

# Daily Current Affairs



जनसत्ता



The Indian EXPRESS

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS



5  
**The Hindu**



0  
**PIB, PRS & Other newspaper**



2  
**The Indian Express**



0  
**Jansatta**



1  
**Financial Express**



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**'Instead of Israel, Syria can deal with Hezbollah'**

**EVLAN**  
U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he had requested to Israel that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad should deal with Lebanon's Hezbollah militia as the Israeli campaign was nearing its final conclusion. ■ PAGE 14

**Savarkar filed 10 mercy pleas, his kin tells court**

**MEMPHIS**  
Tajendra Savarkar, the grandfather of Vinodkumar Dhanoo Savarkar, told a special NCFM court in Pune that the right-wing ideologue had submitted 10 mercy petitions to the British government seeking reduction of his sentence. ■ PAGE 8

**RSS must answer Karnataka gov't queries: Priyank**

**BENGALURU**  
After RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat distributed Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge's questions on transparency, the Minister on Tuesday said, "The RSS cannot say that it will not reply because they are being asked by the Government." ■ PAGE 8

**Probe the theft of Ram Temple donations: Cong.**

**LUCKNOW**  
Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders on Tuesday demanded a time-bound investigation by a sitting judge of a high court into donations missing from the Ram temple trust, alleging "organised plunder" of hundreds of crores of rupees. By the BJP and RSS. ■ PAGE 8

# India's rainfall deficit 35% as monsoon stalls

Central India faces a 61% rain deficit as monsoon falters; gov't. directs crop-wise contingency plans | Centre places around 200 districts under priority monitoring; weekly reviews of I3 Niño ordered | Deficit is significant in a year forecasters globally have warned will likely be a 'Super El Niño' year

**Jacob Koshy**  
**A.M. Liguori**  
NEW DELHI

Over a week past the monsoon's normal arrival date, the rain clouds have yet to reach Mumbai, leaving India's nationwide monsoon deficit to 35% as of Tuesday. The shortfall in rainfall is concentrated in the regions the monsoon has failed to cover — Maharashtra, the Konkan coast, and the adjoining regions of central India — where its northward progress has been stalled for several days.

The southern peninsula (14%), Meerwade, Union Agriculture Minister Shriya Singh Choudhan, chairing a review of short-term preparations on Tuesday, directed states to identify districts facing low or uneven rainfall and to draw up crop-wise contingency plans so that affected farmers could be "immediately provided with alternative, advice, and assistance." The Union government has placed 150 to 200 the districts under priority monitoring, ordered weekly I3 Niño reviews, and is encouraging a shift towards cotton and pulses.

**Hanging clouds**  
While a monsoon deficit in June is not unusual, it assumes additional significance in a year which has been globally forecast to witness a 'Super El Niño'.

Year	June	Whole southeast monsoon
2019	1,274	1,244
2018	1,274	1,244
2017	1,274	1,244
2016	1,274	1,244
2015	1,274	1,244
2014	1,274	1,244
2013	1,274	1,244
2012	1,274	1,244
2011	1,274	1,244
2010	1,274	1,244
2009	1,274	1,244
2008	1,274	1,244
2007	1,274	1,244
2006	1,274	1,244
2005	1,274	1,244
2004	1,274	1,244
2003	1,274	1,244
2002	1,274	1,244
2001	1,274	1,244
2000	1,274	1,244

While a rainfall deficit in June, the first of the monsoon months, is not unusual, it assumes additional significance in a year that forecasters globally have warned will likely be a 'Super El Niño' year. An analysis of the IMD's all-India June rainfall comparisons for 10 Niño years since 2000 shows no consistent early-season signal. In June 2015, during one of the strongest El Niño events on record, rainfall was 14% above normal. In June 2002 and June 2004, both years that ended in drought, recorded near-normal June rainfall of around 2% and 1% above normal, respectively. The deficit arriving only in July and later.

Only in 2009 (47% below normal) and 2014 (44% below normal) did June rainfall fall as sharply as it has this year. In 2020, the first year of the current year, June closed about 8% below normal, within the IMD's normal range. An El Niño event — the periodic warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean that tends to suppress the Indian monsoon — establishes itself only in the spring and weakens its influence mainly in the middle and later part of the season. "June rainfall and the pace of onset, by contrast, are governed largely by local and regional factors," Dr. Pal explained that the monsoon moves in pulses, and the first pulse, having reached the outskirts of Mumbai, did not sustain itself. Instead, an "anticyclonic circulation" in the city's north, combined with a westerly push from mid-latitude weather systems, has prevented the monsoon from establishing itself, he told the *Hindu*. The Madden-Julian Oscillation, a travelling band of atmospheric activity that can strengthen or weaken the monsoon, is currently in an "unfavourable phase". This implies that the onset over Mumbai is likely to be delayed by a further two to six days until the next pulse strengthens, possibly aided by a low-pressure system forming over the Bay of Bengal, he reckoned.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration based an El Niño advisory on June 11, confirming the event had formed and placing the odds of it becoming "very strong" by winter at 65%. The World Meteorological Organization had earlier put the probability of El Niño emerging between June and August at 90%. The IMD's own June bulletin states that El Niño conditions are present and that the ocean and atmosphere have coupled, with no positive Indian Ocean Niño expected to offset it this season. The warnings have been building. IMD's first-stage forecast in April pegged seasonal rainfall at 92% of the long-period average. Its May-end update lowered this to 90% and assigned a 65% probability to a deficient year — the agency's most pessimistic pre-monsoon call since 2011.

## The beautiful game



Shilpa celebrates: College students in South India, Kerala, take part in a fun event for the FIFA World Cup 2020, shared in prides of various football teams and holding the national flags of Brazil, Argentina, Portugal, and other tournament participants. (1)

## Ex-Minister Vijayabaskar quits as M.L.A., exits AIADMK

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI/PUDUCHOTTAI

In yet another blow to the AIADMK, Virudhachal MLA and former Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar resigned from the Tamil Nadu Assembly and quit the party on Tuesday. He submitted his resignation to Speaker J.C.D. Prabhakar. The Speaker said in a statement that he had accepted the resignation. Associated with the AIADMK since college days, he is the fifth MLA to leave the party since the party's formation in 2016 after the 2016 election.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
PAGE 4



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with leaders of G7 members and other countries in G7 summit, eastern France, on Tuesday. (AP)

## World suffers from a shortage of trust, PM Modi tells G7 leaders

**Priscan Lakshman**  
LONDON

With a message that trust was in short supply globally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday participated in a session with the Group of Seven (G7) countries and others on "Forging New Partnerships and Rebuilding International Solidarity". In addition to the G7 and India, other partner countries — Brazil, Egypt, Kenya, and South Korea — participated in these discussions along with the World Bank and African Development Bank. Mr. Modi met U.S. President Donald Trump for the first time since February 2019 at the meeting. The host country France's attention for the session was to build a fairer and more effective system of international partnerships. Some of the sessions have reportedly been launched in a way that would hold Mr. Trump's interest.

Mr. Modi summarised his message to the gathering on social media. "The world does not suffer from a shortage of resources... it suffers from a shortage of trust," he wrote on X.

**FAP FERRYING TEST PAPERS**  
PAGE 4

# Govt. orders blocking of Telegram app till NEET re-examination

**ACQUIN DEER**  
NEW DELHI

At the National Testing Agency (NTA)'s request, the Centre is blocking the messaging app Telegram in India until Monday, in what the NTA described as a "response to the original use of the platform by cheating racketeers to defraud candidates appearing for the NEET (UG) 2020 re-examination scheduled on 21 June 2020."

