

# TODAY'S NEWS

## Governor gives nod to prosecute Karnataka CM

Emergency meet of State Cabinet says it is 'illegal, unconstitutional, against spirit of democracy'; Siddaramaiah rules out resignation, thanks Cabinet colleagues for 'complete solidarity'; Gehlot cites in his communication a 2004 ruling by a five-judge Supreme Court Bench related to Madhya Pradesh. seeks neutral, objective, and non-partisan probe

**Nagesh Prabhu**  
BENGALURU

**K**arnataka Governor Thawarchand Gehlot on Saturday sanctioned the investigation and prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in a case of alleged corruption in the allotment of land to his wife by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA).

The sanction has been given based on petitions submitted by two Bengaluru-based social activists Pradeep Kumar S.P. and T.J. Abraham, and Mysuru-based Snehamayi Krishna. A six-page communication to Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh by the Governor's Secretariat on Saturday said that sanction has been given under Section 17A [for investigation] of the Prevention of Corrup-

tion Act, 1988, and Section 218 [for prosecution] of the Bharatiya Nagarika Suraksha Samhitha, 2023, "for the commission of the alleged offences mentioned in the petitions".

Later on Saturday, Mr. Siddaramaiah chaired an emergency meeting of the State Cabinet, which unanimously condemned Mr. Gehlot's decision, terming it "illegal, unconstitutional and against the spirit of democracy and federalism" and decided to fight the case legally.

The Chief Minister ruled out his resignation and thanked his Cabinet colleagues for expressing complete solidarity with him.

In his communication, the Governor cited a 2004 ruling by a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court related to Madhya Pradesh. He said that the



**Hot seat:** Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D.K. Shivakumar addressing the media on Saturday. **SUDHAKARA JAIN**

top court had held that if Governors did not use their discretion based on facts and circumstances, it would lead to a "complete breakdown of rule of law inasmuch as it would then be open for governments to refuse sanction in spite of overwhelming material showing that a *prima facie* case is made out".

"Upon perusal of the petition along with the mate-

rials in support of the allegations in the petitions and subsequent reply of Sri Siddaramaiah and the advice of the State Cabinet along with the legal opinion, it seems to me that there are two versions in relation to the same set of facts," the Governor said.

"It is very necessary that a neutral, objective and non-partisan investigation should be conducted. I am

### BJP demands Siddaramaiah's resignation

**NEW DELHI**

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday sought the resignation of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to ensure an "impartial and independent" probe into his alleged role in the MUDA site allotment scam. **» PAGE 4**

*prima facie* satisfied that the allegations and the supporting materials disclose commission of offences... I am satisfied that sanction can be accorded against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on the allegations," he added.

State Ministers and other Congress leaders accused the Governor of acting at the behest of the BJP leadership, accusing the

BJP of misusing the Raj Bhavan to destabilise the Congress government in Karnataka. The Opposition BJP and Janata Dal(S) hailed the Governor's decision, and reiterated their demand for Mr. Siddaramaiah to step down.

**How events panned out**  
The Governor had issued a show-cause notice to Mr. Siddaramaiah on July 26, hours after the complaint was filed, asking why prosecution should not be permitted in the case of alleged irregularities in the distribution of sites in MUDA. On August 3, the Chief Minister replied, denying the allegations.

In the intervening period, on August 1, the State Cabinet "strongly advised" Mr. Gehlot to reject the petition and withdraw the show-cause notice. The Chief Minister had refused

himself from the Cabinet meeting and authorised his deputy D.K. Shivakumar to chair the meeting of the Council of Ministers. The Deputy CM accused the Union government of attempting to destabilise a democratically elected government in Karnataka.

The Governor rejected this advice.

Mr. Siddaramaiah has been claiming that the MUDA had legally allotted 14 alternative residential sites to his wife Parvathi, in lieu of "illegally" taking over her land without any acquisition process. "Accepting the mistake," a MUDA committee allotted the alternative sites in 2021, at a time when the BJP was in power in Karnataka. The CM denied any role in the allotment of sites.

**LEGALITY OF THE MOVE**  
**» PAGE 4**

## When Governors moved against Chief Ministers in the recent past

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

**K. Venkataraman**

Law and politics yield a complex mix. The issues arising out of the Karnataka Governor, Thawarchand Gehlot, granting sanction to prosecute Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for alleged irregularities in the allotment of plots by the Mysore Urban Development Authority are a good example.

The law relating to a Governor granting sanction for a serving CM's prosecution is governed not by statutory provisions alone, but also a string of court judgments. In the current political atmosphere, in which incumbents in the Raj Bhavan are seen as serving the political interests of the ruling party at the Centre, it is difficult to consider gubernatorial acts of far-reaching import as decisions completely free from political bias.

Yet, their acts, in a legal context, may be justified on the basis of fact and judicial precedent.

The question whether a Governor can accord sanction to prosecute a Chief Minister on his own discretion, rather than the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, has been addressed only in a few cases. The question concerning the prosecution of former Maharashtra Chief Minister A.R. Antulay resulted in a judgment by a two-member Supreme Court Bench in 1982 that held in favour of the Governor's discretion. "...when there is to be a prosecution of the Chief Minister, the Governor would... as a matter of propriety, necessarily act in his own discretion and not on the advice of the Council of Ministers." However, the order was based on a concession by the State government before the court. The Supreme Court refused to allow any resiling from the concession.

The precedent cited by Governor Gehlot in his order – the *Maharashtra Special Police Establishment vs. State of Madhya Pradesh* (2004) – is the closest possible authority on the question, although it concerns two Ministers and not the CM. As in the Gehlot-Siddaramaiah instance, the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet had then refused sanction to prosecute two Ministers, while the Governor found that there was sufficient material to do so. A five-member Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the Governor's decision and set aside the ministerial Council's refusal to grant sanction. If, on the given facts and circumstances, the Governor were not to act in his own discretion, "there would be a complete breakdown of the rule of law, inasmuch as it would then be open for Governments to refuse sanction, in spite of overwhelming material showing that a



**Ongoing row:** Siddaramaiah and Thawarchand Gehlot. **FILE PHOTO**

*prima facie* case is made out," it said. It cautioned that if sanction to prosecute "high functionaries" in such cases is refused or withheld, "democracy itself will be at stake".

### Past decisions

The earliest decision to prosecute a serving Chief Minister concerned Tamil Nadu Governor Marri Channa Reddy and Chief Minister Jayalalitha in 1995. Subramanian Swamy, then heading the Janata Party, obtained Governor Reddy's sanction to

prosecute Jayalalitha on March 25, 1995, on two corruption charges. A Division Bench of the Madras High Court rejected her challenge to the sanction order, citing the Governor's immunity under Article 361 that protected him from being answerable to any court regarding his functions. Unfortunately, the crucial question of law that Jayalalitha raised before the Supreme Court was never adjudicated. The question was whether when sanction was sought to prosecute a CM, the Go-

vernor should act in his own discretion, or on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers excluding the Chief Minister. The matter was referred to a Constitution Bench, but Jayalalitha withdrew her challenge in 2002, as she had by then been acquitted in both the TANSI land deal case and the coal import case, the two charges on which prosecution had been allowed by the Governor.

Bihar Governor A.R. Kidwai allowing the CBI to prosecute Lalu Prasad and H.R. Bhargava according sanction to private complainants to prosecute B.S. Yediyurappa are the two well-known instances of Governors passing adverse orders against Chief Ministers in office. The 2011 sanction order against Mr. Yediyurappa was quashed by the Karnataka High Court in November 2015 on the ground that it contained no discussion on why sanction was being gi-

ven. In that instance, too, the Chief Minister had drawn the Governor's attention to a resolution of the Council of Ministers not to grant sanction. The common thread in the matters concerning the Madhya Pradesh Ministers, Mr. Yediyurappa and Mr. Siddaramaiah is that the Council of Ministers were against grant of sanction, while the Governors favoured it.

The Karnataka High Court had then observed that "great care, caution and proper application was necessary" because the complaint was private in nature. It also took note of the "uneasy relationship" between the CM and the Governor. If the request had come after an investigation, the Governor would have had materials in hand for applying his mind. "With respect, the caution that ought to have been exercised is absent in this case." The Supreme Court disposed of the ap-

peal against the High Court's order as the Governor, who had been asked to reconsider the sanction order, subsequently refused to give sanction.

In Mr. Siddaramaiah's case, the complainants and political parties backing his prosecution may rely on the Supreme Court judgment in the Madhya Pradesh case that effectively gave the Governor a veto over the Council of Ministers if material evidence was ignored for the sake of blocking a legitimate prosecution. The Governor himself has not only cited the M.P. precedent, but also declared in the order that he had independently examined the petitions and the supporting documents. On the other hand, Mr. Siddaramaiah, who has refused to resign, is likely to take the view that the sanction order was actuated by political motive and gave undue credence to private persons' views without any investigation.

