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Political executive will decide on Bengal law and order: SC

SC was replying to an urgent oral plea seeking to continue deployment of Central security forces to prevent post-election violence in West Bengal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said the elected political executive in West Bengal would take decisions on law and order, while hearing an urgent oral plea seeking continuation of Central forces' deployment in the State to prevent post-poll violence after the 2026 Assembly election.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said the "State of West Bengal will be run by the Political Executive".

The oral mentioning by senior advocate V. Giri, appearing for an organisation, Sanatani Sangsad, and others, was made even as counting was under way in West Bengal.

The Election Commission (EC), represented by senior advocate Dama Seshadri Naidu, said the poll body's role in the State would come to an end by evening once the election process concluded. "Everything will be over by evening," Chief Justice Kant told Mr. Giri.



On guard: Security personnel stand guard outside a counting centre in Malda on Monday. AP

Mr. Giri said the Central forces deployed in the State may continue to remain in place to ward off any possibility of violence, considering West Bengal's history of post-poll violence.

He suggested that the deployment could be monitored by a retired top court judge.

"The Political Executive of the State will decide," Justice Bagchi said, making it clear that the Supreme Court would refrain from taking a decision on the issue of law and order, which is a State subject.

The court had, on April 2, directed the EC to requisition Central forces to protect the life, liberty and fa-

milies of judicial officers involved in the West Bengal special intensive revision (SIR) exercise after seven judicial officers deployed for SIR work were gharaoed by people in Malda district.

"This was not a routine incident. It was *ex facie* a calculated, well-planned and deliberate move to demoralise the judicial officers and impact the ongoing process of adjudication of objections," Chief Justice Kant had observed then.

The top court had ordered an independent probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation or the National Investigation Agency into the incident.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Political Executive:** In a parliamentary democracy like India, this refers to the elected representatives (the Chief Minister and the Council of Ministers) who hold the power to make policy decisions.
- **Law and Order (State Subject):** Under the **Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution, "Public Order" and "Police" are placed in **List II (State List)**. This means the State Government has the primary responsibility and power to legislate and manage these areas.
- **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF):** These are security forces under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs (Union Government). They are typically deployed to assist states during elections or internal disturbances.
- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** A process to update and verify electoral rolls to ensure only eligible voters are listed. It involves door-to-door verification or specialized scrutiny.
- **Oral Mentioning:** A legal procedure where a lawyer brings an urgent matter to the court's attention verbally, seeking an immediate hearing before the formal filing process is complete.
- **Article 324:** The constitutional provision that grants the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** the power of superintendence, direction, and control of elections.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Core Thesis**

- The Supreme Court emphasized the principle of **Separation of Powers**, asserting that the maintenance of law and order is an executive function belonging to the State Government, and the judiciary should not act as a perpetual administrator.

- **Key Points**

- **Executive Responsibility:** The Bench stated that the "State will be run by the Political Executive," reinforcing that elected leaders must be trusted to fulfill their constitutional duties once the election concludes.
- **ECI's Limited Mandate:** The Election Commission clarified that its authority is temporary, ending once the results are declared and the "election process" is officially over.
- **Preemptive Deployment vs. History of Violence:** The petitioners argued for continued CAPF presence based on the "history of post-poll violence," suggesting a court-monitored mechanism to bypass potential state bias.
- **Judicial Restraint:** The Court signaled a shift from its earlier interventionist stance (seen during the SIR phase) back to a traditional stance of respecting federal boundaries.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **1950s–1980s:** Law and order were strictly viewed as state subjects. Central intervention was rare, usually occurring only through the imposition of President's Rule under Article 356.
- **1990s (The Seshan Era):** The ECI began massive deployments of Central forces to prevent booth capturing, shifting the "security balance" during the election period.
- **2021 Post-Poll Violence:** Following the 2021 West Bengal elections, significant violence led to NHRC interventions and High Court-monitored CBI probes, setting a precedent for judicial oversight in law and order.
- **2024–2026 SIR Phase:** The Supreme Court took a direct hand in protecting judicial officers after the Malda incident, treating the revision of rolls as a prerequisite for a "free and fair" poll.
- **The Current Phase (2026):** A return to constitutional normalcy where the Court insists that once the "emergency" of the election is over, the elected government must resume its role.

- **Way Forward**

- **Institutional Autonomy:** Implement the **Prakash Singh Case (2006)** directives on police reforms to insulate state police from political interference.
- **Gradual De-induction:** Instead of an abrupt withdrawal of Central forces, a phased withdrawal coordinated between the ECI, MHA, and State Government could be explored.
- **State-Level Peace Committees:** Establishing multi-party peace committees at the district level to monitor and prevent localized skirmishes.
- **Judicial Vigilance:** While the SC should not manage the State, it must remain "vigilant" to intervene if there is a breakdown of the Constitutional machinery.

- **All Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **Mains (2022 - GS2):** "The States in India seem reluctant to empower urban local bodies both functionally as well as financially." (Theme: Federalism).
- **Mains (2017 - GS2):** "The local self-government system in India has not proved to be a very effective instrument of governance."
- **Mains (2013 - GS2):** "The role of the Election Commission of India has evolved over the years."
- **Prelims (2021):** Question on the "State" definition and the "Seventh Schedule."



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AXIA COMPETITIVE EXAM CENTRE

WEST BENGAL POST-POLL VIOLENCE: SUPREME COURT ANALYSIS & UPSC GS-II LINKAGES

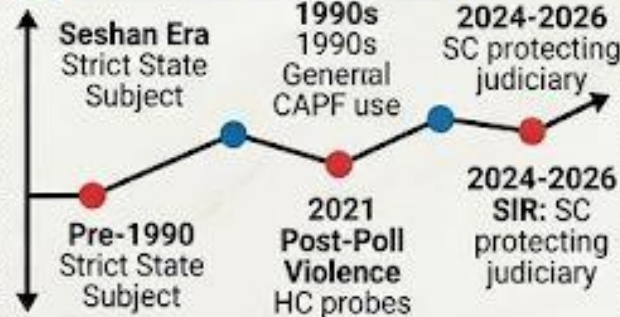
1 KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS

- Political Executive:**
 - Elected Government
 - Policy Decisions
- Public Order:** List II State Subject
 - Police Implementent
- CAPF:** MHA control, assist states
 - Police comeonisation
- SIR:** Electoral Roll Revision

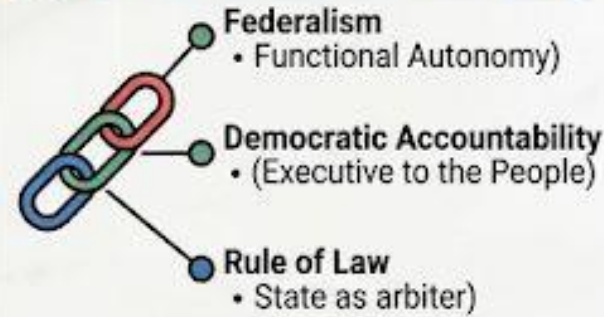
2 MAIN ARGUMENTS & JUDICIAL STAND

- Core thesis:** Separation of Powers
 - SC Restraint
- SC:** "State will be run by the Political Executive"
- EC Role ends with polls**
No permanent CAPF monitoring.

3 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION



4 LOGICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL BASE



5 NEW IDEAS & CHALLENGES

- New idea:**
 - Court-monitored force? - deemed unfeasible
- Challenges:**
 - Transition Security Vacuum
 - Political Capture of Police
 - Cycles of Litigation

6 MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

- Social:** Fissures, displacement
- Political:** Centre-State friction
- Legal:** Article 32/226 limits
- Ethical:** Public Service Neutrality

7 UPSC CSE SYLLABUS LINKAGES

- Strong GS Paper 2 connections**
 - Federal Structure, - separation of powers, - EC functions
- GS 4 Ethics**
 - Civil Service Values
- Essay themes**
 - Ctirer connettams and Essay

8 WAY FORWARD & POLICE REFORMS

- Recommendations**
 - Prakash Singh directives implementation
- Phased CAPF Withdrawal**
 - District Peace Committees
- District Peace Committees**
 - Phoseemesauled net preforums

Deital summary las attractive violence, ecompation transition and acaiust desised owemment, natural transition. No fluff. Improvative feel is expert and comprehensive.

SC brings survivors of forcible ingestion of acid in RPwD Act

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday included persons who were forcibly administered acid within the definition of "acid attack victims" under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

The 2016 law recognised only victims of acid-throwing, and not forcible acid ingestion. It accepted both the act of acid-throwing and the administration of acid as offences punishable with imprisonment from 10 years to a life sentence under Section 124 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt).

A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi said the reading into of survivors of forcible administration of acid in the category of "acid attack victims" would be deemed to be operative retrospectively from the inception of the Act in 2016.

Benefits apply

The deemed recognition would aid victims of forcible acid ingestion to claim disability benefits due under the 2016 Act.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Union government, said the nodal Ministry had

The court has suggested framing a comprehensive policy framework to protect the survivors

already forwarded the proposed amendment in the Schedule of the 2016 Act to the Ministry of Legislative Affairs.

Though Mr. Mehta urged the court to wait for the Ministry to initiate the amendment, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for petitioners, successfully pleaded the court to flex its plenary powers under Article 142.

"The victims mostly, if not all, are women. Till the Schedule of the 2016 Act is changed, the Supreme Court must pass an order under Article 142 to include not only persons on whom acid was thrown but also those who suffered the extreme agony of having to forcibly ingest acid in the category of 'acid attack victim'. There is some monetary support given to them under the Act and they are issued an identity card..." Mr. Rohatgi submitted.

The court had suggested framing a comprehensive policy framework to protect the survivors, who require extensive and continuous medical treatment.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016:** A landmark legislation that replaced the 1995 Act. It increased the types of recognized disabilities from 7 to 21, including "acid attack victims" for the first time.
- **Article 142 of the Constitution:** This grants the Supreme Court "plenary power" to pass any order necessary for doing "complete justice" in any cause or matter pending before it. It allows the court to transcend statutory limitations to protect fundamental rights.
- **Acid Ingestion vs. Acid Throwing:** Traditionally, law focused on "throwing" (external contact). "Ingestion" involves the forced consumption of acid, leading to internal organ damage, which is equally, if not more, debilitating.
- **Section 124 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS):** (Formerly IPC sections). It deals with voluntarily causing grievous hurt by use of acid, etc. It carries a minimum punishment of 10 years, extending to life imprisonment.
- **Retrospective Operation:** This means the court's ruling applies backward in time to 2016. Victims who suffered from ingestion years ago can now claim benefits as if they were always included in the Act.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Core Thesis:** The trauma and disability resulting from forced acid ingestion are functionally identical to—and often more severe than—acid throwing. Therefore, excluding the former from the RPwD Act was a legislative oversight that required judicial correction.
- **The Argument for Judicial Intervention:** While the government (Solicitor General) argued for a legislative amendment process, the petitioners successfully argued that victims could not wait for the slow wheels of bureaucracy.
- **Human Rights over Procedure:** The court prioritized the immediate welfare of survivors. By using Article 142, the court ensured that survivors receive identity cards and monetary support immediately, rather than waiting for an official amendment in the Schedule of the Act.
- **The Gendered Nature of the Crime:** The petitioners highlighted that a vast majority of these victims are women, framing the issue not just as a disability matter, but as a crucial component of gender-based justice and protection.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-2013 (Laxmi v. Union of India):** Acid attacks were treated under general "grievous hurt" provisions. The landmark Laxmi case led to the regulation of acid sales and the creation of specific sections in the Penal Code.
- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013:** Following the Nirbhaya case, specific sections (326A and 326B IPC) were inserted to deal exclusively with acid attacks, recognizing them as a distinct class of heinous crimes.
- **2016 - RPwD Act:** Acid attack victims were officially recognized as "specified disabilities," making them eligible for reservations in jobs, education, and social security schemes.
- **2026 (Current Ruling):** The definition is now refined to include "ingestion," acknowledging the internal biological devastation of acid, ensuring a more scientific and empathetic legal standard.

- **Way Forward**

- **Centralized Database:** Create a real-time tracking system for acid attack survivors to ensure they receive "continuous" rather than "episodic" care.
- **Training Medical Boards:** Sensitize doctors on how to evaluate internal chemical injuries for the purpose of issuing Disability Certificates.
- **Strict Enforcement of Acid Sales:** Legal remedies are reactive; the state must be proactive in strictly enforcing the "Poisons Act" to prevent the substance from reaching perpetrators.
- **Psychological Rehabilitation:** Include mandatory mental health support in the disability package, as the trauma of ingestion is deeply linked to PTSD and depression.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **Mains (GS 2, 2020):** "The local self-government system in India has not proved to be a very effective instrument of primary health care and education for the vulnerable sections." (Relevant for implementation of RPwD Act).
- **Mains (GS 2, 2011):** "The concept of 'Complete Justice' under Article 142."
- **Mains (GS 1, 2021):** "Examine the role of 'Gig Economy' in the process of empowerment of women in India." (Theme: Women empowerment).
- **Prelims (2017):** Question on the features of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

SUPREME COURT EXPANDS DEFINITION OF ACID ATTACK VICTIMS: AN AXIA IAS ANALYSIS



AXIA COMPETITIVE EXAM CENTRE



GROUNDBREAKING JUDICIAL DECISION:

Supreme Court under CJI Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi. Retrospective recognition from 2016.

