- Despite advocacy for plant-based diets, global meat demand is projected to increase.
- Protein-energy malnutrition remains a significant global health concern, prompting exploration into alternative protein sources like insects and lab-grown meats.



How the same ear senses murmurs and withstands deafening music (18 July)

At the heart of our auditory system are intricate hair cells nestled within the cochlea. Each cochlea houses around 16,000 of these sensory cells, each with a cluster of hair-like projections called stereocilia. These stereocilia, arranged like a staircase from the shortest to the tallest, are key to hearing

- The human auditory system is remarkably versatile, capable of detecting faint whispers and enduring loud noises.
- Recent research reveals that our ears adapt to different sound environments, similar to how pupils adjust to light.
- Hair cells within the cochlea are central to our hearing, with around 16,000 sensory cells equipped with stereocilia.
- Stereocilia are hair-like projections connected by tip links, which play a crucial role in converting sound waves into electrical signals.
- Sound waves cause vibrations in the inner ear fluid, bending stereocilia and stretching tip links, opening ion channels that generate electrical signals.
- Nerve cells transmit these signals to the brain, where they are interpreted as sound, resembling a microphone's function.

A mechanical circuit breaker

- Humans perceive sound between 20 Hz to 20 kHz in frequency and 5-120 decibels (dB) in intensity.
- Sound waves exert a force of 10–100 piconewtons (pN) on tip links in the auditory system.
- Tip links consist of proteins cadherin-23 (CDH23) and protocadherin-15 (PCDH15), crucial for sound transmission.



A python at Closed Cycle Breeding International, a snake breeding farm in Nam Phi, in Thailand's northern Uttaradit province. The farm provides snake skins for the fashion market. AFP

Could pythons be a protein alternative?

GS Paper III: Environment

In a warehouse in the lush farmlands of central Thailand, thousands of pythons lie coiled in containers.

They are being raised for their robust, diamond-patterned skins, which are sold to high-end European fashion houses for belts, bags, and handbags, but some scientists and industry insiders believe the snakes' true value could lie in their meat.

Demand for meat is growing globally, despite the carbon footprint associated with traditional livestock, and while a plant-based diet is often touted as the best alternative, some feel reptiles have been overlooked as an option.

Snakes can tolerate high temperatures and drought, reproduce quickly, and grow far faster than traditional sources of animal protein while consuming a lot less food.

Researchers estimate that China and Vietnam alone have at least 4,000 python farms producing several million snakes, mostly for the fashion industry.

"Python farming may offer a flexible and efficient response to global food insecurity," a study published earlier this year in the journal Nature said.

The researchers spent a year studying nearly 5,000 reticulated and Burmese pythons at two commercial farms in Vietnam and Thailand.

"They can survive for months on end with no food at all and no water, and literally they won't lose condition at all," said Patrick Aust, director of the African Institute of Applied Herpetology and one of the scientists involved in the study.

Researchers estimate that China and Vietnam alone have at least 4,000 python farms producing several million snakes, mostly for the fashion industry

The pythons were fed waste chicken and wild-caught rodents and offered a more efficient feed-to-meat ratio than poultry, beef, and even crickets.

Emilio Malucchi has a farm in central Thailand that breeds pythons for skins.

Herpetology is the branch of zoology that deals with the study of reptiles and amphibians. This field encompasses various aspects such as the biology, behavior, ecology, physiology, classification, and conservation of these animals.

Wild python has long been eaten throughout Southeast Asia, but the meat has yet to attract widespread international interest despite offering a chicken-like texture low in saturated fats.

The climate impact of meat has been extensively documented, with the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noting that meat from grazing animals has been "consistently identified as the single food with the greatest impact on the environment."

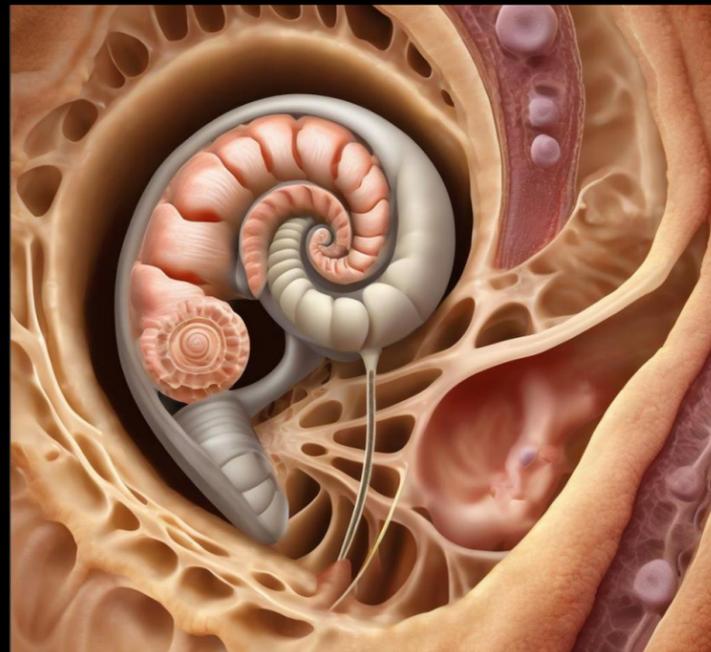
While the UN and climate activists advocate moving to a more plant-based diet, the OECD estimates demand for meat will increase by 14% by 2032.

Meanwhile, drought and extreme weather are making traditional farming increasingly difficult in many parts of the world where the need for protein is urgent.

Protein-energy malnutrition, sometimes called protein-energy undernutrition, caused nearly 190,000 deaths globally in 2021, according to the Global Burden of Disease study.

That paradox has spurred a push to explore meat alternatives, from edible insects to lab-grown meats.

- Loud noises can break these tip links, a protective mechanism to prevent hair cell damage.
- Unlike hair cells, tip links can regenerate, preserving hearing function.
- Tip links naturally dissociate and rejoin, with an average lifetime of about 31.8 seconds.
- Temporary hearing loss after exposure to loud sounds occurs due to multiple tip link complexes breaking simultaneously.
- The lifetime of tip links decreases with increasing sound intensity and frequency.
- Researchers at Indian Institute of Science Education and Research studied mechanisms ensuring tip links withstand varying sound forces, safeguarding hearing.



Testing tip links

- Researchers used an atomic force microscope (AFM) to study tip link complexes.
- Tip links show three distinct responses to different levels of force applied.
- Lower forces result in longer tip link lifespans, while higher forces decrease their lifespan.
- Mid-range forces between 36 pN and 70 pN surprisingly do not significantly affect tip link lifespan.
- Strong forces above 80 pN cause tip links to disconnect, protecting the auditory system from intense sounds.
- Tip links act as force sensors, interrupting sound transmission to safeguard hair cells from damage.
- Tip-links in the ear act as sensitive detectors of mechanical signals from sounds.
- They convert these signals into electrical signals, enabling us to perceive faint sounds.
- In response to loud sounds, tip-links function as force filters, transmitting low forces to activate ion channels and blocking intermediate forces.
- At extremely high forces, tip-links disconnect to prevent damage to the auditory system.
- Mutations in the PCDH15 protein, part of the tip-link complex, can cause inherited deafness by altering its response to different force levels.
- Normal tip-links exhibit three responses across force ranges, including a mid-range behavior crucial for hearing.
- Understanding tip-links could lead to innovative strategies for protecting against hearing loss from loud noises, potentially improving quality of life for many affected individuals.
- The research involved a team of scientists and was published in Nature Communications.