## Summary

The controversy surrounding Karnataka Governor Thawarchand Gehlot's sanction for prosecuting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over alleged irregularities in land allotment highlights the intricate intersection of **law and politics**. The Governor's decision, based on petitions by activists, has sparked a political battle, with the **State Cabinet** and **Congress leaders** condemning it as unconstitutional and politically motivated, while the **BJP** and **Janata Dal(S)** have supported the move.

Legally, the Governor's authority to grant such sanctions is governed by **Supreme Court precedents** rather than just statutory provisions. Gehlot cited the 2004 **Madhya Pradesh case**, in which the **Supreme Court** upheld a Governor's discretion to act independently of the Council of Ministers when there is **prima facie evidence**. This precedent is central to the current situation, where the Karnataka Cabinet opposed prosecution, but the Governor deemed it necessary based on the evidence presented.

Similar cases in the past, such as those involving **Jayalithaa**, **Lalu Prasad**, and **B.S. Yediyurappa**, show that Governors have exercised discretion in prosecuting sitting Chief Ministers. However, such actions are often seen as politically charged, given the strained relations between the **Raj Bhavan** and state governments, particularly when Governors are perceived as acting in the interest of the ruling party at the Centre.

While Siddaramaiah denies the allegations, claiming the land allotment was legal and done during the **BJP's tenure**, his opponents argue that the **Governor's decision** is supported by judicial authority. The Chief Minister's refusal to resign and the **State Cabinet's united stance** against the prosecution reflect the broader political struggle between the state and the Governor's office, with **Congress** accusing the **BJP** of destabilizing the state government.

Ultimately, the case underscores the tension between **legal processes** and **political maneuvering**, where decisions by Governors, though legally justified, are often viewed through a political lens, complicating the governance dynamic in states.

## Practice Mains Question

Q. Discuss the role of the Governor in sanctioning the prosecution of a sitting Chief Minister in the context of constitutional provisions and judicial precedents. How do such decisions impact the federal structure and the relationship between the Governor and the state government? Illustrate your answer with recent examples. (250 words)

## Practice Prelims Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the role of the Governor in India:

1. The Governor can grant sanction for the prosecution of a sitting Chief Minister based solely on the advice of the Council of Ministers.
2. Article 361 of the Indian Constitution provides immunity to the Governor from being answerable to any court for acts done in the discharge of official duties.
3. The Supreme Court has upheld the Governor's discretion to act independently in certain cases involving the prosecution of high-functionaries.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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



**Correct Answer:** (b) 2 and 3 only

**Explanation:**

1. **Statement 1: Incorrect** The Governor is not bound to act solely on the advice of the Council of Ministers in cases of prosecuting a sitting Chief Minister. Judicial precedents, such as the 1982 and 2004 Supreme Court rulings, have clarified that the Governor can use discretion in granting sanctions for prosecution in cases involving the Chief Minister, especially when there is prima facie evidence.
2. **Statement 2: Correct** Article 361 of the Indian Constitution provides immunity to the Governor from being answerable to any court for actions done in the discharge of official duties. This means the Governor cannot be questioned or held accountable in a court of law for such decisions.
3. **Statement 3: Correct** The Supreme Court, in various rulings (such as the 2004 **Madhya Pradesh case**), has upheld the Governor's discretion to act independently, particularly when the Council of Ministers refuses to grant sanction for prosecution despite clear evidence. This ensures the rule of law is maintained even if the political executive is unwilling to take action.

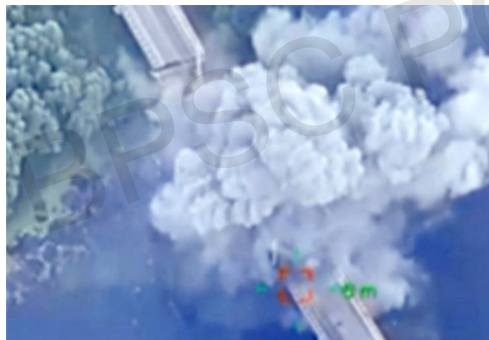
## Ukraine used U.S.-made rockets to strike Kursk: Russia

**Reuters**  
MOSCOW

Russia's Foreign Ministry said Ukraine had used Western rockets, likely U.S.-made HIMARS, to destroy a bridge over the Seym river in the Kursk region, killing volunteers trying to evacuate civilians.

"For the first time, the Kursk region was hit by Western-made rocket launchers, probably American HIMARS," Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, said late on Friday on the Telegram messaging app.

"As a result of the attack on the bridge over the



Smoke billows from a bridge over the Seym river in the Glushkovo, following a Ukrainian strike in the Kursk region on Friday. REUTERS

Seym River in the Glushkovo district, it was completely destroyed, and volunteers who were assisting the evacuated ci-

vilian population were killed." Russia has accused the West of supporting and encouraging Ukraine's first ground offensive on Rus-

sian territory and said Kyiv's "terrorist invasion" would not change the course of the war.

The United States, which has said it cannot allow Russian President Vladimir Putin to win the war he launched in February 2022, so far deems the surprise incursion a protective move that justifies the use of U.S. weaponry, officials in Washington said.

Russia kept up its assault on Ukraine on Saturday even as Ukrainian forces pushed into Russia's Kursk border region.

### **Russian attack**

A Russian missile sparked a blaze in the city of Sumy

that injured two persons and also damaged cars and nearby buildings, said Ukraine's State Emergency Service. It said that the hit had involved an Iskander-K cruise missile and an aerial bomb.

Ukraine's air force also said it had shot down 14 Russian drones overnight, including over the Kyiv region.

### **Kursk on edge**

Meanwhile, fighting continued in Russia's Kursk region, where Ukrainian troops have been deployed since Aug. 6 in a bid to divert the Kremlin's military focus away from the front line in Ukraine.

## Practice Prelims Question

**Q. The Seym River, recently in the news, flows through which of the following countries?**

- (a) Russia and Belarus
- (b) Ukraine and Russia
- (c) Ukraine and Poland
- (d) Russia and Kazakhstan

**Answer:** (b) Ukraine and Russia

## CM formally launches Ladki Bahin Yojana, says scheme permanent

At launch in Pune, Shinde promises to double stipend from ₹1,500 to ₹3,000 if ruling alliance retains power; beneficiaries say the money will come in handy but wonder if scheme will last

Seetal Mishra

The Maharashtra government on Sunday formally launched its Maharashtra Ladki Bahin Yojana for eligible women from Pune's Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde telling beneficiaries that if the ruling alliance is voted to power in the upcoming Assembly election, it may double the monthly stipend from ₹1,500 to ₹3,000. The Shinde also assured women that the scheme is "permanent". "The financial plan for the scheme is in place, and allocations have been made accordingly up to March 2025," he said.

First announced during the State budget presentation in the Assembly, the government started transferring benefits from August 14 of a monthly ₹1,500 assistance to women in the 21-60 age bracket having up to ₹2.5 lakh annual family income.



'More income': Women at the launch event said the money would come in handy, but wondered if the scheme would last.

The scheme launch was also attended by Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar of the Shivrajji Janata Party and Nationalist Congress Party, who belong to BJP and NCP. The ruling alliance is betting big on the scheme in the run-up to the State election after suffering reverses in the Lok Sabha election. The opposition, Maha Vikas Aghadi, has called questioned the scheme's viability given the Maharashtra's mounting debt burden that has already touched ₹7.8 lakh crore.

Women in large numbers attending the official launch event called the scheme useful, but some expressed apprehensions about its sustainability.

'Will buy saree': Rajanya Ghumbar, who has already received the first instalment of ₹3,000 for July and August, will use the sum to buy a saree ahead of Raksha Bandhan on August 15. "After the joint offer, sarees are

thunder rare! (This is my rightmost money, I will spend it on myself)," she said. An angamachar worker from the Market Yard in Pune city, she helped over 600 women in her area in filling the forms, of whom 375 women have received money. "The money is useful, but I doubt its continuity. Let's see how long this scheme runs."

A few women were wary of the government's motive, but were all too glad to take whatever they could get. Neelam Magar (name changed from Pimpri) called the scheme a way of "legally buying voters". "This is a bribe, but I want to take it; it will add to my (monthly) income of ₹8,000. Taking this money means one less house to work at," said Neelam, a house help.

Anna Shukh, who is yet to receive the benefit, felt that ₹1,500 a month is inadequate given the inflation. "I will use this money to fix my house as a plumber has retired it," said the housewife, whose husband is a daily wage.

## Practice Prelims Question

The Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, recently launched in Maharashtra, provides financial assistance to women under which of the following conditions?

- Women aged 21-60 with an annual family income up to ₹2.5 lakh
- Women aged 18-45 with a monthly income of ₹8,000
- Women aged 30-65 with no income restrictions
- Women aged 21-60 with a monthly family income up to ₹10,000

**Answer:** (a) Women aged 21-60 with an annual family income up to ₹2.5 lakh

### Explanation:

The **Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana** is a financial assistance program launched by the Maharashtra government. It provides a monthly stipend of ₹1,500 to women who are between the ages of 21 and 60, and whose family income does not exceed ₹2.5 lakh annually. This assistance is intended to support women in this income bracket.