CONSTITUTIONAL LINKAGE:

Invocation of Article 142 ('Complete Justice'). Strong ties to GS-2 (Judiciary) and GS-4 (Ethics: Compassion).



CLAIMABLE BENEFITS:

Identity Card issuance, financial support, and access to reservations in employment and education.



OLDER LEGAL SCOPE (2016 Act)



- Acid in throwing
- External
- Internal
- Damages
- Severe
- Stophags
- Stomach
- Damage



DENIED DISABILITY BENEFITS



SUPREME COURT INTERVENTION (Article 142 Plenary Powers)



NOW INCLUDED: FORCIBLE INGESTION



ELIGIBLE FOR DISABILITY BENEFITS



CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE POLICY:

Judiciary suggested specialized, continuous medical.



KEY DIMENSIONS: Social Empowerment, Political Accountability, Legal Precedent, and Ethical Obligation.



CRITICAL IMPLEMENTATION: Proper internal injury assessment by Medical Boards.

UPSC RELEVANCE



SC raps Odisha courts for 'odious' bail conditions to Adivasi people

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

When the Odisha judiciary set "odious" bail conditions, such as cleaning police stations for two months, for members of Adivasi and Dalit communities, it suggested that judges had a "regressive mindset" and caste-based biases, the Supreme Court said on Monday.

"Assuming that such conditions were imposed inadvertently or without any premeditated bias, the nature of the condition is so abhorrent, degrading, and unknown to law that it carries the potential to cast a serious aspersion, suggesting that the Odisha Judiciary is afflicted by a caste-based bias," a Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi observed in a se-



SC directs the Registrar General of Orissa HC to file compliance report in four weeks.

ven-page order.

The subjects of these bail conditions were around 40 indigenous people facing criminal charges after their protest against the acquisition of their land for a Vedanta Group bauxite mining project in Rayagada and Kalahandi districts allegedly turned violent. Some of them were subsequently allowed bail by various courts in the State. However, a range

of bail conditions were thrust upon the accused in return for exercising their fundamental right to personal liberty.

'Bad name to judiciary'

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, who had taken *suo motu* cognisance of the orders imposing "obnoxious" and "unprecedented" these bail conditions, said they had brought a bad name to the judicial institution itself. The Bench noted that, between May 2025 and January 2026, six such bail orders were issued by a local trial court.

The court said it was unfortunate to see that the State High Court and the trial courts were on the same plane, both passing "unpalatable" bail conditions.

"Such conditions reflect the underlying, albeit un-

articulated, bias of the Odisha State judiciary premised on the perception that the accused individuals belonged to the marginalised Adivasi community," the Supreme Court observed.

The court directed that all State judiciaries should refrain from imposing conditions that carry caste implications. It also directed the Supreme Court registry to circulate the order to all High Courts. "Each High Court shall ensure that a copy of this order is sent to each judicial officer in its jurisdiction, accompanied by a communication that such conditions shall not be imposed while granting bail," it said.

The court directed the Registrar General of the Orissa High Court to file a compliance report in four weeks.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Bail Conditions:** Legal requirements set by a court that an accused must follow to remain out of custody while awaiting trial. Typically, these involve financial bonds or restrictions on travel.
- **Suo Motu Cognisance:** A Latin term meaning "on its own motion." It refers to a situation where a court takes up a case on its own initiative without a formal petition being filed by a party.
- **Fundamental Right to Personal Liberty:** Enshrined under **Article 21** of the Constitution, it mandates that no person shall be deprived of their life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.
- **Marginalized Communities (Adivasi/Dalit):** Socio-economically disadvantaged groups protected under the **Sixth Schedule** and various statutes like the **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act**.
- **Judicial Bias:** A situation where a judge's decisions are influenced by personal prejudices or stereotypes (caste, gender, religion) rather than purely legal facts.
- **Atypical/Odious Conditions:** Non-legal requirements—such as performing community service (cleaning police stations)—that are deemed degrading or unrelated to the judicial process.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The "Odious" Nature of Bail:** The core argument is that requiring indigenous people to clean police stations as a condition for bail is "abhorrent" and "unknown to law." It transforms a legal procedure into a tool for social humiliation.
- **Implicit Caste Bias:** The Supreme Court posits that such conditions aren't just legal errors but reflect a "regressive mindset." The assumption is that because the accused are from marginalized backgrounds, they can be subjected to menial labor.
- **Institutional Reputation:** The CJI noted that these orders bring a "bad name" to the judiciary, suggesting that the trial courts and the High Court failed to act as guardians of the Constitution.
- **Systemic Failure across Tiers:** A significant point is that both the local trial courts and the High Court were found to be on the same "plane," failing to correct these "unpalatable" conditions for months.
- **Universal Mandate:** The ruling isn't just a critique; it is a directive to all state judiciaries to purge their orders of any conditions carrying caste-based implications.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Colonial Era:** The criminal justice system was often used to suppress tribal uprisings. The "Criminal Tribes Act" of 1871 is a historical precursor to the systemic profiling of Adivasi communities.
- **Post-Independence Land Acquisition:** Large-scale mining projects (like those of the Vedanta Group) have historically led to displacement. This often leads to "protest-arrest-bail" cycles where the state uses the legal machinery to quell dissent.
- **Expansion of Article 21:** From the 1970s (notably *Maneka Gandhi vs. Union of India*), the Supreme Court expanded personal liberty to include "dignity."
- **Recent Trends in "Creative" Bail:** In the last decade, there has been an uptick in trial courts imposing "social service" conditions (e.g., planting trees, donating to funds). While some are benign, others—like the Odisha case—cross into being punitive and discriminatory.

- **Way Forward**

- **Standardized Bail Guidelines:** The Law Commission should recommend a clear list of "permissible" vs "prohibited" bail conditions to minimize individual judge bias.
- **Sensitization Programs:** Continuous training for the lower judiciary on the socio-economic realities of Adivasi and Dalit communities.
- **Legal Aid Strengthening:** Empowering the **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** to specifically monitor and challenge unusual bail conditions at the trial court level.
- **Technological Monitoring:** Using AI-based systems to flag "atypical" phrases or conditions in bail orders for review by High Court committees.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **Mains (GS 2, 2020):** "The jurisdiction of the Central Administrative Tribunal and the High Courts: Discuss in light of the dignity of the civil servant." (Theme: Judicial dignity/procedure).
 - **Mains (GS 2, 2017):** "The Indian Constitution has provisions for holding the joint session of the two houses of the Parliament. Enumerate the occasions..." (Theme: Constitutional Procedure).
 - **Ethics (2019):** "What do you understand by the term 'constitutional morality'? How does one uphold it?"
-



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UPSC CSE ANALYSIS: SUPREME COURT'S HISTORIC RULING ON DISCRIMINATORY BAIL CONDITIONS (A Case from Odisha)

1 MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES (ADIVASI/DALIT)



- Caste-based bias
- Menial Labor as punishment
- Social Humiliation



2 LAND ACQUISITION PROTESTS



- Land Rights vs. Mining
- Dissent and Arrests
- State Suppression



3 ODIIOUS BAIL CONDITIONS



- Cleaning police stations for two months
- Violating Fundamental Right to Personal Liberty (Art. 21)
- Beyond Section 437/439 CrPC
- Presumption of Innocence



4 JUDICIAL BIAS AND MINDSET



- Regressive mindset in State courts
- Implicit Caste-based bias
- Judicial conduct standards



Judiciary must reflect 'Constitutional Morality', not caste bias

THE ISSUE:

REGRESSIVE BAIL CONDITIONS vs. CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY

ODIOUS BAIL CONDITIONS



- Cleaning police stations for two months
- Violating Fundamental Right to Personal Liberty (Art. 21)
- Beyond Section 437/439 CrPC
- Presumption of Innocence

5 WAY FORWARD



- ALL state judiciaries to refrain from caste implications
- High Courts to circulate order to ALL judicial officers
- Mandatory compliance reports

UPSC RELEVANCE

- GS Paper 1 (Social Justice)
- GS Paper 2 (Judiciary, Constitutional Law)
- GS Paper 4 (Ethics, Public Service)
- Ethics Case Studies

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SC asks Centre to examine plea on revising Aadhaar issuance norms

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Union government to examine a plea seeking issuance of new Aadhaar cards only to children, and that the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) frame "stringent guidelines" for the grant of the identity document to adults and adolescents.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant asked the Centre to consider a petition filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, which said easy accessibility to Aadhaar cards should be restricted to prevent infiltrators from disguising themselves as Indian citizens.

Mr. Upadhyay said a signed rental agreement and a 182-day stay in one



The plea said accessibility to Aadhaar must be restricted to prevent infiltrators from disguising themselves as Indian citizens. FILE PHOTO

location would make a person statutorily eligible to apply for an Aadhaar card.

He said Aadhaar was being used as an entry document to "infiltrate" and obtain other Indian records, from ration cards to passports.

Mr. Upadhyay said that as per UIDAI records, there were already 144 crore

Aadhaar holders. The authority had stated that 99% of citizens had Aadhaar, including 55 crore Jan Dhan account holders and 85 crore recipients of free ration.

The court pointed out that not only Aadhaar, but other government documents were also being forged, with many of the

criminal hubs behind such acts located abroad.

Mr. Upadhyay said a cache of 87,000 fake documents had been found in Mumbai, terming it "infiltration through the Aadhaar framework".

"Infiltration is an economic offence in so far as it is done to take unlawful benefits of the resources of a country. It is done in an organised manner... The sole intent of infiltration is to settle in a country such as India and live off its resources. Almost 80 crore people are being given free ration, in which a large number of infiltrators are also present," the plea said.

The petition also sought the installation of display boards at common service centres stating that Aadhaar is only proof of identity and not of citizenship.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- To understand this issue, we must first deconstruct the technical and legal terminology that forms the backbone of India's digital identity infrastructure.
- **Aadhaar (UIDAI):** A 12-digit unique identity number issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India. It is based on a person's biometric (fingerprints, iris scan) and demographic data. *Example:* While a passport is a travel document, Aadhaar is a "service delivery" document.
- **Proof of Identity (PoI) vs. Proof of Citizenship:** This is the most crucial distinction. Aadhaar proves *who* you are, but not your *legal status* as a citizen. A foreign national residing in India for 182 days can legally obtain an Aadhaar, but they cannot vote or claim Indian citizenship based on it.
- **Infiltration:** In this context, it refers to the unauthorized entry of individuals into the country. The concern raised is that these individuals use Aadhaar as a "gateway" document to procure more sensitive documents like Passports or Voter IDs.
- **Statutory Eligibility:** The legal requirements set by a law (The Aadhaar Act, 2016). Currently, any "resident" who has lived in India for 182 days in the preceding year is eligible.
- **Economic Offence:** An illegal act committed to gain financial advantage. Infiltration is viewed here as an economic offence because it leads to the "theft" of state resources like subsidized food (PDS) meant for the poor.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core debate centers on whether the current Aadhaar issuance process is too "porous" and if it inadvertently facilitates the settlement of illegal immigrants.
- **The Problem of "Gateway" Documentation:** The primary argument is that Aadhaar is being used to "seed" other databases. If an infiltrator gets an Aadhaar, they can use it to get a bank account, a SIM card, and eventually a Ration Card or Passport, effectively "bleaching" their status from illegal to legal.
- **Resource Drain:** With 80 crore people receiving free rations and 55 crore Jan Dhan accounts, the plea argues that even a small percentage of "infiltrator-holders" results in a massive diversion of taxpayer money and essential resources away from genuine citizens.
- **Saturation vs. Integrity:** The UIDAI claims near-total saturation (144 crore cards). However, the counter-argument is that this number exceeds the projected population in certain age groups, suggesting a high volume of duplicate or fake identities.
- **The "Children Only" Proposal:** A radical shift is proposed: issue new Aadhaars only to children (at birth/schooling) and subject adult applicants to "stringent guidelines" to ensure they aren't foreigners trying to create a back-dated identity.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The journey of Aadhaar has shifted from a tool for financial inclusion to a point of contention regarding national identity.
- **2009 (The Birth):** UIDAI was established under the Planning Commission with Nandan Nilekani at the helm. The focus was purely on "targeted delivery of subsidies."
- **2012-2015 (Legal Challenges):** The "Justice K.S. Puttaswamy" case began, challenging Aadhaar on the grounds of privacy. The Supreme Court initially passed interim orders saying Aadhaar cannot be made mandatory for services.
- **2016 (The Act):** The government passed the Aadhaar Act as a "Money Bill," giving it a legislative framework but sparking debates about the powers of the Speaker.
- **2018 (The Landmark Judgment):** The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Aadhaar but limited its use. It struck down Section 57, which allowed private companies to use Aadhaar for KYC.
- **Present Day:** The focus has shifted from "Privacy" to "National Security." The current scrutiny looks at how the ease of obtaining Aadhaar might be exploited by non-citizens, leading to the current judicial inquiry into stricter issuance norms for adults.