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, even for a limited period. The NTA emphasised that this decision was "solely based and bounded in time," and that it would be lifted later. The agency said that several Telegram groups were advertising fake test papers for the upcoming NEET and defaming the institute willing to pay for them. Telegram founder Pavel Durov criticised the blocking order, at least one telecom operator had already blocked access to the service, and the app's listing was taken down from Google Play and Apple's App Store. This is the first time that a messaging app operating at such a scale is being blocked in India by



The ITA has emphasised that the blocking is "calibrated and bounded in time," and that it would be lifted later. (AP)

prevent "backlisting scam," he said. "Acting on inputs received continuously from NTA, from State law-enforcement agencies including the police forces of Bihar, Gujarat and Rajasthan, and from its own continuous monitoring of public channels and platforms," Mr. Durov is also making the "redacted" label more visible to

the Ministry of Home Affairs, has secured the prompt take-down of a substantial number of Telegram channels, groups and bots whose names and content openly advertised their fraudulent and misleading purposes," the agency said. There are several Telegram groups circulating everything from pirated links to real-time news updates from established organisations. The platform has attracted many users as it offers features such as integrating bots into the platform, not typically found on other popular platforms such as WhatsApp and Signal. In a video message, NTA Director-General Abdulhakim Singh said, "To all parents, I say, please protect your child from financial fraud

# India's rainfall deficit 35% as monsoon stalls

Central India faces a 61% rain deficit as monsoon falters; govt. directs crop-wise contingency plans

Centre places around 200 districts under priority monitoring; weekly reviews of El Niño ordered

Deficit is significant in a year forecasters globally have warned will likely be a 'Super El Niño' year

Jacob Koshy

A.M. Jigeesh

NEW DELHI

Over a week past the monsoon's normal arrival date, the rain clouds have yet to reach Mumbai, driving India's nationwide monsoon deficit to 35% as of Tuesday.

The shortfall in rainfall is concentrated in the regions the monsoon has failed to cover – Maharashtra, the Konkan coast, and the adjoining regions of central India – where its northward progress has been stalled for several days.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) statistics show that apart from northwest India, which has received 5% more rain than normal for this time of the year, all other regions are in the red, including east and northeast India (-43%), central India (-61%), and

the southern peninsula (-14%).

Meanwhile, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, chairing a review of kharif preparations on Tuesday, directed States to identify districts facing low or uneven rainfall and to draw up crop-wise contingency plans, so that affected farmers could be "immediately provided with alternatives, advice, and assistance."

The Union government has placed 150 to 200 districts under priority monitoring, ordered weekly El Niño reviews, and is encouraging a shift towards cotton and pulses.

## 'Better placed'

Mr. Chouhan has maintained that seed and fertilizer stocks are adequate and that reservoir storage – at 30.4% of capacity in May, against a 25.1% average in previous El Niño years – leaves the country

## Hanging clouds

While a monsoon deficit in June is not unusual, it assumes additional significance in a year which has been globally forecast to witness a 'Super El Niño'

Rainfall departures for El Niño years since 2000:

	June	Whole southwest monsoon
2002	+2%	19% below LPA*
2004	+1%	13% below LPA
2009	-47%	22% below LPA
2014	-44%	12% below LPA
2015	+14%	14% below LPA
2023	-8%	6% below LPA



\*LPA: Long Period Average

Source: IMD

better placed than in earlier seasons with rainfall deficiency.

While a rainfall deficit in June, the first of the monsoon months, is not unusual, it assumes additional significance in a year that forecasters globally have warned will likely be a 'Super El Niño' year.

An analysis of the IMD's all-India June rainfall departures for El Niño years

since 2000 shows no consistent early-season signal. In June 2015, during one of the strongest El Niño events on record, rainfall was 14% above normal. June 2002 and June 2004, both years that ended in drought, recorded near-normal June rainfall of around 2% and 1% above normal respectively, with the deficits arriving only in July and later.

Only in 2009 (47% below normal) and 2014 (44% below normal) did June rainfall fail as sharply as it has this year. In 2023, the most recent El Niño year, June closed about 8% below normal, within the IMD's normal range.

An El Niño event – the periodic warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean that tends to suppress the Indian monsoon – establishes itself only in the spring and exerts its influence mainly in the middle and later part of the season.

"June rainfall and the pace of onset, by contrast, are governed largely by local and regional factors," according to D.S. Pai, chief forecaster at the IMD's Regional Meteorological Centre in Chennai.

## First pulse weakened

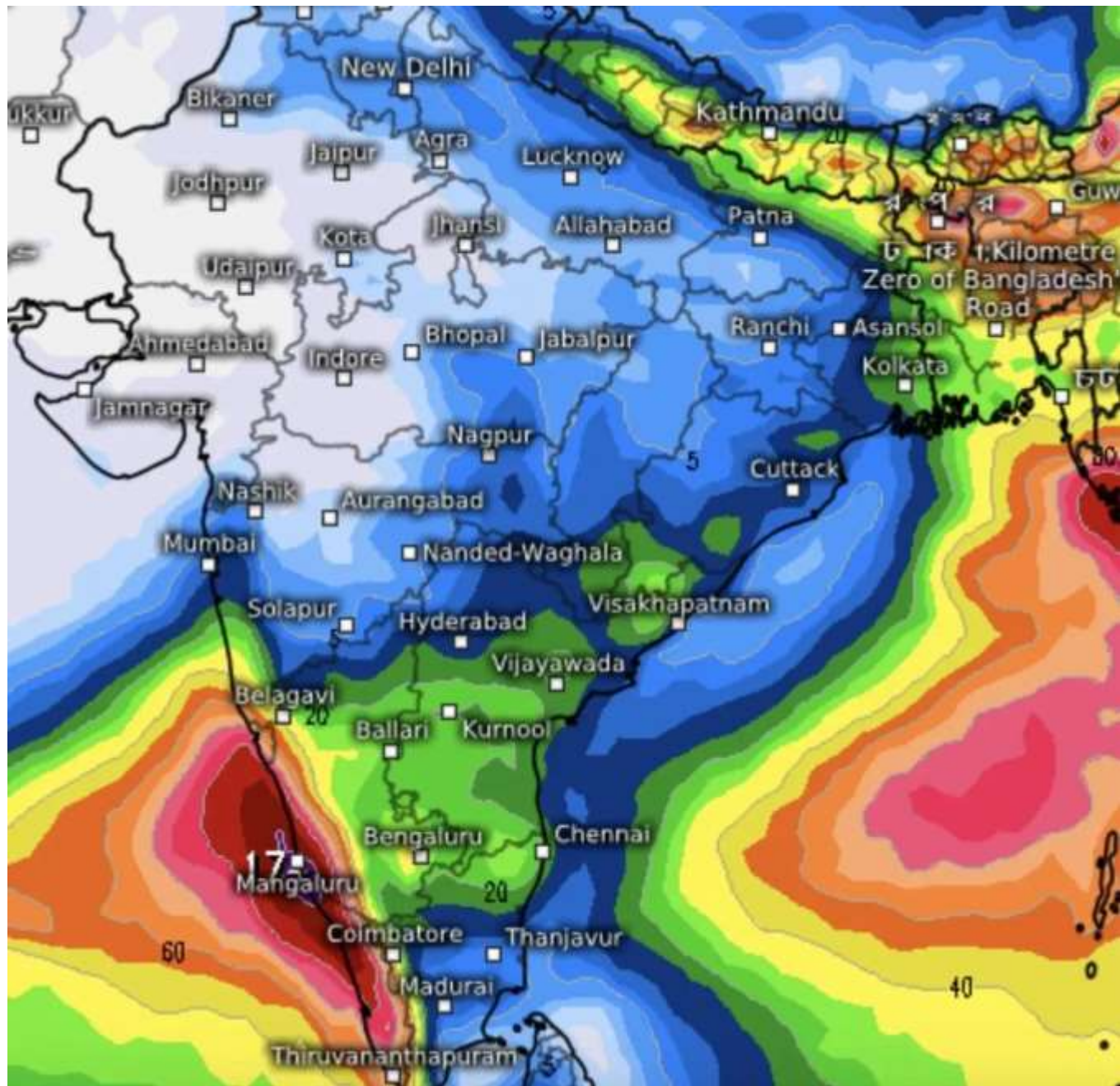
This year, the monsoon set in over Kerala on June 4, just three days behind its

