

Daily Current Affairs

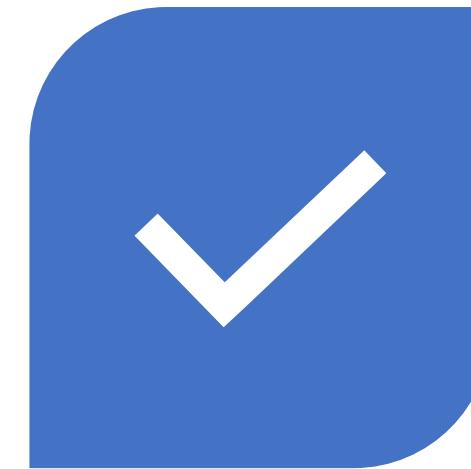




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INSIDE



Manipur's CM reaches out to Kukis, Meiteis

GUJARAT
Manipur Chief Minister Yuvendra Singh on Wednesday assured Jammu and Kashmir's states and increased with violence-scarred Kuki Zos and Meitei communities as part of the state's building up of the government. ■ PAGE 4

'Vande Mataram must precede the National Anthem'

NEW DELHI
The Centre has said in a set of instructions to the States and government bodies that while the National Anthem should be sung or played at all functions, the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, when both the songs are played at an event, is PAGE 5

Ex-TDB secretary summoned by ED in gold theft case

KRISHNA
The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has issued notices to former Tatas Finance Director (Tata Finserve) Jayesh Patel and Rajesh, an alleged intermediary, in the Sabarmati gold theft case. ■ PAGE 5

Vice Chief of Air Staff seeks more fighter planes

NEW DELHI
The Vice Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal Hemant Kapoor on Wednesday described the Rafale fighter jet as the "best" fighter aircraft in the world and the Indian Air Force (IAF) was looking to induct more such fighter aircraft. ■ PAGE 5

Tamil Brahmi inscriptions in Egypt point to ancient trade links

S. SAI CHARAN

A path-breaking finding has shed new light on trade links between the parts of India, and the Roman Empire. Two researchers have found ancient Tamil inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi, Prakrit, and Sanskrit at the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. These inscriptions are said to belong to the period between 2024 and 2025 by Charlotte Schmid, Professor at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. The team documented the inscriptions across six tombs in the Theban Necropolis. They fol-

lowed in the footsteps of French scholar Jules Bonna, who in 1926 had published more than 2,000 Greek graffiti marks. From these findings in a paper titled *From the Valley of the Kings to India: Tamil Brahmi inscriptions in Egypt at the ongoing International Conference on Tamil Brahmi and Tamil Studies*, the researchers said that the individuals who made these inscriptions came from the north-western and southern regions of the Indian subcontinent, with those from the latter forming the majority.

Visitor graffiti

Visitors had left brief inscriptions and graffiti by carving their names on the walls of the corridors and rooms, marking their presence in the tombs, the researchers said, adding that

these sets of inscriptions appear inside the tombs along with other bodies of graffiti in other languages, primarily Greek. Within such settings, the Indian visitors seem to have followed an existing practice of leaving their names inside the tombs.

The name *Cikai Koggai* (pronounced 'Kotra') appears in Tamil Brahmi inscribed eight times across five tombs. The name was found near entrances, walls, among other graffiti marks. In one tomb, it appears as a head title, and in another at the entrance, Mr. Schmid said. The name *Koggai*, which means 'king', this element may be connected to the Sanskrit *rikta*, which is a common name, the second element, *Koggai*, is more distinctly Tamil. It carries strong war-

like associations, as it refers to a root, *koggai*, meaning 'to lay'. This root is echoed in the Chera warrior goddess *Koggai* (also known as *Kavayi*, meaning king). ■ Page 10

More finds

The name *Koggai* also came up in other inscriptions from Pugala, the ancient

A Tamil Brahmi inscription with the name *Cikai Koggai* in one of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

paramba, written on a sherd discovered at Berenike, a port city in Egypt. The name is significant as they shed light on the trade links between the Roman Empire and the Indian subcontinent. The name *Koggai* has also been found in Arumanian, and other Tamil names identified include *Cikai* and *Koggai*.

K. Rajan, academic and research adviser, Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, said the findings are significant as they shed light on the trade links between the Roman Empire and the Indian subcontinent. The team had focused on the Red Sea port city of Berenike, which had conducted trade with the Malabar Coast and the Roman Empire.

The team had also found that the name *Koggai* in the Parambanam inscription, it sometimes directly addressed as *Koggai*, the scholar pointed out, and that this was conducted for 100 years and attention had now moved to the Nile river valley.

Govt. plans guidelines on books by veterans

Ministry held a meeting to frame regulations for both serving and retired personnel, says official

**SANGHAMITRA
NEW DELHI**

Amid the controversy surrounding the Army's guidelines for serving and retired personnel, the Defence Ministry is working on detailed guidelines for serving and retired personnel, for whom who wish to publish books in future.

These guidelines will spell out the process to be followed before any manuscript is cleared for publication.

A senior defence official informed that the meeting was held recently to frame a new set of rules, during which a detailed presentation was made. The upcoming framework is expected to incorporate provisions of the existing service rules as well as the Official Secrets Act.

For serving Army per-

sonnel, the rules are explicit and mandatory. Service rules and regulations, including those relating to sensitive details, require written permission before undertaking any literary, artistic or other form of activity outside official duties. Requests are round the relevant department, then the services and cross-checks the manuscript command and may require clearance up to Army

Fresh framework

The upcoming guidelines are expected to incorporate provisions of existing service rules, including the Official Secrets Act (OSA).

At present, there is no specific provision for serving and retired personnel, says the official.

Tricky waters!

Left:

in the UK

Sabuhi

gandhi

with a copy of

PRRI

The Centre will lay down a framework that must be followed before any manuscript is sanctioned

The OSA continues to apply for life, making it an offence to disclose classified, or sensitive data

Headquarters or the MoD, depending on the nature of the content.

Material relating to classified information, operations outside, including equipment capabilities, intelligence information, security or foreign relations is strictly prohibited. Material related to national security is required to be cleared.

He further mentioned that in his capacity as a civil servant, he or she is as much entitled to publish sensitive details, as any other civilian as an official. The OSA remains the primary legislation, largely concerned with individuality and judgment regarding what to write and should avoid writing on matters that are classified

and set in open domain. However, retired personnel are free to express their personal opinions about politics and matters of national security, including non-classified information, sensitive data, or classified information.

In the case of civil servants, the Centre has issued the Permanent Rules for Civil Servants in 2023, prohibiting retired officials from publishing sensitive information or classified information related to national security. The guidelines, however, do not apply to civil servants.

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High turnout expected as Bangladesh votes today

**Agence France-Presse
DHAKA**

A day before its first polls since 2014, Bangladesh's Election Commission said on Wednesday that it expected a strong turnout.

Many youth had been effectively deprived of the freedom to vote for their choice of candidate. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling party, the Awami League, had told pressmen: "We see euphoria among the people," he said.

RELATED REPORTS
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Sensitive items out of U.S. statement on deal with India

SABUHAI HAIKAR

The U.S. on Wednesday backtracked on changes it made to the India-U.S. joint statement and the White House's statement on the India-U.S. framework for the interim agreement on trade, removing references to "pulp and paper products", "digital services" and Indian "communications" worth \$50 billion.

The references had raised concerns after not being present in the original joint statement. ■ Page 1

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Taking back

These references had raised concerns after not being present in the original joint statement. ■ Page 1

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The Centre will lay down a framework that must be followed before any manuscript is sanctioned

The OSA continues to apply for life, making it an offence to disclose classified, or sensitive data

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

Amid the controversy surrounding the unpublished memoir, *Four Stars of Destiny*, of former Army chief General M.M. Naravane (retd.), the Defence Ministry is working on detailed guidelines for serving and retired armed forces personnel who wish to publish books in future.

The proposed guidelines will spell out the process to be followed before any manuscript is cleared for publication.

A senior defence official confirmed that a meeting was held recently to frame a new set of rules, during which a detailed presentation was made. The upcoming framework is expected to incorporate provisions of existing service rules as well as the Official Secrets Act.

At present, there is no single consolidated law specifically governing book-writing by retired Army officers. Instead, different legal and service frameworks apply to serving personnel and retirees. In both cases, national security and protection of classified information remain the primary red lines.

There are no specific service rules barring ex-servicemen or retired Army officers from authoring or publishing books. However, the freedom operates within a legal grey area. The Official Secrets Act (OSA) continues to apply for life, even after retirement, making it a criminal offence to disclose classified information, sensitive operational details, or any material prejudicial to national security.

While retired personnel are no longer governed by the Army Act or Army

Fresh framework

The upcoming guidelines are expected to incorporate provisions of existing service rules as well as the Official Secrets Act (OSA)



Tricky words: LoP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi with a copy of the unpublished memoir of former Army chief M.M. Naravane. PTI

- At present, there is no single consolidated law specifically governing book-writing by retired Army officers

- The OSA makes disclosure of classified information, sensitive operational details, or any material prejudicial to national security a criminal offence

- The Act continues to apply to an officer for life, even after retirement

rules in matters of publication, statutory laws remain applicable. If a manuscript contains operational or sensitive details, authors are expected to submit it to the Ministry for clearance. The relevant department then verifies and cross-checks the content before granting approval.

For serving Army per-

sonnel, the rules are explicit and mandatory. Service rules and defence service regulations require prior written permission before undertaking any literary, political or remunerative activity outside official duties. Requests are routed through a chain of command and may require clearance up to Army

Headquarters or the MoD, depending on the nature of the content.

Material relating to classified information, operational details, internal procedures, equipment capabilities, intelligence inputs, or issues affecting national security or foreign relations is strictly prohibited. Even fictional works may face restrictions if they closely resemble real operations or disclose identifiable details.

Individual's judgment

Lt. Gen. (retd.) D.P. Pandey said, "When an Army person retires, he or she is as much a civilian as anyone else but the facet of Official Secrets Act remains. After retirement, it largely comes down to individual's maturity and judgment regarding what to write and how to present it. One should avoid writing on matters that are classified

and not in open domain. However, retired personnel are free to express their personal opinions about politics and matters of national security. If any content falls under the Official Secrets Act, prior permission from the MoD is required."

He further mentioned that in his view, material that is already in the public domain can be written about. There is a laid-down process within the respective Services to grant permission for publication if a book mentions issues related to national interest. If any information published in a book is found to be incorrect or unlawful, there are legal provisions to deal with such infringements.

On Tuesday, Gen. Naravane endorsed Penguin Random House India's (PRHI) statement that his memoir has not been published. PRHI clarified it

holds sole publishing rights and that no print or digital copies have been released or distributed. This followed a First Information Report by the Delhi Police over alleged illegal circulation of the unpublished manuscript. The row intensified after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi questioned conflicting claims, prompting the PRHI to state that pre-order announcements do not amount to publication.

In the case of civil servants, the Centre had amended the Pension Rules for Civil Servants in 2021, prohibiting retired officials in intelligence or security related organisations to publish any information related to their organisation without clearance from the competent authority.