- **Way Forward**

- A balanced approach is needed to protect the integrity of Aadhaar without marginalizing genuine citizens.
- **Multi-layered Verification:** Instead of just a rental agreement, adult Aadhaar applicants should require "social verification" or attestation by a gazetted officer, similar to the Passport process.
- **Tech-Led Audits:** UIDAI should use AI-driven "anomaly detection" to find clusters where Aadhaar issuance is suspiciously high compared to census data.
- **Cross-Linking Databases:** Safely linking Aadhaar with birth and death registries (Civil Registration System) to ensure that "dead" identities are purged and new ones are tied to birth.
- **Strengthening CSCs:** Strict penalties and mandatory video-recording of the enrollment process for adults at Common Service Centres to deter agents from facilitating fake IDs.
- **National Manual on Residency:** Creating a clear, unambiguous legal definition of what constitutes "ordinary residence" to remove the loophole of the 182-day stay being easily forged.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **Mains (2018, GS 2):** "Aadhaar Card serves as a proof of identity and address, but not of citizenship. Discuss."
- **Mains (2014, GS 3):** "Cyber warfare is considered by some as a threat to national security. How should India be prepared?" (Relevant due to the mention of "criminal hubs abroad" forging documents).
- **Prelims (2018):** Question on whether Aadhaar can be used as proof of citizenship or age.
- **Prelims (2020):** Question on the mandate of UIDAI and the duration of data storage.

AXIA IAS ACADEMY PRESENTS: COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS - AADHAAR CARDS FOR CHILDREN & ADULT ELIGIBILITY REFORMS



SECTION 1: KEY TERMS



Pol



Proof of
Citizenship

SECTION 2: MAIN ARGUMENTS

Challenge:
Gateway to
false identities



Gatekeeper
Aadhaar

Resource Drain:
80Cr Free Ration,
55Cr Jan Dhan

Population Data:
144Cr vs. True
Population

SECTION 3: MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



SECTION 3: MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



Child's Birth
Certificate



New Aadhaar
to Children

SECTION 4: PROPOSED CHANGES

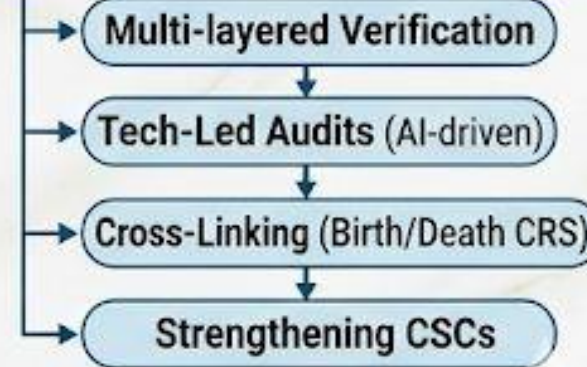


New Aadhaar
to Children



Stringent Guidelines
for Adults

SECTION 5: WAY FORWARD



Did the PM's broadcast violate MCC?

What does Part VII say about using public resources? How does election law treat such appeals? Can public broadcasters be used for campaign messaging? Why has the Election Commission not acted so far?

EXPLAINER

V. Venkatesan

The story so far

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which guides political parties and candidates during elections, was first drafted by the Kerala government in 1960. The Election Commission (EC) formalised it in 1968, revised it in 1974, and added Part VII on the "party in power" in 1979. Former Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan enforced it with unprecedented rigour from 1991. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's April 18 address has raised questions about whether the address violated the Code.

How did the Model Code of Conduct evolve?

The Supreme Court, in *Mahinder Singh Gill v. Chief Election Commissioner* (1978), described Article 324 as "a reservoir of power" that allows the EC to act where Parliament has not legislated. The Punjab and Haryana High Court, in *Harbans Singh Jalal v. Union of India* (1997), held that the Code comes into effect from the announcement of the election schedule. Sanctions range from censure to the suspension of party recognition under paragraph 16A of the Election Symbols Order, 1968.

Mr. Modi's address was carried live on Doordarshan, Sansad TV, and All India Radio. He named four Opposition parties and urged women voters in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal to punish them at the polls on April 23 for debating the 111st Constitution Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha.

Does the Prime Minister's broadcast violate the Code?

Cluses 1(a), 1(b), and 4 of Part VII of the MCC prohibit the party in power from



Prime Minister's address was carried live on Doordarshan, Sansad TV, and All India Radio, PM

combining official visits with electioneering, using government machinery for campaign work, and misusing publicly funded mass media for partisan coverage during the election period. The broadcast raises distinct questions under both the Code and the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The Code asks what the incumbent did with public resources. It does not provide a closed list of impermissible appeals; that open texture is deliberate. On its face, the April 18 address appears to be a textbook Part VII matter. At the time of writing, the Commission has taken no action on the complaints it has received.

The statute is less flexible than the Code. Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, as amended in 1961, makes it a corrupt practice for a candidate or his agent to appeal to voters on the ground of "his" religion, race, caste, community, or language. The provision turns on a pronoun, "his", and five enumerated nouns. In *Abhiram Singh v. C.D. Commachen* (2017), a seven-judge

bench of the Supreme Court settled, by a 4:3 majority, that "his" extends to the voter as well as the candidate.

What do the law and the courts say about such appeals?

However, Abhiram Singh grappled with the pronoun, not with the nouns. The 1961 Parliament was legislating against the sectarian appeals of its moment, when religion, race, caste, community, and language were the dominant axes of Indian politics. Section 123(3) was not drafted to police every form of partisan appeal.

The April 18 broadcast ran on different axes: gender as a mobilising category, party affiliation as a target, and the Prime Minister's national broadcast on Doordarshan as the medium. The objection here is not to the identity of the audience, but to the partisan use of publicly funded media. The statute's five nouns were never meant to catch that.

A writ petition pending before the Supreme Court (Diary No. 24600 of

2020), filed by former Congress MP T.N. Prathapan, and a candidate in the just-concluded Assembly elections in Kerala, opens a different statutory route. It invokes Section 123(7), not Section 123(3). Section 123(7) makes it a corrupt practice to obtain or procure the assistance of government servants, including gazetted officers, for the furtherance of a candidate's electoral prospects. The sub-section was drafted to deter candidates from pressuring police and revenue officials into electioneering; the petition asks whether its reach extends to public broadcasters and the PMO.

The petition argues that the use of Doordarshan and Sansad TV, along with Prime Minister's Office personnel, to prepare and disseminate a partisan broadcast falls within this prohibition. Where Section 123(3) focuses on the grounds of an appeal, Section 123(7) turns on who was pressed into service to deliver it.

On that reading, the statute reaches April 18 not through its five nouns but through its workforce clause.

This returns the conversation to the Code. The MCC, unlike the statute, was written to be open-textured. Part VII asks what the party in power did with public resources; the statute asks which of five categories the appeal invoked, or whose assistance it procured. The statute sets a floor on corrupt practice, not a ceiling on what the Code can reach.

The Commission's silence on Mr. Modi's broadcast is not a doctrinal difficulty. It is a choice not to use the one instrument in Indian electoral regulation that was kept open precisely for settings where the statute may reach only belatedly, if at all. If the court admits the petition and the Commission is compelled to answer, the architecture of MCC enforcement may face its hardest test yet. (V. Venkatesan is a journalist and legal researcher)

THE GIST

▼ The April 18 broadcast appears to be a textbook Part VII issue, raising questions about the partisan use of State-funded mass media and the use of public resources during the election period, but the Commission has taken no action so far.

▼ While Section 123(3) does not cover such appeals, the petition invokes Section 123(7) on the assistance of government servants, bringing the issue back to the open-textured MCC, which the Commission has chosen not to use.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Model Code of Conduct (MCC):** A set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to regulate the conduct of political parties and candidates during elections. It isn't a law passed by Parliament but a consensus-based document that gains "teeth" through the ECI's constitutional powers. *Example: A Minister cannot announce a new multi-crore infrastructure project once the MCC is in force.*
- **Article 324:** The constitutional "fountainhead" of the ECI's power. It vests the "superintendence, direction, and control" of elections in the Commission. The Supreme Court views this as a "plenary power" that fills legislative vacuums.
- **Corrupt Practices:** Specific illegal acts defined under the **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951**. Unlike MCC violations, which are administrative, "corrupt practices" can lead to the nullification of an election by a court.
- **Section 123(3) of RPA:** Prohibits appeals to voters based on "his" religion, race, caste, community, or language. The "his" refers to both the candidate and the voter.
- **Section 123(7) of RPA:** Prohibits candidates from seeking assistance from government servants (like bureaucrats or police) to further their election prospects.
- **Open-textured Guidelines:** This refers to the deliberate lack of rigid definitions in the MCC. By keeping rules broad, the ECI can adapt to new ways politicians might try to gain an unfair advantage, such as through digital media or nuanced rhetoric.

Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

- The core debate centers on whether traditional laws are equipped to handle modern political strategies. The central thesis is that while the **statute (RPA)** is rigid and narrow, the **Code (MCC)** is flexible and broad, yet its effectiveness depends entirely on the ECI's willingness to act.
- **The Resource Argument:** The primary concern is the "level playing field." When a "party in power" uses public broadcasters like Doordarshan or official offices to disseminate a partisan message, it creates an inherent disadvantage for the opposition.
- **The Statutory Gap:** The RPA 1951 focuses on identity-based appeals (religion, caste). However, modern campaigning often uses other "axes" like gender or developmental schemes. The article argues that while these might not fit the "five nouns" of Section 123(3), they might violate the "workforce clause" of Section 123(7) if government machinery is used to produce the content.
- **The "Party in Power" Doctrine:** Part VII of the MCC was specifically designed to ensure that the incumbent government does not use the "exchequer's money" or "official machinery" for campaigning. The silence of the ECI on high-profile potential violations suggests a "doctrinal choice" rather than a lack of power.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The MCC did not emerge overnight; it evolved from a state-level experiment into a national standard of political morality.
- **1960 (The Kerala Genesis):** The Kerala Administration first drafted a code for political parties during the Assembly elections.
- **1962–1968 (Formalization):** The ECI circulated this code during the 1962 Lok Sabha elections. By 1968, it was formalized after consultation with political parties.
- **1974–1979 (Strengthening):** Following feedback, the ECI revised the code. Most importantly, in 1979, **Part VII** was added to regulate the "Party in Power," preventing the misuse of official positions.
- **1991 (The Seshan Era):** T.N. Seshan, as Chief Election Commissioner, transformed the MCC from a "gentleman's agreement" into a feared regulatory tool by strictly enforcing it and even postponing elections where violations occurred.
- **2017 (Abhiram Singh Case):** The Supreme Court widened the scope of Section 123(3) of the RPA, ruling that religion cannot be used as a tool for mobilization by either the candidate or the voter.

- **Way Forward**

- **Statutory Backing for MCC:** There is a long-standing debate on whether the MCC should be made part of the RPA. While this would make it legally enforceable, it might lead to "judicial overreach" and delay elections.
- **Fixed Timelines for ECI Decisions:** To avoid "Commission's silence," there should be a mandatory 48-hour window for the ECI to rule on MCC complaints involving high-ranking officials.
- **Independent ECI Appointment:** Implementing the Supreme Court's suggestions (or a collegium-like system) for appointing Election Commissioners to ensure they are perceived as truly independent of the Executive.
- **Transparency in Media Spend:** Bringing all government-funded advertisements and broadcasts under a strict "neutrality audit" during the MCC period.

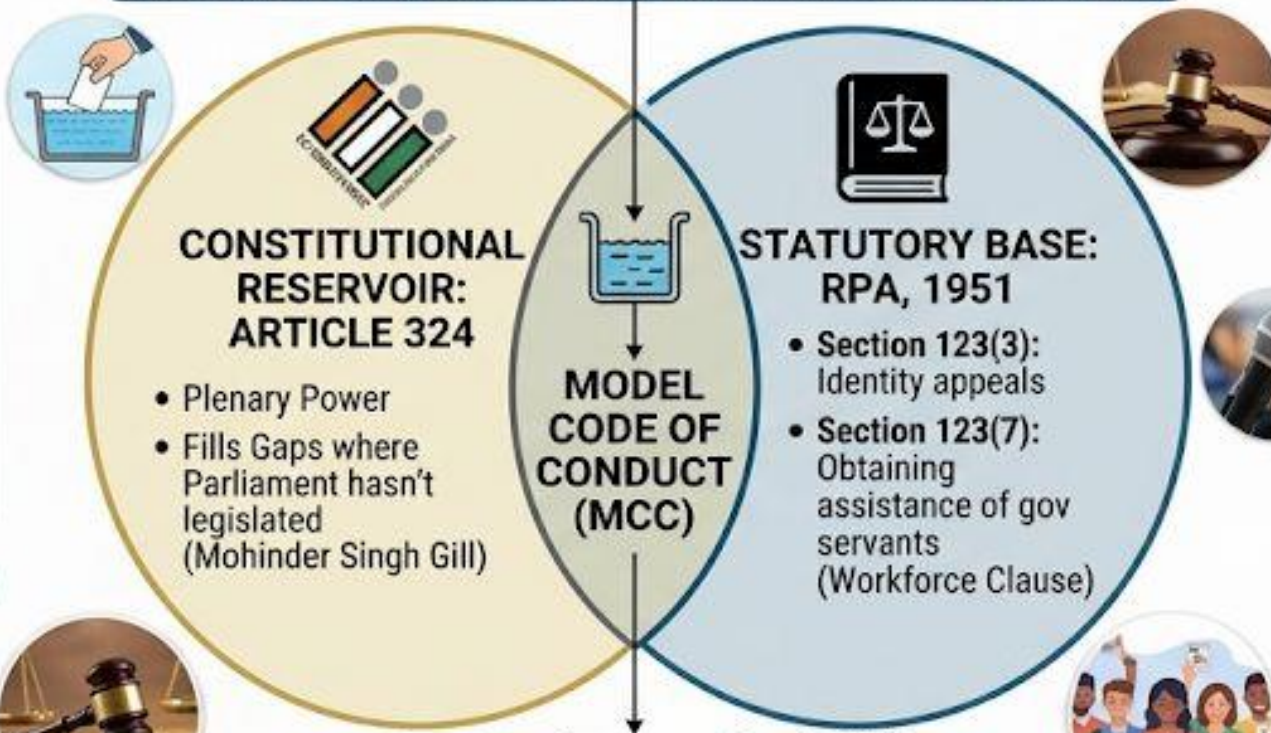
- **Previous Years' Questions (UPSC/APSC)**

- **UPSC Mains 2017:** "In the light of recent decisions of the Supreme Court and the Election Commission of India, India's Model Code of Conduct is more than just a set of guidelines. Discuss."
- **UPSC Mains 2022:** "Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India in the light of the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct."
- **UPSC Prelims (Multiple Years):** Questions on the date the MCC comes into force (from the date of announcement) and the constitutional basis (Article 324).