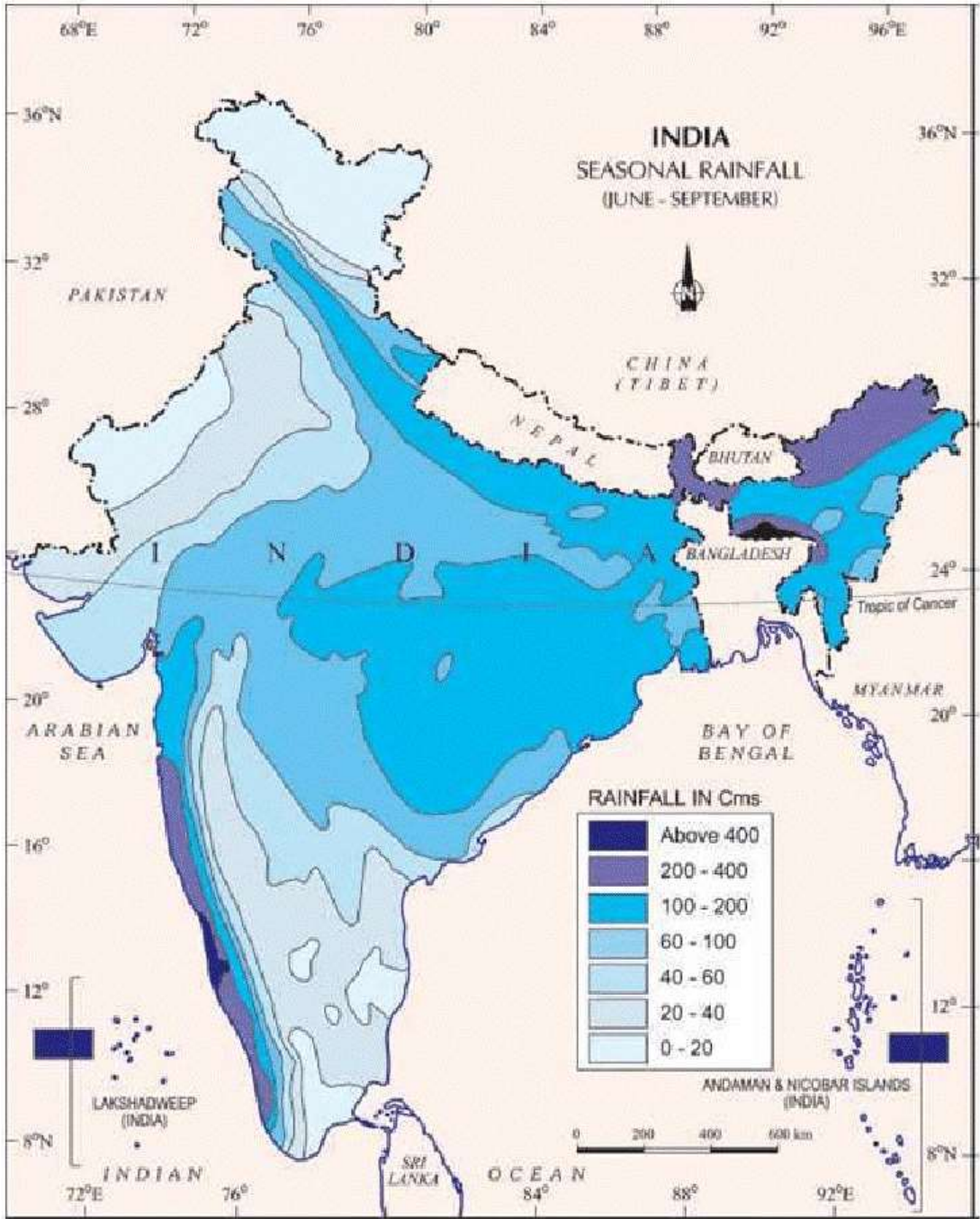
normal date, but its advance up the west coast has since lost momentum. Dr. Pai explained that the monsoon moves in pulses, and the first pulse, having reached the outskirts of Mumbai, did not sustain itself. Instead, an "anticyclonic circulation" to the city's north, combined with a westerly push from mid-latitude weather systems, has prevented the monsoon from establishing itself, he told *The Hindu*.

The Madden-Julian Oscillation, a travelling band of atmospheric activity that can strengthen or weaken the monsoon, is currently in an "unfavourable phase". This implies that the onset over Mumbai is likely to be delayed by a further five to six days, until the next pulse strengthens, possibly aided by a low-pressure system forming over the Bay of Bengal, he reckoned.

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued an El Niño advisory on June 11, confirming the event had formed and placing the odds of it becoming "very strong" by winter at 63%. The World Meteorological Organization had earlier put the probability of El Niño emerging between June and August at 80%. The IMD's own June bulletin states that El Niño conditions are present and that the ocean and atmosphere have coupled, with no positive Indian Ocean Dipole expected to offset it this season.

The warnings have been building. IMD's first-stage forecast in April pegged seasonal rainfall at 92% of the long-period average; its May-end update lowered this to 90% and assigned a 60% probability to a deficient year – the agency's most pessimistic pre-season call since 2015.





Topic	Details
National Rainfall Deficit	35% below normal
Central India	~61–63% deficit
East & Northeast India	43% deficit
Southern Peninsula	14% deficit
Northwest India	5% above normal
Districts under monitoring	150–200
Main concern	El Niño
Agriculture Minister	Shivraj Singh Chouhan
Monsoon onset	Reached Kerala but stalled later
IMD forecast	90% of Long Period Average rainfall
Probability of deficient monsoon	~60%

## 2. What is El Niño?

### Definition

El Niño is the abnormal warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean.

### Impact on India

Impact	Effect
Weak Monsoon	Less rainfall
Agriculture	Lower crop output
Food Inflation	Increase
Reservoir Levels	Decline
Hydropower	Reduced generation
GDP	Rural demand falls

Historically, many drought years in India coincide with El Niño events.  CarbonCopy +1

### **3. Why Has Monsoon Stalled?**

According to IMD scientists:

#### **1. Weak First Pulse**

The first monsoon surge reached Kerala but lost momentum afterward.

#### **2. Anti-Cyclonic Circulation**

Dry air movement north of Mumbai blocked monsoon progression.

#### **3. Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)**

The MJO is currently in an unfavorable phase, reducing rainfall activity.

#### **4. Emerging El Niño**

Pacific Ocean warming is suppressing monsoon circulation.

Year	June Rainfall Departure
2002	+2%
2004	+1%
2009	-47%
2014	-44%
2015	+14%
2023	-8%
2026	-35%

## 5. Important El Niño Years in India

Year	Impact
1982	Severe drought
1987	Major drought
2002	Drought
2009	Severe drought
2015	Below-normal rainfall
2023	Weak monsoon, driest August in over a century
2026	Current concern

## 7. Impact on Agriculture

### Most Vulnerable Crops

Crop	Risk Level
Paddy	Very High
Cotton	High
Soybean	High
Sugarcane	High
Pulses	Moderate
Millets	Low

Agriculture is especially vulnerable because almost **50% of India's farmland remains rain-fed.**

Sector

Impact

Agriculture

Lower production

Inflation

Higher food prices

Rural Consumption

Declines

GDP Growth

Slower

Water Supply

Pressure

Electricity

Lower hydropower

# Previous Year Exam Questions on Monsoon, El Niño, ENSO, MJO & Indian Agriculture

Year	Exam	Question
2024	UPSC Prelims	Consider the following statements regarding El Niño and Southern Oscillation (ENSO). Which statements are correct?
2024	SSC CGL	El Niño is associated with abnormal warming of which ocean?
2024	CDS	Which climatic phenomenon is known to weaken the Indian monsoon?
2024	UPPCS	How does El Niño affect Indian agriculture?
2023	UPSC Prelims	El Niño is generally associated with which of the following conditions?
2023	UPSC GS-I Mains	Discuss the factors affecting the onset and variability of the Indian monsoon.
2023	RAS Prelims	Which climatic event is linked with below-normal monsoon rainfall in India?
2023	BPSC	What is the relationship between ENSO and Indian monsoon?