Intergenerational equity as tax devolution criterion (18 July)

- The devolution of Union tax revenue to States is a common topic of discussion among politicians and economists.
- The Finance Commission (FC) decides the distribution formula of Union tax revenue among States every five years.
- The formula prioritizes equity (fair distribution among current States) over efficiency.
- This focus on equity can worsen intergenerational inequity within States.
- Intergenerational equity means providing equal opportunities and outcomes to every generation, ensuring current decisions don't burden future generations.
- Governments raise revenue through taxes or borrowing.
- If tax revenue equals current expenditure, current taxpayers pay for the services they receive.
- If the government borrows to finance current expenditure, future generations will pay higher taxes to repay the borrowing and interest, creating intergenerational inequity.
- The Ricardian Equivalence Theory suggests that when the government borrows, households save more to help future generations pay higher taxes, keeping aggregate demand constant.
- In India, developed States pay more taxes than they receive in public services, forcing them to borrow more or reduce expenditure.
- Developing States pay fewer taxes than the value of public services they receive, relying on higher financial transfers from the Union government.

Versus intragenerational equity

- Major States can be divided into high-income (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana) and low-income (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Jharkhand).
- During the 14th Finance Commission period (2015-20):
 - High-income States financed 59.3% of their revenue expenditure with their own tax revenue.
 - Low-income States financed only 35.9% of their revenue expenditure with their own tax revenue.
 - Revenue Expenditure to GSDP ratio was 10.9% for high-income States and 18.3% for low-income States.
- High-income States:
 - Reduced their revenue expenditure.
 - Financed a significant part of it with their own tax revenues.
 - Received 27.6% of revenue expenditure from Union financial transfers.
 - Had a deficit of 13.1%.
- Low-income States:
 - Had higher revenue expenditure relative to GSDP.
 - Financed only a smaller portion of it with their own tax revenues.

- Received 57.7% of revenue expenditure from Union financial transfers.
- Had a deficit of 6.4%.
- Three aspects of federal finances:
 - Low-income States finance less of their revenue expenditure with their own tax revenue and receive more Union financial transfers.
 - High-income States finance more of their revenue expenditure with their own tax revenue and receive fewer Union financial transfers.
 - High-income States incur higher deficits despite generating more tax revenue and reducing their expenditure.
- People expect the value of public services to match the taxes they pay.
- Public services provided by both State and Union governments should meet these expectations to avoid overburdening high-income States with taxes.
- Balancing intragenerational equity (fair distribution among current States) and intergenerational equity (fair distribution across generations) is important.
- The Finance Commission should create a fair mechanism to address these conflicting equity issues in the distribution formula for tax devolution to States.

Address conflicting equities

- Finance Commissions (FCs) use indicators like per capita income, population, and area in the distribution formula.
- These indicators reflect differences between States in public service demand (population and area) and public revenue size (per capita income).
- These indicators are given more weight to ensure equity in distributing Union financial transfers among States.
- Variables such as tax effort and fiscal discipline have smaller weight to reward the fiscal efficiency of States.
- Equity variables are proxy variables and may not reflect actual fiscal situations in States.
- Efficiency indicators are fiscal variables from State budgets and can change States' fiscal behavior.
- Including more fiscal variables in the tax devolution criterion can better impact States' fiscal behavior.
- Every State has a Fiscal Responsibility Act limiting deficit and public debt.
- Reduced Union financial transfers can force some States to exceed these legal limits.
- FC should give more weight to fiscal indicators and incentivize tax effort and expenditure efficiency with larger Union financial transfers.
- This approach will ensure intergenerational fiscal equity and sustainable debt management by States.

Choosing the right track to cut post-harvest losses

GS Paper II

India ranks second in global agriculture production, but its share in global agricultural exports is only 2.4%, placing it eighth in the world. This is attributed to several factors that include low productivity, an inability to meet desired quality standards and inefficiencies in the supply chain such as an inadequate transportation network and infrastructure, which also leads to significant post-harvest losses.

India's post-harvest losses amount to approximately ₹1,52,790 crore annually, according to a Ministry of Food Processing Industries 2022 study. As India's population continues to grow, the challenge of meeting the food and nutrition demand of its people will continue to intensify. While growing more food is part of the solution, the prevention of post-harvest losses is crucial.

A closer look at India's post-harvest loss

The biggest loss is from perishable commodities, which include livestock produce such as eggs, fish and meat (22%), fruits (19%) and vegetables (18%). During the export of perishables, approximately 19% of food is lost, particularly at the import-country (trade partner) stage. Storage, transportation and marketing play a critical role in ensuring that perishable products reach the consumer in time. The strengthening of agri-logistics is recognised as a priority by the Committee on Doubling Farmer's Income (DFI).

There are multiple logistical requirements in a single supply chain. Starting with first mile transport from farmgate to *mandi* (wholesale/retail), long haul or wholesale transportation by rail, road, water or air, and last mile transportation to the consumer. The trade of perishables faces a time shortage once the crop is harvested. The latest agriculture Census shows that 86% of farmers in India are small and marginal (SMF). They struggle to attain economy of scale due to the small production. Together with a lack of assured market connectivity, this



Shweta Lamba

Program Manager,
Food, Land and Water
program at WRI India



Nitya Sharma

Program Manager,
Food, Land and Water
program at WRI India

Integrating the Railways with agricultural product logistics management can cut post-harvest losses significantly; it will also help the environment

results in post-harvest losses, which includes income losses for the farmers.

In India, food price volatility has been caused partly by supply constraints affecting perishable produce. As in a NITI Aayog report, the revenue of the Indian Railways is primarily driven by freight transport, which includes commodities such as iron, steel, fertilizers and agricultural produce. In the 2022 fiscal year, it accounted for 75% of its total earnings. The Indian Railways efficiently connects urban centres and rural areas across the country. The Food Corporation of India is heavily dependent on the Indian Railways to move approximately 90% of its food grains. In contrast, about 97% of fruits and vegetables are transported by road.

Initiatives by the Railways

The Indian Railways has taken a few initiatives to improve its freight operations in perishables. The truck-on-train service carries loaded trucks on railway wagons. Efforts are being made to expand this service following successful trial runs involving commodities such as milk and cattle feed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Railways introduced parcel special trains to transport perishables and seeds between market and producers.

Additionally, to support SMFs, the Kisan Rail was initiated to connect perishables (inclusive of milk, meat and fish) production surplus regions to consumption regions more efficiently. A recent study highlighted the impact of the Kisan Rail scheme on reducing post-harvest losses and enhancing farmer incomes in India. For example, grape growers in Nashik, Maharashtra, secured a net profit of ₹5,000 per quintal by supplying about 22,000 quintals using Kisan Rail. This highlights the advantage of using rail-based long-haul of fruits and vegetables.