MP. gov't. to act against madrasas giving religious teachings without consent

Religious education in India has been a contentious issue for decades. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has been urging the government to take action against madrasas that provide religious education to children without the consent of their parents or guardians. The NCPCR has also been criticizing the government for not taking any steps to regulate madrasas and ensure that they are providing quality education to their students.

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The **Madhya Pradesh** government has mandated a **survey** of students in **State-aided madrasas** to ensure they are not receiving **Islamic religious teachings** without parental or guardian **consent**. This directive follows recommendations from the **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)**. The **School Education Department** has instructed officials to inspect madrasas receiving government funds and take action against those providing unauthorized religious education or fraudulently obtaining grants.

The NCPCR has supported the move, emphasizing that **Hindu children** should not be in madrasas and calling for a survey of unrecorded madrasas to integrate their students into the mainstream education system. The State has recently taken action against over **1,500 madrasas**, including revoking recognition for **61 in Ratlam and Sheopur**.

Speak as one on global governance, Modi tells developing world, seeks UN reform

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the third Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGS) hosted virtually by India, emphasizing the need for "just and inclusive" global governance. He announced a new **Global Development Compact** funded by India with \$3.5 million (₹29 crore), focusing on trade, capacity building, technology sharing, and trade negotiation training for developing countries.

The summit, held ahead of the UN's **Summit of the Future** in September, addressed concerns about global tensions, conflicts, and disparities between the Global North and South. Modi highlighted the need for global institutions that prioritize the Global South and called for reforms in the UN, including India's demand for a seat in an expanded Security Council.

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Among the 20 leaders at the summit was interim Bangladeshi leader Muhammad Yunus, who focused on equitable financing. The summit included participants from Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and other Global South countries but did not invite China or Pakistan. Discussions also covered UN reform, with critiques likening the organization to Orwell's *Animal Farm* due to perceived inequities among member countries. Sessions led by Indian ministers addressed topics like energy, IT, and youth.

## Practice Prelims Question

**Q. Consider the following statements regarding the "Global Development Compact" announced by India:**

1. It focuses on **trade, capacity building, and technology sharing** among developing countries.
2. It was announced during the Voice of the Global South Summit in 2024.
3. India pledged **\$3.5 billion** to fund the initiative.

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

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

**Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only**

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1** is correct: The Global Development Compact focuses on **trade, capacity building, and technology sharing** among developing countries.
- **Statement 2** is correct: The Global Development Compact was announced during the **Voice of the Global South Summit** in **August 2024**.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect: India pledged **\$3.5 million (₹29 crore)**, not \$3.5 billion, to fund the initiative.

**Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Third Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGS), 2024:**

1. The summit was hosted by India in a virtual format.
2. It focused on promoting a "just and inclusive" global governance system for developing countries.
3. The summit took place ahead of the **G-20 Summit** to be held in New Delhi.

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

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



Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

### Explanation:

- **Statement 1** is correct: The Third Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGS) was hosted by India in a virtual format.
- **Statement 2** is correct: The summit focused on promoting a **just and inclusive** global governance system, addressing the concerns of the developing countries or the Global South.
- **Statement 3** is incorrect: The summit took place ahead of the **UN's Summit of the Future** in September 2024, not the G-20 Summit.

### Panel on SC status for Dalit converts racing against time as deadline nears

**Abhinav Lakshman**  
NEW DELHI

The Commission of Inquiry set up by the Centre to look into the possibility of granting Scheduled Caste (SC) status to Dalit Christians and Muslims is racing against time to submit its report as its two-year term is about to expire in October 2024.

The panel is likely to seek a "short extension" from the government to complete its task.

The commission was unable to start its field visits — a crucial aspect of its work — until August this year as the required staff had not been made available to the panel, multiple sources aware of its functioning told *The Hindu*.

"The commission is trying its best to meet the deadline. If possible, a short extension may be sought to finish the work," one of them said. "It would ideally require an extension to complete the assigned task and submit a report," another source said. However, the Centre has not yet received a formal request for an extension from the commission.

The three-member Commission of Inquiry, headed by former Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan, was set up in October 2022 to examine the possibility of granting SC status to Dalits who have converted to any religion other than the ones mentioned in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950. Currently, only Dalits of Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist faiths are entitled to be categorised as SCs.

**Field visits under way**

The commission is now in the middle of field visits, where it is holding public consultations with interest groups. It has already been to Kerala, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh for public hearings. However, it has yet to visit Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu, where similar public hearings have been scheduled.

The commission was constituted and notified just as the Supreme Court was about to resume hearing a batch of pleas that sought SC status for Dalit Muslims and Christians. The issue has been pending in the top court for 20 years now.

In the field visits conducted so far, the panel has largely met with associations of SC communities as well as members of the Dalit, Christian and Muslim communities in those States. A large section among these associations is opposed to the inclusion of Christians and Muslims in the SC list.

The National Council of Dalit Christians, one of the largest bodies to mobilise around the demand for SC status to Dalit Christians and Muslims, has presented its case before the panel in Gujarat and Kerala.

However, former MP Ali Anwar — head of the Bharu-based All India Pannunda Muslim Mahal — told *The Hindu*, "we have not yet been approached by the panel. And I doubt any member of our community trusts that this panel is working fairly. Because of this, we do not want to take our case to them. We would be more than willing to give our input if they work it."

The commission has also written to various States and Union Territory administrations about their view on the issue. It has also sought detailed information on the socio-economic indicators of Dalit converts and is analysing this dataset. The Centre has also made a presentation outlining the material available with it and its position on the matter.

"The Modi government has told the top court on multiple occasions that it was justified to exclude Dalit Christians and Muslims from the SC list."

The article discusses the progress of the **Commission of Inquiry** set up by the Indian government to examine the possibility of granting **Scheduled Caste (SC) status to Dalit Christians and Muslims**. Headed by former Chief Justice of India **K.G. Balakrishnan**, the commission's two-year term is set to expire in **October 2024**, but it may seek a short extension due to delays in starting field visits, a critical part of its work. These visits only began in **August 2023**, after staff shortages were resolved.

The commission has held public consultations in **Kerala, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh**, but still needs to visit other states like **Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu**. Established just as the **Supreme Court** was about to hear a 20-year-old plea seeking SC status for Dalit Christians and Muslims, the commission's work has encountered opposition from many SC groups, while groups like the **National Council of Dalit Christians** advocate for inclusion.

The **Centre** has yet to officially receive a request for an extension, but it has maintained its stance in court, arguing against including Dalit Christians and Muslims in the SC list. The commission is also analyzing socio-economic data on Dalit converts as part of its research.

### Practice Prelims Question

Q. Who is heading the Commission of Inquiry set up by the Indian government to examine the possibility of granting Scheduled Caste (SC) status to Dalit Christians and Muslims?

- A) Justice K.G. Balakrishnan
- B) Justice P. Sathasivam
- C) Justice H.L. Dattu
- D) Justice Dipak Misra

Answer: A) Justice K.G. Balakrishnan

**Explanation:** The Commission of Inquiry, established in October 2022 by the Indian government, is headed by former Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan. The commission's purpose is to explore the possibility of extending Scheduled Caste (SC) status to Dalit Christians and Muslims, a subject of long-standing legal and social debate.

## Harsher laws alone don't deter crimes against women: SC

**Archives/Editorial**  
Change in mindset is needed to curb gender violence, Justice Banumathi had said in 2017

Stricter laws and punishments against rape may not be enough to deter rising crimes against women, the Supreme Court had warned the government in 2017. The court was considering the death penalty for a 23-year-old paramedic in a 2012 gang-rape case in Delhi. The government of the day had sought to commit the case to the Justice J.S. Verma Committee to study the law more stern and effective in future. The suggestion of the panel led to the enactment of Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, which brought in substantial changes in the law of rape and sexual assault. In the separate opinion, Justice Banumathi said, "The government, on its own, cannot take steps to ensure that the law is properly implemented. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that the law is properly implemented. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that the law is properly implemented."

In 2017, the Supreme Court upheld the death penalty for four men involved in the brutal 2012 gang-rape of a 23-year-old paramedic in Delhi, cautioning that stringent laws and punishments alone are insufficient to combat rising crimes against women. Following this incident, the government set up the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee**, leading to the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**, which introduced significant legal reforms.

Justice R. Banumathi, in a separate opinion, emphasized the need for societal **mindset change, gender sensitization, and public awareness** to combat violence against women. She recommended practical measures like **banners in public transport, better street lighting, increased police patrols, and mobile apps** for women's safety.

## Practice Prelims Question

Q. The Justice J.S. Verma Committee, constituted in 2012, is known for its significant contribution in which of the following areas?

- A) Electoral Reforms
- B) Environmental Protection
- C) Criminal Law Amendments related to Crimes against Women
- D) Economic Reforms

**Answer:** C) Criminal Law Amendments related to Crimes against Women

## Explanation:

The **Justice J.S. Verma Committee** was set up by the government in response to the 2012 Delhi gang-rape case to recommend changes to laws regarding crimes against women. Its recommendations led to the enactment of the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**, which introduced stricter laws for sexual offences and aimed to strengthen women's safety and legal protection.