FIR OVER 'MEMOIR'
» PAGE 4

1. What is being planned / क्या योजना बन रही है

- Government/Defence Ministry is working on **detailed guidelines for serving + retired armed forces personnel** who want to publish books/memoirs. / सरकार/रक्षा मंत्रालय सेवारत + सेवानिवृत्त सशस्त्र बल कर्मियों की किताब/संस्मरण प्रकाशित करने की प्रक्रिया के लिए विस्तृत दिशानिर्देश बना रहा है।
- A **framework/process** will be laid down that must be followed **before any manuscript is cleared/sanctioned**. / किसी भी मैन्यूस्क्रिप्ट को मंजूरी देने से पहले अनिवार्य प्रक्रिया/फ्रेमवर्क तय किया जाएगा।

2. Why now / अभी क्यों

- The move comes amid controversy around an **unpublished memoir** attributed to a former Army Chief (Gen. M.M. Naravane, retd.). / यह कदम पूर्व सेनाध्यक्ष (जनरल एम.एम. नरवणे, से.) के कथित अप्रकाशित संस्मरण से जुड़े विवाद के बीच आया है।

3. Current legal position / वर्तमान कानूनी स्थिति

- There is **no single consolidated law** specifically governing **book-writing by retired Army officers**; different legal/service frameworks apply to serving vs retired. / सेवानिवृत्त सैन्य अधिकारियों की पुस्तक-लेखन गतिविधि को नियंत्रित करने वाला एकीकृत/एकल कानून नहीं है; सेवारत व सेवानिवृत्त पर अलग-अलग नियम/कानूनी ढांचे लागू होते हैं।
- **National security + protection of classified information** remain the primary red lines. / राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा और गोपनीय/वर्गीकृत सूचना की सुरक्षा सबसे बड़ी सीमा-रेखा है।

4. Official Secrets Act (OSA) impact / OSA का असर

- OSA makes disclosure of **classified/sensitive operational information** a **criminal offence**, and it can continue to apply even after retirement. / OSA के तहत वर्गीकृत/संवेदनशील संचालनात्मक जानकारी का खुलासा आपराधिक अपराध हो सकता है; यह प्रभाव सेवानिवृत्ति के बाद भी बना रह सकता है।

Drishti IAS +1

5. How clearance is expected to work / मंजूरी की संभावित प्रक्रिया

- If a manuscript contains **operational/sensitive details**, authors may be expected to **submit it for Ministry clearance**; the concerned department will **verify/cross-check** before approval. / यदि मैन्यूस्क्रिप्ट में संचालन/संवेदनशील विवरण हैं, तो उसे मंत्रालय को क्लियरेंस हेतु देना पड़ सकता है; संबंधित विभाग जांच-पड़ताल/क्रॉस-चेक करके मंजूरी देगा।
- For serving personnel, permissions are generally **prior + written**, routed through **chain of command**, possibly up to **Army HQ/MoD** depending on content. / सेवारत कर्मियों के लिए अनुमति सामान्यतः पूर्व + लिखित होती है; कमांड चैन के माध्यम से जाती है; सामग्री के अनुसार आर्मी HQ/रक्षा मंत्रालय तक क्लियरेंस लग सकता है।

6. What content is strictly barred / क्या सख्त निषिद्ध है

- Anything relating to **classified information, operational details, internal procedures, equipment capabilities, intelligence inputs**, or matters affecting **national security/foreign relations**. / गोपनीय जानकारी, ऑपरेशन विवरण, आंतरिक प्रक्रियाएँ, उपकरण क्षमता, इंटेलिजेंस इनपुट, या राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा/विदेश संबंध प्रभावित करने वाली बातें।
- Even "fiction" may face restrictions if it **resembles real operations** or reveals **identifiable details**. / "काल्पनिक" रचनाएँ भी प्रतिबंधित हो सकती हैं यदि वे वास्तविक ऑपरेशन्स जैसी हों या पहचाने जा सकने वाले विवरण उजागर करें।

7. Retired personnel—freedom vs limits / सेवानिवृत्त—स्वतंत्रता बनाम सीमाएँ

- Retired personnel can express **personal opinions** (including politics) **as long as** they do not violate secrecy/national security laws; if content falls under OSA, **prior permission** is required. / सेवानिवृत्त व्यक्ति व्यक्तिगत राय (राजनीति सहित) व्यक्त कर सकते हैं, बशर्ते गोपनीयता/राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा कानून न टूटे; OSA के दायरे में आने पर पूर्व अनुमति आवश्यक है।

8. Related parallel rule (civil services) / समानांतर उदाहरण (सिविल सेवा)

- Civil Services (Pension) Rules have provisions requiring **clearance** for publication in sensitive/intelligence/security contexts (commonly cited in policy discussions). / सिविल सेवा (पेंशन) नियमों में भी संवेदनशील/इंटेलिजेंस-सुरक्षा संदर्भों में प्रकाशन हेतु क्लियरेंस जैसी शर्तें नीति-चर्चा में बताई जाती हैं।

Exam	Date	Question (Exact/Memory-based)	Answer
UPSC CSE Prelims (GS-1)	2023	<p><i>With reference to India, consider the following pairs (Action — Act):</i> (includes a pair on unauthorized wearing of police/military uniforms — Official Secrets Act, 1923). <i>How many pairs are correctly matched?</i></p>	Only two (as per the official key/explanations).
UPSC CAPF (AC) Paper-I	04 Aug 2024	<p>Statements: (1) Abolition of OSA recommended by Second ARC (as stated in question) (2) RTI enacted in 2005. <i>Which is/are correct?</i></p>	Both 1 and 2. (
UPSC CSE Mains (Ethics/GS-4)	2019	<p>“There is a view that the Official Secrets Act is an obstacle to the implementation of the Right to Information Act. Do you agree? Discuss.”</p>	Model direction: Balanced — secrecy for security vs transparency for accountability (argue with safeguards, public interest test, reforms).

Sensitive items out of U.S. statement on deal with India

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

The U.S. on Wednesday backtracked on changes it made to the India-U.S. joint statement and the White House factsheet on the India-U.S. framework for the interim agreement on trade, removing references to 'pulses', 'agricultural products', 'digital service tax' and Indian 'commitments' on investing \$500 billion. The references, which were not in the original joint statement, had led to questions being raised in New Delhi.

Opposition leaders asked the government to clarify its position after officials had categorically said that sensitive agricultural items were not included in the deal and that India had "intended" but not given a binding commitment to investing \$500 billion in American products over a period of five years. "India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all U.S. industrial goods and a wide range of U.S. food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products," the corrected factsheet read.

"India intends to buy more American products and purchase over \$500 billion of U.S. energy, information and communication technology, coal, and other products", a line which earlier also included "agricultural" products.

The External Affairs Ministry did not respond to a question on whether the government or the Indian embassy had reached out

Taking back

The references had raised concerns after not being present in the original India-U.S. joint statement

Dropped references:

- Pulses
- Agricultural products
- Digital service tax
- 'Commitments' on investing \$500 billion

to the U.S. government to request the changes. The U.S. did not issue any statement before quietly amending the two documents available online.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Trade Representative's office deleted another entry related to the India-U.S. deal. The social media post showed a map of India including in it Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin. This is in line with India's official map but runs counter to the U.S.'s official maps that show the two regions as "disputed territory". The post had led to the question of whether the U.S. was changing its position in India's favour.

U.S. Trade Representative Jameson Green told *Fox News* on Wednesday, "India has already started winding down purchases of Russian energy products and are already ramping back up purchases of American energy and other sources."

The government has not so far denied the U.S. contention that it has given up Russian oil, saying only that its policy is to "diversify" energy procurement and this would be in "national interest".

1. What happened / क्या हुआ

- The U.S. **backtracked** and **edited** the India-U.S. joint statement / White House factsheet on an interim trade framework. / अमेरिका ने भारत-अमेरिका संयुक्त बयान/व्हाइट हाउस फैक्टशीट में बाद में बदलाव करके कुछ बातें हटा दीं।
- The edits removed references that were **not in the original joint statement**, but appeared in the factsheet/online documents. / जो संदर्भ पहले मूल संयुक्त बयान में नहीं थे, वे ऑनलाइन दस्तावेजों में आए और फिर हटा दिए गए।

2. What exactly was removed / क्या-क्या हटाया गया (Dropped references)

- **Pulses** / दालें
- **Agricultural products** / कृषि उत्पाद
- **Digital service tax** / डिजिटल सर्विस टैक्स
- **“Commitments” on investing \$500 billion** / \$500 बिलियन निवेश पर “प्रतिबद्धताएँ”

3. Why it mattered / क्यों महत्वपूर्ण बना

- These references raised political and policy questions in India; opposition sought clarification from the government. / इन बातों पर भारत में सवाल उठे; विपक्ष ने सरकार से स्थिति स्पष्ट करने को कहा।
- Sensitive trade items + big investment numbers can change how the deal is perceived (binding vs non-binding). / संवेदनशील व्यापार वस्तुएँ व बड़े निवेश आंकड़े समझौते की प्रकृति (बाध्यकारी/गैर-बाध्यकारी) को प्रभावित करते हैं।

4. What the corrected factsheet indicates / संशोधित फैक्टशीट का संकेत

- India would **eliminate/reduce tariffs** on many U.S. industrial goods and a range of U.S. food/agri items (examples mentioned: **DDGs, red sorghum, tree nuts, fresh/processed fruit, soybean oil, wine & spirits, etc.**). / भारत कई अमेरिकी औद्योगिक वस्तुओं व खाद्य/कृषि उत्पादों पर शुल्क घटाने/हटाने की बात करता है (उदाहरण: **DDGs, रेड सोरगम, ट्री-नट्स, फल, सोयाबीन तेल, वाइन/स्पिरिट्स आदि**)।
- Another line emphasizes India's intent to buy large volumes of U.S. goods—especially **energy, ICT, coal, etc.**, with the headline figure **\$500 billion** appearing as "purchase/intent" rather than "investment commitment." / एक अन्य पंक्ति में भारत द्वारा ऊर्जा, ICT, कोयला आदि सहित अमेरिकी उत्पाद खरीदने के इरादे का उल्लेख है; **\$500 बिलियन** को "निवेश प्रतिबद्धता" के बजाय "खरीद/इरादा" की तरह रखा गया।

5. How the change was made / बदलाव कैसे हुआ

- The U.S. quietly **amended** the online documents without an upfront public statement, according to the report. / रिपोर्ट के अनुसार अमेरिका ने बिना स्पष्ट सार्वजनिक बयान के ऑनलाइन दस्तावेजों में चुपचाप संशोधन किया।

6. Another sensitive element: map post / दूसरा संवेदनशील पहलू: मानचित्र पोस्ट

- The U.S. Trade Representative's office deleted a social media post linked to the deal that showed a map of India including **Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK)** and **Aksai Chin**. / USTR कार्यालय ने डील-संबंधित सोशल मीडिया पोस्ट हटाई जिसमें मानचित्र में PoK और अक्साई चिन भारत का हिस्सा दिखे थे।
- This aligned with India's official map depiction but conflicted with common U.S. "disputed territory" depiction—triggering questions about U.S. positioning. / यह भारत के आधिकारिक दृष्टिकोण से मेल खाता है, पर अमेरिकी "विवादित क्षेत्र" वाले चित्रण से टकराता है—इसी पर सवाल उठे।

IN BRIEF



Soldier, civilian injured in two separate explosions in J&K

A soldier and a civilian were injured in two separate explosions in J&K on Wednesday. Officials said an anti-personnel landmine went off from a roadside in the area of Control (LoC), in Gulmarg Sector in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. One junior commissionner was killed in the blast and was shifted to the Badami Bagh hospital in Srinagar for treatment. In the Pir Panjal Valley, Poonch district, a roadside blast on Tuesday injured a civilian, officials said. Ahmad, 45, was loading sand into a tractor at Battar Nallah when the blast took place. The injured civilian was shifted to a hospital.