# Govt. orders blocking of Telegram app till NEET re-examination

**Aroon Deep**

NEW DELHI

At the National Testing Agency (NTA)'s request, the Centre is blocking the messaging app Telegram in India until Monday, in what the NTA described as a "response to the organised use of the platform by cheating rackets to defraud candidates appearing for the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination scheduled on 21 June 2026."

On Tuesday evening, a few hours after the government's order, at least one telecom operator had already blocked access to the service, and the app's listing was taken down from Google Play and Apple's App Store. This is the first time that a messaging app operating at such a scale is being blocked in India by

the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, even for a limited period.

The NTA emphasised that this blocking was "calibrated and bounded in time," and that it would be lifted later.

The agency said that several Telegram groups were advertising fake test papers for the upcoming NEET and defrauding candidates willing to pay for them.

Telegram founder Pavel Durov criticised the blocking, saying it "punishes" over 15 crore "ordinary Telegram users in India". "Banning the app even temporarily, he said, "is a mistake".

"The leaks just moved to other apps", Mr. Durov added. While it is unclear what he was referring to,



The NTA has emphasised that the blocking is 'calibrated and bounded in time,' and that it would be lifted later. REUTERS

the NTA on the day kept dismissing the legitimacy of certain screenshots purported to be that of the upcoming NEET exam's question paper.

"Over the past few weeks, we removed hundreds of channels sharing leaked exam materials and related scams in India. We are also making the "edited" label more visible to

prevent backdating scams," he said.

"Acting on inputs received continuously from NTA, from State law-enforcement agencies including the police forces of Bihar, Gujarat and Rajasthan, and from its own continuous monitoring of public channels and platforms, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), under

the Ministry of Home Affairs, has secured the prompt take-down of a substantial number of Telegram channels, groups and bots whose names and content openly advertised their fraudulent and misleading purpose," the agency said.

There are several Telegram groups circulating everything from pirated links to real-time news updates from established organisations; the platform has attracted many users as it offers features such as integrating bots into the platform, not typically found on other popular platforms such as WhatsApp and Signal.

In a video message, NTA Director-General Abhishek Singh said, "To all parents, I say, please protect your child from financial fraud

and from the panic these rackets are designed to create. NTA is committed to a fair, secure and credible examination, and to act against every person involved in spreading these scams."

Additionally, many groups, the NTA said, were editing past messages with recent exam paper questions, to fake their capabilities in obtaining question papers in advance.

In separate directions, the IT Ministry said that it had ordered Telegram to disable message editing as well until June 30, to shut off "this avenue of fabrication for the post-examination window in which such artefacts have historically been deployed."

**IAF FERRYING NEET PAPERS**

» PAGE 6



Topic

Trigger

Agency Requesting Action

Action Taken

Duration

Ministry Involved

Reason

Additional Action

Other Measure

States Mentioned

Cyber Agency

Telegram Founder Response

Details

NEET (UG) 2026 Re-examination

National Testing Agency (NTA)

Temporary blocking of Telegram

Until NEET re-exam (21 June 2026)

Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology  
(MeitY)

Fake question papers and exam fraud

Telegram channels, groups and bots removed

Message-editing feature disabled till 30 June

Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

Pavel Durov opposed temporary ban





Institution

National Testing Agency

Ministry of Electronics and  
Information Technology

Indian Cyber Crime  
Coordination Centre

[Telegram](#)

Role

Conducts NEET

Ordered blocking

Monitoring cyber fraud

Platform allegedly used for  
fraud





Provision

Article 19(1)(a)

Article 19(2)

IT Act 2000

IT Rules 2021

Public Order

Examination Integrity

Relevance

Freedom of Speech

Reasonable Restrictions

Blocking powers

Intermediary obligations

Government justification

Public interest argument



## Stranded at sea: Indian mariner died aboard ship waiting for assistance

M. Kalyanasaraman  
CHENNAI

His name was Nishanth Uthiranthan. In Tamil, his last name means 'who has come back to life', a reference to Jesus Christ.

On June 13, Uthiranthan, a 35-year-old seaman of 11 years on MT Coastal, a half-masted vessel, died aboard the ship. He is not going to come back to life.

Uthiranthan's home address is listed as Therasagaram in Thoothukudi, a neighbourhood of hazy waterflood for whom rigging a repaired boat at sea is routine. But, Uthiranthan

died of sheer weakness.

With 16 Indian crew members, including the master of the ship, one Pakistani electrical officer, and one Indonesian cook, Coastal's 20th anniversary was celebrated on the vessel. The crew members have faced in the past few months a half-masted ship, problems with owners, distress calls not being attended to, rationing of food and water, long stressful days in the open zone, and the crew's hostile manoeuvres.

No medical help was offered to Uthiranthan even though he lay suffering for



Witnesses call: The crew on board MT Coastal 300 had sent out urgent messages about depleted supplies, among, assistance for more than three days, and crew members were not attending to the deceased. The ship, Captain Devendra Y.

day, said the officer started vomiting and later stopped eating. Though he seemed to get better briefly, he subsequently collapsed and died.

Urgent messages

All this time, the crew members were sending urgent messages to whoever would listen, including the Maritime Research and Statistics Committee, the manager of the vessel, the Shipping Company, and Durgam port authorities who apparently told him he had to get an agent to look after these things.

Three days before the officer's death, the company advised the master to sail to Shimon, Oman, so supplies could be arranged. But the Captain refused.

The vessel was boarded by the Navy on May 15 while at Khor Fakkan and was to go to Durgam, 400 nautical miles away. From the Strait of Malacca, the vessel was to go to Durgam. The Captain didn't want to go back into the sea. The ship manager delayed in finding an agent at Durgam, said

Captain Yadav. A helicopter evacuation was planned as Uthiranthan was still alive, but that didn't come either. In Captain Yadav's opinion, Uthiranthan died because of food poisoning, but he didn't forget to add that the crew had been subsisting almost exclusively on rice and dal for many months now — no vegetables nor meat.

Maritime rules across the world specify a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet for seafarers who perform physically taxing and exhausting work every day. There are no

Sundays onboard a ship, nor Deepavali or Eid.

After Uthiranthan died, his body lay decomposing for another three days in the crew recreation room. The stranded crew recorded a video and sent it out to draw attention to their ordeal. On Sunday night, Durgam port authorities asked them to come in so that Uthiranthan's body could be cremated.

Celestial Sea is a 20-year-old tanker that can carry 11,500 tonnes of cargo. The ship had left Singapore nearly a month and a half ago and its ordeal is not yet over.

## Cough syrup can't be sold without prescription: govt.

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Medicinal syrups, including those used to treat coughs, can no longer be bought without a doctor's prescription, according to a government notification issued on Tuesday. This means that over-the-counter sales of these syrups will no longer be allowed.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare notified the change to the Drugs Rules, 1945, which laid out the regulations pertaining to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Tuesday's notification directed that the word 'cough syrup' be removed from the list of items that had been exempted from the provisions of the Act.

The rules had earlier specified that 'Syrups, lozenges, pills and tablets for cough' would be exempted, meaning that cough lozenges and tablets will still be available over the counter.

The amendment follows a draft notification in December 2025 to which the Centre invited objections



The Union Health Ministry notified the change to the Drugs Rules, 1945.

and suggestions from stakeholders and the public. The government said all comments received on the draft rules were considered before the final notification was issued.

Many fatalities  
The rules came after fatalities due to cough syrups, pills and tablets for cough, including deaths of 24 children in Madhya Pradesh last year. The government said all comments received on the draft rules were considered before the final notification was issued.

The amendment follows a draft notification in December 2025 to which the Centre invited objections

## Modi holds talks with Carney at G7: hopeful of trade deal

New Delhi and Ottawa have been negotiating a free trade agreement, with Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal visiting Canada last month with a delegation of over 100 industry representatives

Sriram Lakshman  
LONDON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with Canadian counterpart Mark Carney on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian, France. Discussions covered trade, economy, energy, technology and people-to-people ties, according to Mr. Modi. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Modi was invited to accept Mr. Carney's invitation to visit Canada before the year ends and to complete an India-Canada Free Trade Agreement (FTA) before then.