## Lok Sabha Speaker constitutes six new parliamentary panels

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has constituted six new parliamentary committees, including the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which keeps a close eye on government expenditure, to be headed by senior Congress leader K.C. Venugopal.

The PAC, one of the five key financial committees tasked with keeping a watch on the government's accounts, is usually headed by a senior Lok Sabha member of the opposition party.

Before him, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge headed the PAC.

Two other financial committees — the Estimates Committee and the Public Undertakings Committee — will be chaired by BJP leaders.

In a bulletin issued on Friday, Sanjay Jaiswal was appointed Chairman of the Committee on Estimates, and Rajgopal Das

The Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla, has formed **six new parliamentary committees**, including the **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)**, which will be led by Congress leader **K.C. Venugopal**.

The PAC, along with two other financial committees—the **Estimates Committee** and the **Public Undertakings Committee**—oversees government finances. These two committees will be chaired by **BJP leaders** Sanjay Jaiswal and Baijayant Panda.

Other committees include those focused on the welfare of **OBCs, SCs, and STs**.

All committees have a one-year term and consist of members from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

## UPSC advertises lateral entry posts in Ministries; Opposition cries foul

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Saturday issued an advertisement to recruit 45 joint secretaries, directors, and deputy secretaries across 24 Central Ministries through lateral entry on a contract basis or deputation, triggering allegations from Opposition leaders that the Centre was trying to bypass reservation policies.

"The advertisement is for the posts of 45 joint secretaries and 15 deputy secretaries. The posts are required to be filled by September 17," said Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress president.

He accused the BJP of "tripping over the Constitution" of "bypassing a clear-cut rule on reservation."

He asked if there was any reservation for the scheduled Caste (SC), scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC) or Economically Weaker Section (EWS) in these lateral entry posts.

"As part of a well-planned conspiracy, the

**The BJP is deliberately making such recruitments as jobs so that SC, ST, OBC candidates can be kept away from reservation,"** said Mallikarjun Kharge.



BJP is deliberately making such recruitments as jobs so that SC, ST, OBC candidates can be kept away from reservation. Instead, the reservation scan in the appointment of 60,000 assistant teachers in Uttar Pradesh has now been exposed by the High Court decision," the Kharge said in a post on X.

He said that in March, Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi had written to the Prime Minister on the U.P. issue.

"It is necessary to fully implement the provisions of economic, social and political justice enshrined in the Constitution of India. That is why the Congress party is demanding caste-based reservation for the socially backward," said Mr. Kharge.

Kharge's junior, the UPJ leader Jagadev, also slammed the

The **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** has announced a recruitment drive for **45 positions** (10 joint secretaries and 35 directors/deputy secretaries) across 24 Central Ministries **through lateral entry** on a contract or deputation basis. This move has drawn criticism from opposition leaders, particularly for bypassing reservation policies.

### Key Points:

- **Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav have criticized the government, alleging that the lateral entry system undermines reservation for SCs, STs, OBCs, and EWS categories.**

- They argue that filling these posts through the traditional civil services examination **would have ensured reservation** for these groups.
- The government has opened applications to both private sector professionals and state/UT officers, with a focus on talent and motivation for nation-building.
- Since the introduction of the lateral entry system in 2018, 63 appointments have been made, with 35 from the private sector.

### Note:

The **lateral entry scheme** was introduced in 2018 to bring experienced professionals from the private sector and other public sectors into senior government positions, such as joint secretaries, directors, and deputy secretaries. The goal is to infuse specialized skills and expertise into government administration. Candidates from the private sector are hired on a contract basis, while those from public sectors are appointed on deputation. Despite its aims to improve governance, the scheme has faced criticism for bypassing traditional reservation policies, potentially limiting opportunities for SCs, STs, OBCs, and EWS candidates, and raising concerns about the fairness and transparency of the process.

**"Civil service is not just a job; it's a commitment to public service, a duty to uphold the principles of democracy, and a chance to make a tangible difference in the lives of citizens."**





## The valley's brew



**Nunchai** is a traditional **Kashmiri tea** known for its distinctive pink color and creamy texture. Made from green tea leaves, milk, salt, and baking soda, it is prepared in a copper samovar, which imparts a frothy finish.

The tea's unique preparation process includes boiling with baking soda, cooling to retain color, and aerating to create a froth.

Served with local breads like sheermal and makke ki roti, nunchai is a **symbol of Kashmiri hospitality and culture**. It is popular among locals and tourists alike, and has found its way into elite restaurants and hotels outside Kashmir.

## Practice Prelims Question

**Question:** Which of the following statements about nunchai is/are correct?

1. Nunchai is a signature tea of Kashmir known for its distinctive pink color, achieved by adding baking soda during preparation.
2. It is traditionally served with sheermal, a mildly sweet bread, and sometimes with makke ki roti.
3. The preparation involves boiling tea leaves with baking soda until the mixture turns burgundy, followed by adding milk to achieve the pink color.
4. Nunchai is primarily prepared using black tea leaves and does not include green tea.

**Options:**

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1, 2, and 3
- d) 1, 2, and 4

**Answer:** c) 1, 2, and 3

**Explanation:**

1. **Statement 1** is correct. Nunchai is known for its distinctive pink color due to the addition of baking soda.
2. **Statement 2** is correct. Nunchai is traditionally served with sheermal and sometimes makke ki roti.
3. **Statement 3** is correct. The preparation involves boiling tea leaves with baking soda to turn the mixture burgundy, then adding milk to achieve the pink color.
4. **Statement 4** is false. Nunchai is traditionally made from green tea leaves, not black tea.

## Why is mpox a global health emergency?

What has the World Health Organization said? What are the symptoms? Is there a vaccine?

### What is mpox?

The story so far: Mpox, or monkeypox, is a rare, usually self-limiting disease caused by a virus that spreads from animals to humans and between humans. It is caused by the monkeypox virus, which belongs to the Orthopoxvirus genus in the Poxviridae family. Other diseases caused by viruses from the Orthopoxvirus genus include smallpox, cowpox, and vaccinia. The monkeypox virus is transmitted through direct contact with infected individuals, including skin-to-skin contact, contact with bodily fluids, and contact with contaminated materials. It can also be spread through contact with infected animals, such as rodents, birds, and primates. The disease typically presents with a characteristic rash, which may be accompanied by fever, swollen lymph nodes, and muscle aches. The rash usually starts on the face and spreads to other parts of the body. It can last for several weeks and may be painful. In some cases, it can lead to complications, such as skin infections and scarring. There is no specific treatment for mpox, but supportive care is recommended. Vaccines are available for people at high risk of infection, such as healthcare workers and laboratory personnel. The World Health Organization declared mpox a global health emergency on August 14, 2024, due to the rapid increase in cases and the potential for widespread transmission.

What is the emergency? The story so far: Mpox, or monkeypox, is a rare, usually self-limiting disease caused by a virus that spreads from animals to humans and between humans. It is caused by the monkeypox virus, which belongs to the Orthopoxvirus genus in the Poxviridae family. Other diseases caused by viruses from the Orthopoxvirus genus include smallpox, cowpox, and vaccinia. The monkeypox virus is transmitted through direct contact with infected individuals, including skin-to-skin contact, contact with bodily fluids, and contact with contaminated materials. It can also be spread through contact with infected animals, such as rodents, birds, and primates. The disease typically presents with a characteristic rash, which may be accompanied by fever, swollen lymph nodes, and muscle aches. The rash usually starts on the face and spreads to other parts of the body. It can last for several weeks and may be painful. In some cases, it can lead to complications, such as skin infections and scarring. There is no specific treatment for mpox, but supportive care is recommended. Vaccines are available for people at high risk of infection, such as healthcare workers and laboratory personnel. The World Health Organization declared mpox a global health emergency on August 14, 2024, due to the rapid increase in cases and the potential for widespread transmission.

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## WHO Declares Mpox Outbreak a Global Health Emergency

### Emergency Declaration and Current Status

- On August 14, 2024, the WHO elevated the mpox outbreak to an acute **grade 3 emergency**, the **highest level** on its response scale. This decision follows a surge in cases and deaths, particularly in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries**.

### About Mpox

- Mpox, or monkeypox, is a **zoonotic disease** caused by the **monkeypox virus**, **transmitted** through **direct contact** with infected animals or contaminated materials. It presents with **symptoms** such as **rashes, fever, sore throat, and swollen lymph nodes**.

### Treatment and Prevention

- There is **no specific treatment** for mpox; **supportive care** is recommended. Antivirals used for smallpox and three vaccines are available but not for mass vaccination.

### Current Outbreak and Global Impact

- The outbreak has spread to 116 countries, with over 15,600 cases and 537 deaths reported. The outbreak is particularly severe in Africa but has now reached other regions, including Pakistan and Sweden.

## "Deep Dive into the Concept"

The World Health Organization (WHO) **classifies emergencies** into **different grades** based on their severity and required response.

**Here's an overview of the various types:**

### 1. Grade 1 Emergency

#### Definition:

- A Grade 1 emergency is the **lowest level** of alert, indicating a situation that **poses a potential threat** but **does not yet require significant international intervention**.