SC agrees to list another plea against Assam Chief Minister

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to consider listing another plea filed by four persons against the then Assam Chief Minister Hemanta Biswa Sarma over a series of alleged hate speeches targeting Muslims in the state. The four persons include former professor Hiren Gohain, former DGP of Assam Harekrishna Deka, senior journalist Parendra Choudhury and former Assam Legislative Assembly member Borthakur. On Tuesday, a Bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant had agreed to list for hearing separate pleas of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and its leader Anup Raja seeking action against the chief minister. ■

Delhi HC asks Rapsodia to disclose sales information

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In an interim order in a suit filed by Indian designer Ashish Nanda against Rapsodia, a garment brand, Rapsodia is alleged to have authorised the duplication of her copyrighted designs. The court has directed the company to disclose production, sale, export and sales details of the alleged infringing products.

On February 6, the court asked the defendant to file, within six weeks, an affidavit specifying the total number of items produced for each alleged infringement and the manufacturer, the place and name of the manufacturer, the date of entry into India along with shipping documents, invoices and forwarder documents, and copies of purchase orders.

Vande Mataram to be played before National Anthem: govt.

Fresh set of guidelines issued to States and government bodies but no formal statement made by the Centre; it says when the National Song is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government has said in a set of instructions to the states and government bodies that the National Song, *Vande Mataram*, should be sung or played before the National Anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*, which is to be played at the blast and was shifted to the Badami Bagh hospital in Srinagar for treatment, in the Pir Panjal Valley, Poonch district, a roadside blast on Tuesday injured a civilian, officials said. Ahmad, 45, was loading sand into a tractor at Battar Nallah when the blast took place. The injured civilian was shifted to a hospital.

The fresh set of guidelines were uploaded on the Union Home Ministry website on February 6, but no formal announcement or a press release was made.

It states that whenever the official version of the National Song, which is 56 minutes long, is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention. In the context of a new entry or document, the National Song is played before the film, it is not expected of the audience to stand as it is standing during the exhibition of the film and would create disorder and confusion, which is contrary to the dignity of the National Song, "it said.

The Ministry said the instructions were being issued for general informa-

Setting the tone

Key guidelines for singing and playing the National Song
■ In private functions, the National Flag should be raised before the National Anthem when the National Flag is present and honored in an event.
■ The audience must stand to attention when the National Anthem is sung or played during the Republic Day Parade, 1950.
■ The official version shall be accompanied by music singing during the Republic Day Parade, 1950.
■ Standing is not required when played as part of a ceremonial or documentary.

tion and guidance on the official version of the National Song, which is 56 minutes long, is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention for parity of respect by observance of proper decorum on such occasions.

It said that the National Song, written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, is known as the National Song, which is to be sung on arrival and departure of the state functions, and other functions organised by the government, immediately before and after the President addresses the nation.

All India Radio and television, on arrival and departure of the state functions, Lieutenant-Governor at formal state functions, when the National Flag is present and honored in an event, the National Song, which is to be sung on arrival and departure of the state functions, and other functions organised by the government, immediately before and after the President addresses the nation.

tional Song is about to be played," the Ministry said. "The National Flag should be raised before the National Anthem when the National Flag is present and honored in an event.

■ The audience must stand to attention when the National Anthem is sung or played during the Republic Day Parade, 1950.

■ The official version shall be accompanied by music singing during the Republic Day Parade, 1950.

■ Standing is not required when played as part of a ceremonial or documentary.

All India Radio and television, on arrival and departure of the state functions, Lieutenant-Governor at formal state functions, when the National Flag is present and honored in an event, the National Song, which is to be sung on arrival and departure of the state functions, and other functions organised by the government, immediately before and after the President addresses the nation.

■ The audience must stand to attention when the National Song is played by a band, the roll of drums to assist the audience to know that it is going to be played, unless there is some other specific indication that the Na-

tional Song is to be played for respect as a salute to the motherland and prop- tained," the Ministry said.

"When the National Song is played by a band, the roll of drums to assist the audience to know that it is going to be played, unless there is some other specific indication that the Na-

Calling Rafale a 'hero', Vice Chief of Air Staff seeks more fighter planes

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Vice Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor on Wednesday described the Rafale fighter jet as the "best fighter jet in the world" and said the Indian Air Force (IAF) was looking to induct more such multi-role fighter aircraft along with Rafale planes among the contenders.

He was definitely the hero during Operation Sindoora among other heroes including the IAF personnel looking forward to introducing more MIGs.

He was looking forward to introducing more MIGs, which is going to be Rafale. He said the IAF was looking forward to introducing more such deliveries. A decision has yet to be taken. We are looking forward to introducing aircraft (to add) to our inventory," he said.

He was briefing journalists about Vayu Shakti, an upcoming IAF exercise to be held at the Pokhran air-ground range in Rajasthan on February 27. ■

gated terror infrastructures and several military installations. "Whether we did something there or whether they did something there, caused by something else, we don't know. These video feeds are very important, we did nothing beyond attacking terror and neutralising them," he said. He was briefing journalists about Vayu Shakti, an upcoming IAF exercise to be held at the Pokhran air-ground range near the India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan on February 27. The biennial firepower display, which will highlight the success of Operation Sindoora and the IAF's air superiority, will dominate the enemy and dominate the operational environment.

More than 120 air assets, including 77 fighter jets, will participate. The line-up includes Rafale,

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Vande Mataram to be played before National Anthem: govt.

Fresh set of guidelines issued to States and government bodies but no formal statement made by the Centre; it says when the National Song is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Union government has said in a set of instructions to the States and government bodies that the National Song, *Vande Mataram*, should be sung or played before the National Anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*, when both the songs are played at an event.

The fresh set of guidelines were uploaded on the Union Home Ministry website on February 6, but no formal announcement or a statement was issued.

It states that whenever the official version of the National Song, around 3.1 minutes long, is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention. "However, when in the course of a newsreel or documentary, the National Song is played as a part of the film, it is not expected of the audience to stand as standing is bound to interrupt the exhibition of the film and would create disorder and confusion rather than add to the dignity of the National Song," it said.

The Ministry said the instructions were being issued for general informa-

Setting the tone

Key guidelines for singing and playing the National Song

- *Vande Mataram* should be sung or played before the National Anthem when both are performed at an event

- The audience must stand at attention when the official version, around 3 minutes 10 seconds long, is sung or played

- Standing is not required if it is played as part of a newsreel or documentary



Proud moment: A tableau celebrating 150 years of *Vande Mataram* during the Republic Day Parade. PTI

- The official version shall be accompanied by mass singing during unfurling of the National Flag, cultural occasions, or ceremonial functions other than parades

tional Song is about to be played," the Ministry said.

The official version shall be played accompanied by mass singing on the unfurling of the National Flag, on cultural occasions or ceremonial functions other than parades. The mass singing could be arranged by having a choir of adequate size, suitably stationed, which would be trained to coordinate its singing with the band.

It may be sung on occasions which, though not strictly ceremonial, are nevertheless invested with significance because of the presence of Ministers and others, the Ministry said.

"It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of occasions on which the singing (as distinct from playing) of official version of the National Song can be permitted. But there is no objection to the singing of the National Song accompanied by mass singing so long as it is done with due respect as a salutation to the motherland and proper decorum is maintained," the Ministry said.

"In all schools, the day's work may begin with community singing of the National Song..." it added.

tion and guidance on the official version of the song, the occasions on which it is to be played or sung, and about the need for paying respect to the song by observance of proper decorum on such occasions.

It said that *Vande Mataram*, written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, is known as the "National Song, which is to be sung on arrival and departure of the President at formal state functions and other functions organised by the government, immediately before and after the President addresses the nation

over All India Radio and television, on arrival and departure of the Governor or Lieutenant-Governor at formal state functions, when the National Flag is brought on parade, any other occasion for which special orders are issued by the Government of India".

When a band plays it

"When the National Song is played by a band, the song will be preceded by a roll of drums to assist the audience to know that it is going to be played, unless there is some other specific indication that the Na-

Point

Status / दर्ता

Core purpose / रक्षा काल

Author (lyrics) / घट्टस्वरूपग्र

Source work / काल

Language / क्रमाल

Official adoption/recognition /
एश्रि ड्रवराध्द रक्षाल्व

Standard duration / रक्षाड़ २ अश्र

When both performed together / दर्ता
द्रवल प्रकाश

Key sensitivity / क्रमाल द्रहचाल्व

Vande Mataram / अमृतरक्षाधरकाज National Song / धर्मसंग्रह पहल्वन

National Song / धर्मसंग्रह पहल्वन

Symbol of freedom struggle; salutation to motherland / स्वतन्त्रत्व एवं स्वतन्त्रत्व इन्द्र बहुदः ; रक्षाल्वानामव दृश्य इन्द्रवरग्र

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay / अक्षरदाक दृश्यवेगा

Novel “Anandamath” (published 1882); song composed earlier (1870s) / क्षेत्रान्त्रिका “ए ष्टारवर्ष्म” जहास्तराज्ञ पहल स्वदृश्य हण्डुज्ञानपाज्ञ

Sanskritised Bengali (often called Sanskritised Bengali) / द्वामालाक माप्तचार

Recognised as National Song along with Anthem (24 Jan 1950) / 24 न एश्रघाह इश्वरज दृश्य धर्मसंग्रह पहल इन्द्र च ह रक्षाल्व

Commonly used “official version” about 3 min 10 sec (full version often longer; practice varies) / बद्रश्चाल “एश्रि ड्रवराध्द” द्वामाल घर चापक्रप ट्रायराध्द इन्जादृश्य

Played/sung before National Anthem as per recent guideline in news / द्वामालप्रकाशदृश्यप्रकाशगत शक्तिकारक्षुप्रकाश

Some lines relate to “goddess” imagery; therefore only first 2 stanzas often used publicly / क्रमाल हङ्ग एश्रि ड्रवराध्दादृश्य इन्द्रालाश्वर च ह दृश्य १ ए घ दृश्य लह नह इन्द्र एह