In less than a year, it is our fourth meeting discussing our relationship to strong India-Canada ties. We committed the full range of relations between our nations, notably the gradual covered since we last met. Mr. Modi said Mr. Carney on Tuesday, stressing the desire of India to advance technologically. Canada could be a major



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney on the sidelines of the G7 Summit, in Evian on Tuesday.

partner in energy security. The deal, while signed, is one of the top energy exporters in the world. New Energy Partnership in March this year, under which Canada's Cameco and the Department of Atomic Energy in India signed a CAD 2.8 billion commercial agreement for the long term supply of 2027-2035. In 2024, India had been

accused by Canadian authorities of orchestrating acts of violence and extortion in Canada, with Mr. Trudeau alleging that Indians were behind the killing of a pro-Khalistan individual, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in British Columbia in three years prior. New Delhi had accused the Canadian government of being soft on anti-India terrorism, including not adequately prosecuting its highest level of terrorism suspects.

The two countries have been negotiating a free trade agreement, with Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal visiting Canada last month with a delegation of over 100 industry representatives. Faced with U.S. tariffs and multiple jokes about an 'insulation from U.S. pressure' by Mr. Carney, Mr. Modi said Mr. Carney has sought to diversify Canada's strategic and commercial relations with China, India, Australia and Europe.

## Modi holds bilateral talks with leaders of U.K. and UAE

Sriram Lakshman  
LONDON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a bilateral meeting with U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian, on Tuesday.

"Had a wonderful meeting with PM Starmer in Evian. The last year has been outstanding as far as U.K. relations are concerned. The trade deal has opened many avenues of economic cooperation," Mr. Modi said, adding that the conversation focused on further adding momentum to U.K.-India ties.

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U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian, on Tuesday.

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## Court to rule on Nimbalkar murder case on June 20

Chinmay Gaidwad  
MUMBAI

A special CBI court in Mumbai will pronounce judgment in the 2006 murder case of Congress leader Poonawale Nimbalkar on June 20. The case, which has seen a trial lasting 15 years, involves allegations of a contract killing conspiracy against former MP Padmantri Patil, the victim's cousin.

Special court judge Sayantani Navanekar, who had led the case in judgment, said Tuesday afternoon proceedings to June 20, stating that he needed more time to complete the judgment.

The CBI has named Mr. Patil as the prime accused. The agency's contention was that Mr. Patil paid contract money to eliminate Nimbalkar over a political and business rivalry.

Mr. Patil, a former Maharashtra Home Minister and former MP, was an MP at the time of the murder. He had held multiple Cabinet portfolios during his political career. The prosecution examined 128 witnesses in the course of the trial. Among them was activist Anna Hazare, who was satisfied after approval from his political party to testify. The prosecution examined 128 witnesses in the course of the trial. Among them was activist Anna Hazare, who was satisfied after approval from his political party to testify. The prosecution examined 128 witnesses in the course of the trial. Among them was activist Anna Hazare, who was satisfied after approval from his political party to testify.

## Savarkar filed 10 mercy pleas before the British, grandnephew tells court

Chinmay Gaidwad  
MUMBAI

Natyaki Savarkar, the grandnephew of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, told a special MP/MLA case in Pune that the right-wing ideologue had submitted 10 clemency petitions to the British government seeking reduction of his sentence. The testimony was part of a criminal defamation case Mr. Natyaki had filed against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

During the hearing of the case in the court of special judge Anil Shinde, Mr. Natyaki said Savarkar was referred to as 'a' in a periodical run by the Cadet Organisation before he was transferred to the Andaman Islands. Asked about incarceration of other revolutionaries from the same period, Mr. Natyaki said the likes of Rajguru, Bhatkavkar and Ashfaqulla Khan did not file clemency petitions. But Savarkar submitted a mercy petition within the first month after reaching the island. He said Mr. Natyaki told the court that he was not aware of Bhagat Singh and that petitioning the British government to demand treatment as prisoners of war, and to refuse concessions or le-



V.D. Savarkar

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petitions. The reduction or remission of sentences depended on the government's policy.

All pleas rejected  
Mr. Natyaki said the colonial government had rejected all of Savarkar's clemency petitions. In their replies, the British government expressed appreciation that Savarkar would reject the revolutionary movement if released, he said.

Savarkar's grandnephew said that filing clemency petitions were also denied procedures under the British government, adding that other prisoners had filed such petitions and the practice was neither exceptional nor illegal.

The court recorded a verdict in which Savarkar stated that others sent to the Andaman had with him released and he kept incarcerated and classified as a Class I prisoner facing hard labour punishment. The witness said he did not have a report comparing the mercy petitions filed by Savarkar with those made by other prisoners. Mr. Natyaki testified that no prisoner was obliged to submit a mercy petition. The British government had the authority to commute or alter sentences in mercy

## Supreme Court seeks response from Centre, States on Aadhaar 'misuse'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought responses from the Centre and States on a plea alleging misuse of Aadhaar cards, issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) as proof of citizenship, domicile and residence.

The petition claimed that 'infiltrators and illegal immigrants' are able to obtain the cards and project themselves as 'lawful residents.'

The plea contended that the continued use of Aadhaar for purposes beyond identity verification is contrary to Section 3 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016, which expressly states that Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship or domicile. It also relied on an August 2023 UIDAI notification which stated that Aadhaar serves only as proof of identity and not as proof of residence, and that it is not to be used as proof of citizenship, domicile or residence. The plea also questioned the use of Aadhaar as proof



The plea contended that the continued use of Aadhaar for purposes beyond identity verification is contrary to Section 3 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016.

of state of birth and residence in Form-8, the application form for fresh voter registration. Mr. Upadhyay argued that while Aadhaar is to be used for this purpose, it should not be used to determine the integrity of the electoral process. "Aadhaar is not only being used as proof of age, citizenship & domicile for school admission, property purchase, and to obtain birth certificate, ration card, driving license, but also being used in the application for voter registration (Form-6) and other identity documents and eventually such inclusion which such persons can obtain Aadhaar cards and therefore liable to be declared as 'void and inoperative'."

Complete overhaul  
Accordingly, the petition sought an complete overhaul of the verification framework used in electoral processes and proposed the establishment of a high-powered monitoring committee comprising a retired Supreme Court judge along with cybersecurity and forensic experts to oversee reform.

It also proposed a direction to declare the use of Aadhaar as proof of state of birth and residence in the application form for new voter registration "is contrary to statutory provisions and therefore liable to be declared as 'void and inoperative'."

"Infiltration is a weapon of political parties to subvert the electoral process for their benefit. West Ben-

gali, Assam and other Northeastern States have been afflicted by cheap political tactics. The infiltrators are helped by either the party in power or the Opposition parties, and are also helped with identity documents such as Aadhaar/ration card. Once they have a plethora of documents, they enter themselves in the voting rolls. The sacrosanct nature of the election process is compromised," the plea stated.

# Cough syrup can't be sold without prescription: govt.

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Medicinal syrups, including those used to treat coughs, can no longer be bought without a doctor's prescription, according to a government notification issued on Tuesday. This means that over-the-counter sales of these syrups will no longer be allowed.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare notified the change to the Drugs Rules, 1945, which laid out the regulations pertaining to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Tuesday's notification directed that the word 'syrups' be removed from the list of items that had been exempted from the provisions of the Act.

The rules had earlier specified that "Syrups, lozenges, pills and tablets for cough" would be exempted, meaning that cough lozenges, pills, and tablets will still be available over the counter.

The amendment follows a draft notification in December 2025 to which the Centre invited objections



The Union Health Ministry notified the change to the Drugs Rules, 1945.

and suggestions from stakeholders and the public.

The government said all comments received on the draft rules were considered before the final notification was issued.

## **Many fatalities**

The move comes after fatalities due to cough syrups adulterated with industrial solvents, including the deaths of 24 children in Madhya Pradesh last September. Cough syrups exported from India have been linked to the deaths of more than 140 children in Africa and Central Asia since 2022.