#### Characteristics:

- Impact:** Limited to a specific area or population.
- Response Required:** Basic and localized response efforts are sufficient. Minimal international support or coordination is needed.

#### Purpose:

- To monitor the situation and prepare for possible escalation if necessary.

## 2. Grade 2 Emergency

### Definition:

- A Grade 2 emergency is *more serious and requires a moderate response*. It indicates that the situation is significant *but not at a scale* that demands a global emergency response.

### Characteristics:

- Impact:** Affects a broader area or larger population but is still *manageable with national resources* and support.
- Response Required:** Increased international support and coordination are necessary but not on a large scale.

### Purpose:

- To mobilize national and regional resources and to prepare for potential escalation.

## 3. Grade 3 Emergency

### Definition:

- A Grade 3 emergency is the *highest level*, signaling a *major or maximal response is needed* due to the severity of the situation.

### Characteristics:

- Impact:** The crisis has widespread effects, potentially *impacting multiple countries or regions*.
- Response Required:** Extensive international coordination and a large-scale response are required. This includes significant resource mobilization and global support.

### Purpose:

- To ensure immediate and comprehensive international action to manage and mitigate the emergency effectively.

## Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

### Definition:

- A PHEIC is a formal declaration by the WHO that *signifies an extraordinary event* which *poses a risk to international health and requires a global coordinated response*.

### Characteristics:

- Scope:** *May overlap with Grade 3 emergencies* but is specifically for health-related crises.
- Response Required:** Immediate international action to prevent the spread and manage the health risks.

### Purpose:

- To coordinate global efforts and mobilize resources to address and contain the emergency before it escalates further.

These classifications help the WHO and other international bodies prioritize resources and coordinate responses effectively based on the severity and scope of the emergency.



## Allegations Against SEBI and Adani Group: Key Developments

### Why is SEBI's credibility under a cloud?



### Background on Allegations

- Hindenburg Research accused the Adani Group of stock price manipulation and other corporate malfeasance. Their recent report claims that SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch's investment in an offshore fund linked to Adani raises conflict-of-interest concerns.

### SEBI's Response

- SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and her husband, Dhaval Buch, stated their investment in the fund was made before her SEBI appointment and was disclosed appropriately. SEBI has completed 23 of 24 investigations into Adani Group and defended its practices against the allegations.

### Further Questions Raised

- Hindenburg Research questioned the timing of Buch's transfer of consulting firm shares and continued ownership of another firm, suggesting potential conflicts of interest. There are calls for a transparent investigation into these matters.

### Next Steps

- The Supreme Court had previously expressed confidence in SEBI's investigations. Moving forward, the focus is on expediting the pending investigation into the Adani Group and ensuring transparency in SEBI's actions.

## Background and Incident

### Do doctors need a Central protection Act?



- Resident doctors across India are striking to demand better safety laws following the rape and murder of a young doctor at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9. The incident highlighted the **lack of central protection** for healthcare workers.

### Ground Reality

- Health and law and order** are **state subjects**, making it the state's responsibility to ensure safety. The central government does not maintain comprehensive data on fatalities of medical professionals from attacks. Historical incidents show a persistent issue of violence against healthcare workers, with demands for improved security measures.

### Doctors' Demands

- Doctors are calling for improved safety measures, including better lighting, security guards, and CCTV. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has called for a **Central Protection Act** and enhanced hospital security protocols.

### Recent Provisions

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has **mandated** that **heads of institutions must file an FIR within six hours** of any violence against healthcare workers. The National Medical Commission (NMC) has also directed medical colleges **to establish safety policies and promptly investigate violence incidents**.

The Islamist movement, whose leader was convicted of war crimes for helping the Pakistani military in the 1971 massacre and hanged, has made a political comeback in Bangladesh after the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government was toppled on August 5

## Political Dynamics of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JeI)

## Background and Key Events

- The political turmoil in Bangladesh was highlighted by a protest slogan describing the Sheikh Hasina government's actions as a betrayal. The government, led by Hasina, faced criticism for failing to curb the anti-liberation forces, notably represented by the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JeI).

## JeI's Historical Context

- **Formation and Early Opposition:** The JI, founded in 1941 in Lahore, *initially opposed Pakistan's creation* but later

supported an Islamic constitution. In East Pakistan, it became a prominent force against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his federalist demands.

- **1971 Liberation War:** During the 1971 liberation war, JeI's leader, Ghulam Azam, was implicated in war crimes. The party's support for Pakistan's military led to widespread atrocities.

## Post-1971 Developments

- **Revival and Politics:** After Bangladesh's independence, JeI was re-established in 1979. It grew in political significance, winning seats in various elections and forming alliances with major parties like the BNP.
- **Shift in Strategy:** Post-1992, after the Babri Masjid demolition, JeI capitalized on religious sentiments to strengthen its position. Despite setbacks, including Ghulam Azam's exclusion from active politics and Nizami's execution, the JeI adapted its tactics.

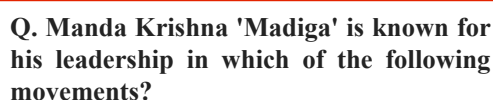
## Recent Developments

- Modern Tactics:** Following Nizami's execution in 2016, JeI adopted a more sophisticated approach, focusing on social media and educational institutions. The party, despite being banned, played a role in a pro-democracy movement in 2024, collaborating with student groups to challenge the Hasina government.

### Rebel with a cause

### Madan Krishna

Decades-long activism of the Madiga leader paid off when the Supreme Court gave a historic



- a) Movement for the abolition of untouchability
- b) Movement for the sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes

- c) Movement for the integration of tribal communities into the mainstream
- d) Movement for environmental conservation in Andhra Pradesh

Answer : b

**Explanation:**

Manda Krishna 'Madiga' led the movement for the sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Andhra Pradesh through his organization, the Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS). This movement aimed to divide SCs into sub-groups to ensure more equitable distribution of reservations and benefits.

## 'Subclinical TB is the reason for slow drop in TB incidence'

The first has been the slow drop in incidence and diagnosis of people who come with TB symptoms and is evident from the fact that the number of people who come with TB symptoms has been dropping since 2012.



The article *discusses* the **challenge of detecting and managing subclinical tuberculosis (TB)**, a form of TB where *individuals do not exhibit typical symptoms but can still transmit* the disease.

### Key points include:

- 1. Prevalence of Subclinical TB:** National surveys, including the Tamil Nadu TB prevalence survey, reveal a significant proportion of TB cases are subclinical, ranging from 30% to 80% depending on the definition used. Subclinical TB contributes to the slow decline in overall TB incidence, as these cases can remain undetected and continue to spread the disease.
- 2. Global and Local Screening Efforts:** Countries like Vietnam have implemented extensive community screening for subclinical TB, using chest X-rays and molecular testing to reduce TB prevalence significantly. However, this approach is not yet part of national TB programs in most countries.
- 3. Challenges in Screening and Treatment:** Screening seemingly healthy individuals for TB is challenging and requires new strategies, such as mobile units with X-ray capabilities. Convincing individuals with subclinical TB to start and complete treatment is difficult due to the lack of symptoms, which can lead to higher dropout rates.
- 4. Focus on High-Risk Groups:** While subclinical TB is found in the general community, high-risk areas and populations could be targeted for screening to identify and manage cases effectively.
- 5. Infectious Nature of Subclinical TB:** People with subclinical TB can still be infectious, potentially contributing to ongoing transmission of TB in the community. Some may self-cure, but others can progress to active TB.
- 6. AI in Screening:** The use of AI-based chest X-rays for TB screening is being explored, with some AI algorithms already validated for use in TB detection.

Overall, the article highlights the need for improved detection and management strategies to address the significant burden of subclinical TB and its impact on TB control efforts.

## Practice Prelims Question

Consider the following statements regarding subclinical tuberculosis (TB):

1. Subclinical TB refers to TB cases where individuals do not exhibit any symptoms but can still transmit the disease.
2. High-burden countries have found a median prevalence of subclinical TB to be around 50%, with variability based on the definition and symptom complex used.
3. The primary challenge in managing subclinical TB is the difficulty in convincing asymptomatic individuals to start and complete treatment.
4. Screening for subclinical TB using chest X-rays is currently part of standard national TB programs in several high-burden countries.



Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 1, 2, and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 2, 3, and 4

**Answer:**

- b) 1, 2, and 3

**Explanation:**

1. **Subclinical TB** refers to cases where individuals *do not show symptoms* but can still spread the disease, which is correct.
2. Studies in high-burden countries indicate a **median prevalence** of subclinical TB around 50%, with variations based on definitions, so this statement is accurate.
3. The challenge of managing subclinical TB includes the **difficulty in convincing** asymptomatic individuals to begin and complete treatment, making this statement correct.
4. Screening for subclinical TB using chest X-rays is *not yet a standard practice* in national TB programs in most high-burden countries, so statement 4 is incorrect.