Jana Gana Mana / न एश्रप्रधरवर्ष ज National Anthem / धर्मसंग्रह

National Anthem / धर्मसंग्रह

Formal national anthem; state ceremonies & official occasions / च ह द्रक्षादृश्य धर्मसंग्रह; द्रघडव्रधरप्रकाश इहग्र १ अद्रघ

Rabindranath Tagore (lyrics + tune widely attributed to him) / घर्मसंग्रह लाल

Written by Tagore; first published in 1911 / ब्रह्मस्मोक्षमप्रकाश्य; इन्द्रहराध्द इन्द्राल

Highly Sanskritised Bengali (often described so) / द्वामालाक माप्तचार

Adopted as National Anthem (24 Jan 1950) / 24 न एश्रघाह इश्वरज दृश्य धर्मसंग्रह इन्द्र च ह रक्षाल्व

Full version ≈ 52 seconds; short version ≈ 20 seconds / हाल ≈ इन्द्र दृश्यम; द्वामाल ≈ जज दृश्यम

Played after National Song when both performed / धर्मसंग्रह पहल इन्द्र एवं

Less religious controversy; more formal protocol bound / १ हुक्मकाल इरग शक्तिकाल; च ह द्रक्षादृश्य दृश्यहुज्ञ

Year/Date

1870s (commonly cited)

1882

1896 (important)

1911 (important)

24 Jan 1950

1980s onwards (exam angle)

Vande Mataram / अस्तु रक्षां धरम्

Composed by Bankim (song existed before the novel) / प्रकृत राम्य क्रेष्ण
घट्टप्रज्ञ हैंक्रेष्ण द्वारा प्रकृत

Included in novel “Anandamath” /
“ए ज्ञानमाथ” राम्य क्रेष्ण

First sung at Indian National Congress session (Calcutta) / INC
१९११ अस्तु ए ज्ञानमाथ द्वारा राम्य क्रेष्ण

—

Recognised as National Song / धर्मान्वय पहल राम्य क्रेष्ण

Court/constitutional debates around “respect” and selective stanzas / द्वारा विवादित, लोकान्वय हैं

Jana Gana Mana / न षष्ठ्य प्रस्तु धरम्

—

—

—

First sung (Calcutta Session of INC, widely cited) and published / INC
१९११ अस्तु ए राम्य प्रकृत विवादित, लोकान्वय हैं

Adopted as National Anthem / धर्मान्वय श्रीराम्य क्रेष्ण

Supreme Court directions on Anthem etiquette (not “forced singing”) / धर्मान्वय श्रीराम्य क्रेष्ण क्रियान्वयन के लिए नियमों की घोषणा

Topic

Full text usage / ਹੁਕਾਮਾਂ

Religious imagery / ਰਿਲੈਗ੍ਜ਼ਨਲ ਚੂਂਝੂ

Theme / ਸਾਡਾ

Vande Mataram / ਭਾਵੁਕ ਕੁਦਰਕੁ

Full song is longer; public performance often uses first 2 stanzas (common practice) / ਪਹਿਲੀ ਚਾਹੀਂ, ਫਰਾਜ਼ ਅਣ੍ਡ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਏ ਘੜ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਹੁਣ

Later stanzas contain deity imagery; hence selective use common / ਪਾਵਣ ਤੁਹਾਨ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਅਗ੍ਰੀ ਚੂਂਝੂ ; ਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਅਣ੍ਡ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਕਿਵੇਂ

Motherland as mother; freedom/awakening / ਰਾਤੀਆਂ ਰਾਤੀਆਂ ਰਾਤੀਆਂ, ਅਗ੍ਰੀ ਅਗ੍ਰੀ ਅਗ੍ਰੀ

Jana Gana Mana / ਨਾਨਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਘਰਾਣੀ

Full anthem is standardised (52 sec) / 52 ਲੋਕਾਂ ਅਧਿਕਾਰਾਂ ਅਗ੍ਰੀ ਅਗ੍ਰੀ

More civic/political in tone; no deity-specific stanza / ਇਸ਼ਾਂ ਦੀ ਅਗ੍ਰੀ ਅਗ੍ਰੀ

Unity of India, collective identity / ਕਿਸੇ ਤੁਹਾਨ ਤੁਹਾਨ ਲੋਕ, ਫਰਾਜ਼ ਅਣ੍ਡ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਅਗ੍ਰੀ

Situation	What to do / ਏਕ ਝੱਲ੍ਹ	Exam notes / ਵਿਧਾਲੀ ਝੱਲ੍ਹ
When National Anthem is played/sung (full) / ਧਰਮਾਵਰਣ ਦਿਨ ਜ਼ਖ਼ਮਿਕਾਵਣ ਵਿਖੇ	Stand at attention; maintain silence; no movement; respect / ਫੁਰੋਰਿਸ਼ਵਰਣ ਰਾਸ਼ਟਰਕੁਲ ਫੁਲ੍ਹ ਟ੍ਰਕਾਂ ਧਿਆਨ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ	Exceptions for disability are allowed; dignity is key / ਸ਼ਹਿਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ੰਸਨ ਵਿਖੇ; ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ੰਸਨ ਰਾਸ਼ਟਰ
When National Anthem (short version) / ਫੁਲ੍ਹ ਧਰਮਾਵਰਣ	Used in some occasions (like sports); same respect rules / ਫੁਲ੍ਹ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ	Time ~20 sec / ~20 ਫੁਲ੍ਹ ਵਿਖੇ
When National Song is played/sung (official performance) / ਧਰਮਾਵਰਣ ਪਹਿਲ ਦਿਨ ਜ਼ਖ਼ਮਿਕਾਵਣ ਵਿਖੇ	Stand to attention (as per guideline in the news you shared) / ਫੁਰੋਰਿਸ਼ਵਰਣ ਰਾਸ਼ਟਰਕੁਲ ਫੁਲ੍ਹ ਜਾਹਜ਼ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ	If embedded in film/newsreel/documentary, standing may not be expected to avoid disruption / ਸ਼ਹਿਰੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਫੁਲ੍ਹ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ
Order when both performed / ਫੁਲ੍ਹ ਵਿਖੇ	Vande Mataram first, then Jana Gana Mana (as per guideline) / ਵਿਣਾਚੁਕੁੜ੍ਹ ਰਾਸ਼ਟਰਕੁਲ ਸ਼ਾਂਦਾਰ ਨਾਲ ਵਿਖੇ	“Song before Anthem” is a current-affairs angle
Clapping / ਲਕੜ੍ਹ	Not appropriate during/at end; maintain decorum / ਲਕੜ੍ਹ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ	Many exam keys emphasise “dignity”
Band version / ਸਾਡੇ ਕੋਈ	May include drum roll/intro to alert audience (as per guideline) / ਫੁਲ੍ਹ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ	Protocol detail = good for MCQ

Topic

Constitutional mention / द्रष्टव्यांश रक्खा क्र०

Fundamental Duties / ਕਰਨਾਂ ਪਾਂਡ ਤੁ ਲੁਕਾ

Penal law / कानून इवराज

Supreme Court stance (core idea) / SC ਤੁਕ੍ਰ ਢਕਘ

Government guidelines / ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਗੇਡਿਲਾਨਿਜ਼ / ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਗੇਡਿਲਾਨਿਜ਼

Key Points (English + ଶାବ୍ଦିକୀ)

National Anthem/Song are not explicitly defined in Constitution text; recognised by government decisions & conventions / द्रष्टव्याशक्ति राष्ट्रगानका ध्वनि विवरण ध्वनि विवरण पहले द्रष्टव्याशक्ति राष्ट्रगानका ध्वनि विवरण पहले द्रष्टव्याशक्ति राष्ट्रगानका ध्वनि विवरण पहले द्रष्टव्याशक्ति राष्ट्रगानका ध्वनि विवरण पहले

Article 51A(a): respect Constitution, National Flag, National Anthem / १ अखण्डA(a): द्रुक्षाश्वरण, नं, धर्माभ्याव इति द्रुक्षणः

Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971: penalises disrespect to National Flag/Anthem (and related) / 1971 १९७१ भारत का नाम और नाम का नाम विरोध करने का विवरण

Respect can be expected; forced singing is not always compulsory; dignity + reasonable accommodation / ଦ୍ୱାକ୍ରାଣ୍ଟ ହୁଅବାଲ୍; ଧୀର୍ଘ ପରିଷ୍ଵର ପରିଷ୍ଵର ରକ୍ଷଣ୍ଟରେ ଅନୁଭବ ପରିଷ୍ଵର ଅନୁଭବ ଦୁରକ୍ରମକୁ ଏ

Detailed executive instructions exist on how/when to play; recent guideline adds sequencing + standing rules / କ୍ରମକ୍ରମ ଏବଂ ନିଯମାବଳୀ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ; ଏକାଧିକ ଗ୍ରହକ କ୍ରମକ୍ରମ ରବ ଅବଶ୍ୟକ ହେଲାମ୍ବାନ୍ତିରୁ

Why asked / पूछने का क्या उल्लेख है?

Trick MCQ: “Constitution says...” → usually false

Direct linkage to civic duties

Static GK + Polity

Ethics + rights vs duties type questions

Current affairs + governance

Must-Remember	Answer
National Song / ग्रन्थालय पहल	Vande Mataram / अस्तु रक्षा द्वरका
National Anthem / ग्रन्थालय	Jana Gana Mana / न षष्ठप्रस्तुत्वाणि
Authors / घट्ट ष्वाङ्कवद्ध	Bankim Chandra / बंकिमचन्द्र ; Rabindranath Tagore / घञ्जीष्वाङ्क बंकिम
Key dates / रक्षा शक्तिप्रदान	1896 (VM at INC), 1911 (JGM first sung/published), 24 Jan 1950 (both recognised/adopted)
Durations / १ अंश	VM official performance ~3:10 (per guideline/news); JGM 52 sec (full), 20 sec (short)
Legal link / ड्रविङ	National Honour Act 1971 + Article 51A(a) duty

Situation / स्थिति

Someone **intentionally prevents** singing of National Anthem / इन्होंने नेतृत्व के द्वारा गाने का अवलोकन रुका दिया है

Someone **causes disturbance** to an assembly engaged in singing / अन्योंने गाने के लिए गमन कर रही जगती का अवलोकन रुका दिया है

Second/subsequent conviction (repeat offender) / लालू गाने का अवलोकन रुका दिया है

Act ke hisaab se kya hota hai? / स्टूडी
Act इन्होंने गाने का अवलोकन रुका दिया है

Offence (Section 3)

Offence (Section 3)

Enhanced penalty (Section 3A)

Penalty / दण्डनाल

Jail up to **3 years** OR fine OR both /
3 दण्डनाल तक ग्रन्ति की जानी चाही दण्डनाल

Jail up to **3 years** OR fine OR both

Minimum **1 year imprisonment**
(repeat cases)