Topic

Ministry

Rule Amended

Parent Law

Change

OTC Sale

Pills/Tablets/Lozenges for cough

Draft Notification

Final Notification

Reason

Details

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

Drugs Rules, 1945

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

Medicinal syrups now require prescription


Not allowed

Still available OTC

December 2025

June 2026

Safety concerns and deaths linked to contaminated cough syrups



# What Exactly Changed?

## Earlier

Product	OTC Allowed?
Cough Syrups	Yes
Cough Tablets	Yes
Lozenges	Yes
Pills	Yes

## Now

Product	OTC Allowed?
Medicinal Cough Syrups	✗ No
Prescription Syrups	Doctor's prescription required
Lozenges	✓ Yes
Pills/Tablets	✓ Yes

# Background: Why Did Government Act?

## International Cough Syrup Deaths

Year	Country/Region	Deaths
2022-25	Gambia	70+ children
2022-25	Uzbekistan	20+ children
2022-25	Cameroon	Multiple cases
2022-25	Africa & Central Asia Combined	140+ children
2025	Madhya Pradesh	24 children

The issue was linked to contamination with:

- Diethylene Glycol (DEG)
- Ethylene Glycol (EG)

These industrial solvents can cause:

- Kidney failure
- Liver damage
- Death

# Savarkar filed 10 mercy pleas before the British, grandnephew tells court

**Chinmay Gaikwad**  
MUMBAI

Satyaki Savarkar, the grandnephew of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, told a special MP/MLA court in Pune that the right-wing ideologue had submitted 10 clemency petitions to the British government seeking reduction of his sentence. The testimony was part of a criminal defamation case Mr. Satyaki has filed against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

During the hearing of the case in the court of special judge Amol Shinde, Mr. Satyaki said Savarkar was referred to as "veer" in a periodical run by the Gardar Organisation before he was transferred to the Andaman Islands.

Asked about incarcerations of other revolutionaries from the same period, Mr. Satyaki said the likes of Rajguru, Batukeshwar Dutt, and Ashfaqulla Khan did not file clemency petitions. But Savarkar submitted a mercy petition within the first month after receiving his sentence, he said. Mr. Satyaki told the court that he was not aware of Bhagat Singh and Dutt petitioning the British government to demand treatment as prisoners of war, and to refuse concessions or le-



V.D. Savarkar

niency. He agreed that Singh and Dutt stood by their ideology until the end of their lives.

Mr. Satyaki informed the court that records of Savarkar's 10 petitions exist in government archives. He said the language in these petitions did not indicate loyalty to the British regime and were forwarded by prison authorities for approval.

He said language used in clemency petitions followed official protocol.

Mr. Satyaki said he was not aware that Savarkar signed each petition with the phrase, "I beg to remain, Sir, your most obedient servant, V.D. Savarkar." He denied that Savarkar was released after these 10 pleas were filed.

According to him, the British government had the authority to commute or alter sentences in mercy

petitions. The reduction or remission of sentences depended on the government's policy.

## 'All pleas rejected'

Mr. Satyaki said the colonial government had rejected all of Savarkar's clemency petitions. In their replies, the authorities expressed apprehension that Savarkar would rejoin the revolutionary movement if released, he said.

Savarkar's grandnephew said that filing clemency petitions were standard procedures under the British government, adding that other prisoners had filed such petitions and the practice was neither exceptional nor illegal.

The court recorded excerpts from one mercy petition in which Savarkar stated that others sent to the Andaman jail with him be released and he be kept incarcerated and classified as a Class D prisoner facing harsh punishment. The witness said he did not have a report comparing the mercy petitions filed by Savarkar with those made by other prisoners. Mr. Satyaki testified that no prisoner was obligated to submit a mercy petition. The decision to file such petitions depended on the prisoner's preference.

Topic	Details
Full Name	Vinayak Damodar Savarkar
Birth	1883
Death	1966
Popular Title	Veer Savarkar
Organisation	Abhinav Bharat Society
Associated With	Revolutionary Nationalism
Famous Book	The Indian War of Independence 1857
Cellular Jail Sentence	1911
Place of Imprisonment	Cellular Jail
President of Hindu Mahasabha	1937–1943



Year

Event

1904

Founded Abhinav Bharat

1909

Linked with revolutionary activities in London

1910

Arrested in London

1911

Sentenced to two life imprisonments (50 years)

1911–1924

Cellular Jail imprisonment

1924

Released with restrictions

1937

Became Hindu Mahasabha President

1966

Death



## Fact

## Details

First Mercy Petition

1911

Number Claimed in Article

10

Submitted To

British Government

Purpose

Sentence reduction/remission

Historical Debate

One side views them as tactical; critics view them as compromise

Historical Record

Mercy petitions are preserved in archives



Feature

Location

Built

Nickname

Purpose

Wings

Cells

UNESCO Status

National Memorial Declared

Details

Cellular Jail

1896–1906

Kala Pani

Isolate political prisoners

7

693

Not UNESCO, but National Memorial

1979





Revolutionary

Filed Mercy Petition?

Savarkar

Yes

Bhagat Singh

No mercy petition; filed legal/political representations

Rajguru

No

Ashfaqulla Khan

No

Batukeshwar Dutt

No mercy petition in the same sense



# Not binary: India can save its forests by winning the war on poverty

Forests with more poor households and communities that depended more on fuelwood were also found to have less diverse tree species, a new study has found. On the other hand, forests where communities had access to alternative livelihoods, such as farming, had more diverse tree species

India Herlekar

**T**raditionally, many conservationists and policymakers have seen biodiversity conservation as a choice between protecting nature and meeting human needs. Forests were often seen as places that had to be protected from people, while alleviating poverty and economic development were treated as separate concerns.

A new international study has concluded that this is a harmful view. In a paper in the journal *Nature Sustainability*, researchers from the University of Notre Dame, the University of Michigan, Yale University, the University of Colorado Boulder (U.S.), the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, the University of Manchester (U.K.), the University of Victoria (Canada), and the Indian School of Business analysed data from community-managed forests in the tropics.

The data came from the International Forestry Resources and Institutions network, and spanned 322 community-managed tropical forests in 15 countries from 1993 to 2017.

The dataset's size allowed the researchers to understand both current patterns in forest biodiversity and how they had changed over time. Principally, they found a significant link between people's livelihoods and forest biodiversity.

Forests, people, livelihoods  
 Forests with more poor households and communities that depended more on fuelwood were also found to have less diverse tree species. The study also found similar patterns in forests in densely populated areas with higher levels of poverty.

On the other hand, forests where communities had access to alternative livelihoods, such as farming, had more diverse trees.

Tree species diversity refers to the number of tree species in a forest; it is an important measure of biodiversity. Forests with more species tend to support more wildlife, are ecologically more stable, and are often more resilient to environmental change.

Overall, the analysis found that a greater dependence on forest resources was associated with lower tree species diversity.

However, the researchers emphasised that poverty is not responsible for biodiversity loss. They pointed out that when people have fewer livelihood options and depend heavily on forests to survive, the pressure on forest resources automatically increases. The way out is to improve economic opportunities.

**The bottom line**  
 The study also focused on human-dominated landscapes, which are common in India. Most forests in the country are owned and managed by State



State tribal women carrying firewood in the West Garo hills district of Meghalaya in 2024. Representative image. (WU/Anonon)

Departments. And for decades, this apparatus has followed the fortress model — where protected areas are managed by restricting human activities and restricting access to resources. While this model has allowed the Departments to recover several iconic species and strengthen protection, it has some severe limitations.

Today, many protected areas are increasingly becoming isolated islands surrounded by human-dominated landscapes.

"The forests in these landscapes are smaller in size and bear a heavy burden of extraction," Ashwin Chaturvedi, associate professor of Public Policy at the Indian School of Business and one of the study's authors, said.

Around 279 million people depend on these forests in varying degrees for their livelihoods and daily needs.