In recent times, the role of the Railways in the agricultural sector has shown promising results. However, initiatives must also focus on increasing awareness and accessibility of farmers to

available Railway schemes. Friends of Champions 12.3 India, a coalition of food supply chain actors powered by WRI India, also identified that multiple touch points during the transport of perishables using the Railways is a challenge.

Therefore, investment in specialised wagons for temperature-controlled transport and the establishment of rail-side facilities for safe cargo handling are essential. This would also present a significant opportunity to enhance food safety in the agriculture sector, by minimising spoilage and contamination risks, thereby supporting both domestic and export markets. Further, the DFI committee recommends streamlining loading and unloading processes to minimise transit times. It also emphasises addressing staffing shortages through recruitment and training initiatives. Prioritising the Railways over roadways, particularly for fruit and vegetable transportation, promises efficient transportation.

Untapped opportunities

The Railways offers a tremendous opportunity to reduce post-harvest losses and positively impact not just livelihoods but also the environment. Findings from the Logistics Division, Ministry of Commerce, state that the Indian Railways generates up to 80% less carbon dioxide for freight traffic than road transport.

There is a need for adopting systems-based approach, cutting across modes of transport and geographies. The private sector can play a crucial role in enhancing operational efficiency and strengthening the rail infrastructure through public-private partnerships. The budgetary allocation for agriculture 2024 also aims to bridge the farm-to-market gap with modern infrastructure and value-addition support. Such Railway initiatives complement these efforts by supporting the efficient transportation of perishable goods and minimising post-harvest losses.

The views expressed are personal

Choosing the right track to cut post-harvest losses (18 July)

- India is the second-largest agricultural producer globally but only eighth in agricultural exports, with a 2.4% share.
- Issues affecting exports include low productivity, poor quality standards, and supply chain inefficiencies.

- India's annual post-harvest losses are around ₹1,52,790 crore.
- Meeting the growing food and nutrition demand is challenging; reducing post-harvest losses is crucial.
- Perishable commodities like eggs, fish, meat (22%), fruits (19%), and vegetables (18%) suffer the most losses.
- About 19% of perishables are lost during export, especially at the import-country stage.
- Effective storage, transportation, and marketing are essential to reduce losses.
- Strengthening agri-logistics is a priority according to the Committee on Doubling Farmer's Income (DFI).
- The supply chain includes first-mile transport (farmgate to mandi), long-haul transport, and last-mile transport to consumers.
- Perishables face time constraints once harvested.
- 86% of Indian farmers are small and marginal (SMF), struggling with small production scales and market connectivity, leading to post-harvest losses and income losses.
- Food price volatility in India is partly due to supply constraints of perishable produce.
- Indian Railways' revenue mainly comes from freight transport, including agricultural produce, which accounts for 75% of its earnings.
- The Food Corporation of India relies on Indian Railways to move about 90% of its food grains.
- Approximately 97% of fruits and vegetables are transported by road.

Initiatives by the Railways

- The Indian Railways has improved freight operations for perishables with the truck-on-train service, carrying loaded trucks on railway wagons.
- During COVID-19, parcel special trains were introduced to transport perishables and seeds between markets and producers.
- The Kisan Rail connects regions with surplus perishables (milk, meat, fish) to consumption regions, reducing post-harvest losses and increasing farmer incomes.
- Grape growers in Nashik, Maharashtra, earned ₹5,000 per quintal by using Kisan Rail.
- Railways initiatives have shown promising results in agriculture but need to increase farmer awareness and accessibility to Railway schemes.
- Friends of Champions 12.3 India identified challenges with multiple touch points during rail transport of perishables.
- Investment is needed in specialized wagons for temperature-controlled transport and rail-side facilities for safe cargo handling.
- Enhancing food safety by minimizing spoilage and contamination risks supports both domestic and export markets.
- The DFI committee recommends streamlining loading/unloading processes and addressing staffing shortages.
- Prioritizing railways over roadways for fruit and vegetable transportation promises efficient transport.
- Indian Railways generate up to 80% less carbon dioxide for freight traffic than road transport.
- A systems-based approach, integrating different transport modes and geographies, is needed.
- The private sector can enhance operational efficiency and strengthen rail infrastructure through public-private partnerships.
- The 2024 agriculture budget aims to bridge the farm-to-market gap with modern infrastructure and value-addition support.
- Railway initiatives complement these efforts by supporting efficient transportation of perishables and minimizing post-harvest losses.

- WRI India, or the **World Resources Institute India**, is an organization that provides research, analysis, and solutions for various environmental and developmental issues in India.
- WRI India is involved in the coalition "Friends of Champions 12.3 India," which focuses **on improving the food supply chain**.

Arrest and liberty (18 July)

Is proof of necessity a pre-requisite for the ED to arrest accused under PMLA?

- The Supreme Court of India made two important observations about personal liberty.
- The observations were related to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).
- One issue was whether an officer must show the necessity for arrest to make it valid.
- The other issue was about courts quickly staying bail orders.
- Justice Sanjiv Khanna's Bench granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.
- The verdict questioned if the Enforcement Directorate (ED) must prove the necessity to arrest before making an arrest.

GS Paper II: Regulatory bodies

Arrest and liberty

Is proof of necessity a pre-requisite for the ED to arrest accused under PMLA?

Two observations made in different contexts by the Supreme Court of India have raised relevant issues concerning personal liberty. The cases related to actions under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)**, and the significance of these observations lies in the extent to which courts are inclined to **protect personal liberty in the face of a determined government that wants its agencies to have their way**. One concerned the question whether an officer arresting a person on money-laundering charges should demonstrate the necessity for arrest for the action to be deemed valid; and the other voiced shock and revulsion at the ease and quickness with which courts were staying reasoned orders granting bail. A Bench headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna granted interim bail, for the second time since his arrest in March, to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in the course of a discussion on the legality of his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The 64-page verdict ended with a reference to a larger Bench the question **whether the ED would have to prove the need or "necessity to arrest" a person, before effecting an arrest**. Section 19 of PMLA speaks of the arresting officer being required to have **"reason to believe"** that the person is guilty of money-laundering before effecting arrest.

The PMLA casts a **statutory obligation on an officer to both record reasons for arrest and convey grounds for arrest to the accused**. Whether these obligations include a duty to demonstrate the necessity to arrest the person will have to be decided. It is established that the existence of a power is not sufficient justification for exercising it. The heartening feature of the Court's order is that it lays down the view that the authorised officer's decision on arrest ought to be rooted in compliance with statutory requirements, and **one that a magistrate or judge can examine**. The Court has also done well to reiterate that arrests under the PMLA cannot be on a mere whim; and that decisions during investigation should consider exculpatory material too, and not merely material against the accused. The other issue, regarding another Bench's shock over courts staying bail orders, touches upon a key aspect of contemporary judicial functioning. The vehemence with which the prosecution argues its case, be it against bail or challenging a court's order granting it, seems to be a major factor in the approach of higher courts. As the Bench noted, a stay on reasoned orders ought to be rare exceptions based on grounds such as perversity by the lower court, and not done as a matter of routine.