1. New guideline theme / नए दिशानिर्देश का सार

- Government instructions say **Vande Mataram (National Song)** should be sung/played before **Jana Gana Mana (National Anthem)** when both are performed at an event. / सरकारी निर्देशों के अनुसार किसी कार्यक्रम में जब राष्ट्रीय गीत वंदे मातरम् और राष्ट्रगान जन-गण-मन दोनों हों, तो वंदे मातरम् पहले होगा।
- A fresh set of guidelines has been issued to States/government bodies; uploaded on the Home Ministry website; **no formal central announcement** was made. / राज्यों/सरकारी संस्थाओं को नए दिशानिर्देश जारी किए गए; गृह मंत्रालय की वेबसाइट पर अपलोड हुए; केंद्र का औपचारिक बयान नहीं आया।

2. Audience conduct / श्रोताओं का आचरण

- Whenever the **official version** of the National Song (about 3 minutes 10 seconds) is sung/played, the audience **shall stand to attention**. / राष्ट्रीय गीत के आधिकारिक संस्करण (लगभग 3 मिनट 10 सेकंड) के गाए/बजाए जाने पर श्रोताओं को सावधान मुद्रा में खड़ा होना होगा।
- Exception: If the National Song is used within a **newsreel/documentary/film** as part of the content, the audience is **not expected** to stand because it may interrupt viewing and create disorder. / अपवाद: यदि समाचार-रील/डॉक्यूमेंट्री/फिल्म में राष्ट्रीय गीत कथानक/प्रदर्शन का हिस्सा हो, तो दर्शकों से खड़े होने की अपेक्षा नहीं, क्योंकि इससे व्यवधान/अव्यवस्था हो सकती है।

3. How it should be sung/played in functions / कार्यक्रमों में प्रस्तुति कैसे

- The official version may be accompanied by mass singing during unfurling of the National Flag, cultural occasions, or ceremonial functions (other than parades). / राष्ट्रीय ध्वज फहराने, सांस्कृतिक अवसरों या (परेड के अलावा) अन्य समारोहों में समूह-गान के साथ इसे बजाया/गाया जा सकता है।
- Mass singing may be arranged with a suitably placed **choir**, trained to coordinate with the band. / गायक-दल (कोयर) को उचित स्थान पर खड़ा कर बैंड के साथ तालमेल हेतु प्रशिक्षित किया जा सकता है।
- It may be sung even on occasions that are not strictly ceremonial but are significant due to the presence of Ministers/others. / यह ऐसे अवसरों पर भी गाया जा सकता है जो पूर्णतः औपचारिक न हों, पर मंत्री आदि की उपस्थिति के कारण महत्वपूर्ण हों।
- No exhaustive list is possible; singing is fine as long as **due respect** and **proper decorum** are maintained. / सभी अवसरों की पूर्ण सूची संभव नहीं; शर्त—सम्मान और मर्यादा बनी रहे।

4. When a band plays it / बैंड द्वारा बजाने पर

- When the National Song is played by a band, it should be preceded by a **roll of drums** to alert the audience, unless there is a specific indication that the National Song is about to be played. / बैंड द्वारा राष्ट्रीय गीत बजाने पर, श्रोताओं को संकेत देने हेतु पहले इम-रोल होगा, जब तक कोई विशेष संकेत पहले से न हो।

5. Schools / विद्यालय

- In schools, the day's work may begin with **community singing** of the National Song. / विद्यालयों में दिन की शुरुआत राष्ट्रीय गीत के सामूहिक गायन से हो सकती है।

6. Status reminder / स्थिति-स्पष्टता

- Vande Mataram is referred to as the **National Song** and Jana Gana Mana as the **National Anthem**; guidelines focus on sequence and decorum, not replacing the Anthem. / वंदे मातरम् राष्ट्रीय गीत और जन-गण-मन राष्ट्रगान हैं; दिशानिर्देश क्रम व मर्यादा पर हैं—राष्ट्रगान के स्थानापन्न पर नहीं।

Topic / विषय	Key Facts (English + शास्त्रज्ञान)	Exam Use / हार्दिक विषय
National Anthem / ध्वनिसंग्रह	Jana Gana Mana adopted as National Anthem by Constituent Assembly on 24 Jan 1950 ; full rendition ~ 52 sec , short version ~ 20 sec (commonly used). / 24 जनवरी 1950 द्वारा शपथकारघ; हल्का ~52 दूरीम, लंबी ~20 दूरीम दूरीम	Polity static facts; MCQs
National Song / ध्वनिसंग्रह पहल	Vande Mataram (from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's work) recognized as National Song (also associated with 24 Jan 1950 recognition). / बंकिम चन्द्र चतुपाद्याय का ध्वनिसंग्रह पहल द्वारा लंबाई लिया गया	History + National symbols
Source & context / इतिहास व दृष्टिकोण	Vande Mataram is linked to the novel “ Anandamath ”; became a rallying cry in freedom movement. / “ आनन्दमाथ ” द्वारा लिखा गया; अलंकृत इतिहास व दृष्टिकोण	Modern History
Legal protection / अधिकार दृष्टिकोण	Disrespect to National Flag/Anthem is addressed under Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 (core statute in GK). / नामांतरण विवरण द्वारा 1971 वर्षात अन्तर्गत अधिकार दृष्टिकोण	Polity + Governance
Decorum principle / व्यवहार शृंखला	Key idea: Respect + order ; avoid actions that cause confusion/disruption (e.g., film screening exception). / व्यवहार शृंखला के दृष्टिकोण र 1 अन्तर्गत अन्तर्गत अधिकार दृष्टिकोण	Ethics + governance answer points
Sequence when both performed / दृश्य	New instruction: Vande Mataram before Jana Gana Mana when both are performed at an event. / द्वारा अन्तर्गत अन्तर्गत अधिकार दृष्टिकोण	Current affairs + static integration

Fit to width

stitution enters the sanctum

Two recent judgments of the Madras High Court – one concerning the right of the Hindu Devaswam and the other relating to the right of the Thenkali sect to use the holy name of Kanchipuram Varadaraja Perumal temple – have brought to the fore the role of the judiciary in adjudicating religious disputes. That these matters have reached the High Court is revealing on multiple counts. The first is that courts have a constitutional role in deciding religious disputes.

Second, that temples are private spaces where the court or the state cannot have a say. Given the growing number of such cases, the law around religion has taken a centre stage like never before.

Shift from civil rights dispute
Over a hundred years ago, it was civil rights that defined religious disputes. In a case pertaining to entry into the Kamakshi temple in Kanchipuram, the Madras High Court around civil rights to enter temple premises were fought all the way up to the Privy Council in London, in *Madras Hindu Nadar Ors v. Rajaji Rajaswamy Doss and Ors* (1906), the Privy Council was called upon to decide whether the Nadar had a right to enter the Kamakshi temple. In the process, the court ruled that issues around temple entry and right to co-worship were primarily religious as disputes concerning civil rights.

In 1957, the Madras Presidency government enacted the Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act to govern temples and their endowments. A few of legislative acts followed in the next few decades, which enabled setting up of local temple committees and the temple board, which exercised the supervisory role of the government.

All this changed when the Constitution was adopted in 1950, which introduced fundamental rights to practice religion. The



The growing number of religious disputes before constitutional courts reflects the role of the judiciary in ensuring that religious practices do not undermine constitutional principles

Freedom of worship rights in Articles 25 and 26 to worship were made applicable to individuals as well as to institutions. However, this freedom was tempered with the requirement that the practice of a professing religion would be subject to public order, health, and morality. This allows for a regulation of the religious practice when it offended public conscience or morality.

This period ushered in a critical shift in the law. In the earlier view that these matters were civil rights disputes, the court had the upper hand from the vantage of constitutional directives. By doing so, the law was able to protect the rights of the individual to equality and religious freedom subject to public interest restrictions. This led to the protection of the right to practice around temple entry, religious freedoms, and equality in the approach of the court. This is now a matter of debate in constitutional courts as to if and how these rights should be protected.

Nevertheless, the southern States, which belonged to the erstwhile Madras, have not been able to credit this bringing in this jurisdiction. It started with these States enacting legislation under the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act for better temple governance. These legislative acts, in turn, consequently, invited judicial oversight, as wrt courts were called upon to decide whether State intervention respecting the rights of the religious denominations would be essential to the religious freedom and morality.

Therefore, the law of the land is that religious freedoms are subject to the public order, which in turn is founded on the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and morality.

The growing number of religious disputes before constitutional courts reflects not only the public protection within and across states, but also the enduring role of the judiciary in ensuring that religious practices do not undermine constitutional principles. Judicial review of religious practices can be seen as an aberration, but a continuation of a long-standing constitutional experiment that seeks to harmonise faith with the fundamental principles of the Constitution.

With fundamental rights, such matters can be brought before constitutional courts. The constitutional court then undertakes the task of finding out whether such custom or practice is prima facie discriminatory or religious practice test. A creation of the Supreme Court, this test is to determine whether a particular custom or practice is essentially integral to the religion. These not essentially religious were, however, to be “secular” and open to judicial guidance. Therefore, if a practice satisfies the test, it would typically proceed to issue directions in consonance with the principles of the Constitution.

Despite criticism regarding its inconsistent interpretation in subsequent judgments, the courts have continued to rise to the challenge of objectivity to decisions by focusing on the core principles of equality and the Indian Young Lawyers Association and Ors v. State of Kerala (1980) OBCs and SCs. This approach underwent a significant consolidation when the Supreme Court held that even though the practice may be integral to the religious belief, it cannot be shielded from judicial scrutiny if they are inconsistent with equality and morality.

Therefore, the law of the land is that religious freedoms are subject to the public order, which in turn is founded on the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and morality.

The growing number of religious disputes before constitutional courts reflects not only the public protection within and across states, but also the enduring role of the judiciary in ensuring that religious practices do not undermine constitutional principles. Judicial review of religious practices can be seen as an aberration, but a continuation of a long-standing constitutional experiment that seeks to harmonise faith with the fundamental principles of the Constitution.

A battle over the title of 'Jatipita'

The Congress and BRS spur over KCR's role in the Statehood movement

STATE OF PLAY

Ravi Reddy

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Telangana

The centre of a recent political controversy, Telangana is a secessionist, but emotionally charged question, who deserves to be called the Father, or the Father of Telangana?

The immediate trigger for this latest round of political infighting and leaders bailing their skins is the notice served on Mr. Rao by a Special Investigation Team, a semi-governmental body, in connection with an alleged phone-tapping case during the 1990s. The notice, however, was as much to their leader, who they claimed had single-handedly led the Telangana Movement and ensured the creation of Telangana in 2014. Calling him the architect of the state, they questioned how he could be treated like a criminal.

The repeated attempts by the BRS to bestow the title of *Jatipita* on Mr. Rao did not go down well with the Congress. Mr. Ravanthi Reddy, who launched a scathing attack on Mr. Rao, claimed that he was the only self-proclaimed father of Telangana, though he himself never claimed that title. Prof. Bodulur explained:

“Other than Mr. Bapuji Krishnamurthy from Warangal, Konda Laxman Bapuji, and others, he has not played significant roles in sustaining the movement. He is not even mentioned in the history of the movement. It is only after the formation of Telangana, the narrative shifted. During the annual commemoration of Mr. Rao's legacy, he has been invited to commemorate Mr. Rao's fast that presumed the Centre to announce statehood for Telangana.