"But these forests are ecologically important and provide significant ecosystem services," Dr. Chaturvedi said. According to him, the new findings can be used to support conservation by prioritising wildlife corridors — patches of forests that form a loose link between protected areas.

"These corridors are used by large mammals to move between protected areas. The improvement of species richness in these corridors will increase forest resilience and support conservation efforts," he said.

**Helping corner victims**  
 To reduce pressure on forests, State Forest Departments across India have introduced initiatives like distributing subsidised LPG connections and efficient cooking stoves and heaters around many tiger reserves and national parks. The measure reduce people's need for fuelwood and to enter forests.

**Today, many protected areas are increasingly becoming isolated islands surrounded by human-dominated landscapes. They bear a heavy burden of extraction from communities who depend on them for their livelihoods.**

Extending similar support to private landholdings and community forests along wildlife corridors could help conservation.

However, Inam Siddiqui, senior field conservationist at the Centre for Wildlife Studies, who has worked extensively in protected areas and with forest communities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, said that while such initiatives are well intentioned and that communities often welcome them, they face implementation challenges.

"Funding can be inconsistent, participation from local communities may vary, and long-term support is not always guaranteed," he said.

**Conservation partners**  
 Today, there is growing recognition among wildlife conservation and forest managers that conservation can't succeed without the support of local communities.

In addition to fuel alternatives and subsidies, many State Forest Departments also give local community members jobs in tourism, forest protection, and seasonal conservation work.

The late ecologist Madhav Gadgil was a strong advocate of an inclusive approach, believing conservation efforts would be more effective if local communities had rights, incentives, and a meaningful role in managing natural resources. He also emphasised the value of traditional

ecological knowledge, and argued people who had lived alongside forests for generations possessed insights that could complement scientific approaches to conservation.

In Lakshdi, the *State Leopard Conservation* has mitigated economic losses of human-wildlife conflict with community-run homestays and livestock insurance programmes. In Maharashtra's *Mulshing district*, village-level *Management Committees* help protect mangrove ecosystems while supporting fisheries, ecotourism, and sustainable aquaculture.

In Arunachal Pradesh, forestallment adoption programmes run by the *Nature Conservation Foundation* have encouraged local communities to protect nesting sites, with former Nyctid tribes hunters now serving as nest protectors and forest patrollers.

There is also tremendous scope to expand these initiatives and to further support community welfare. In Meghalaya, wildlife tourism is a growing multi-million-dollar industry, yet only a small fraction of its revenue reaches the communities living alongside forests and protected areas. He added that a greater share of these benefits should be directed to local communities, creating stronger incentives for conservation.

The findings of the new study highlight the close links between alleviating poverty and conserving biodiversity, and show how socio-economic conditions and conservation goals need not be in conflict with each other. By recognising these connections, both conservationists and policymakers can design more inclusive frameworks to benefit both people and nature.

*India Herlekar is an independent science writer. ipshaherlekar@gmail.com*

## THE GIST

Researchers pointed out that when people have fewer livelihood options and depend heavily on forests to survive, the pressure on forest resources automatically increases.

The new findings can be used to support conservation by prioritising wildlife corridors — patches of forests that form a loose link between protected areas.

The findings show how socio-economic conditions and conservation goals need not be in conflict with each other.

## BIG SHOT



An employee of the Teriva company releases sterile male tiger mosquitoes in Montpellier, southern France, on June 3, 2026. With global warming, 80% of the world's population now runs the risk of being exposed to one or more infectious diseases long considered tropical, which cause more than a million deaths a year, according to the WHO. (AP)

## WHAT IS IT?

### GRAPES-3: A cosmic-ray tracker

Yamunakar Mukundh

**R**esearchers from Mumbai, Kochi, and Japan used the GRAPES-3 telescope to track how the earth's upper atmosphere temperature and the sun's magnetic field affect muons — subatomic particles from space. By analysing 25 years of data, they developed a way to use these measurements to monitor changes in the upper atmosphere in real-time with high accuracy. The findings are to be published in the August issue of *Astroparticle Physics*.

The GRAPES-3 telescope in Ooty, Tamil Nadu does not look at light like a traditional telescope. Instead, it is a muon detector. Muons are created when high-energy cosmic rays from deep space collide with the earth's upper atmosphere. The facility consists of 16 independent modules spread over a large area. Each module contains 232 proportional counters, which are long steel tubes filled with a special mixture of argon and methane, with a thin tungsten wire running through the centre. When a muon passes through a tube, it knocks electrons out of the gas molecules. These electrons are pulled towards the wire, creating an electrical pulse that the telescope records as a hit.



The detector array of GRAPES-3 in Ooty (AP) (AP) (AP)

The tubes are arranged in four layers, with each layer positioned at a right angle to the one below. This grid layout allows scientists to track the exact path and angle of the incoming muons. Thick layers of reinforced concrete are placed between the tubes to ensure the telescope only counts high-energy muons that are strong enough to penetrate the concrete. This is how GRAPES-3 is able to produce a high-resolution map of the invisible cosmic forces affecting the earth.

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## WHAT IS IT?

# GRAPES-3: A cosmic-ray tracker

Vasudevan Mukunth

**R**esearchers from Mumbai, Kochi, and Japan used the GRAPES-3 telescope to track how the earth's upper atmosphere temperature and the sun's magnetic field affect muons — subatomic particles from space. By analysing 22 years of data, they developed a way to use these measurements to monitor changes in the upper atmosphere in real-time with high accuracy. The findings are to be published in the August issue of *Astroparticle Physics*.

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The detector array of GRAPES-3 in Ooty. HIDEKI TANAKA (CC BY-SA)

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subject 'Daily page'

Parameter

Details

Full Form

Gamma Ray Astronomy PeV EnergieS Phase-3  
(GRAPES-3)

Location

GRAPES-3 Observatory

State

Tamil Nadu

Established

2000

Managed By

Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR)

Purpose

Study cosmic rays and muons

Recent Research

Monitoring upper atmosphere using muons

International Collaboration

India + Japan

Journal Mentioned

Astroparticle Physics

Data Used

22 years

## What are Cosmic Rays?

Feature	Details
Definition	High-energy particles coming from outer space
Source	Sun, Supernovae, Black Holes, Galaxies
Composition	Mostly protons
Speed	Near speed of light
Discovered By	Victor Hess (1912)
Nobel Prize	Physics 1936

## What are Muons?

Feature	Details
Type	Elementary particle
Family	Lepton
Charge	Negative
Mass	207 times electron
Created When	Cosmic rays hit atmosphere
Lifetime	About 2.2 microseconds
Can Penetrate	Concrete, rocks, buildings

## How GRAPES-3 Works?

Step	Process
1	Cosmic rays strike atmosphere
2	Muons are produced
3	Muons reach Earth
4	Detector records muons
5	Scientists study atmosphere & solar activity

## Structure of GRAPES-3

Feature	Details
Modules	16
Counters per Module	232
Total Counters	3712
Gas Used	Argon + Methane
Wire Used	Tungsten
Layers	4
Shielding	Reinforced Concrete

## Why is this Research Important?

Area	Importance
Climate Science	Monitor upper atmosphere
Space Weather	Solar storms prediction
Aviation	Radiation monitoring
Satellite Safety	Space weather forecasting
Defence	Communication disruption forecasting
Astronomy	Cosmic ray studies

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Percentage increase in MCD revenue in 2025-26

**17** in per cent. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi recorded its highest-ever annual revenue of ₹14,848.06 crore in 2025-26, a 17.27% increase over the previous financial year, officials said on Tuesday. The revenue figures were shared by MCD standing committee chairperson Satya Sharma, who said the total revenue increased from ₹12,666.79 crore in 2024-25. **10**

### Number of beneficiaries under PM-VBRY

**60** lakh. About 60 lakh first-time employees, including over 18 lakh women have benefited under Pradhan Mantri Vikrit Bharat Rojgar Yojana (PM-VBRY), official sources said. PM-VBRY is the Centre's Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme operational from August 1, 2023. The benefits of the scheme would be applicable till July 31, 2027. **11**

### Identified area of coral reef capable of surviving climate crisis

**64,000** sq km. Nearly 1,66,000 sq km (64,000 sq miles) of coral reefs capable of surviving and recovering from climate change, three times more than previously estimated, have been identified by scientists in a study released on Tuesday. The coral reefs have come under severe stress in recent years. **11**

### Energy storage capacity added by India in first quarter

**4.6** GWh. India added 4.6 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of battery energy storage capacity in the first three months of this year, registering a 941% increase from 44.7 megawatt-hours added in the preceding October-December 2023 period, a report said. As per the latest research, India's cumulative installed battery energy storage capacity reached 5.9 GWh. **11**

### Vacancies in Delhi Pollution Control Committee as of 2026

**62**. The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has improved its staffing position over the past two years, reducing vacancies from 187 in 2023 to 62 in 2026, according to a Right to Information reply. The RTI reply, obtained by environmental activist Armit Gupta, showed that the DPCC has 282 employees against a sanctioned strength of 344 posts. **11**

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# Why was Trump's H-B fee struck down?