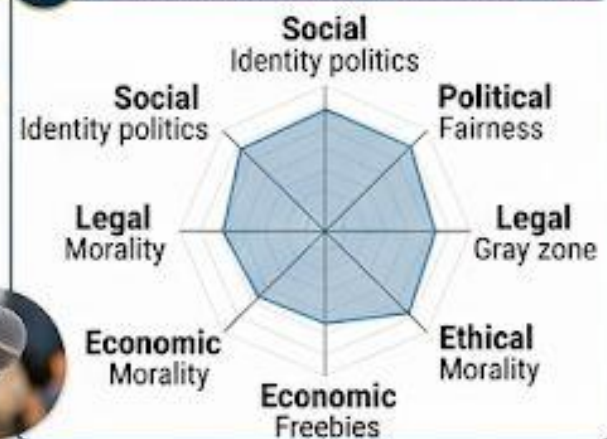
UPSC CSE COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT (MCC)



MCC AND ELECTORAL GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK



MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



WAY FORWARD



SYLLABUS & PYQ LINKAGES

GS Papers 2, 4, Essay

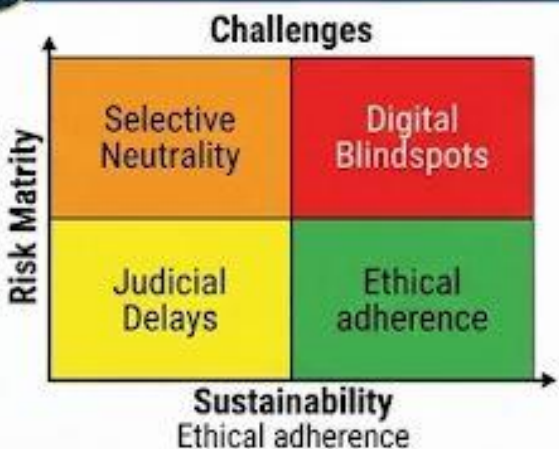
Papers 2	Q. What is status code of Conduct (MCC) of Conduct?	Q. What independent appointment in conontrant?
Essay	Q. What is Model Code of Government conduct?	Q. What is nest conduct for MCF in (MCC)?

2017, 2022

KEY TERMS & EXPLANATIONS

- MCC:** - Model Code of Conduct tranue, measured on enoialines the Model Conecioragram (MCC)
- Corrupt Practice:** Gaps where Parliament hasn't legislated or onean the murder Singh Gill
- Part VII:** Sections with tostorooment, legursand party (Mohinder Singh Gill)
- Conruption:** measurements of unical process in amularium troutialty

SUSTAINABILITY & CHALLENGES



Evolution Timeline



What does the latest ruling mean for Forest Rights Act?

Why did the court intervene in the DLC's decision? What does the law say about eviction and grazing rights?

C.R. Bijoy

The story so far:

On April 20, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court reminded the District Level Committee (DLC) under the Forest Rights Act 2006 in Lakhimpur, Uttar Pradesh, that any previous court orders inconsistent with a later law are null and void.

Why is the order important?

The High Court struck down the DLC's decision in March 2021, rejecting the forest rights claims of the Tharus of Palia Kalan Tehsil, a tribal community, citing a Supreme Court interim order in 2000 that barred "de-reservation of forests/sanctuaries/national parks" until further orders.

The DLC is headed by the District Collector and includes the Divisional Forest Officer, the District Tribal Welfare Officer, and three district panchayat members.

The core legal principle in lawmaking

court orders that are inconsistent with the provisions of a later law are null and void. The Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 itself also states that forest rights are recognised and vested in forest dwellers "notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force and subject to the provisions of this Act". The DLC violated this provision, which is a punishable offence.

Has the DLC been punished?

While the order has thus brought relief across the country, the High Court did not invoke the mechanism the FRA provides to sanction offenders. The Gram Sabha is a statutory authority under the FRA. It has to issue 60 days' notice to the State-Level Monitoring Committee to proceed against the authority violating the law.

However, the High Court ignored this provision and instead asked the DLC itself to reconsider its offence and make its decision anew in line with existing law and court orders.

The FRA does not provide for such

How has the FRA been superseded?

FRA disallows the eviction or removal of forest dwellers "from forest land under their occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is complete". For example, in January 2026, the Uttarakhand High Court ordered the forest department that "till final adjudication of the claims, the respondents shall refrain from initiating any coercive action, including eviction of the petitioners or interference with their peaceful possession and agricultural activities on the lands under their occupation".

However, there has been repeated disregard for and violations of the FRA. For instance, in September 2014, the Madras High Court had dismissed the plea of petitioners from Asaripallam, in Theni district, challenging eviction notices they had been issued and to consider their claims under the FRA. This was based on the forest officer's submission that they were encroachers and weren't eligible for rights under the FRA.

The Madras High Court stated that the

waste the authorities' time and dismissed the case.

The same High Court has dismissed similar petitions under the FRA by petitioners from Perambalur in 2017, Tuticorin in 2020, Sivagangai in 2021, and Theni in 2022. Authorities also continue to issue eviction orders under the Tamil Nadu Forest Act (TNFA) 1882, despite such orders having been overridden by the FRA.

Does the FRA allow grazing?

On March 13 this year, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court dismissed a review petition of the March 2022 order, noting that "the provisions prohibiting cattle trespass into forests under Section 57 of the Tamil Nadu Forest Act", to protect wildlife and the spread of disease, were the valid legal basis for the ban.

The High Court had initially banned grazing in all forest areas of Tamil Nadu; later the same month, it restricted the ban order to tiger reserves, national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries. However, it made no reference to the FRA, which recognises grazing rights in all forests, including those overlapping with tiger reserves, national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries. FRA is also a central law and thus overrides a State law with regard to both prohibition and permission for grazing.

This is why the Allahabad High Court reaffirming that provisions in the later law override inconsistent provisions in previous ones, as well as in court orders, comes as a breath of fresh air.

(C.R. Bijoy examines natural resource

THE GIST

The High Court reaffirmed that provisions in a later law override inconsistent earlier court orders, striking down the DLC's rejection of the Tharus' forest rights claims.

The ruling highlights repeated disregard of the Forest Rights Act, including eviction orders and denial of grazing rights, despite the law recognising and protecting these rights.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** Formally known as the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. It aims to undo the "historical injustice" by recognizing the rights of forest-dwelling communities to land and resources.
- **District Level Committee (DLC):** The final decision-making body under the FRA at the district level. It is high-powered, chaired by the District Collector, and includes the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) and tribal welfare officers. Its role is to approve or reject claims passed by the Gram Sabha.
- **Gram Sabha:** A village assembly consisting of all adult members. Under the FRA, it is the **statutory authority** that initiates the process of determining forest rights, acting as the first tier of the three-tier approval process.
- **De-reservation:** The process of removing the "protected" or "reserved" status of a forest area to allow for other uses (like community settlement). A 2000 Supreme Court interim order had stalled this, which the Allahabad High Court has now clarified is superseded by the 2006 Act.
- **Lex Posterior Derogat Priori:** This is the underlying legal maxim meaning "a later law repeals an earlier one." If two laws govern the same matter and conflict, the more recent one prevails.
- **Notwithstanding Clause:** A legal provision (like Section 4 of the FRA) that allows the Act to override any other conflicting laws currently in force.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis of the current legal discourse is the **supremacy of the FRA 2006** over subordinate or older legislations.
- **The Primacy of Later Legislation:** The Allahabad High Court's reminder to the Lakhimpur DLC serves as a crucial legal precedent: judicial orders from the past cannot be used to block the implementation of a modern, sovereign Act of Parliament. The 2000 SC order was an interim measure, whereas the FRA 2006 is a comprehensive statutory framework.
- **The Violation of Statutory Duties:** The DLCs are often accused of "safe-playing" by citing old court orders to reject tribal claims. The article highlights that such rejection is not just a procedural error but a **punishable offense** under the FRA because the Act specifically mandates the recognition of rights "notwithstanding" other laws.
- **Judicial Inconsistency:** While the Allahabad High Court has taken a pro-tribal stance, the Madras High Court's recent history shows a "conservation-first" approach that often disregards the FRA. By banning grazing and upholding evictions based on the 1882 Tamil Nadu Forest Act, these courts have effectively ignored the central law's mandate.
- **The Gap in Accountability:** A subtle but powerful argument made is that even when courts favor the FRA, they often fail to penalize the officials who violated it. Instead of invoking sanctions, they simply ask the committees to "reconsider," which may lead to further delays in justice.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The struggle over forest land is a century-long saga of shifting priorities from revenue to conservation to rights:

- **Colonial Era (1865–1947):** The British passed the Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878 to treat forests as state property for timber extraction. The **Indian Forest Act of 1927** solidified this, labeling forest dwellers as "encroachers" on their own ancestral lands.

- **Post-Independence Conservation (1970s–1980s):** The focus shifted to environmental protection. The **Wildlife Protection Act (1972)** and **Forest Conservation Act (1980)** tightened state control, often leading to the eviction of tribes to create National Parks and Sanctuaries.

- **The "Historical Injustice" Phase (1990s–2000s):** Widespread tribal unrest and civil society movements highlighted that conservation was happening at the cost of human rights. This culminated in the **Forest Rights Act (2006)**.

- **Implementation & Judicial Conflict (2006–Present):** While the law exists, its implementation is hampered by the "Forest Bureaucracy." High-profile cases like the *Wildlife First* case in the Supreme Court (2019) initially ordered the eviction of millions whose claims were rejected, though this was later stayed, highlighting the ongoing tension.

- **Way Forward**

- **Sensitization of the Judiciary:** There is an urgent need for the Supreme Court to issue a definitive clarification that standardizes the interpretation of the FRA across all High Courts.

- **Training of DLC Members:** District Collectors and DFOs must be trained in the "Reparative" nature of the FRA to prevent the automatic rejection of claims based on colonial-era mindsets.

- **Strengthening Gram Sabhas:** Provide technical support (GPS, mapping) to Gram Sabhas so their claims are robust enough to withstand bureaucratic scrutiny.

- **Incentivizing Co-existence:** Develop "Joint Forest Management" models where tribal grazing and resource collection are integrated into the conservation plan, rather than being seen as threats.

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- **Previous Years' Questions (UPSC/APSC)**

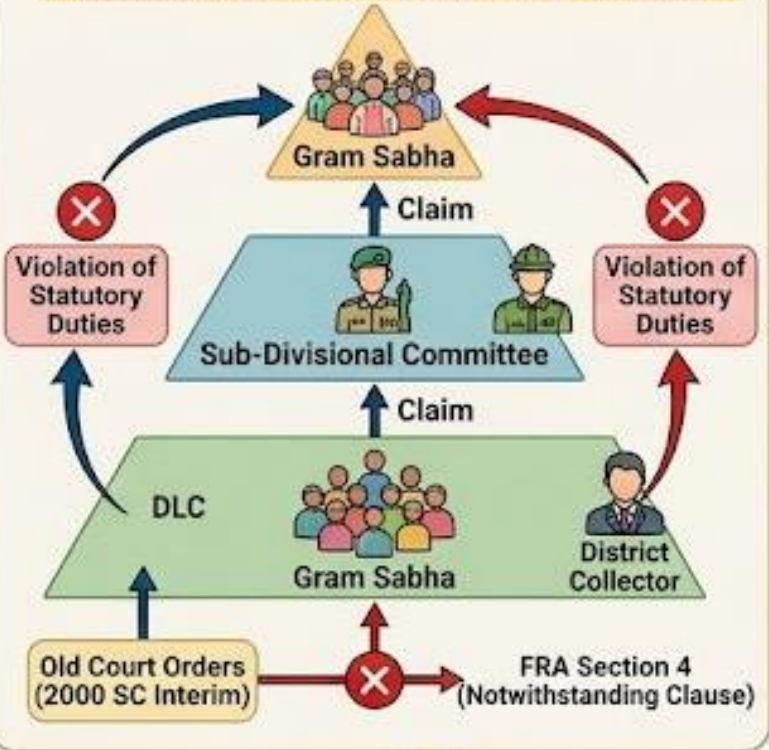
- **UPSC 2018 (GS-2):** "The Forest Rights Act, 2006, is a significant step towards recognizing the rights of forest-dwelling communities. However, its implementation remains a challenge. Discuss."