## Zoopharmacognosy – how animals self-medicate



In the May 2, 2024, issue of the journal *Nature*, an article titled 'Active self-treatment of a facial wound by a biologically active plant by a male Sumatran orangutan', Launer et al. report on how this primate in Indonesia treats a wound on his face by making a paste of the local plant *Fibraurea tinctoria*, and applied it to the wound. A 2012 publication by Matt Kaplan in *Nature*, titled 'Neanderthals ate their greens', analysed the dental plaque of some Neanderthals from northern Spain, and found that

they used plants such as yarrow and chamomile, to rid themselves of infections and for their general health. Several such plants have been used by people in traditional medicine, to overcome infections and for general health. The comprehensive review by R. Raman and S. Khandia in *Life*, 2023, 13(12), 245-253, March 2008 points out that the ecologist D.H. Janzen from the University of Pennsylvania coined the term 'zoopharmacognosy' in 1967, and was the first one to compile a list of animals that self-medicate by ingesting or topically applying specific plants, soil, and insects. Besides offering essential nutrients for metabolism and growth, these also offer disease treatment and protection from parasites. 'Coo'



Sumatran orangutan named Rakot seen two months after wound self-treatment using a medicinal plant, in Indonesia, in 2015. The article refers to animals, and pharmacognosy to the study of drugs and venics for health. Dr. E.M. Costa-Pereira of Bahia, Brazil, in 'Trends in Environmental Science, Biotechnology' in 2012 titled 'Zoopharmacognosy: the self-medication behavior of animals, as also Joel Sharfman from Baltimore, in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences has listed several plants and their roots, leaves, and

fruits that apes, monkeys, reindeer, bears and some birds (starlings) eat to stay healthy. Dogs medicate themselves by chewing grass and vomiting it to get rid of infections in the stomach. Pregnant lemurs nibble on tamarind leaves to aid milk production, and pregnant elephants in Kenya eat the leaves of some plants of the Boraginaceae family to induce delivery. The Roman natural history

Pliny pointed out 2,000 years ago that many animals had made medical discoveries from certain plants that they eat. Many of these medicinal plants have been known for over 3,000 years in Africa, Egypt, the Middle East, India, and China, and are still used today. The medicinal plant *Fibraurea tinctoria* that the Sumatran orangutan used for wound healing contains the anti-inflammatory molecule berberine. Called 'Akar kunyit' locally, the plant is used in the traditional medical system there. And in the southern subtropical regions, its equivalent is called 'Oleander' and is used as a curative for jaundice. The shrub aloe vera, which is found in India where it is called 'gaur patra' in Hindi and

The article *discusses* the use of plants for self-medication observed in animals and the historical and contemporary use of medicinal plants in traditional medicine.

**1.Recent Observations:** A 2024 study in *Nature* reports that a male Sumatran orangutan self-treats a facial wound by applying a paste made from the plant *Fibraurea tinctoria*. This plant contains the anti-inflammatory compound berberine.

**2.Historical Context:** A 2012 study in *Nature* found that Neanderthals used plants like yarrow and chamomile for health and infection treatment.

3. **Concept of Zoopharmacognosy:** The term '*zoopharmacognosy*,' coined by ecologist D.H. Janzen, *refers to animals using plants, soil, and insects for self-medication*. This includes practices seen in various animals, such as dogs chewing grass to induce vomiting and pregnant lemurs nibbling on tamarind leaves to aid milk production.
4. **Traditional Medicine:** Medicinal plants have long been used across cultures. The article highlights traditional systems from China, Arabia, and India, which have utilized plants like aloe vera, holy basil, and wild garlic for thousands of years.
5. **Contemporary Relevance:** The article mentions that plants like *Fibraurea tinctoria* and *Aloe vera* are still used today for their medicinal properties, including anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial effects. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of traditional knowledge in discovering new natural product molecules for modern medicine.

## Practice Prelims Question

**Q. Which of the following statements are correct regarding the use of medicinal plants and self-medication in animals?**

1. The Sumatran orangutan's use of *Fibraurea tinctoria* for wound healing demonstrates the practice of zoopharmacognosy.
2. Neanderthals were found to use plants like yarrow and chamomile primarily for nutritional purposes.
3. Animals such as dogs and pregnant lemurs have been observed using specific plants for self-medication and health benefits.
4. The concept of zoopharmacognosy was first introduced by the Roman natural historian Pliny.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

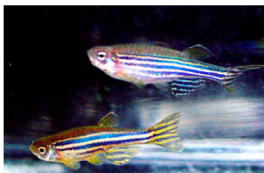
- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 1 and 3 only
- C) 2 and 4 only
- D) 1, 3, and 4 only

**Answer:**

- B) 1 and 3 only

**Explanation:**

1. **Statement 1** is correct: The use of *Fibraurea tinctoria* by the Sumatran orangutan for wound healing is an example of zoopharmacognosy, where animals self-medicate using plants.
2. **Statement 2** is incorrect: Neanderthals used plants like yarrow and chamomile for medicinal purposes, not just for nutrition.
3. **Statement 3** is correct: Animals like dogs and pregnant lemurs have been observed using specific plants for self-medication and health benefits.
4. **Statement 4** is incorrect: The concept of zoopharmacognosy was coined by ecologist **D.H. Janzen**, not by the Roman natural historian Pliny.



### Zebrafish use surprising strategy to regrow spinal cord

Zebrafish are capable of fully healing a severed spinal cord. A new study maps out a detailed atlas of all the cells involved – and how they work together – in regenerating the zebrafish spinal cord. The researchers showed that survival and adaptability of the severed neurons themselves is required for full spinal cord regeneration. Stem cells capable of forming new neurons – and typically thought of as central to regeneration – only play a complementary role but do not lead the process.

Which of the following statements about zebrafish spinal cord regeneration is/are correct?

1. Stem cells are the primary drivers of spinal cord regeneration in zebrafish.
2. The survival and adaptability of severed neurons are essential for full spinal cord regeneration.
3. A new study has developed a detailed atlas of all cells involved in zebrafish spinal cord regeneration.

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

- A) 1 only   B) 2 only   C) 2 and 3 only   D) 1, 2 and 3

Answer : C) 2 and 3 only

### Explanation:

**1. Stem cells are the primary drivers of spinal cord regeneration in zebrafish.**

- This statement is *incorrect*. The study indicates that while stem cells play a role in spinal cord regeneration, they do not lead the process. The primary role is played by the survival and adaptability of the severed neurons.

**2. The survival and adaptability of severed neurons are essential for full spinal cord regeneration.**

- This statement is *correct*. The research highlights that the survival and adaptability of the severed neurons are crucial for complete spinal cord regeneration.

**3. A new study has developed a detailed atlas of all cells involved in zebrafish spinal cord regeneration.**

- This statement is *correct*. The study mentioned maps out a detailed atlas of the cells involved in spinal cord regeneration in zebrafish.



Scottish, Irish rocks record a rare 'snowball Earth'

A rock formation spanning Ireland and Scotland may be the world's most complete record of 'snowball Earth', a moment in planetary history when the globe was covered in ice. The Port Askaig Formation, composed of layers of rock up to 1.1 km thick, was likely laid down between 662 and 720 million years ago during the Sturtian glaciation – the first of two global freezes thought to have triggered the development of complex, multicellular life. Other rocks that formed at a similar time are missing this transition.

The **Port Askaig Formation**, spanning *Ireland* and *Scotland*, may be the most complete record of 'snowball Earth,' a period when the Earth was entirely covered in ice. This rock formation, up to 1.1 km thick, was likely deposited between 662 and 720 million years ago during the Sturtian glaciation. This global freeze is believed to have played a key role in the emergence of complex, multicellular life.

Unlike other contemporaneous rocks, the Port Askaig Formation *preserves this crucial transitional period in Earth's history*.

Q. The Port Askaig Formation, spanning parts of Ireland and Scotland, is significant for studying which of the following periods in Earth's history?

1. The Cretaceous Period
2. The Ordovician Period
3. The Sturtian Glaciation
4. The Cambrian Explosion

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 3 only
- d) 1 and 4 only

Answer: C

### Explanation:

The Port Askaig Formation is linked to the Sturtian glaciation, a major ice age event that occurred between 662 and 720 million years ago. This formation provides a detailed record of this 'snowball Earth' period, which is significant for understanding the early history of Earth's glaciations and the development of complex life. The other periods listed (Cretaceous, Ordovician, and Cambrian) are not related to the Port Askaig Formation.



Blind cavefish have taste buds on the head, chin.

Over thousands of years, cavefish evolved and lost their vision, earning the moniker "the blind cavefish." But some cavefish also developed a number of taste buds on the head and chin. Researchers have determined when the taste buds start to appear. The number of taste buds is similar to the surface fish from birth through five months of age. They start to increase in number and appear on the head and chin in month six, well into adulthood, at nearly 18 months.

Over thousands of years, **cavefish** evolved to lose their vision, leading them to be known as "the **blind cavefish**." However, during this evolution, some cavefish developed **additional taste buds** on their **head** and **chin**.

Researchers have found that while the number of taste buds in cavefish is similar to that of surface fish from birth through five months, they begin to increase in number and appear on the head and chin, continuing to develop into adulthood, reaching their peak at around 18 months.