On the other hand, former prime minister PV Narasimha Rao, who founded the party's position, he argued that it is common in statehood movement to have a leader who is seen as Bapuji or *Jatipita*.

He said that Mr. Rao deserves recognition as *Jatipita*, since his leadership was instrumental to the formation of the State.

Drawing parallels with Jharkhand, Mr. Ravanthi pointed out that Shibu Soren, founder of the Biju Janata Dal, was the leader of the State, who started the movement for decades, and though Jharkhand was carried out of the state by the Biju Janata Dal-led National Democratic Alliance government, his recognition was not given.

“The agitation for a separate statehood started in 1969. During the 1969 movement, more than 400 people lost their lives. The police, on the other hand, KCR's leadership in the final phase of the statehood was largely non-existent,” Mr. Ravanthi Reddy said.

While the BRS cadre may just be in honouring Mr. Rao, the other party suggests that such recognition cannot be manufactured for political purposes. Titles like *Jatipita* endure only when they are affirmed by a broad spectrum of people, who respects partisan loyalties. The current controversy appears to be about present-day political positioning, with both the BRS and Congress still debating how Mr. Rao's legacy in the Telangana movement is defined, or who gets to be called *Jatipita*.

Taxpayer base more than doubled in the last decade

Expansion of the base has coincided with an improvement in tax administration efficiency

DATA POINT

Chandrasekar K.

In India's direct tax system has undergone a significant expansion over the last decade, marked by a large number of taxpayers as well as sustained improvements in administrative efficiency. Between Assessment Year (AY) 2013-14 and AY2024-25, the total number of taxpayers, defined as persons liable either on the basis of income or in whose case tax was deducted at source, increased from 1.13 crore to 13.85 crore.

This increase, which more than doubles the taxpayer base, is accompanied by a steady growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 7.80% over 11 years, underscoring the same nature of the expansion. It marks a significant, but important structural shift in India's direct tax landscape since the wider tax base has been built on a more persistent, reflecting deeper for individual participation rather than a shift in the nature of the base.

Between Assessment Year (AY) 2013-14 and AY2024-25, the total number of taxpayers, defined as persons liable either on the basis of income or in whose case tax was deducted at source, increased from 1.13 crore to 13.85 crore in AY2024-25, translating into a CAGR of about 7.80%.

Growth was largely steady in the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, but saw a sharp increase, mostly in the high single digits. The contraction visible in AY2020-21 is likely to be a one-off, as taxpayers declared by nearly 9% coincides with the disruption caused by the pandemic. This long-term decline has occurred despite a remarkable increase in the number of taxpayers and total tax collections.

Cost of collection

The expansion of the taxpayer base has coincided with a marked improvement in tax administration efficiency. As illustrated in **Chart 2**, the cost of collecting direct taxes fell from 1.36% in FY2000-01 to 0.70% in FY2024-25, a reduction of 25% and is now 50% lower than the cost of collecting direct taxes in FY2000-01. This long-term decline has occurred despite a remarkable increase in the number of taxpayers and total tax collections.

The temporary rise in the cost

in the expansion of the individual tax base.

While individuals dominate the tax system in scale, the expansion has not been limited to individuals alone.

Chart 2 shows the combined trend for non-individual taxpayers, comprising firms, companies, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act for better temple governance. These legislative acts, in turn, consequently, invited judicial oversight, as wrt courts were called upon to decide whether State intervention respecting the rights of the religious denominations would be essential to the religious freedom and morality.

Therefore, the law of the land is that religious freedoms are subject to the public order, which in turn is founded on the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and morality.

Despite this, the growth rate of non-individual taxpayers has been more moderate than among individuals, but also more stable. Year-on-year growth rates have been within the 4% to 7% range in the pre-pandemic years. The pandemic has impacted the growth in AY2020-21, where growth slowed sharply to below 5% before recovering gradually in subsequent years.

However, individuals, rebounding from the pandemic, have been measured, with growth stabilising at around 8% in recent assessment years. The pattern suggests that formalisation has progressed across organisational and business entities, particularly within the formal economy. This transition has important implications for revenue resilience, equity, and long-term fiscal planning nationwide.

It is to be noted that the growth in the cost of collection is a year-on-year basis using taxpayer headcount data. The cost of collecting direct taxes has been computed for the period AY2013-14 to AY2024-25 using unrounded values, and figures for AY2004-05 and AY2024-25 are provisional.

The writer is with the Indian Statistical Service. The views expressed are personal.

Rising numbers

The data for the charts were sourced from the Directorate of Revenue Services, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and Time Series Data, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) from 2004-05 to 2024-25.

CHART 1: Number of individual taxpayers in the income tax department (as at end of the year) and the year-on-year growth rate (y-o-y) (as at end of the year).



CHART 2: Number of non-individual taxpayers in the income tax department (as at end of the year) and the year-on-year growth rate (y-o-y) (as at end of the year).



CHART 3: Cost of collection (approx.)

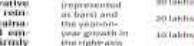


CHART 4: Cost of collection (approx.)

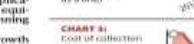


CHART 5: Cost of collection (approx.)

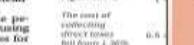


CHART 6: Cost of collection (approx.)



the party began calling him *Jatipita*.

On the other hand, former prime minister PV Narasimha Rao has strongly condemned the party's position. He argued that it is common in statehood movement that leaders are called *Jatipita*, or the Father of Telangana?

The immediate trigger for this latest round of political infighting and leaders bailing their skins is the notice served on Mr. Rao by a Special Investigation Team, a semi-governmental body, in connection with an alleged phone-tapping case during the 1990s.

Former Telangana Joint Action Committee (TJAC) and ex-MLC M. Rao claimed that he was instrumental in the formation of the Telangana movement, and that he deserved the title as the architect of the movement.

Drawing parallels with Jharkhand, Mr. Ravanthi Reddy pointed out that Shibu Soren, founder of the Biju Janata Dal, was the leader of the State, and he deserved the title of the Statehood movement for decades, and though Jharkhand was carried out of the state by the Biju Janata Dal-led National Democratic Alliance government, his recognition was not given.

The repeated attempts by the BRS to bestow the title of *Jatipita* on Mr. Rao did not go down well with the Congress.

Mr. Ravanthi Reddy, who launched a scathing attack on Mr. Rao, claimed that he was the only self-proclaimed father of Telangana, though he himself never claimed that title. Prof. Bodulur explained:

“Other than Mr. Bapuji Krishnamurthy from Warangal, Konda Laxman Bapuji, and others, he has not played significant roles in sustaining the movement. It is only after the formation of Telangana, the narrative shifted. During the annual commemoration of Mr. Rao's legacy, he has been invited to commemorate Mr. Rao's fast that presumed the Centre to announce statehood for Telangana.

While the BRS cadre may just be in honouring Mr. Rao, the other party suggests that such recognition cannot be manufactured for political purposes. Titles like *Jatipita* endure only when they are affirmed by a broad spectrum of people, who respects partisan loyalties. The current controversy appears to be about present-day political positioning, with both the BRS and Congress still debating how Mr. Rao's legacy in the Telangana movement is defined, or who gets to be called *Jatipita*.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 12, 1970

Attendance in offices: directive reiterated

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 11: Following the special drive in Government offices to ensure punctuality by officials and the finding that there is still some absence, the ministry of Home Affairs has asked all the ministries to take care that the earlier instructions issued by the ministry of Home Affairs are fully complied with.

The Department of Personnel is entrusted by the ministry of Home Affairs to ensure that all Government offices are punctual in the performance of their duties. Instructions are to be issued to all Government offices to ensure that the punctuality of Government servants is maintained.

It is considered that the punctuality of Government servants is important for the smooth running of the Government. The ministry of Home Affairs has issued a circular to all Government offices to ensure that the punctuality of Government servants is maintained.

It is to be noted that the circular is to be issued to all Government offices to ensure that the punctuality of Government servants is maintained.

Taxpayer base more than doubled in the last decade

Expansion of the base has coincided with an improvement in tax administration efficiency

DATA POINT

Chandrasekar K.

India's direct tax system has undergone a significant expansion over the last decade, marked by a sharp rise in the number of taxpayers as well as sustained improvements in administrative efficiency. Time-series data released by the Income-Tax Department indicate that this expansion has been broad-based and persistent, reflecting deeper formal participation rather than a short-lived compliance surge.

Between Assessment Year (AY) 2013-14 and AY2024-25, the total number of taxpayers, defined as persons who either filed a return of income or in whose case tax was deducted at source, increased from 5.26 crore to 12.13 crore.

This increase, which more than doubles the taxpayer base, represents a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 7.89% over 11 years, underscoring the sustained nature of the expansion. It marks one of the most important structural shifts in India's direct tax landscape since the wider adoption of the Permanent Account Number.

A disaggregated view of the data shows that individual taxpayers remain the primary drivers of this expansion. As illustrated in **Chart 1**, the number of individual taxpayers rose from 4.96 crore in AY2013-14 to 11.61 crore in AY2024-25, translating into a CAGR of about 8% over the period.

Growth was largely steady in the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, with year-on-year increases mostly in the high single digits. The contraction visible in AY2020-21, when individual taxpayers declined by nearly 9%, coincides with the disruption caused by the pandemic. This was followed by strong recovery, with growth accelerating to double digits in the most recent assessment years, indicating renewed momentum in the expansion of the individual tax base.

While individuals dominate the tax system in scale, the expansion has not been confined to households alone. **Chart 2** shows the combined trend for non-individual taxpayers, comprising firms, companies, Hindu Undivided Families, Associations of Persons or Body of Individuals, local authorities, artificial juridical persons, and other residual PAN categories.

In absolute terms, the non-individual taxpayer base increased steadily from about 0.29 crore in AY2013-14 to nearly 0.48 crore by AY2024-25, corresponding to a CAGR of roughly 5% over the period.

Growth among non-individual taxpayers has been more moderate than among individuals, but also more stable. Year-on-year growth rates generally remained within the 4% to 7% range in the pre-pandemic years. The pandemic's impact is again evident in AY2020-21, when growth slowed sharply to below 1% before recovering gradually in subsequent years.

However, unlike individuals, the post-pandemic rebound among non-individuals has been measured, with growth stabilising at around 5% in recent assessment years. This pattern suggests that formalisation has progressed across organisational and business entities, albeit at a steadier pace than individuals.

Cost of collection

The expansion of the taxpayer base has coincided with a marked improvement in tax administration efficiency. As shown in **Chart 3**, the cost of collecting direct taxes fell from 1.36% in FY2000-01 to 0.41% in FY2024-25. The figure for FY2024-25 is provisional and may be updated later. This long-term decline has occurred despite a substantial increase in the number of taxpayers and total tax collections.

The temporary rise in the cost

ratio around FY2020-21 reflects pandemic-related disruptions rather than structural weakening. Since then, the ratio has fallen to its lowest level in the available data series, indicating sustained improvements in administrative efficiency.