- Section 19 of PMLA requires an officer to have "reason to believe" the person is guilty before arresting them.
- Officers must record reasons for arrest and convey them to the accused.
- The Court will decide if officers must also demonstrate the necessity to arrest.
- Just having the power to arrest is not enough; it must be justified.
- The Court emphasized that arrest decisions should comply with statutory requirements and be open to examination by a magistrate or judge.
- Arrests under PMLA should not be arbitrary and must consider evidence both for and against the accused.
- The second issue was about courts staying bail orders too easily.
- Higher courts often react strongly to prosecution arguments against bail.
- The Court noted that staying bail orders should be rare and only in cases of lower court perversity, not routine.

In search of jobs (18 July)

Technology must be harnessed for easing burden and for efficiency

- Employment generation is a major challenge for the Narendra Modi government in its third term.
- The upcoming Union Budget is expected to address this issue.
- The number of young job seekers is increasing, and technological advancements require fewer workers.
- Recent studies show the severity of the problem.
- The Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) found only 21% of establishments used the Internet for business activities.
- The unincorporated non-agricultural economy employed about 11 crore workers in 2022-23, up from 9.8 crore in 2021-22.
- The International Labour Organisation (ILO) reported stagnant manufacturing employment at 12%-14%.
- The transition from agricultural to non-agricultural jobs slowed due to COVID-19.
- A Citigroup report stated the current job creation rate is insufficient for future demand.
- ASUSE noted 'Other Services' contributed 36.45% to total employment, 'trading' 35.61%, and 'manufacturing' 27.94%.
- Periodic Labour Force Surveys found 45.76% of the workforce was in agriculture and allied sectors in 2022-23.
- The government cannot easily change the situation but can consider solutions.
- The Swadeshi Jagran Manch suggested imposing a robot tax and incentivizing job creation.
- Trade unions want the Indian Labour Conference to be convened.
- Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has reached out to trade unions, which is a positive step.
- Technological innovations should reduce people's workload, not create job hurdles.
- More public and cooperative investment in agriculture could create jobs and reduce farmers' burden.
- A collaborative approach involving private and public sectors, labour unions, States, and political parties is needed to design a job-centric growth model.
- Economic growth without employment growth can lead to social and political unrest.
- Acknowledging the problem honestly is a good start for finding solutions.

दिल्ली से भी बेहतर

आपके शहर गोरखपुर में



Team Led by:
Amit Kumar

(More than 4 Years of Teaching Experience
In Vision IAS Delhi & Qualified 4
Times For The IAS Mains).



Patriotic IAS
IAS/PCSwali Pathshala



Piyush Gambhir Sir

(More than 5 years of teaching experience
in Vision IAS Delhi & qualified 3 times for
the IAS mains & 2 times IAS Interview)

पैडलेगंज, गोरखपुर

Mob. 9971932488



Sonal Choudhary Ma'am

More than two years of experience
in Vision IAS and qualified
3 Times for IAS mains.



Tanya Sehgal Ma'am

More than four years of
experience in Vision IAS and
qualified 2 times for IAS mains.



Manohar Pandey Sir

(More than 5 years of experience
in Vision IAS Delhi & qualified
3 times for the IAS mains &
2 times for PCS Interview).



Piyush Kannaujya Sir

(More than 4 years of teaching
experience in Vision IAS Delhi &
qualified 6 times for the
IAS Mains & 2 IAS Interview)



Abhishek A. Singh Sir

(More than 3 years of experience
in Vision IAS Delhi & qualified
2 times for the IAS Mains).



Divyansh Srivastava sir

More than 3 years Working
experience with Vision IAS Delhi
and Qualified 2 times for IAS mains and
2 times for CAPF Interview.

Medicinal Plant: Gloriosa lily



The problems with sub-caste reservations (18 July)

- The Supreme Court is considering sub-caste reservations for SC/STs.
- Decisions need legal and academic justification.
- The academic basis for sub-caste reservation is weak.
- The government uses three policy instruments:
 - Legal safeguards against caste discrimination.
 - Reservation in legislature, public jobs, and education.
 - Measures to improve ownership of capital assets like land, businesses, and education.
- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar justified these measures due to the denial of equal rights, employment, and education to untouchables.
- These measures address the isolation and suffering of untouchables as a whole, not specific sub-castes.
- Legal safeguards, reservation, and economic/education empowerment are complementary, not substitutes.
- Legal safeguards alone are insufficient for fair share in legislature, jobs, and education.
- Reservation supplements legal measures to ensure fairness in the present.
- Legal safeguards and reservations do not address past denials of property, employment, and education.
- Improving ownership of capital assets complements the reservation policy to enhance capabilities of untouchable youth.
- Reservations in legislature, public jobs, and education are needed for untouchables as a whole with a social group focus.
- Economic empowerment policies should focus on untouchable individuals lacking income-earning capital assets and education.
- Any decision on sub-caste reservation must consider these propositions.
- Supporters argue that some sub-castes benefit more than others, so lagging sub-castes should have separate quotas.
- Low share in jobs may not be due to discrimination by other sub-castes, but due to low education and lack of capital assets.
- Improving job and education share should focus on enhancing capital assets and education for those SC individuals who lack them.
- Without improving capital ownership and education, sub-caste reservations may not help as the better-off will continue to have an edge.
- Economic and educational empowerment, as suggested by Ambedkar, is a better alternative than sub-caste reservations with low capital ownership and education.
- Legal solutions for discriminated groups must consider economic and social realities.
- The extent of under-representation of some SC sub-castes in jobs needs to be understood.
- If under-representation is due to discrimination by other sub-castes, sub-caste reservations might be justified.
- However, under-representation is more likely due to low income and education, not discrimination.
- An individual-focused policy to improve income and education is better for enabling effective use of job reservations.
- Legal authorities should base decisions on academic justification and factual data about sub-castes.
- Without this, sub-caste reservations may not effectively address the problem and could lead to widespread demands.
- Such a scenario could mirror the complexity of caste society with numerous sub-castes under SC/ST/OBC categories.

The problems with sub-caste reservations

GS Paper I: Safeguard of Dalits

The Supreme Court has reserved the decision on sub-caste reservation for SC/STs. Any decision on sub-caste reservation needed to be justified not only on legal grounds but also on academic grounds. The academic basis for sub-caste reservation seems to be weak. So far, the government has used three policy instruments namely legal safeguards against caste discrimination, reservation in the legislature, public jobs, education institutions, and measures to improve ownership of capital assets such as land, businesses and education levels.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who struggled for 30 years, justified these three sets of policy measures due to the denial of equal civic and property rights, employment, and education, as well as the physical and social isolation of untouchables as a whole, not specific sub-castes within the untouchable community since all suffered similarly from untouchability. But it needs to be understood that the three measures, namely legal safeguards, reservation, and economic/education empowerment measures were proposed as a complement to each other and not as substitutes or standalone solutions.

Clarification on the interconnection between these three measures is essential to bring some insight on the issue of sub-caste reservation.

As a first step, Ambedkar proposed legal safeguards against caste discrimination. He also believed that the law by itself would not ensure a fair share for untouchables in the legislature, jobs, and education. Therefore, the reservation was proposed as supplementary to legal measures. The legal safeguards and reservations together ensure a fair share in the “present.”