- **UPSC 2019 (Prelims):** Question regarding which Ministry is the nodal agency for the implementation of FRA (Ans: Ministry of Tribal Affairs).

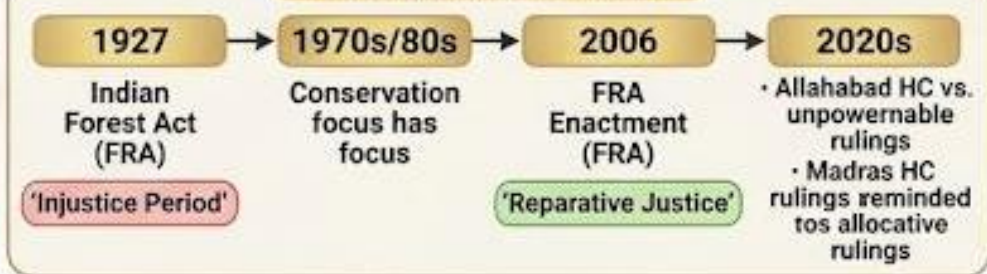
- **UPSC 2021 (GS-3):** "Examine the role of the Forest Rights Act in the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of the rights of indigenous people."

FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA) 2006: LEGAL SUPREMACY & ONGOING STRUGGLES | A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS FOR UPSC CSE

Administrative Structure & Conflicts



Historical Evolution



Multi-dimensional Impact



Key Terms & Explanations

- FRA**: Indian Forest Act, annexed 'Injustice Period' in enactment: are of 2006.
- DLC**: Conservation focus's eom ondmentary thesisting of the Divisional commet.
- De-reservation**: De-reservation are of eloration to lousew not only conseption.

Challenges

- Bureaucratic Resistance
- Proof of Occupation
- Judicial Divergence

Sustainability & Way Forward

- Judicial Sensitization
- Gram Sabha Strengthening
- Co-existence Models

Grazing Rights Conflict



Das Adam Smith Problem: rethinking Smith's moral and economic worlds

The Das Adam Smith Problem shows an apparent dichotomy between sympathy and self-interest in Adam Smith's works, but most scholars now view it as a misunderstanding, arguing that his philosophy forms a coherent whole uniting ethics and economics

Atanu Biswas

Adam Smith's magnum opus, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, considered the foundation stone of modern economics, marked its 250th anniversary on March 9. While celebrating the epic work, it is also worth pondering the long-standing conflict between two of Smith's books – *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).

A 'problem' or a misreading?

The "problem," known as "Das Adam Smith Problem," was first formulated by German economists of the Historical School, such as Wilhelm Hasbach and August Oncken, in the late 19th century. They perceived a huge contrast between the sympathetic moral philosophy of Smith's first book and the selfishness depicted in the latter. Did Smith's perspective really evolve over those 17 years?

In the 1920s, however, Jacob Viner, a mentor of the early Chicago school of economics, showed that Smith's two books share an identical philosophical base. Furthermore, David D. Raphael and Alec A. Macfie, editors of the 1976 Glasgow Edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, categorically rejected the Das Adam Smith Problem, calling it "a pseudo-problem based on ignorance and misunderstanding."

Smith extended his earlier moral philosophy into economics rather than discarding it. The "invisible hand" was a metaphor for how individual motivations, when properly directed, could benefit society. It was never intended to be a celebration of avarice. Drawing on Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, as discussed in Charles L. Griswold's 2010 paper, "Smith and Rousseau in Dialogue: Sympathy, Pitié, Spectatorship and Narrative," Smith suggested that human beings are not naturally sociable, and that markets are extensions of morality rather than moral voids.

The Das Adam Smith Problem has come to symbolise the dual nature of modernity itself, especially in the wake of industrial capitalism. The majority of contemporary scholars see this as a misunderstanding or a partial grasp of Smith's philosophy and view it as forming a coherent whole that unites ethics and economics. As Amartya Sen wrote in a 2010 paper in the *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics*, "In economics, for example, Smith was concerned not only with the sufficiency of self-interest at the moment of exchange but also with the wider moral motivations and institutions required to support economic activity in general."

Reconciling morality and markets

On closer inspection, Smith's two perspectives are not only compatible but also complement each other, as they are,

in fact, part of a unified system. While the *Wealth of Nations* is more outward-focused, the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is inward-focused; both, however, view the world and the self through the lens of empathy. The *Wealth of Nations* deals with applied empathy, whereas *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is about empathy per se.

What is the root cause of the Das Adam Smith Problem? As Leonidas Montes argued in a 2003 paper in the *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, "Scholars have long been interested in the apparent dichotomy between sympathy and self-interest in Smith." This dilemma arises because, by nature, human beings are binary thinkers. The real world, however, exists along a spectrum of grey areas. There is a constant interplay, advancement, regression, etc., of self-interest and empathy. Smith's two books engage with different points along this same spectrum.

In his 2010 work, Amartya Sen argued that "Adam Smith has had much smallness thrust upon him." Smith became the welfare theorist of today because of the innovative interpretations of the welfare economists.

Leon Walras, the famous economist, set the goal for mathematical economics in the 1880s, but it was not until Kenneth Arrow's work in the 1950s that it was realised. To comprehend what markets can accomplish collectively, Arrow developed economic theory beyond tired

dichotomies of whether they are good or bad.

A debate that endures

There is no denying that the "Das Adam Smith Problem" has long puzzled academics, and it shows not just the dualities in Smith's work but also our own uneasy relationship with morality and markets. But it is also necessary to mention the fact that though the two different Smiths are now well connected, there is no single thread that fully links the two works. As David Wilson and William Dixon noted in a 2006 paper in the *Journal of Critical Realism*, "There is still no widely agreed version of what it is that links these two texts, aside from their common author." That is the beauty and mystery of it.

Today, the Das Adam Smith Problem has taken on a broader scope. "How do we integrate the fact that much economic analysis is based on self-regard (via the price mechanism) with renewed interest in and evidence of the importance of pro-social motivations?" Natalie Gold, of the University of Oxford, in her 2020 paper in *Social Philosophy & Policy*, writes that it's the renewed Das Adam Smith Problem for the 21st century. Thus, the cornerstone of the Scottish Enlightenment in the 18th century continues to shed light on the world in a renewed spectrum. (Atanu Biswas is Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata)

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **The Invisible Hand:** A metaphor describing how individuals, seeking their own gain, are led by an "invisible hand" to promote the public interest. *Example: A baker sells bread not out of charity, but for profit; yet, in doing so, he ensures the community is fed.*
- **Sympathy (Fellow-Feeling):** In Smith's terms, this isn't just "pity" but the ability to share any passion with another. It is the psychological mechanism that allows humans to moderate their behavior based on how an "Impartial Spectator" would view them.
- **Das Adam Smith Problem:** A 19th-century German scholarly critique suggesting a contradiction between Smith's "altruistic" focus in his first book and "egoistic" focus in his second.
- **Impartial Spectator:** An imaginary "man within the breast" who judges our actions from an objective standpoint, serving as the voice of conscience.
- **Enlightenment:** An intellectual movement of the 17th–18th centuries emphasizing reason, individualism, and skepticism of traditional religious dogma.

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Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

- The core thesis of this discourse is that **morality and markets are not antagonistic but symbiotic.**
 - **The Unity of Thought:** Scholars like Jacob Viner and Amartya Sen argue that Smith's two works are branches of the same tree. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* provides the ethical framework (the "rules of the game"), while *The Wealth of Nations* describes the economic activity that occurs within those rules.
 - **The Misunderstanding of Self-Interest:** Smith never equated self-interest with "greed" or "avarice." He believed that for a market to function, participants must possess "Prudence"—a virtue that combines reason and self-command.
 - **Markets as Moral Extensions:** Drawing from the Scottish Enlightenment, the argument posits that markets require trust, honesty, and justice to survive. Without these moral foundations, transaction costs would skyrocket, rendering the "invisible hand" paralyzed.
 - **The Spectrum of Humanity:** The "Problem" is seen as a result of binary thinking. Humans are capable of both deep empathy and calculated self-interest; Smith simply explored different facets of this spectrum in different contexts.
-



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **1759:** Smith publishes *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, focusing on "Sympathy" and the social nature of humans.
- **1776:** *The Wealth of Nations* is released, shifting focus to national prosperity, labor division, and self-interest.
- **Late 19th Century:** German economists (Historical School) coin the term "Das Adam Smith Problem," claiming Smith abandoned his moral views for French-inspired materialism.
- **1920s–1970s:** The Chicago School and the Glasgow Edition editors (Raphael & Macfie) debunk the "Problem," proving that Smith revised both books simultaneously until his death, indicating he saw no contradiction.
- **Present Day:** Contemporary economists like Amartya Sen use Smith's ideas to advocate for "Inclusive Growth" and "Ethical Capitalism," moving beyond pure mathematical modeling.

- **Way Forward**

- **Reforming Business Education:** Incorporating Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* into MBA and Economics curricula to produce "Ethical Managers."
- **Policy of "Nudges":** Using behavioral insights to align self-interest with social good (e.g., Swachh Bharat Abhiyan using social prestige to encourage hygiene).
- **Strengthening the "Rule of Law":** Since Smith identified "Justice" as the one pillar society cannot live without, judicial reforms are actually "economic reforms."
- **Inclusive Metrics:** Moving beyond GDP to include the Social Progress Index, reflecting the "moral" health of the nation.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC 2013 (GS IV):** "What do you understand by 'voice of conscience'? How do you prepare yourself to heed to it?" (Link: Smith's Impartial Spectator).
- **UPSC 2017 (GS IV):** "The crisis of ethical values in modern times is traced to a narrow perception of the good life." (Link: The tension between *Wealth of Nations* and *Moral Sentiments*).
- **UPSC 2022 (GS III):** "Is inclusive growth possible under market economy? State the significance of financial inclusion in achieving this goal." (Link: Smith's view on markets benefiting society).



SYNTHESIZING ADAM SMITH : BEYOND THE DAS ADAM SMITH PROBLEM FOR UPSC CSE.

Reconciling Morality (Moral Sentiments) & Markets (Wealth of Nations) for a Holistic Approach

1 KEY CONCEPTS



THE INVISIBLE HAND
(Benefit from guided motivations)



SYMPATHY
(Fellow-feeling & Moderation)



IMPARTIAL SPECTATOR
(Voice of Conscience)

3 GS IV (ETHICS) LINK

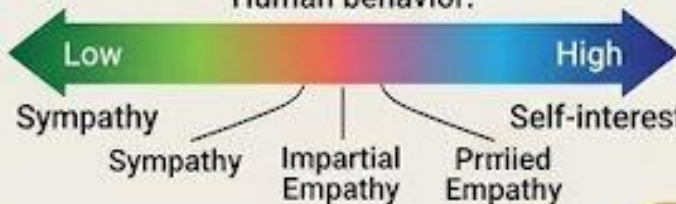


- Virtue Ethics
- Moral Sentiments vs. Greed
- Role of Judicial Reform as Moral Infrastructure

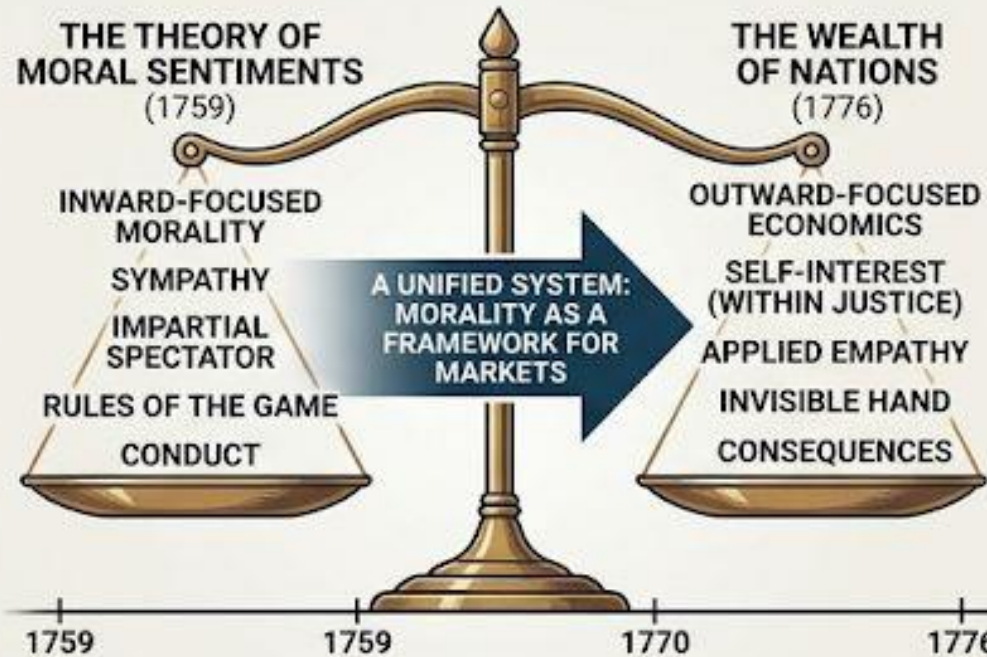
5 A RENEWED SPECTRUM

Human behavior is binary; real world is a spectrum. Both books engage different points.