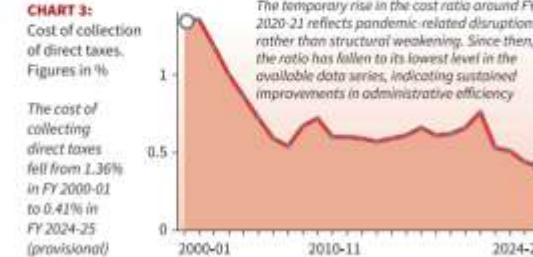
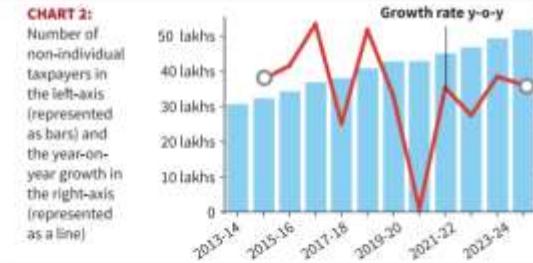
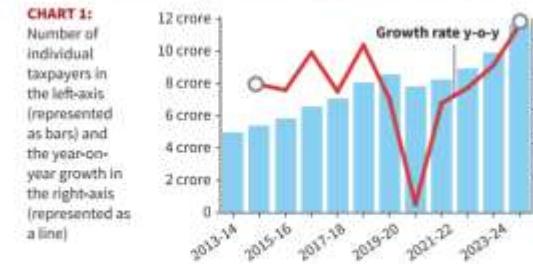
Several institutional and technological changes help explain these trends. Over the past decade, the tax administration has increasingly relied on digital filing systems, pre-filled returns, faceless assessments, and expanded third-party information reporting. These measures have reduced compliance frictions and enabled the system to manage a larger taxpayer base without a commensurate increase in administrative resources.

Unlike headline filing statistics that focus on absolute counts, the evidence presented here draws on taxpayer-level data, year-on-year growth dynamics, and long-term CAGR trends to assess the durability of India's tax base expansion.

Taken together, the evidence from taxpayer levels, growth rates, CAGR patterns, and collection costs points to a structural strengthening of India's direct tax system. Revenues are being mobilised from a broader cross-section of taxpayers even as administrative efficiency improves, thereby reinforcing the stability and sustainability of public finances and embedding taxation more firmly within the formal economy. This transition has important implications for revenue resilience, equity, and long-term fiscal planning nationwide.

It is to be noted that growth rates are calculated on a year-on-year basis using taxpayer headcount data.

CAGR is computed for the period AY2013-14 to AY2024-25 using unrounded values, and figures for AY2024-25 and FY2024-25 are provisional.



The writer is with the Indian Statistical Service. The views expressed are personal

2. How much the taxpayer base expanded / करदाता आधार कितना बढ़ा

- Between AY 2013-14 and AY 2024-25, total taxpayers (return filers + TDS-deducted cases) rose from 5.26 crore to 12.3 crore. / आकलन वर्ष 2013-14 से 2024-25 के बीच कुल करदाता 5.26 करोड़ से 12.3 करोड़ हो गए।
- This implies a long-term CAGR of about 7.89% over ~11 years. / लगभग 11 वर्षों में चक्रवृद्धि वार्षिक वृद्धि दर (CAGR) लगभग 7.89% रही।

3. Individuals are the main driver / मुख्य चालक—व्यक्तिगत करदाता

- Individual taxpayers increased from 4.96 crore (AY 2013-14) to 11.61 crore (AY 2024-25), around ~8% CAGR. / व्यक्तिगत करदाता 4.96 करोड़ से 11.61 करोड़ हुए; CAGR लगभग ~8%।
- Growth was mostly steady pre-COVID; there was a visible dip around AY 2020-21 linked to pandemic disruption, followed by strong recovery. / कोविड से पहले वृद्धि स्थिर रही; AY 2020-21 के आसपास महामारी-जनित गिरावट दिखी, फिर तेज़ रिकवरी हुई।

4. Non-individual taxpayers also rose (but slower) / गैर-व्यक्तिगत करदाता भी बढ़े (पर धीमे)

- Non-individual taxpayers (firms/companies/HUF/AOP-BOI/local bodies, etc.) rose from ~0.29 crore to ~0.48 crore between AY 2013-14 and AY 2024-25, roughly ~5% CAGR. / गैर-व्यक्तिगत करदाता ~0.29 करोड़ से ~0.48 करोड़; CAGR लगभग ~5%।
- Their year-on-year growth stayed in a moderate band; pandemic year showed weakening, then a post-pandemic rebound. / इनकी YoY वृद्धि मध्यम दायरे में रही; महामारी वर्ष में कमज़ोरी, फिर उछाल।

4. Non-individual taxpayers also rose (but slower) / गैर-व्यक्तिगत करदाता भी बढ़े (पर धीमे)

- Non-individual taxpayers (firms/companies/HUF/AOP-BOI/local bodies, etc.) rose from ~0.29 crore to ~0.48 crore between AY 2013-14 and AY 2024-25, roughly ~5% CAGR. / गैर-व्यक्तिगत करदाता ~0.29 करोड़ से ~0.48 करोड़; CAGR लगभग ~5%।
- Their year-on-year growth stayed in a moderate band; pandemic year showed weakening, then a post-pandemic rebound. / इनकी YoY वृद्धि मध्यम दायरे में रही; महामारी वर्ष में कमजोरी, फिर उछाल।

5. Efficiency: cost of collection fell / दक्षता: वसूली-लागत घटी

- The cost of collecting direct taxes fell from 1.36% (FY 2000-01) to 0.41% (FY 2024-25, provisional). / प्रत्यक्ष कर संग्रह की लागत 1.36% (FY 2000-01) से घटकर 0.41% (FY 2024-25, अस्थायी) हुई।
- A temporary rise around FY 2020-21 is attributed to pandemic disruption rather than structural weakening; later it fell to the lowest in the available series. / FY 2020-21 के आसपास अस्थायी बढ़ोतरी महामारी-असर मानी गई; बाद में यह उपलब्ध श्रृंखला के न्यूनतम स्तर तक गिर गई।

6. Why administration improved / प्रशासन क्यों बेहतर हुआ

- Increased use of digital filing, pre-filled returns, faceless assessments, more information reporting/third-party data, and process reforms reduced friction and enabled scaling. / डिजिटल फाइलिंग, प्री-फिल्ड रिटर्न, फेसलेस असेसमेंट, अधिक सूचना-रिपोर्टिंग/थर्ड-पार्टी डेटा और प्रक्रिया सुधारों से घर्षण घटा व स्केल-अप संभव हुआ।
- The pattern suggests broadening is not just "one-time compliance," but a more sustained structural expansion. / रुझान संकेत देता है कि यह केवल "एक-बार की अनुपालन वृद्धि" नहीं, बल्कि अधिक टिकाऊ संरचनात्मक विस्तार है।

Rising numbers

The data for the charts were sourced from the Income-Tax Department, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and Time Series Data on Direct Taxes (FY 2000-01 to 2024-25)



CHART 1:
Number of individual taxpayers in the left-axis (represented as bars) and the year-on-year growth in the right-axis (represented as a line)

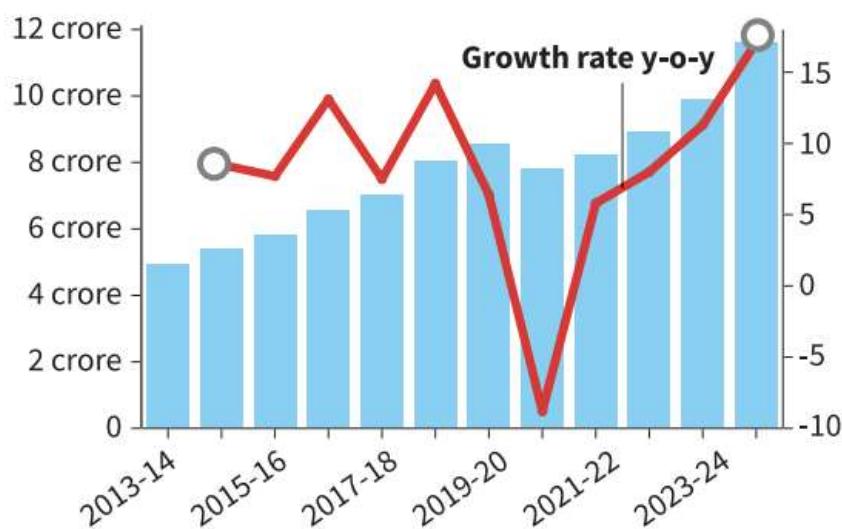


CHART 2:

Number of non-individual taxpayers in the left-axis (represented as bars) and the year-on-year growth in the right-axis (represented as a line)

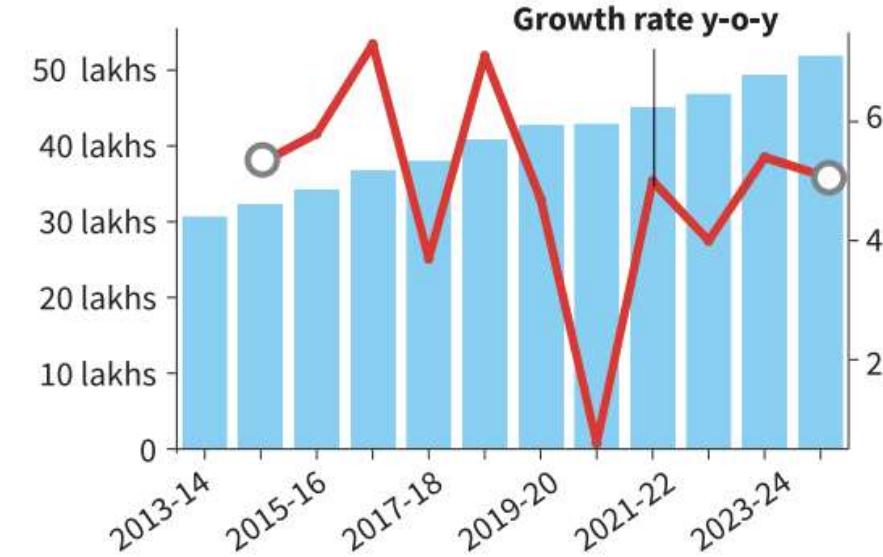
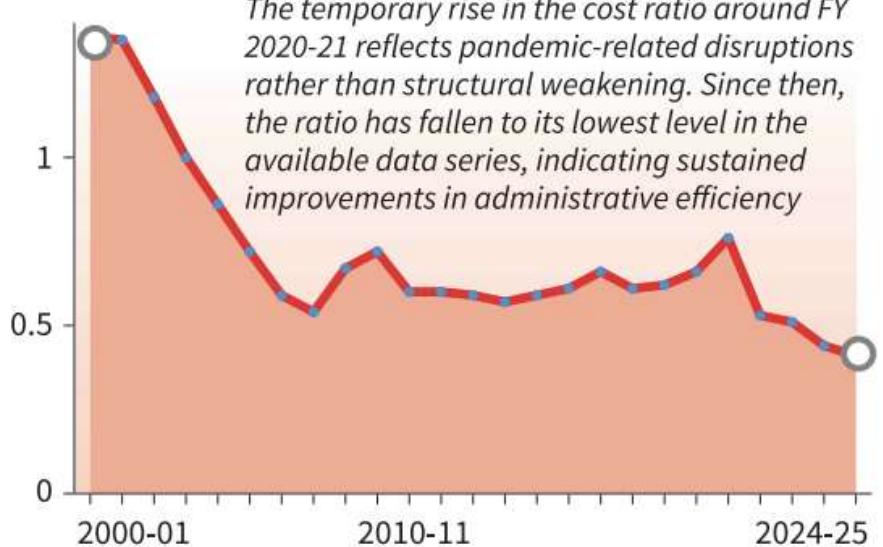