He also argued that while these measures address discrimination in the “present”, they have limitations in dealing with the



Sukhadeo Thorat

Former Chairman of the University Grants Commission and Professor Emeritus at JNU

Problem of low participation of some sub-castes in job reservation will have to be dealt with by improving their ownership of capital assets and education levels

consequences of past denials of the right to property, employment and education. Therefore, a third policy to improve the ownership of capital assets like land, business, and education was thought to be essential as complementary measure to the reservation policy. The purpose was to enhance the capabilities of untouchable youth to seek education and become capable of securing jobs under reservation.

Reservations in the legislature, public jobs and education institutions was needed for untouchables as a whole with a “social group focus”. The policy of economic empowerment was thought to be focused on those untouchable “individuals” who lack income earning capital assets and education. Therefore, any decision on sub-caste reservation must take these propositions into consideration. The supporters of sub-caste reservation argue that some sub-castes benefitted more than others, thus, the sub-castes that lag behind should have separate quotas. Assuming that some sub-castes lag behind others in job reservations, the low share may not necessarily be due to discrimination by other sub-castes. Some may lag behind in public jobs because they suffered from low education, which in turn is due to a lack of income earning capital assets. This reduces their capability to seek public jobs.

If this is the case, then the policy to improve the share of these sub-castes in jobs and admissions to educational institutions must focus on enhancing their ownership of capital assets and education. It should be focused on those SC “individuals” who lack ownership of capital assets and education. If the sub-caste reservation is given without improving their capital ownership and educational participation, they may continue to have a low share in jobs and education, as the relatively better-off will have an edge in accessing jobs and education,

which in all probability is the case even today. So, the policy of economic and educational empowerment, which Ambedkar suggested for adequate utilisation of the reservation policy, is a better alternative than sub-caste reservations with low capital ownership and low education.

It needs to be recognised by the legal authority that legal solutions for discriminated groups are determined by economic and social realities. In this context, the legal authority making the decision has to know the extent to which the under-representation in jobs of some SC sub-castes is due to caste discrimination, and the extent to which it is due to a lack of income sources and low education. If discrimination by other sub-castes is the reason for under-representation, which is unlikely, there may be a case for sub-caste reservations. But if it is due to a lack of capabilities on account of low income and education, then an “individual focus” policy is a better alternative, which will enable them to make effective use of job reservations.

The under-representation of some sub-castes, who seek sub-caste reservation, is mainly due to a lack of income earning assets and education, and unlikely due to discrimination by other SC sub-castes. The problem of low participation of some sub-castes in job reservation will have to be dealt with by improving their ownership of capital assets and education levels, which in turn will improve their capabilities to access jobs under reservation and education. But if legal authorities prefer sub-caste reservations without academic justification and the factual reality based on data of sub-castes, the problem may remain unaddressed. Besides, it will open the floodgates of demand for sub-caste reservations by thousands of sub-castes/tribes from SC/ST/OBC. In that case, the reservation policy will be a mirror image of caste society with its innumerable sub-castes.

The problems with sub-caste reservations (18 July)

- The Supreme Court is considering sub-caste reservations for SC/STs.
- Decisions need legal and academic justification.
- The academic basis for sub-caste reservation is weak.
- The government uses three policy instruments:
 - Legal safeguards against caste discrimination.
 - Reservation in legislature, public jobs, and education.
 - Measures to improve ownership of capital assets like land, businesses, and education.
- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar justified these measures due to the denial of equal rights, employment, and education to untouchables.
- These measures address the isolation and suffering of untouchables as a whole, not specific sub-castes.
- Legal safeguards, reservation, and economic/education empowerment are complementary, not substitutes.
- Legal safeguards alone are insufficient for fair share in legislature, jobs, and education.
- Reservation supplements legal measures to ensure fairness in the present.
- Legal safeguards and reservations do not address past denials of property, employment, and education.
- Improving ownership of capital assets complements the reservation policy to enhance capabilities of untouchable youth.
- Reservations in legislature, public jobs, and education are needed for untouchables as a whole with a social group focus.
- Economic empowerment policies should focus on untouchable individuals lacking income-earning capital assets and education.
- Any decision on sub-caste reservation must consider these propositions.

- Supporters argue that some sub-castes benefit more than others, so lagging sub-castes should have separate quotas.
- Low share in jobs may not be due to discrimination by other sub-castes, but due to low education and lack of capital assets.
- Improving job and education share should focus on enhancing capital assets and education for those SC individuals who lack them.
- Without improving capital ownership and education, sub-caste reservations may not help as the better-off will continue to have an edge.
- Economic and educational empowerment, as suggested by Ambedkar, is a better alternative than sub-caste reservations with low capital ownership and education.
- Legal solutions for discriminated groups must consider economic and social realities.
- The extent of under-representation of some SC sub-castes in jobs needs to be understood.
- If under-representation is due to discrimination by other sub-castes, sub-caste reservations might be justified.
- However, under-representation is more likely due to low income and education, not discrimination.
- An individual-focused policy to improve income and education is better for enabling effective use of job reservations.
- Legal authorities should base decisions on academic justification and factual data about sub-castes.
- Without this, sub-caste reservations may not effectively address the problem and could lead to widespread demands.
- Such a scenario could mirror the complexity of caste society with numerous sub-castes under SC/ST/OBC categories.

On political representation of women

Have women been fairly represented in Parliament in independent India? Should political parties provide internal reservations to increase women's political participation? When will the 106th constitutional amendment be implemented?

GS Paper II: Polity

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan. R

The story so far:

In the recently concluded general elections in the U.K., a record 263 women MPs (40%) have been elected to the House of Commons. The South African National Assembly has around 45% women representation, while the U.S. House of Representatives has 29%. Universal suffrage was achieved in various parts of the world after prolonged political movements. New Zealand as a self-governing unit under British rule was the first to grant universal women suffrage in 1893. The U.K., itself provided all its women the right to vote only in 1928. The U.S., granted equal voting rights through the nineteenth amendment only in 1920.

What about women representatives in independent India?

India as a sovereign republic provided the right to vote for all its women right from the first general elections in 1952. While the right to vote was provided to all women since the commencement of the Constitution, the representation of women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies has been far from satisfactory. The percentage of women MPs in the Lok Sabha had been very low between 5% and 10% till 2004. It rose marginally to 12% in 2014 and currently stands at 14% in the 18th Lok Sabha. The representation in State Legislative Assemblies is even poorer with the national average being around 9%.

The 73rd and 74th amendments of the Constitution in 1992/1993, provided for one-third reservation for women in panchayats and municipalities. However, attempts between 1996 and 2008 to provide similar reservation in the Lok Sabha and assemblies were unsuccessful.

How do women MPs fare worldwide?