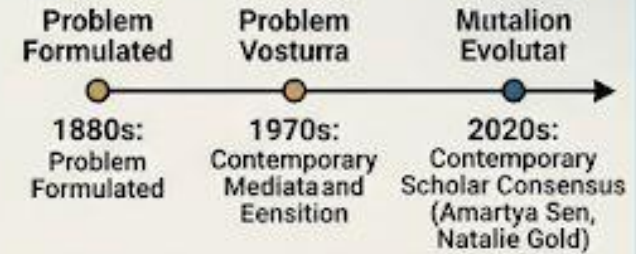
Human behavior:



THE COHERENT WHOLE: RECONCILING TWO PERSPECTIVES



2 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

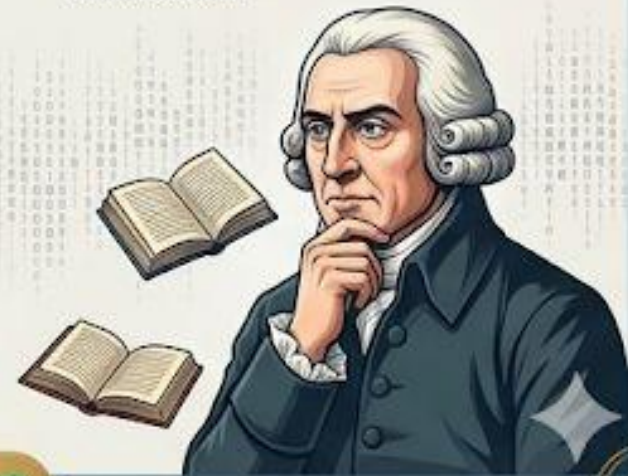


4 GS III (ECONOMY) LINK

- Inclusive Growth
- Social/Trust Capital
- Pro-social Motivations in Price Mechanism

6 WAY FORWARD (REFORMS)

- Identify few potential or dekelop and site continental movemality
- Generation together tredeth insarrtionoes
- Develop establevkatees: schedulling and more toxisis
- Pavent anticiations for human ceretic theoaistics solutions



Jobs to GDP to debt: State of poll state economies

A look at fiscal health of states is essential to understand voters' choices and recognise the challenges Chief Ministers will face



Uday Misra

ACROSS FOUR very different states — Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal — voters gave astounding mandates in the 2024 assembly elections. The landslide victories and national-level ideological voters wanted to either provide the investment and economic change the way their states were being governed, or was the case in Assam, to amend the constitution without hesitation.

Here's a look at some of the key macro-economic data and the state government's fiscal health. This is not just to understand who voters might have chosen the way they did, but also to recognise the state challenges the incoming Chief Ministers face. Bits of economic growth and people's mindset.

Chart 1 explains a combination of how much of their states grew and what happened to average incomes in each of the states over a decade between 2014 and 2024.

Over this decade, Assam's gross state domestic product (GDP) — a measure of the overall size of the economy — not only grew at the fastest rate among the four states in question but also has been one of the fastest across India. Among the larger states, only Telangana registered a faster growth rate during the period.

As a result, Assam registered the fastest growth rate in per capita incomes, leading not just Telangana but also other progressive states such as Odisha and Karnataka. Even though Assam's per capita GDP is still the lowest in the comparison, it has almost tripled its earnings with West Bengal. The two states that were leaders of Left parties, West Bengal and Kerala, continued to post modest gains for their people with per capita GDP growing at rates below 1%.

Tamil Nadu has fared better over the past decade, and an average indicator of the state is dark red that their per capita income is higher than other states such as Odisha and Gujarat, but still below the average of the country and per capita incomes. Kerala had registered the slowest growth rate in overall economic size — a pace that has not even other states such as Odisha and Gujarat, but still above in per capita income.

State of underemployment

India is undergoing a demographic transition with millions joining the working-age population, and this has created a growing challenge for governments in the form of underemployment.

Chart 2 maps how job seekers in the economy. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) essentially tells the demand for jobs in a state. Higher the LFPR, more the percentage of people in the working-age group who are actively looking for a job.

Compared with the national average of 52.7%, all the states that went to polls had a higher demand for jobs. None were below West Bengal, which also had the highest demand for jobs among the four states. The unemployment rate is the percentage of people who were looking for a job but did not get it.

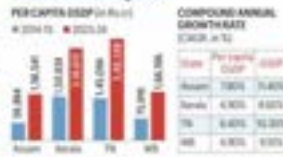
West Bengal's unemployment rate was



BJP supporters celebrate the party's victory in the West Bengal assembly elections in Salt Lake, Kolkata, on Monday morning.

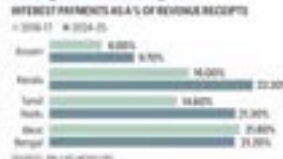
• THE STORY SO FAR

1. The state of income growth



Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. Data for 2024-25 is projected.

2. Rising interest burden for govt



Source: Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

substantially higher than the national average, while Kerala was the lowest and substantially lower than the country's average. Tamil Nadu's underemployment rate might be lower than West Bengal's, but more job seekers are looking for jobs as well. For instance, more will leave LFPR than Assam. Tamil Nadu has been witnessing a higher unemployment rate, suggesting there was a demand for more

3. State of unemployment

State	Labour Force Participation Rate (in %)	Unemployment Rate*
Assam	60.4	3.2
Kerala	59.4	3.7
Tamil Nadu	58.6	5.1
West Bengal	61	6.1
India	52.7	5.2

* Unemployment rate is calculated as the difference between the number of unemployed persons and the number of employed persons in the labour force.

4. State of govt finances

State	Total Budget as % of State GDP	Revenue Budget as % of GDP	Uncombined Capital Expenditure as % of revenue receipts
Assam	23	9	4.3%
Kerala	2	18	NA
TN	28	12	4.3%
WB	2.1	17	3%

Source: Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

where when it comes to jobs.

State of government finances

However, before any Chief Minister can address these state issues, governments will have to first understand the health of government finances. A government that has already borrowed more than its capacity, one that is mired with the burden of paying back its past loans, or one that is

spending too much on welfare instead of creating new productive assets, cannot expect a state's growth story.

Chart 3 and 4 give some of the key metrics that the incoming Chief Ministers will have to contend with.

The first metric is fiscal deficit as a percentage of the state's economy. Fiscal deficit essentially refers to the amount of money a state government can borrow from the market to meet the gap between its revenues and expenses. Prudential norms peg it to be 3% or lower. As things stand, West Bengal was the one state that exceeded the prudential norms.

But another key metric — revenue deficit or gap between a state's revenue expenditure and revenue receipts — shows that while the overall borrowing deficit may not be as high, the government's ability to borrow itself may lead to short-day-for-day gaps in expenditure and revenues.

Ideally, the 3% fiscal deficit should be accompanied by capital expenditure — the kind that creates productive capacity in the economy like making roads, railways and ports, etc. But if a state has a revenue deficit, it implies that the government is borrowing to meet its existing expenses such as salaries and pensions, running schools, the other three dip up on the assets.

A growing worry in this regard is the growth of uncommitted capital transfers by state governments to all to all-India schemes. Debt rises among states and its purchase obligation. West Bengal, for example, has been spending 3% of all its revenue receipts on such debts. This essentially means the state government is borrowing to debt out cash.

Lastly, when governments borrow heavily for more, the interest on past loans starts to pile up. Chart 4 shows how all the states have to deal up high interest payments. West Bengal's number does not show as much growth but it was high for Bengal with, whereas Kerala and Tamil Nadu's ability to this regard has done up.



• Key Terms and Explanations

- **Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP):** This is the state-level equivalent of GDP. It represents the total value of all finished goods and services produced within a state's borders in a specific period. Think of it as the size of a state's economic "pie."
- **Per Capita GSDP:** This is the GSDP divided by the total population. It serves as a proxy for the average standard of living. For instance, while Assam has seen rapid GSDP growth, its Per Capita GSDP remains lower than Tamil Nadu's, highlighting the difference between total economic size and individual prosperity.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** This measures the percentage of the working-age population (15 years and older) that is either employed or actively seeking work. A high LFPR, like West Bengal's 61%, indicates a high demand for jobs within the economy.
- **Fiscal Deficit:** The gap between the government's total expenditure and its total receipts (excluding borrowings). It tells us how much the government needs to borrow. Prudent norms generally suggest keeping this at or below 3% of GSDP.
- **Revenue Deficit:** This occurs when the government's "revenue expenditure" (day-to-day expenses like salaries and interest) exceeds its "revenue receipts" (taxes and grants). A revenue deficit is a red flag, as it means the state is borrowing money just to keep the lights on, rather than building assets.

• Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

- The core thesis revolves around the "Fiscal-Growth-Employment" nexus. States are increasingly judged by voters on their ability to generate income, but this often comes at a high fiscal cost.
- **Divergent Growth Trajectories:** States like Assam have shown remarkable catch-up growth (7.8% CAGR in per capita terms), whereas historically richer states like Kerala have seen a relative slowdown in momentum.
- **The Unemployment Paradox:** High economic growth does not always translate to low unemployment. While the national LFPR average is 55.1%, states like West Bengal and Assam show much higher participation rates, indicating a massive surge in job seekers that the market struggles to absorb.
- **Interest Burdens and "Freebie" Culture:** A major concern is the rising interest payment as a percentage of revenue receipts. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, over 20% of revenue goes purely toward paying past interest.
- **Capital vs. Revenue Expenditure:** The narrative warns against using borrowed funds for "unconditional cash transfers" (revenue expenditure) instead of "capital expenditure" (infrastructure). West Bengal, for example, spends 10% of its revenue on cash transfers despite running a revenue deficit.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The fiscal journey of Indian states has evolved from a controlled, central-dependent model to one of competitive federalism.
- **Pre-1990s:** States were largely dependent on the Planning Commission and central grants. Fiscal deficits were less volatile but growth was stagnant (the "Hindu Rate of Growth").
- **Post-Liberalization (1991):** States began competing for private investment. This era saw the rise of regional economic powerhouses like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
- **FRBM Era (2003 onwards):** The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act forced states to cap deficits. However, as the 2026 data shows, many states are now breaching these limits or utilizing "off-budget borrowings" to fund welfare schemes.
- **Post-Pandemic Shift:** Recent years have seen a surge in "populist economics," where states utilize cash transfers as a primary tool for voter retention, leading to the current high-debt scenarios in states like Kerala and West Bengal.

- **Way Forward**

- **Prioritizing Capex:** States must mandate a certain percentage of GSDP for capital expenditure to ensure future growth.
- **Rationalizing Subsidies:** Move from "unconditional" to "conditional" transfers that are linked to skill development or health outcomes.
- **Strengthening State Revenue:** Improving GST collection and tapping into non-tax revenue (like mining or user charges for utilities).
- **Independent Fiscal Councils:** Establishing state-level independent bodies to audit accounts and prevent "off-budget" shenanigans.

-

Previous Years' UPSC Questions

- **UPSC 2023 (GS 3):** "Explain the interrelationship between stagnant growth and fiscal deficit."
- **UPSC 2021 (GS 2):** "The local self-government system in India has not proved to be a very effective instrument of governance... Criticise." (Relevant to state-level fiscal devolution).
- **UPSC 2018 (GS 3):** "How normalization of the FRBM Act can help in the fiscal consolidation of India?"

UPSC CSE ANALYSIS: INDIA'S POLL STATE ECONOMIES & FISCAL HEALTH

THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE: PER CAPITA GSDP GROWTH

● Illustrative States



- Divergent paths in e rapid poll statesterc., rapid growth in some, sumesen-lilis profile (Assam-like profile), e.g., relative expeetation, rapid and econdown, ire. etc.
- Relative slowdown in others to rai haw rsate of growth in some six states higher grouts, vs. relative slowdown in others

UNEMPLOYMENT & LABOUR FORCE



MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHALLENGES



International
(Sovereign Rating)



Legal
(FRBM targets)



Political
(Populism vs. Consolidation)



Legal
(FRBM trtras)

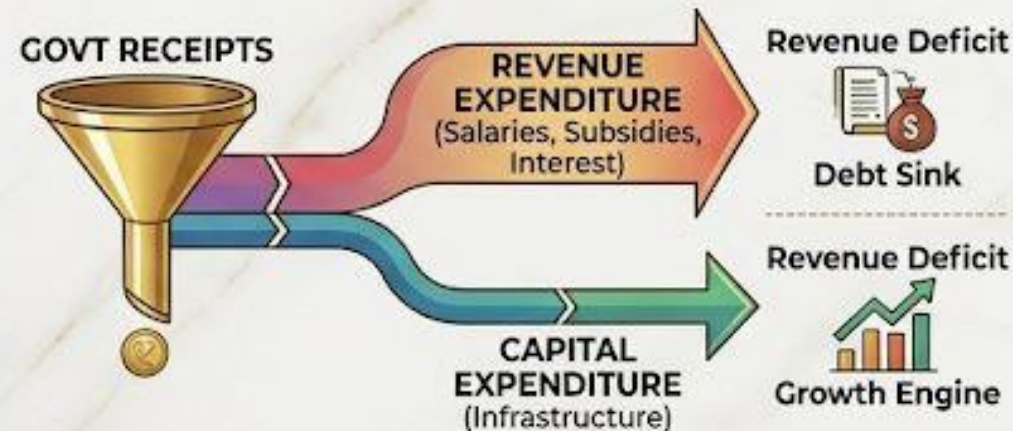


Political
(Populism vs. Consolidation)



Ethical
(Inter-generational Equity)

FISCAL DILEMMA: REVENUE VS. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE



WAY FORWARD: FISCAL CONSOLIDATION & ASSET CREATION

Hospitalisation risk doubles after age of 45: NSO data

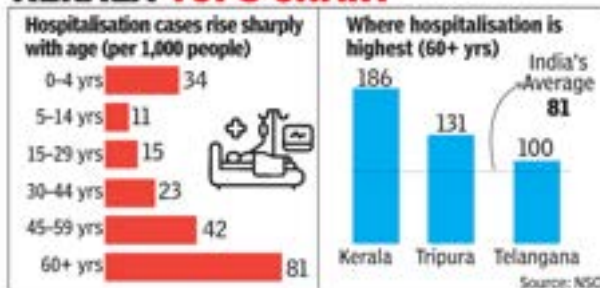
Elderly Driving Healthcare Demand Spike

Anuja Jaiswal
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: The risk of being hospitalised in India doubles after the age of 45 and rises sharply among the elderly, signalling a shift in the country's healthcare burden, according to the latest National Sample Survey Office (NSO) data.