CHART 3:

Cost of collection of direct taxes. Figures in %

The cost of collecting direct taxes fell from 1.36% in FY 2000-01 to 0.41% in FY 2024-25 (provisional)



The share for States

Till the 13th FC (2010-2015), the devolution involved specific transfers for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) with extensive conditionalities

Table 1: Criteria for horizontal devolution amongst States

Criteria	13th FC 2010-15	14th FC 2015-20	15th FC 2020-26	16th FC 2026-31
Income distance	47.5	50	45	42.5
Population (1971)	25	17.5	-	
Population (2011)	-	10	15	17.5
Area	10	15	15	10
Forests	-	7.5	10	10
Fiscal discipline	17.5	-	-	
Demographic performance	-	-	12.5	10
Tax effort	-	-	2.5	
State's contribution to GDP				10
Total	100	100	100	100



Boycotts and bans: Only constants in B'desh polls

With Sheikh Hasina's Awami League banned, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami — out of the electoral fray for years — are the main contenders. On the agenda is a break with the past and at stake are growth and stability and the country's India ties

Eighteen months after PM Sheikh Hasina was forced to flee the country amid a massive wave of student unrest, Bangladesh faces yet another watershed in its 55-year history as it votes on Thursday to elect a new govt. Sheikh Hasina had presided over a phase of stability and economic growth in her second, and uninterrupted, 15-year stint in office beginning 2009, but she's also accused of undermining democracy in the country during this period.

Her fall, swift and violent, was more than a simple case of the ouster of an unpopular leader. The student movement that anchored the protests proceeded to efface all markers of the country's foundational history, in which Sheikh Hasina's father and the founder of her Awami League party, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, looms as a larger-than-life

figure. There has also been a thaw in ties with Pakistan, setting aside Islamabad's violent repression of the 1971 liberation movement.

As Awami League's leadership and supporters went underground, outfits like the Khaleda Zia-led Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) — cornered and sidelined under Sheikh Hasina — have emerged as the primary contenders for forming the new govt. The challenges confronting Bangladesh became evident under the interim administration of Nobel Peace laureate Md Yunus: growth has slowed while the country has been caught in a spiral of violence marked by political killings and attacks on media. Especially worrisome has been the targeting of the country's Hindu minority, which has become one more wrinkle in Dhaka's deteriorating ties with New



Party posters line a Dhaka street in the run-up to Thursday's vote

Close to 13 crore voters..



Men 6.5 crore
Women 6.3 crore

...To elect 300 lawmakers

The unicameral Bangladesh national assembly is called the Jatiya Sangsad. Apart from the 300 constituency seats it has **50 reserved seats for women**, allocated proportionally after the election

Delhi, strained already after Sheikh Hasina was given asylum by India.

With Awami League banned, BNP — led now by Tarique Rahman after his mother Zia's death last Dec — is the favourite to win the election, but it has to contend with a strong rival in JeI,

which has tied up with the National Citizen Party, founded by the students who led the July Revolution of 2024. Whoever wins will have the task of helming a very different Bangladesh, where certainties of the past no longer hold and the path ahead looks sharply contested.

The Key Contenders

BNP had boycotted multiple elections during the tenure of Sheikh Hasina, which had also witnessed a crackdown on Jamaat-e-Islami in connection with crimes during the 1971 liberation movement. Both go into the polls at the head of multi-party alliances

Bangladesh Nationalist Party

Founded in 1978 by then president Ziaur Rahman

Led by Khaleda Zia after Ziaur Rahman's assassination

Goes into polls headed by Khaleda Zia's son **Tarique Rahman**

Economically right-wing and generally conservative



Only 4 'Fair Polls' Out Of 12

Mujib won the first election virtually unchallenged. But after his assassination in 1975, elections were never free under Ziaur Rahman and Muhammad Ershad. In 1991, the first free elections were held in the country. The 1996-2008 period was when democracy was on its strongest footing in a country where main parties either boycotting elections or being banned from contesting has been something of a norm

1st Party

Seats

2nd Party

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami

- **Shafiqur Rahman** is the present chief
- The Islamist outfit was banned by Sheikh Hasina and deregistered by its top court. Ban lifted following Hasina's ouster



National Citizen Party

- Founded in Feb 2025 with student leader **Nahid Islam** as the convener
- Formed as a successor of Students Against Discrimination and Jatiya Nagorik Committee, the party has tied up with Jamaat for the polls



Jatiyo Party

- Founded in 1986 by then president Hussain Muhammad Ershad
- Has two factions – one led by G M Quader and Shamim Haider Patwary, the other by Anisul Islam Mahmud and ABM Ruhul Amin
- Conservative party with Islamic ideology but claims to believe in freedom of all religions



“ We promise that the ideology which inspired our freedom fighters and heroic martyrs to sacrifice their lives, viz., nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism, these ideals shall be the main features of our Constitution

— MUJIBUR RAHMAN IN B'DESH ASSEMBLY

Only 4 'Fair Polls' Out Of 12

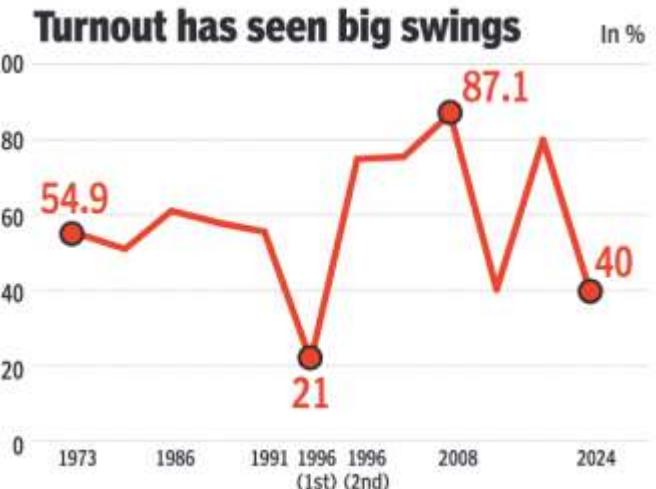
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— MUJIBUR RAHMAN IN B'DESH ASSEMBLY

	1st Party	Seats	2nd Party	
1973	Awami League	293	5	Independents
1979	BNP	207	39	Awami League
1986	Jatiya Party	153	76	Awami League
1988	Jatiya Party	251	19	Combined Opposition
1991	BNP	140	88	Awami League
1996-I	BNP	278	10	Independents
1996-II	Awami League	146	116	BNP
2001	BNP	195	58	Awami League
2008	Awami League	230	30	BNP
2014	Awami League	234	34	Jatiya Party
2018	Awami League	258	23	Jatiya Party
2024	Awami League	224	62	Independents



Sheikh Hasina with the Awami League poll symbol at a party rally in 1991

Getty Images

Economy weak, but it scores high on human development

Apart from being a larger economy than Pakistan, Bangladesh is far more prosperous than its cousin. The average Bangladeshi is richer, more literate and lives longer than an average Pakistani, and also the average Indian. The average Bangladeshi family is smaller than Pakistani families. It also has a lower infant mortality rate than both India and Pakistan

Research: **Atul Thakur**

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Dhaka Tribune, World Bank, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, European Parliamentary Research Service

Better than Ind, Pak on life expectancy, IMR

	Bangladesh	India	Pakistan
Population (million)	174	1,464	240
GDP (\$, trillion)	0.5	3.9	0.4
GDP (PPP \$, trillion)	1.7	16.2	1.6
GDP per capita (\$)	2,593	2,695	1,479
GDP per capita (PPP \$)	9,647	11,160	6,252
Exchange rate (\$ to currency)	122	91	279
Literacy rate	79	82	59
Forex reserve (\$, billion)	21	643	18
Life expectancy at birth	75	72	68
Total fertility rate	2	2	4
Infant mortality rate	24	25	50

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

Charles Darwin originally went to the University of Edinburgh to study _____, but he disliked the experience so much that he left, but not before he learnt taxidermy from the British taxidermist John Edmonstone. In his second year, Darwin began to focus on natural history. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 2

The voyage that shaped Darwin's science was the second expedition of the HMS _____, in 1831-1836. He boarded as a young naturalist and spent years collecting specimens across South America and elsewhere. However, he didn't instantly 'discover' evolution. The meaning of his findings became clear after further studies and expert inputs back in Britain. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 3

Darwin developed the core idea of natural selection years before publishing

it. One important intellectual inspiration was X's essay on population. Darwin applied the idea of people competing for limited resources in the essay to living organisms, helping him see how selection could operate continuously. Name X.

QUESTION 4

Darwin's major work, *On the Origin of Species*, was published in 1859 and sold out quickly. It proposed natural selection as a principal mechanism driving adaptation. Y independently arrived at a similar mechanism; his 1858 letter to Darwin prompted a joint presentation of their ideas at the Linnean Society of London. Name Y.

QUESTION 5

Darwin also wrote _____ in 1871, which extended evolutionary arguments to humans and introduced sexual selection, with traits shaped by mating success rather than just survival. Fill in the blanks.



Visual: Name this woman, a pioneer of close-up photography who also captured the famous 1862 image of Charles Darwin with a big beard. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Answers to February 5 quiz:

1. Location of fort through which IST's time meridian passes – **Ans: Prayagraj**
2. New Zealand territory with a 45-minute timezone offset – **Ans: Chatham Islands**
3. Country with the most number of timezones – **Ans: France**
4. Republic with the earliest timezone on the earth – **Ans: Kiribati**
5. Country in the 'wrong' timezone for more than 80 years – **Ans: Spain**

Visual: Pips

First contact: K.N. Viswanathan | Tamal Biswas | Anmol Agrawal

Corrections & Clarifications

The size of the NLOT's primary mirror was erroneously printed as 30 m in the February 9 article "Budget boosts domestic space research while spending lags behind". It is 13.7 m

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Word of the day

Pugnacity:

a natural disposition to be hostile

Synonyms: aggressiveness, belligerence

Usage: *He is legendary for his pugnacity.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/pugnacitypro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /pʌg'næsəti/

Word of the day

Presentiment:

a feeling of evil to come

Synonyms: foreboding, premonition

Usage: *The lawyer had a presentiment that the judge would dismiss the case.*

Pronunciation:

newsth.live/presentimentpro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /pri'zɛn.tɪ.mənt/

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