Women representation in parliament varies across different democracies. It is a



Long fight: From a protest march demanding the women's Reservation Bill in 2016. FILE PHOTO

perennial issue to promote higher representation for women who constitute half the population in all countries. The important methods used across the world to ensure higher representation of women are (a) voluntary or legislated compulsory quotas for candidates within political parties and (b) quota in parliament through reservation of seats. Quotas within political parties provide more democratic choice to voters and allows flexibility to parties in choosing

Country wise data on women representation*

Women representation in parliament varies across different democracies



Moving forward: Trinamool Congress MPs take selfies at the Parliament House complex during the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha, on June 25. PTI

Country	% of elected women	Quota in Parliament	Quota in political parties
Sweden	46%	No	Yes
South Africa	45%	No	Yes
Australia	38%	No	Yes
France	38%	No	Yes
Germany	35%	No	Yes
U.K.	40%	No	Yes
U.S.	29%	No	No
Pakistan	16%	Yes	No
Bangladesh	20%	Yes	No

*[as of September 2023] | Source: PRS legislative research

Voluntary or legislated quotas within political parties are unlikely to yield the desired representation in our country

women candidates. Opponents of having a reserved quota in parliament for women argue that it would be seen as women not competing on merit. As the seats reserved for women would be rotated after each delimitation, it may also reduce the incentive for MPs to work hard to nurture their constituencies. The table above provides a snapshot of women's representation in some democracies across the world. As can be seen, countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan that have quotas in parliament fare poorer than countries with political party quotas.

What is the 106th amendment?

As on April 2024, India ranks 143 in the list of countries in the 'Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments' published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a global organisation for national parliaments. The Trinamool Congress has the highest proportion of women MPs in the current Lok Sabha at 38%. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and principal Opposition Congress party have around 13% each. Naam Tamilar Katchi, a State

party in Tamil Nadu, has been following a voluntary quota of 50% for women candidates in the last three general elections.

However, voluntary or legislated quotas within political parties are unlikely to yield the desired representation in our country. This is why the Parliament through the 106th constitutional amendment, in September 2023, provided for one-third reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies. This would ensure a fair representation of women in legislatures that would increase gender sensitivity in parliamentary processes and legislation. It would also hopefully increase the number of women Ministers in the Centre and States.

This reservation shall come into effect based on the delimitation exercise after the relevant figures of the first Census conducted after the commencement of this act is published. Hence, the Census which is overdue since 2021 should be conducted without any further delay to ensure that this reservation is implemented starting with the general elections in 2029.

Rangarajan. R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently trains civil-service aspirants at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

India as a sovereign republic provided the right to vote for all its women right from the first general elections in 1952.

The important methods used across the world to ensure higher representation of women are (a) voluntary or legislated compulsory quotas for candidates within political parties and (b) quota in parliament through reservation of seats.

As on April 2024, India ranks 143 in the list of countries in the 'Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments' published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a global organisation for national parliaments.

On political representation of women (18 July)

Have women been fairly represented in Parliament in independent India? Should political parties provide internal reservations to increase women's political participation? When will the 106th constitutional amendment be implemented?

- In the UK's recent elections, 40% of MPs elected were women, a record high.
- South Africa's National Assembly has 45% women representation, while the US House of Representatives has 29%.
- New Zealand was the first to grant universal women's suffrage in 1893, followed by the UK in 1928 and the US in 1920.
- In independent India, women have had the right to vote since the first general elections in 1952.
- However, women's representation in the Lok Sabha has been historically low, around 5-10% until 2004, rising to 14% in the 18th Lok Sabha.
- Representation in State Legislative Assemblies is even lower, averaging around 9%.

- The 73rd and 74th amendments in 1992/1993 provided for one-third reservation for women in panchayats and municipalities, but similar reservation in the Lok Sabha and assemblies has been unsuccessful.
- Globally, promoting higher representation for women in parliament remains a significant issue.
- Methods used include voluntary or legislated quotas within political parties and quotas for reserved seats in parliament.
- Quotas within parties allow for democratic choice and flexibility but face criticism for potentially undermining merit-based competition.
- Countries with parliamentary quotas generally show higher women's representation compared to those relying solely on party quotas, with variations seen globally.

What is the 106th amendment?

- As of April 2024, India ranks 143rd globally in women's representation in national parliaments.
- Trinamool Congress has the highest proportion of women MPs in the current Lok Sabha at 38%.
- The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress each have approximately 13% women MPs.
- Naam Tamilar Katchi in Tamil Nadu has voluntarily allocated 50% of its tickets to women candidates in the last three general elections.
- To address the under-representation of women, the 106th constitutional amendment in September 2023 mandates one-third reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies.
- This reservation will be implemented after the delimitation exercise based on the first Census conducted after the amendment's commencement.
- The overdue Census from 2021 needs to be conducted promptly to facilitate the implementation of this reservation for the general elections in 2029.

What does Maharashtra's Public Security Bill stipulate?

What are the concerns? Which other States have enacted laws to curb Naxalism in urban areas?

[GS Paper II: Polity](#)

Abhinav Deshpande

The story so far:

On July 11, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led MahaYuti government tabled the Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Act, 2024, aimed at curbing the 'menace of Naxalism' in urban areas. The provisions of the proposed Bill, which allows the State to declare any organisation as 'unlawful' with offences categorised as cognisable and non-bailable, has raised concerns and is being dubbed the 'urban naxal' law. The Maoist-hit States of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Odisha have already implemented Public Security Acts to prevent unlawful activities.

Why was the Bill proposed?

According to Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who tabled the Bill in the State Assembly, Naxalism is not limited to rural areas, but is increasing in urban areas through frontal

organisations. These active frontal organisations of Naxal groups give constant and effective support in terms of logistics and safe refuge to its armed cadre, he said. Citing 'safe houses and urban dens of the Maoist network in the cities of Maharashtra,' the senior BJP leader said such unlawful groups 'propagate their ideology of armed rebellion against the constitutional mandate and disrupt public order in the State. He further stated that unlawful activities of such frontal organisations need to be controlled through effective legal means and that existing laws are ineffective to tackle the issue.

"In the absence of a similar law - which is in force in AP, Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Odisha - such organisations are active in Maharashtra. Therefore, the government considers it expedient to enact a special law for more effective prevention of unlawful activities," said Mr. Fadnavis, who is also the guardian minister of the Naxal-affected Gadchiroli bordering Chhattisgarh and Telangana.

How different is it from the UAPA?

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA) is invoked in cases related to Naxalism and terrorism. This law empowers the state to classify organisations as 'unlawful associations.' Both the laws are almost the same. However, in the MSPS Act, an advisory board of three persons who are or have been qualified to be appointed as judges of the High Court shall oversee the confirmation process, while under UAPA, a tribunal led by a High Court judge verifies the State's declaration.

In addition to the UAPA, the State also enforces the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, 1999 (MCOCA) to address perceived extreme situations involving individuals labelled as 'urban Naxals'. If the proposed legislation is passed, it would allow the State police and security agencies to arrest individuals without a warrant and often without informing them of the charges. All offences under this Act would be cognisable and non-bailable.

What are its key provisions?

The MSPS Act empowers the State to designate any suspected 'organisation' as an 'unlawful organisation' and outlines four offences for which a person may be penalised - (i) being a member of an unlawful organisation, (ii) being a member and raises funds for an unlawful organisation or harbours any member of the unlawful organisation, (iii) whoever manages or assists in the management of an unlawful organisation, or promotes or assists in promoting a meeting, and (iv) whoever commits or abets or attempts to commit or plans to commit any unlawful activity. These offences carry sentences ranging from two to seven years, along with fines between ₹2 lakh and ₹5 lakh.

What is the stance of the Opposition?