## Practice Prelims Question

**Q. What adaptation related to taste buds is observed in cavefish compared to their surface-dwelling counterparts, and at what stage of development do these adaptations become prominent?**

- A) Cavefish lose taste buds during early development and regain them in adulthood.
- B) Cavefish develop additional taste buds on the head and chin, with these adaptations becoming prominent around 18 months of age.
- C) The number of taste buds in cavefish is significantly fewer than in surface fish throughout their lifespan.
- D) Cavefish develop more taste buds on their fins and tail as they mature.

**Answer:** B) Cavefish develop additional taste buds on the head and chin, with these adaptations becoming prominent around 18 months of age.

**Explanation:** Cavefish, which evolved to lose their vision, have developed additional taste buds on their head and chin. While the number of taste buds is similar to surface fish from birth through five months, they begin to increase and become prominent on the head and chin well into adulthood, reaching their peak at around 18 months.



### Question Corner

#### Differently affected

Do heat waves affect urban trees more than their rural counterparts?

A recent study details how trees in New York City, Boston and Baltimore, Maryland are more adversely impacted by heat waves and drought than trees of the same species in nearby rural forests. The urban trees in the three cities experienced greater negative impacts from heat waves and drought compared to rural trees. Also, the growth rates and carbon storage capabilities of urban trees are significantly reduced during extreme weather conditions. The growth of oak trees, but not red maple trees, in the urban sites of Boston and New York City, were more adversely impacted by heat stress than their rural counterparts. But such urban-rural differences in the growth of oak trees was not seen in Maryland. The finding highlights the challenges urban trees face in the context of climate change and, underscores the importance of tailored urban forestry management as a tool for protecting tree species and reducing urban heat islands.

Readers may send their questions / answers to [questioncorner@bpscpoint.in](mailto:questioncorner@bpscpoint.in)

**Q. Which of the following statements about the impact of heat waves and drought on urban and rural trees is/are correct?**

1. Urban trees are generally more negatively impacted by extreme weather conditions like heat waves and drought compared to rural trees.
2. Certain tree species in urban environments may experience more stress from heat and drought than others.
3. The growth and carbon storage capacity of urban trees are typically reduced during extreme weather events.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

**Answer:** d) 1, 2, and 3

#### Explanation:

Urban trees generally face more stress due to factors like heat islands, leading to more significant impacts during heat waves and droughts. Specific species of trees may be more vulnerable to these stresses, and overall growth and carbon storage capacity of urban trees decline during such extreme weather events.

## India needs to lift job growth via reforms: IMF's Gopinath

Economist moots a wide range of reforms to boost employment, but for women's safety noting that country can't become a developed economy without adding more women in the workforce

Vikas Thakur  
NEW DELHI

India needs to improve the depth and quality of its education system to create an employable workforce, nurture effective institutions, including an efficient judiciary, to support development, and pursue reforms in its land and labour markets, in order to actualise its quest to become a developed country, International Monetary Fund (IMF) deputy managing director Gita Gopinath emphasised on Saturday.



Ms. Gopinath, who was in conversation with BPSC

### Fund's recipe

IMF's Gita Gopinath says India needs to improve both quality of its education system to create an employable workforce

• India needs to improve both quality of its education system to create an employable workforce

• India needs to improve both quality of its education system to create an employable workforce

match in the workforce "is now a longstanding problem" that warrants urgent investments in revamping education and making sure that people have more years of, and better quality, education and artificial intelligence (AI) spurring worries about the future of work opportunities, the IMF official cited a study by the multilateral lender that looked at four indicators to assess 110 countries' preparedness for adapting with AI.

India is at about an intermediate level of preparedness, somewhat slightly above the average for emerging markets and developing economies, but again, if you look within those indicators, the indicator on education and skill levels of the workforce, that's the area where a lot more work is needed.

## Key facts and points from the discussion by Gita Gopinath at the Delhi School of Economics:

### 1. Education System & Workforce:

- India needs to improve the depth and quality of its education system.
- Creating an employable workforce is crucial for achieving developed country status.
- Urgent investments are needed to address the longstanding skill mismatch in the workforce.

### 2. Judicial and Institutional Reforms:

- Effective institutions, including an efficient judiciary, are essential to support development.

### 3. Land and Labor Reforms:

- Reforms in land and labor markets are necessary.
- Policies should not penalize firms for hiring workers.
- Implementation of the Labor Codes passed by Parliament should be incentivized for States.

### 4. Women's Labor Force Participation:

- India's women labor participation rate stands at 35%.
- No country can attain 'high-income' status without increasing women's participation.
- Ensuring women's safety is vital to achieving this goal.

### 5. Trade and Tariff Reduction:

- India's import tariffs are higher than peer economies.
- Lowering tariffs is necessary to be a key player in global supply chains.

### 6. Employment Growth:

- India's GDP growth averaged 6.6% since the 2010s, but employment growth was under 2%.
- India needs to create between 60-148 million jobs by 2030.

### 7. Corporate and Public Investment:

- Public investment is strong, but corporate investment lags behind.
- Corporate investment should increase to support the 7% economic growth rate.

### 8. Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI):

- India is moderately prepared for AI, slightly above the emerging markets' average.
- The education and skills development area needs more focus to adapt to AI.
- Policies must ensure automation does not reduce job opportunities.

### 9. Social Security and Reskilling:

- Countries must provide social security nets and reskilling programs for displaced workers.
- Ms. Gopinath highlighted Singapore's lifelong learning grants as a model.

These points reflect the steps India must take to progress toward economic development and address key challenges in education, labor, investment, and adapting to technology.



## 'Urgently need to plug \$4 tn financing gap to hasten pace on SDGs'

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said that inadequate access to development finance was hindering developing economies from achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and underscored the urgent need to address this \$4 trillion annual financing gap.

Addressing a Voice of Global South summit, Ms. Sitharaman said reports revealed that the implemen-

tation of many SDGs in developing economies was stagnating, with some indicators even regressing. Citing a World Bank report, she noted that one in four developing countries was set to be poorer by the end of this year than they were before the pandemic. "Growth thus remains insufficient to drive progress in development and poverty reduction. To accelerate progress on SDGs, there is an urgent need to address the \$4 trillion financing gap," she stressed.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, at the **Voice of Global South summit**, emphasized that *inadequate access to development finance* is obstructing developing countries from achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

She highlighted a **\$4 trillion annual financing gap** that needs to be addressed urgently. Citing reports, she noted that SDG progress in many developing nations has stagnated, with some indicators even worsening.

A **World Bank report** revealed that one in four developing countries will be poorer by the end of this year than before the pandemic, with growth insufficient to reduce poverty and advance development.

With more graduates in workforce, Tamil Nadu struggles with skills gap

PTI



Graduates receive certificates from the Tamil Nadu government.

**Tamil Nadu** fares better than most Indian states in employment metrics, but *faces challenges with underemployment and skill gaps* despite producing the highest number of graduates. The state's labour force participation rate (LFPR) is 46%, higher than the national average of 42.4%, and its Worker Population Ratio (WPR) is 44% compared to 41.1% nationwide. However, the unemployment rate among educated individuals is higher in Tamil Nadu, particularly among graduates (16.3% compared to the national average of 13.4%).

Despite a high Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education, the state's job market has not kept pace, leading many graduates to work in the gig economy. Wage discrimination persists, with women earning significantly less than men. Experts suggest focusing more on incentivizing labour over capital investments and improving skill development programs to address the skill

gap among recent graduates. Initiatives like the TN government's **"Naan Mudhalvan" scheme** are seen as promising for job creation but need broader industry involvement and enhanced internships.

## Practice Prelims Question

**Q. With reference to the "Naan Mudhalvan" scheme, consider the following statements:**

1. The scheme is aimed at providing skill development and career guidance to students and youth in Tamil Nadu.
2. It is implemented by the Central Government to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities across India.
3. The scheme focuses on collaboration with industry partners to improve job opportunities for entry-level positions.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A) 1 and 3 only  
B) 2 only  
C) 1 only  
D) 1, 2, and 3

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

**Explanation:**

- Statement 1 is correct: The "Naan Mudhalvan" scheme focuses on skill development and career guidance for students and youth in Tamil Nadu.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The scheme is a state government initiative, not implemented by the Central Government.
- Statement 3 is correct: The scheme involves collaboration with industry partners to enhance employment opportunities for entry-level jobs.

**Q. With reference to the employment scenario in Tamil Nadu, consider the following statements:**

1. Tamil Nadu has the highest number of factories in India.
2. The state's unemployment rate among graduates is lower than the national average.
3. The labour force participation rate (LFPR) in Tamil Nadu is higher than the national average.
4. The "Naan Mudhalvan" scheme focuses on creating entry-level job opportunities for graduates.