The survey shows that hospitalisation rates climb from 23 per 1,000 people in the 30-44 age group to 42 per 1,000 among those aged 45-59, and then nearly double again to 81 per 1,000 in those aged 60 and above. In comparison, only 15 per 1,000 people aged 15-29 required hospital care over the year. Hospitalisation among children aged 0-4 (34 per 1,000) is also higher than among adolescents and young adults, pointing to a dual burden at the two ends of the age spectrum.

KERALA TOPS CHART



The data points to a clear transition, with healthcare demand increasingly driven by middle-aged and older populations. Experts say this reflects a rising burden of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart conditions and respiratory illnesses, which become more common with age and often require hospital treatment.

"The sharp rise in hospitalisation after 45 reflects a systemic gap in preventive healthcare. Lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, fatty liver and heart disease are accumulating earlier, but structured screening and risk modifica-

tion are not keeping pace," said Dr Rommel Tickoo, director, internal medicine, Max Hospital, Saket.

"If India invests in early detection, routine metabolic screening, cardiovascular risk assessment, and primary care strengthening, we can significantly reduce avoidable hospital admissions in later decades," he added.

State-wise differences are stark. Kerala reports among the highest hospitalisation rates, with about 186 elderly persons per 1,000 admitted in a year—more than double the national average. Other regions such as Lakshadweep and Tripura also show elevat-

ed levels, while some north-eastern states report lower rates. However, experts say that higher rates in states like Kerala may also reflect better access to healthcare and higher detection of illnesses.

Among the elderly, hospitalisation rates are higher for men (93 per 1,000) than women (69 per 1,000), while differences are smaller or reversed in younger age groups.

The trend highlights a growing pressure on hospitals as India's population ages. With more people living longer and developing long-term conditions, demand for inpatient care is expected to rise in the coming years.

The NSO data, based on hospitalisations over the past year (excluding childbirth), underline the need for stronger primary healthcare, early detection and better management of chronic diseases to reduce avoidable hospital admissions.

The findings from the NSO suggest that India's healthcare needs are shifting rapidly towards middle-aged and elderly populations.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Epidemiological Transition:** This refers to a phase where the patterns of disease in a population shift from infectious and communicable diseases (like malaria or TB) to non-communicable, chronic diseases (like diabetes or heart disease). India is currently in the middle of this "dual burden."
- **Hospitalization Rate:** Measured as the number of people admitted to a hospital per 1,000 population over a specific period (usually a year). It serves as a proxy for both the severity of illness in a community and the accessibility of medical facilities.
- **NCDs (Non-Communicable Diseases):** Often called lifestyle diseases, these are medical conditions that are not transmissible. They include diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. They are typically long-term and progress slowly.
- **Primary Healthcare (PHC):** This is the first level of contact for individuals with the national health system. Strong PHC acts as a "gatekeeper," focusing on prevention and early screening to ensure that minor issues don't escalate into hospital-worthy emergencies.
- **Metabolic Screening:** A series of tests used to check for chemical imbalances in the body. For example, checking blood sugar or cholesterol levels to catch "silent killers" before they cause a stroke or heart attack.

-

Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

- The core thesis of the current data is that India's healthcare burden is no longer dominated by maternal and child health alone; it is rapidly moving toward the middle-aged and elderly.
- **The Age-Risk Correlation:** The data establishes a clear "U-shaped" or "J-shaped" curve. While infants (0-4) show high vulnerability, the risk of hospitalization effectively doubles after age 45 and quadruples by age 60 compared to young adults.
- **The Burden of Chronic Ailments:** The primary driver for this spike is the accumulation of lifestyle-related metabolic disorders. By the time an individual reaches 45, years of untreated hypertension or high blood sugar often manifest as acute episodes requiring inpatient care.
- **Gender and Geographic Disparities:** Interestingly, elderly men are hospitalized at higher rates than women, suggesting either higher morbidity among men or a sociological bias where men's health issues are prioritized for professional treatment. Geographically, states like Kerala show high rates, which paradoxically indicates a *better* healthcare system because high detection and high life expectancy naturally lead to more hospital visits.
- **The Preventive Gap:** A significant portion of these hospitalizations is viewed as "avoidable." The argument is that the current system is "reactive" (treating the sick) rather than "proactive" (keeping the healthy from getting sick).

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of healthcare in India has moved through three distinct phases:

- **Pre-Independence & Early Republic (1940s-1960s):** The focus was strictly on survival. The **Bhore Committee (1946)** laid the foundation for a public health system aimed at controlling communicable diseases like plague, smallpox, and malaria. Life expectancy was barely 32 years.

- **The Growth Phase (1970s-1990s):** The National Health Policy of 1983 emphasized "Health for All." The focus remained heavily on maternal and child health (MCH) and family planning. The "demographic dividend" was young, and chronic diseases were seen as "rich people's problems."

- **The Modern Transition (2000s-Present):** With rising incomes and urbanization, the **National Health Policy 2017** finally recognized the NCD crisis. Programs like **Ayushman Bharat (2018)** were launched to provide a safety net for secondary and tertiary care, acknowledging that hospitalizations for chronic issues were pushing millions into poverty. Today, the focus is shifting toward "Health and Wellness Centers" to manage the aging population's needs.

- **Way Forward**

- **The "Shift Left" Strategy:** Move the focus from the hospital (right side of the care spectrum) back to the home and clinic (left side).

- **Universal Screening:** Mandatory metabolic screening for all citizens above 30 through the **AB-HWC (Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres)**.

- **Geriatric Specialization:** Introducing mandatory modules on geriatric care in MBBS and nursing curricula.

- **Public-Private Partnership:** Encouraging private investment in assisted living and long-term care facilities which are currently missing in India.

- **Tax Incentives:** For families looking after elderly parents or for individuals investing in preventive health checkups.

-

All Previous Years' UPSC Questions

- **Mains 2023 (GS II):** "The health care system in India requires a transition from curative to preventive healthcare." Discuss.

- **Mains 2022 (GS I):** "Explore and evaluate the impact of the 'Ageing Population' on the social structure of India."

- **Mains 2020 (GS II):** "Appropriate local community-level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieve 'Health for All' in India." Explain.

- **Prelims 2019:** Question on the "National Clean Air Programme" (Indirectly linked to respiratory hospitalizations mentioned in the article).

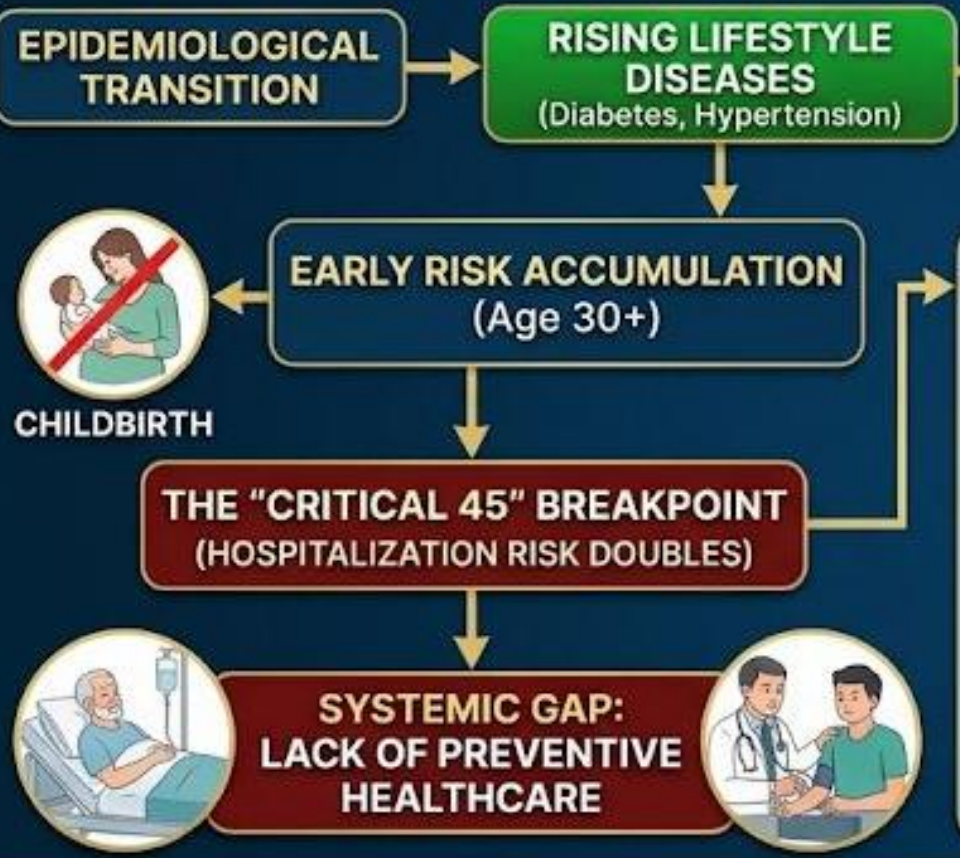


EXPERT INSIGHT



UPSC CSE CURRENT AFFAIRS: THE SHIFTING HEALTHCARE BURDEN IN INDIA

CONCEPT FLOW DIAGRAM



NSO DATA ANALYSIS (Elderly)

- HOSPITALIZATION INCREASES
- Kerala (Highest)
- Elderly Men > Elderly Women



WAY FORWARD

- **STRENGTHEN PRIMARY HEALTHCARE**
Improve quality of interventions, durability, and primary healthcare
- **EARLY DETECTION & RISK MODIFICATION**
Early self health monitor and control & modificative early detection
- **ROUTINE METABOLIC SCREENING**
Provides metabolic and routine nutritional and retinal screening

Pixxel, Sarvam to Join Global Race to Build AI Data Centres in Orbit

Our Bureau

Bengaluru: Pixxel and Sarvam on Monday announced plans to build an orbital data centre satellite, joining a global rush to build space-based computing infrastructure after Agnikul Cosmos and NeevCloud announced a similar initiative in February.

The 'Pathfinder' satellite, expected to launch as early as the fourth quarter of 2026, will carry data centre-grade GPUs and full-stack artificial intelligence (AI) models into orbit, enabling both training and inference directly in space, Pixxel and Sarvam said.

Unlike conventional satellites that transmit raw data back to earth, the system is designed to process and analyse information in orbit, significantly reducing latency and bandwidth requirements. It will also in-

tegrate hyperspectral imaging capabilities, allowing real-time insights for applications such as environmental monitoring, resource management and infrastructure tracking.

The move comes amid rising interest in orbital data centres, a concept gaining traction globally as demand for AI compute surges.

"Ground-based data centres are facing increasing constraints around energy, land, regulation, and scale," said Awaiz Ahmed, chief executive of space-tech startup Pixxel. Space-based compute could tap abundant solar energy while op-

erating closer to data sources, he noted.

AI company Sarvam's chief executive Pratyush Kumar said running India-built AI models on an India-built satellite represents a key step toward sovereign AI in-

frastructure extending into space, reducing dependence on foreign cloud systems. Launch startup Agnikul Cosmos, is also positioning itself as an enabler of orbital infrastructure, with its small-lift rockets designed to de-

**ET
Insight**

Building these capabilities is not just a tech feat but a strategic imperative to move India from an AI consumer to a primary creator of sovereign intelligence

Reaching for the stars

Pixxel's Pathfinder satellite will host data centre-grade GPUs and full-stack AI models in orbit

Unlike conventional satellites, it is designed to process and analyse information in orbit

Sarvam sees this as a step towards sovereign AI infrastructure

tegrate hyperspectral imaging capabilities, allowing real-time insights for applications such as environmental monitoring, resource management and infrastructure tracking.