Former Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan has criticised the measure as 'draconian,' arguing that existing laws are sufficient to address the Naxal issue. "By introducing the bill in the Assembly first instead of the Council, the government clearly shows a lack of interest, while Delhi (Union government) is pressuring them to act. This is simply an attempt to suppress protests... We already have laws with the necessary provisions; why introduce another? This is a 'draconian' measure, and we strongly oppose it," he stated. Mr. Chavan also noted that the Bill would automatically lapse with the dissolution of the Assembly, asserting that if the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) returns to power, it would not reintroduce the Bill.

THE GIST

On July 11, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led MahaYuti government tabled the Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Act, 2024, aimed at curbing the 'menace of Naxalism' in urban areas.

According to Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Naxalism is not limited to rural areas, but is increasing in urban areas through frontal organisations. These active frontal organisations of Naxal groups give constant and effective support in terms of logistics and safe refuge to its armed cadre, he said.

Former Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan has criticised the measure as 'draconian,' arguing that existing laws are sufficient to address the issue.

What does Maharashtra's Public Security Bill stipulate? (18 July)

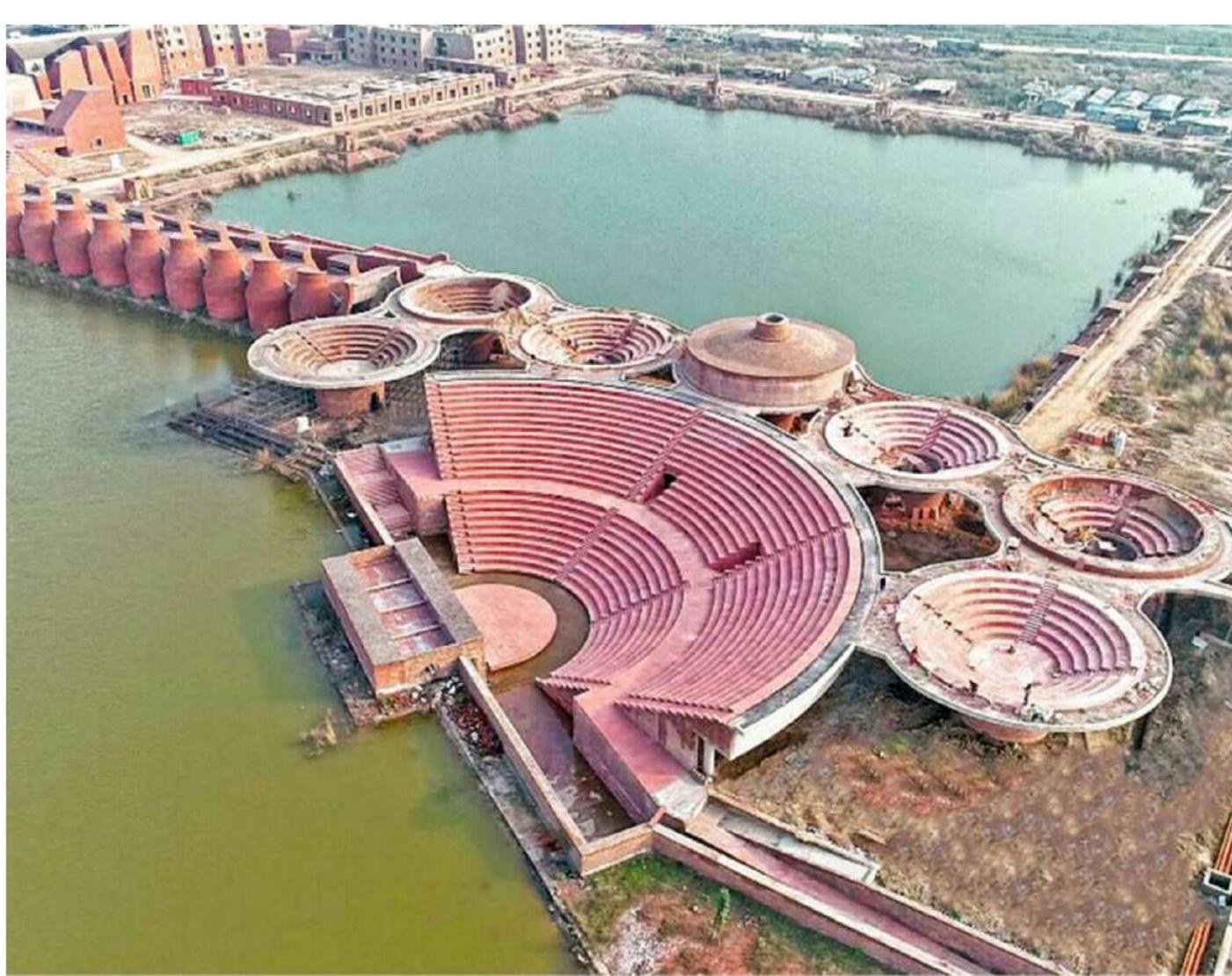
What are the concerns? Which other States have enacted laws to curb Naxalism in urban areas?

- The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led MahaYuti government in Maharashtra has introduced the Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Act, 2024.
- The aim of the MSPS Act is to combat the spread of Naxalism in urban areas by declaring certain organisations as 'unlawful'.
- The Act proposes stringent measures with cognisable and non-bailable offences, allowing arrests without warrants and without informing individuals of the charges.
- Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis highlighted that Naxal activities have expanded into urban areas through supportive frontal organisations.
- Maharashtra cites the presence of safe houses and urban networks supporting Maoist activities as reasons for the new legislation.
- The proposed Act draws comparisons with the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA), but differs in the oversight mechanism for confirming declarations of 'unlawful associations'.
- The MSPS Act would establish an advisory board for confirmation, while UAPA involves a tribunal led by a High Court judge.
- Besides UAPA, Maharashtra also uses the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, 1999 (MCOCA), particularly in cases involving 'urban Naxals'.

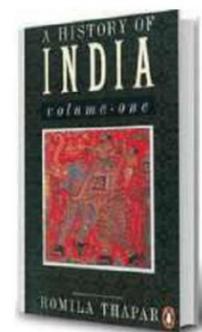
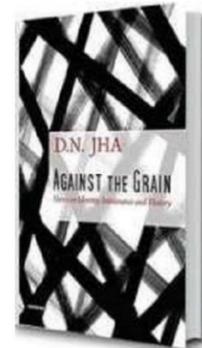
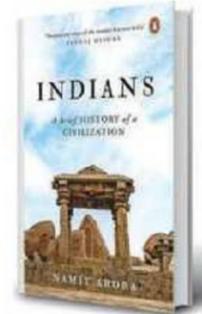
What are its key provisions?

- The Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Act allows the state to designate suspected organizations as 'unlawful' and specifies four offenses.

- Offenses under the MSPS Act include membership in an unlawful organization, raising funds for such organizations, managing or assisting in their management, and committing or planning unlawful activities.
- Penalties under the MSPS Act range from two to seven years of imprisonment and fines ranging from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh.
- Former Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan criticized the MSPS Act as 'draconian,' arguing that existing laws are adequate to handle Naxalism.
- Chavan accused the government of introducing the bill hastily in response to pressure from the central government, describing it as an attempt to suppress protests.
- He noted that the MSPS Act would lapse with the dissolution of the Assembly and stated that if the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) returns to power, they would not reintroduce the legislation.