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

- A) 1 and 3 only
- B) 2 and 4 only
- C) 1, 3, and 4 only
- D) 1, 2, and 4 only

**Answer:** C) 1, 3, and 4 only

**Explanation:**

- Statement 1 is correct: Tamil Nadu has the highest number of factories in India, contributing significantly to industrial employment.
- Statement 2 is incorrect: The unemployment rate among graduates in Tamil Nadu is higher than the national average.
- Statement 3 is correct: Tamil Nadu's labour force participation rate (LFPR) is higher than the national average.
- Statement 4 is correct: The "Naan Mudhalvan" scheme focuses on creating entry-level job opportunities, particularly through skill development initiatives.

DGH boosting management of data to better handle E&P

**Richa Mishra**  
HYDERABAD

To create more transparency in data mining and accessibility as well as preparing itself for monitoring all types of energy sources, the Directorate-General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) is upgrading its National Data Repository (NDR) and also carving out a Hydrocarbon Efficiency and New Energy Department.

At successive roadshows held by the DGH before the exploration rounds, it has been found that investors want a more liberal regime in terms and stability in doing business here.

Also, a constant question to all the successive Director-Generals of DGH, the technical arm of the Ministry for Petroleum and Natural Gas that monitors exploration and production activities, has been why have the Excesses of the world still not made a mark in India's upstream space. What is it that they seek?

"A lot of things have been taken care of in the recently introduced Oilfields Regulation and Development (Amendment) Bill, 2024. Separately a working group for reserve-based funding – financing from banks – has also been constituted by the government," Pallavi Jain Govil, Director-General, DGH, told *businessline*.

While this happening on a real-time basis, the DGH is also working on NDR 2.0. "Tenders have been floated for various packages for NDR 2.0 Project and tender process is expected to be completed soon."

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

The **Directorate-General of Hydrocarbons (DGH)** is undertaking *several initiatives* to improve the oil and gas sector in India:

- 1. Upgrading the National Data Repository (NDR) to version 2.0:** DGH is working on NDR 2.0 to enhance data transparency and accessibility in the oil and gas sector.
- 2. Establishing a new Hydrocarbon Efficiency and New Energy Department:** This new department is being created to address efficiency and new energy needs in the hydrocarbon sector.
- 3. Introducing the Oilfields Regulation and Development (Amendment) Bill, 2024:** This bill aims to address investor concerns and improve the regulatory framework for oilfields.
- 4. Creating a working group for reserve-based financing:** A working group has been set up to facilitate financing from banks based on reserves.

All these measures are part of DGH's efforts to attract investment, improve transparency, and modernize the regulatory framework in the upstream oil and gas sector.

**Q. Which of the following initiatives is being undertaken by the Directorate-General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) to improve data transparency and accessibility in India's upstream oil and gas sector?**

1. Upgrading the National Data Repository (NDR) to version 2.0
2. Establishing a new Hydrocarbon Efficiency and New Energy Department
3. Introducing the Oilfields Regulation and Development (Amendment) Bill, 2024
4. Creating a working group for reserve-based financing

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1, 2, and 3 only
- c) 2, 3, and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

The correct answer is **d) 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

## Shifting Govil 'can delay bill on digital competition'

**K.R. Srivats**  
NEW DELHI

The finalisation of the much-anticipated Digital Competition Bill (DCB) may be delayed following the Centre's decision on Friday to move Manoj Govil, Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, to the Finance Ministry as Expenditure Secretary, say economy watchers.

Mr. Govil was at the helm of framing the DCB to establish a competitive, and equitable digital market in India. His departure has created a vacuum on this front.

### Delays likely

The new MCA Secretary, Deepti Gaur Mukerjee, would need time to familiarise herself with the intricacies of the Bill, delaying its finalisation, said economy watchers. The DCB has been in the works for more than 18 months.

The government expects the digital economy to touch \$1 trillion by 2025-26. The DCB was intended to address the complex challenges posed by the growing dominance of technology giants in India's digital market.

As Chairman of the 16-member Inter-Ministerial Committee on Digital Competition Law (CDCL), set up in 2023, Mr. Govil brought together various stakeholders, from industry experts to legal professionals, to frame DCB.

Mr. Govil played a leading role in completing the CDCL report, drafting the Bill and securing the CCI's approval for the report's recommendations and the Bill's proposals.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

## "Regulating the Digital Giants: Insights into India's Digital Competition Bill"

**India's Digital Competition Bill (DCB)** is an initiative aimed at regulating the digital market to ensure fair competition and address issues arising from the dominance of large technology companies.

### Here are some key aspects of the DCB:

#### Purpose and Objectives:

**1. Fair Competition:** The primary goal is to foster a competitive digital market by curbing anti-competitive practices and ensuring that market dominance by technology giants does not stifle competition.

**2. Consumer Protection:** It aims to protect consumer interests by preventing practices that could lead to unfair market conditions or harm users.

**3. Regulatory Framework:** The Bill seeks to create a comprehensive framework for regulating digital platforms, addressing issues like data privacy, market concentration, and unfair trade practices.

#### Key Features:

**1. Regulation of Dominant Platforms:** The DCB targets large digital platforms that have significant market power, ensuring they do not engage in practices that could harm competition or consumers.

**2. Transparency and Accountability:** It emphasizes greater transparency in business practices and accountability for technology giants operating in the digital space.

**3. Inter-Ministerial Committee:** The Bill has been shaped by an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Digital Competition Law (CDCL), which includes various stakeholders like industry experts and legal professionals.

## Development and Process:

1. **Drafting and Consultation:** The DCB has been in development for over 18 months, with extensive consultations involving various stakeholders to address the complexities of the digital market.
2. **Approval and Finalization:** The Bill has undergone approval processes and has been drafted with input from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and other regulatory bodies.

## Challenges and Delays:

1. **Leadership Changes:** Recent leadership changes, such as Manoj Govil's transfer, have potentially delayed the finalization and implementation of the DCB.
2. **Familiarisation and Transition:** New officials, like the new Secretary of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, may need time to become familiar with the Bill's intricacies, impacting the timeline.

## Impact and Expectations:

1. **Market Dynamics:** The DCB is expected to significantly influence the way digital platforms operate in India, promoting a more competitive and fair market environment.
2. **Economic Growth:** By addressing regulatory gaps and ensuring fair competition, the Bill aims to support India's rapidly growing digital economy, which is projected to reach \$1 trillion by 2025-26.

The DCB represents a critical step in adapting India's regulatory framework to the evolving digital landscape, aiming to balance the growth of the digital economy with robust competition and consumer protection.

### Honouring the dead



People burn offerings for their dead ancestors on a street during the Hungry Ghost Festival in Macau on Saturday. The festival is celebrated in the seventh lunar month of the lunar new year calendar among communities in China, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. AFP

Q. The Hungry Ghost Festival, celebrated during the seventh lunar month, is observed in several regions. Which of the following communities is NOT traditionally associated with this festival?

- 1.China
- 2.Malaysia
- 3.Japan
- 4.Singapore
- 5.Taiwan

**Answer: 3. Japan**

### Explanation:

The Hungry Ghost Festival is celebrated in regions with significant Chinese cultural influences, including China, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Japan, although having its own traditions for honoring ancestors such as Obon, does not traditionally celebrate the Hungry Ghost Festival.





## Chit funds – hook and sinker



The article discusses the **financial turmoil** faced by depositors of the Mylapore Benefit Fund Nidhi Ltd., a 150-year-old Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) that recently shut down, leaving many investors unable to access their funds. Depositors, many of whom are elderly and have invested their savings and pensions, are struggling with the firm's refusal to pay back their principal and interest. The Economic Offences Wing of the Tamil Nadu Police has arrested the company's chairman and two directors.

The issue is part of a broader pattern of financial fraud involving NBFCs in Tamil Nadu. Many such companies, promising high returns, have collapsed, leading to significant financial losses for depositors. The state enacted the Tamil Nadu Protection of Interests of Depositors (Financial Establishments) Act in 1997 to address these issues, and the Economic Offences Wing was established to handle such cases. Despite these measures, fraudulent schemes continue to prey on depositors, especially those from the middle class. The article highlights ongoing challenges in recovering funds and the need for improved monitoring and awareness to protect investors.



## In the sugarcane fields lurks a killer



In Shahi village, Uttar Pradesh, residents are grappling with fear following a series of murders. Over the past 14 months, nine women were killed in the area, with their bodies showing signs of strangulation and sexual assault. Initially treated as separate incidents, the pattern eventually led the police to investigate the possibility of a serial killer.

The police launched **"Operation Talaash"** to address the case. They released sketches of suspects and, on August 9, arrested Kuldeep Kumar, a local man, who was allegedly found intoxicated and confessed to the murders. Kuldeep reportedly targeted women working alone in sugarcane fields, and his confessions were supported by psychological evaluations and forensic evidence.

However, there is controversy surrounding his arrest. Some locals believe Kuldeep is being framed, citing issues with the investigation and inconsistencies in the police's handling of the case. The case has drawn comparisons to similar crimes in other countries involving sugarcane fields. Kuldeep remains in police remand, facing

charges under Indian criminal law.

**"Understanding current affairs is crucial for UPSC/State PSC preparation, as it bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, ensuring that candidates are well-informed, relevant, and capable of making insightful analyses on contemporary issues."**