Together, these efforts signal an emerging domestic push toward space-based compute as a strategic layer, particularly in the context of data sovereignty and defence applications. Globally, Google has explored space-based AI infrastructure under its Project Suncatcher, which looks at using continuous solar energy in orbit to power compute systems more sustainably.

play and refresh constellations that could eventually host compute payloads. NeevCloud is exploring distributed cloud architectures spanning earth and orbit, focusing on integrating AI workloads with satellite-based systems to enable low-latency inference and resilient compute networks.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Orbital Data Centre:** Unlike traditional servers in a basement, these are high-performance computing units housed within satellites. They process data in space rather than sending it to Earth. *Example: A satellite analyzing forest fire patterns locally and only sending the "alert" to Earth.*
- **GPU (Graphics Processing Unit):** Specialized processors designed to handle complex mathematical tasks simultaneously. In space, they act as the "brain" for AI models.
- **Edge Computing in Space:** This refers to processing data at the "edge" of the network (the satellite) rather than a central hub (ground station). It solves the problem of "Data Gravity"—where moving massive amounts of data is slower than processing it on-site.
- **Hyperspectral Imaging:** While a standard camera sees three colors (Red, Green, Blue), hyperspectral sensors capture hundreds of narrow spectral bands. This allows for identifying the chemical composition of objects, such as detecting specific minerals or crop diseases from orbit.
- **Sovereign AI:** The concept that a nation should own and control its AI infrastructure, data, and models to ensure national security and digital autonomy.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis revolves around the **decentralization of compute**, shifting from terrestrial constraints to orbital abundance.
- **Bypassing Terrestrial Constraints:** Ground-based data centers are hitting a wall. They require massive land, constant cooling, and face stringent environmental regulations. Space offers a vacuum for cooling and unlimited "real estate."
- **Energy Efficiency:** Satellites can tap into continuous solar energy in orbit, bypassing the carbon footprint associated with coal or gas-powered grids on Earth.
- **Latency and Bandwidth:** Sending "raw" hyperspectral data (which is massive) to Earth creates a bottleneck. Processing it in orbit and sending only the "insights" reduces the load on satellite communication bands significantly.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** By building indigenous AI models (Sarvam) and launching them on indigenous hardware (Pixxel) via Indian rockets (Agnikul), India creates a closed-loop ecosystem immune to foreign sanctions or outages.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The journey from "Sputnik" to "Space AI" reflects the evolution of the Indian Space Program and global trends.

- **The Era of Communication (1960s-1990s):** Early efforts focused on telecommunications and weather forecasting (INSAT series) to bridge the digital divide in rural India.

- **The Era of Observation (2000s-2010s):** The focus shifted to high-resolution Earth observation (IRS/Cartosat). Satellites were "dumb" sensors—they only captured and sent data.

- **The Privatization Pivot (2020):** The creation of **IN-SPACE** opened the doors for startups like Pixxel and Agnikul, moving beyond ISRO's shadow.

- **The Intelligence Era (2024-Present):** We are now entering a phase where satellites are "smart." They don't just see; they think. This aligns with India's "AI for All" mission and the New Space Policy 2023.

- **Way Forward**

- **Regulatory Framework:** India should advocate for an international "Orbital Traffic Management" system.

- **R&D in Materials:** Focus on "Rad-Hard" (Radiation Hardened) electronics to ensure the longevity of space GPUs.

- **Public-Private Partnership:** ISRO should provide the testing facilities (like high-vacuum chambers) while startups drive the innovation.

- **Space Sustainability:** Mandate "de-orbiting" mechanisms for every compute satellite to prevent the buildup of space junk.

-

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **2023 (GS3):** "Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis?" (Theme: AI Applications).

- **2022 (GS3):** "Discuss India's achievements in the field of Space Science and Technology."

- **2016 (GS3):** "India has achieved remarkable successes in unmanned space missions... Discuss."



AXIA
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RISE ABOVE THE REST
AXIA COMPETITIVE EXAM CENTRE

ORBITAL DATA CENTRES & SOVEREIGN AI: AN INDIA-LED SPACE SHIFT



Bypassing Terrestrial Constraints

- Solar energy in orbit, avoiding
- voiding land/cooling costs



Solar panels



Power grid



Hyperspectral Imaging Applications

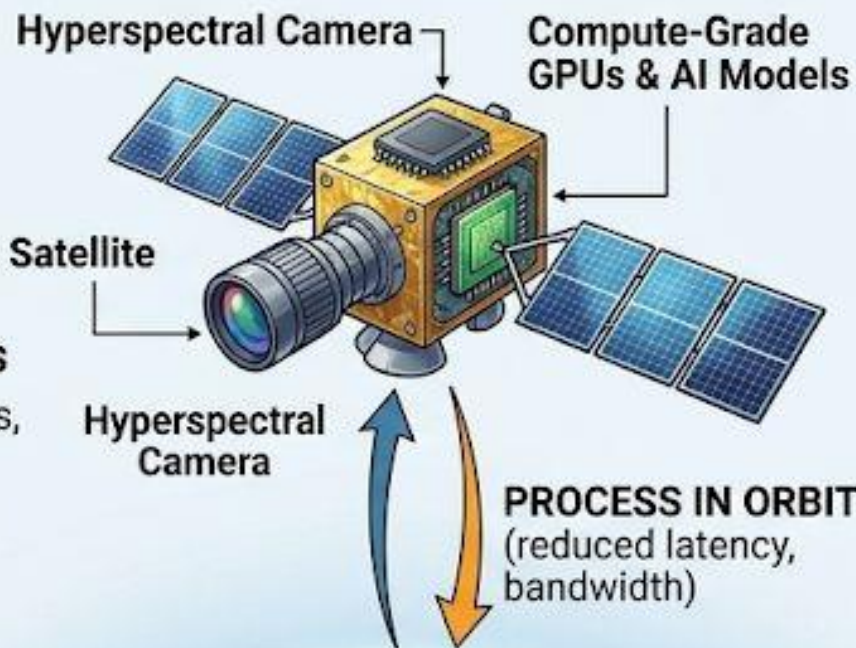
- Real-time insights for farming, forest fires, infra, satellite and inaria imagery



UPSC RELEVANCE

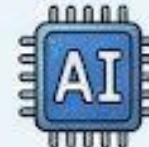
- GS2: Knowspectral Camtres
- GS2 Bioconectral in space
- GS3: GS3 (S&T, Security)

'Pathfinder' Satellite Architecture



Strategic Impetus: Sovereign AI

- Indian-built models and rockets
- Reducing foreign reliance



Sustainability & Challenges

- Thermal management, radiation hardening, space debris prevention



Heat sink



Radiation shield



Clean orbit



Key Concepts

- Edge Computing in Space, Developer and orbitn prostans
- Sovereign AI defined in real-torminity of systems



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India, Canada begin second round of free trade talks, eye \$50 b trade by 2030

WARMING UP. The meeting is likely to set the tone for Commerce Minister Goyal's visit to Canada later this month

Amiti Sen
New Delhi

Shaking off the diplomatic ice, India and Canada on Monday started the second round of negotiations for a free trade agreement, aimed at increasing bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030.

The two sides are hoping to conclude the pact by the year-end, signalling an uptick in bilateral engagement.

TRADE TALKS

"The five-day talks between the two negotiating teams for the India-Canada CEPA started in New Delhi on Monday. The attempt is to fast-track talks so that the pact can be concluded by the year-end as decided by the Prime Ministers earlier this year," a person tracking the meeting told *businessline*.

The meeting is also likely



DEAL PUSH. The two sides are hoping to conclude the pact by the year-end ISTOCK/REUSER

to set the tone for Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal's visit to Canada later this month, heading a business delegation.

KEY MEETING

The first round of negotiations for the pact, officially called the India-Canada

Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), took place in March this year following Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

The summit meeting was key to the resetting of ties

that had hit rock bottom in 2023 when former Canadian PM Justin Trudeau accused Indian authorities of being involved in the murder of Canadian Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

"The leaders expressed confidence that a comprehensive trade framework would serve as a durable economic anchor for the partnership and support the shared aspiration of expanding bilateral trade to C\$70 billion/₹4.65 lakh crore by 2030. They welcomed the finalisation and signing of the Terms of Reference for CEPA negotiations and the launch of formal negotiations and expressed their shared commitment to conclude the talks by the end of 2026," per a joint statement issued after Carney's meeting with Modi in March.

India-Canada bilateral trade in goods was at \$8.66

billion in 2024-25, while India's exports to the country were at \$4.22 billion.

INDIA'S EXPORTS

Major items of India's exports to Canada include pharmaceutical products, machinery parts & mechanical appliances, iron & steel articles, electronic goods, organic chemicals, jewellery, gems & precious stones, clothing & textile articles, seafood, engineering goods and auto parts.

India's major imports from Canada include pulses, fertilizers (potash), mineral fuels, wood pulp, gems & precious stones (diamonds), aircraft parts, machinery parts, paper & paperboard and iron & aluminium scrap.

India's main services sector exports include telecommunications, computers, information services, and other business services.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):** Unlike a basic Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that focuses mainly on goods, a CEPA is a more integrated pact. It covers trade in services, investment, intellectual property rights, and economic cooperation.
 - *Example:* While an FTA might reduce tariffs on Canadian lentils, a CEPA ensures that Indian IT professionals have easier visa access to work in Toronto.
- **Terms of Reference (ToR):** This is the foundational document or "rulebook" that defines the scope, objectives, and timeline of a negotiation. It ensures both parties are playing the same game before the heavy lifting begins.
- **Bilateral Trade:** This refers to the exchange of goods and services between two specific countries.
- **Fast-Track Negotiations:** A diplomatic strategy where both nations commit to bypass standard bureaucratic delays to meet an ambitious deadline, often driven by high-level political will.
- **Services Sector Exports:** In the Indian context, this largely involves "Invisibles"—exports like software development, telecommunications, and business process outsourcing that don't cross borders in shipping containers but contribute significantly to the Balance of Payments.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis revolves around **Economic Pragmatism over Political Friction**. The primary argument is that the economic benefits of a trade deal are too significant to be held hostage by past diplomatic disagreements.
- **The Pivot to \$50 Billion:** The transition from a modest \$8-9 billion trade volume to a \$50 billion target by 2030 signals a shift in ambition. The article argues that a "durable economic anchor" is needed to prevent the relationship from drifting during political storms.
- **Resource Complementarity:** The trade is not competitive but complementary. India needs Canada's "Three P's"—Potash (for food security), Pulses (for protein), and Petroleum/Power (for energy). Conversely, Canada needs India's "Three M's"—Medicines (pharmaceuticals), Machinery, and Manpower (services).
- **Political Will as a Catalyst:** The shift in leadership in Canada (the transition to PM Mark Carney) is presented as the critical variable that allowed the "reset" of ties that had hit rock bottom in 2023.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The India-Canada trajectory has been a rollercoaster of highs and lows since 1947.
- **The Early "Golden Age" (1947-1970s):** Relations were exceptionally warm, rooted in personal ties between Nehru and St. Laurent. Canada provided nuclear technology (CANDU reactors) for peaceful purposes.
- **The Nuclear Winter (1974-1998):** Following India's 'Smiling Buddha' nuclear test in 1974, Canada felt its technology was misused. Ties froze for decades, exacerbated by India's 1998 Pokhran-II tests.
- **The 21st Century Thaw (2010-2022):** The 2010 Civil Nuclear Deal marked a return to normalcy. Trade began to grow, and the Indian diaspora became a major political force in Canada.
- **The 2023 Nadir:** Relations collapsed following allegations regarding the death of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, leading to the suspension of visa services and trade talks.
- **2024-Present:** A new leadership phase in Canada has prioritized a "Reset," moving back toward the CEPA negotiations with a focus on long-term economic stability.

- **Way Forward**

- **Institutionalize Security Dialogue:** Create a separate, robust mechanism for security and intelligence sharing so that political disagreements do not spill over into trade.
- **Focus on the "Green Corridor":** Leverage Canada's technology in carbon capture and critical minerals to fuel India's Net-Zero 2070 goals.
- **People-to-People Track:** Simplify student visa processes and professional accreditation to ensure the "Services" aspect of the CEPA yields immediate results.

- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC Mains (2017, GS II):** "The Indian diaspora has a decisive role to play in the politics and economy of America and European Countries. Comment." (Highly relevant to Canada).
- **UPSC Mains (2023, GS II):** "Virus of Conflict is affecting the functioning of the World Trade Organization... What are the alternatives?" (Bilateral CEPAs like India-Canada are the primary alternative).

INDIA-CANADA CEPA & TRADE PIVOT: BODEHENBREINEFITS A COMPREHENSIVE UPSC CSE ANALYSIS

DIPLOMATIC & TRADE TIMELINE

- PRE-2023:** Steady Growth 
- 2023:** Nadir (Nijjar Issue) 
- MAR 2024:** PM Carney-Modi New Delhi Summit 
- MAY 2024:** Formal Trade Talks Begin 
- 2026 (Target):** Conclude CEPA Pact 
- 2030 (Target):** \$50 Billion Bilateral Trade 

CURRENT REALITY vs. AMBITION



GLOBAL RESOURCE & TRADE MAP

CANADA EXPORTS TO INDIA:



COMPLEMENTARY ECONOMIC INTERESTS



ECONOMIC PRAGMATISM

THE CORE PHILOSOPHY

DIPLOMATIC DECOUPLING

SOCIAL: Diaspora as cultural/economic bridge.

ECONOMIC: Supply chain resilience and diversification.



POLITICAL: Need for stable geoeconomics to manage geopolitics.

INTERNATIONAL: Indo-Pacific Strategy diversification.

UPSC SYLLABUS LINKAGES

Icon	GS II: International Relations & Bilateralism.	GS III: Economy & Globalisation.	NCERT: World Politics (XII) & Economics (XI-XII).	ESSAY: Trade as a tool for Diplomacy.
				

WAY FORWARD (GS/MAINS)

-  Institutional Security Dialogue (De-risk trade).
-  Green Corridor & Critical Minerals.
-  Simplify Labor & Student Mobility.



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