Testament to history: The new campus of Nalanda University. ANI



Path

Of a gilded past and the future: Nalanda's lost glory and new-found ambitions

Writers with the help of Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang's account and other research have traced the rise and fall of an ancient seat of learning going back to the Gupta dynasty. Nalanda, a revered Buddhist site, which had been destroyed, was rediscovered in the 19th century

GS Paper I: History

Ziya Us Salam

Nalanda is not just a name, it is an identity. Nalanda is the root, it is the mantra. Nalanda is the proclamation of the truth that knowledge cannot be destroyed even though books burn in a fire." Prime Minister Narendra Modi's words at the inauguration of the new Nalanda University campus at Rajgir recently and his "golden age" references made us go back to the history books.

Established by emperor Kumaragupta-I of the Gupta dynasty around 427 AD, Nalanda, a centre for learning, carved out its own niche with the support of the Pala kings, and later the monks of Nalanda, who were patronised by the Pithipatis of Bodh Gaya. Nalanda was way ahead of its times, a sacred spot for the spiritually inclined.

Aryabhata on the rolls

At one time, Nalanda's faculty included some of the most highly regarded names in Hinayana as well as Mahayana Buddhism; the latter sect started much after Hinayana but flourished for long, touching with its spirit Tibet, China, Japan and much of southeast Asia. The names of those associated with Nalanda read like a roll call of brilliance, even genius. Included in the list were Aryabhata, Harsha, Dharmapala, Nagarjuna, Dharmakirti, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Chandrakirti and Silabhadra. Hiuen

Tsang, of course, spent five years here during the reign of Harshavardhan in the 7th century, and wrote in detail about Nalanda's meticulous approach in enrolling students, including rigorous admission tests.

Its glory got an affirmative nod in the *History of Bangladesh: Early Bengal in Regional Perspectives*, edited by Abdul Momin Chowdhury and Ranabir Chakravarti with a foreword by Romila Thapar. They write: "It is well known Nalanda gained the celebrated status of a Buddhist site after Alexander Cunningham identified it with Bargon, based on the travel notes of Xuan Zang (Hiuen Tsang) followed by epigraphic records recovered from the site. This Chinese pilgrim left a detailed account of the monastic organisation." Prof. Thapar herself wrote of its global repute in *A History of India*, widely regarded as a must-read for students of ancient and early medieval India, "It is on record that a king of Sumatra requested a Pala king's permission to endow a monastery at Nalanda. The ties between the Buddhists in eastern India and southeast Asia were strengthened at this time."

Khalji raids, and a denial

Yet Nalanda has not been without its share of controversies. Several historians have recorded that Nalanda was ransacked by Bakhtiyar Khalji around 1200 AD and its treasure of books reduced to ashes. In *History of Medieval*

India, Satish Chandra writes: "A Khalji officer, Bakhtiyar Khalji, whose uncle had fought the battle of Tarain, had been appointed in charge of some of the areas beyond Banaras. He had taken advantage of this to make frequent raids into Bihar... During these raids, he had attacked and destroyed some of the famous Buddhist monasteries of Bihar, Nalanda and Vikramshila, which had no protector left."

Noted historian Mohammad Habib, while not referring to Nalanda's possible destruction directly, wrote in *Studies in Medieval Indian Polity and Culture: The Delhi Sultanate and Its Times*, about Bakhtiyar's raids in Bihar. Elucidating about the fall of Indian kingdoms one after the other to the Ghurid army, Habib wrote, "Bakhtiyar, an adventurer from Khilj, who had been twice declared unfit for enrolment in the army as a common soldier, harassed and conquered Bihar and about one-half of Bengal."

Such assertions were probably based on the writings of Minhaj-i-Siraj who wrote in *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, "He (Bakhtiyar Khalji) used to carry his deprivations into those parts and that country until he organised an attack upon the fortified city of Bihar... He advanced to the gateway of the fortress of Bihar with two hundred horsemen in defensive armour, and suddenly attacked the place."

Rediscovering Nalanda

Illustrious historian D.N. Jha, however,

contested such claims. He argued in *Against the Grain: Notes on Identity, Intolerance and History*, one of his last works, "The fortified monastery which Bakhtiyar captured was known as Audand-Bihar or Odandapura-vihara." It was not Nalanda, claimed Jha. He felt that Minhaj did not refer to Nalanda at all in his writings.

Minhaj spoke instead of the ransacking of the fort of Bihar or Hisar-i-Bihar, he argued. "Bakhtiyar did not go to Nalanda. It escaped the main fury of the Muslim conquest because it lay not on the main route from Delhi to Bengal but needed a separate expedition." Bakhtiyar instead probably proceeded from Biharsharif to Nadia in Bengal.

Fellow historian Namit Arora reasoned in *Indians: A Brief History of Civilization*, "By the time of the Turko-Persian invasions, most Buddhist sites had already been abandoned, destroyed, or converted into Brahminical sites across much of India. Buddhist artifacts and texts were wiped out and Buddhism vanished from India's public memory... Only in the 19th century did Indians rediscover Nalanda."

With the opening of the Rajgir campus, scholars hope Nalanda will regain its glory.

For the discerning, Nalanda continues to be an open book. You read, you interpret, you conclude. As Oscar Wilde said: The word is nothing; interpretation is everything.

Of a gilded past and the future: Nalanda's lost glory and new-found ambitions (18 July)

Writers with the help of Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang's account and other research have traced the rise and fall of an ancient seat of learning going back to the Gupta dynasty. Nalanda, a revered Buddhist site, which had been destroyed, was rediscovered in the 19th century

- Nalanda University, established around 427 AD by Emperor Kumaragupta-I of the Gupta dynasty, was a renowned center of learning.
- Supported by the Pala kings and later by Bodh Gaya's Pithipatis, Nalanda flourished as a hub of Buddhist education and spiritual exploration.
- It attracted scholars from both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, fostering intellectual giants such as Aryabhata, Harsha, Nagarjuna, and Hiuen Tsang.
- Hiuen Tsang, a Chinese pilgrim, spent five years at Nalanda during Harshavardhan's reign, documenting its rigorous admission processes and educational practices.
- Nalanda's fame spread internationally, influencing Buddhist communities in Tibet, China, Japan, and Southeast Asia.
- Despite its glory, Nalanda faced devastation when Bakhtiyar Khalji sacked it around 1200 AD, destroying its invaluable collection of books and manuscripts.
- Historians like Mohammad Habib and Minhaj-i-Siraj discussed Bakhtiyar Khalji's raids in Bihar, which included attacks on fortified monasteries.
- Minhaj-i-Siraj mentioned attacks on Bihar's fortified city, distinct from Nalanda, possibly Audand-Bihar or Odandapura-vihara, not Nalanda itself.
- D.N. Jha argued against the notion that Bakhtiyar Khalji attacked Nalanda, suggesting Minhaj's account referred to a different location.
- Namit Arora noted that by the time of Turko-Persian invasions, many Buddhist sites in India were abandoned, destroyed, or converted.
- Nalanda was rediscovered in the 19th century, and efforts continue to revive its legacy with the new campus at Rajgir.