What is the H-B visa programme and who uses it? Why did the Trump administration impose the \$100,000 fee? What impact was the policy expected to have on States and employers? Did the President have the authority to impose the fee? Why did the court classify the charge as a tax rather than a penalty?

## EXPLAINER

Kartheyk Singh

The story so far:

On June 18, in a 43-page ruling with nationwide effect, U.S. District Judge Leo T. Sorokin struck down President Donald Trump's policy imposing a \$100,000 fee on H-B visas for highly skilled foreign workers. Upholding a challenge brought by California and 19 other States (plaintiffs), the court held that the fee amounted to an unlawful tax that the President could not impose without Congressional delegation.

What is an H-B Visa?

The H-B visa, created by the Immigration Act of 1990, is the backbone of the United States' high-skilled immigration architecture. Building on the broader framework of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (INA), which established the "H-1" category of temporary worker visa, the H-B law carved out a distinct H-B classification for highly educated professionals. It permits U.S. employers to hire foreign nationals in "specialty occupations", which require 60 theoretical and practical application of a body of specialised knowledge and 60 at least a bachelor's degree in a relevant field, typically in sectors such as technology, engineering, healthcare, research, finance, and higher education. Notably, H-B workers can generally remain in the U.S. for up to six years and often use the visa as a pathway to permanent residency.

To balance employers' demand for skilled talent with protection of the domestic workforce, Congress capped H-B approvals for most private employers at 65,000 visas annually, with an additional 20,000 visas reserved for holders of advanced degrees. However, universities, affiliated non-profit entities, and governmental or non-profit research organisations are exempt from these



Policy changes. On September 19, 2023, U.S. President Donald Trump signed Proclamation 10775, requiring a \$100,000 supplemental payment for all H-B visa petitions. (AP/TT/USAID)

numerical limits.

Why did Trump impose a \$100,000 fee?

On September 19, 2023, Mr. Trump signed the Proclamation 10775, requiring a \$100,000 supplemental payment for all H-B visa petitions — a substantial increase over the pre-existing filing costs of roughly \$962 to \$7,505. The proclamation reasoned that the H-B programme had been "deliberately exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers" with lower-paid foreign labour, harming U.S. economic and national security interests, particularly in critical STEM sectors. Mr. Trump's proclamation relied on Sections 2102 and 219(a) of the INA. Section 2102 empowers the President to restrict or suspend the entry of any class of aliens (non-citizens) when he finds their entry "would be detrimental to the interests of the United States".

Additionally, Section 219(a), which also concerns the President's authority to regulate entry into the U.S., allows him to restrict alien entry to "such reasonable rules, regulations, and orders, and such limitations and exceptions as the President may prescribe".

While alleging that the proclamation violated the "separation of powers"

principle as it "usurp[ed] Congress's exclusive constitutional authority to set immigration policy and to levy taxes," the plaintiff States argued before the U.S. District Court that the \$100,000 H-B fee would undermine their ability to recruit and retain essential skilled workers. They argued it would worsen teacher shortages, hamper entry to higher education, disrupt research, and deepen healthcare staffing gaps — raising costs and straining public systems.

Simultaneously, the measure also carried significant implications for India, Indians account for roughly 70% of H-B visa approvals, followed by Chinese nationals at about 12%, and are heavily represented in the STEM professions targeted by the proclamation. By raising the cost of an H-B petition, the policy effectively created a prohibitive barrier for thousands of Indian software engineers, doctors, researchers, and other skilled professionals, many of whom already face years-long green card backlogs.

Did the President have the power to impose the fee?

The threshold issue before the court was whether the \$100,000 charge was a "tax" or a "penalty", because only Congress

possesses the constitutional power to "lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts, and Excises" under Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, unless it clearly delegates that authority to the executive.

To answer this question, the judge, an appointee of President Barack Obama, relied on two landmark Supreme Court precedents. In *Doherty v. Deref Furniture Co.* (1922), the court translated the Child Labour Tax Law, holding that its "heavy sanction" was a "penalty" rather than a "tax" because it was designed to prohibit the employment of child labour. By contrast, in *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan & Trust* (1895), the court found that the Affordable Care Act's requirement that individuals pay an additional fee to the Internal Revenue Service for not obtaining health insurance amounted to a "tax", not a "penalty", explaining that a penalty ordinarily "imposed for an unlawful act or omission". Applying this framework, Judge Sorokin concluded that the \$100,000 H-B charge was a "tax", as it was levied on workers under the H-B programme in a plainly lawful, and the payment did not act as a punishment for any unlawful conduct.

Further, the court examined whether Congress had delegated taxing authority to the President through Sections 2102 and 219(a) of the INA. It found no such delegation.

While these precedents empower the President to impose "restrictions", "rules", "regulations", "orders", "limitations", and "exceptions" governing the entry of non-citizens, Judge Sorokin held that their ordinary meaning does not encompass the power over the public purse. The court also found multiple violations of the Administrative Procedure Act. Accordingly, Judge Sorokin ruled that the Policy implementing the Proclamation is declared unlawful and is vacated in its entirety.

Kartheyk Singh, lawyer, and currently working as a Law Clerk, is a Research Associate at the Supreme Court of India. Views expressed are personal.

## THE GIST

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# What does Tenth Schedule provide on party mergers?

Why has the misuse of the merger provision increased after the deletion of paragraph 3?

## LETTER AND SPIRIT

Ranganathan R.

The story so far:

A majority of 20 rebel Trinamool Congress MPs met the Lok Sabha Speaker and announced their decision to merge with Nationalist Congress Party of India (NCP). This has raised queries about the interpretation of Tenth Schedule with respect to merger of political parties.

What is the origin of Tenth Schedule?

The defections legislature during 1970s and 70s from their parent parties created political instability in many States bringing down elected governments. This prompted the 52nd constitutional amendment to introduce the "anti-defection" law through the Tenth Schedule in 1985. This schedule provides

that a member of a House of Parliament or State legislature who voluntarily gives up the membership of their "political party" or votes against the instructions of their party in a House are liable for disqualification from such House. The "political party" is the main organisation of a party, while the "legislature party" is the members of a political party in the House of Parliament or State legislature.

The Tenth Schedule originally had two exceptions that would not render the members liable for disqualification via paragraph 3 of the legislature party. The first was for a merger of two political parties (paragraph 2), or a merger of two political parties with another party that is approved by two-thirds of the members of the legislature party (paragraph 4).

However, considering the need to strengthen the "anti-defection" law, paragraph 3 was amended in 2002. With the deletion of paragraph 3, there have been instances of two-third

members of a legislature party "practically" defecting but claiming to be the original political party in order to escape disqualification. This happened in the case of Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party in June 2002 and July 2003 respectively.

There have also been instances where more than two-third members of a legislature party in a House have merged themselves with another political party in order to escape disqualification. This happened in September 2009 in Rajasthan when all 11 non-third of members of the legislature party split to form a separate group (paragraph 2), or a merger of two political parties with another party that is approved by two-thirds of the members of the legislature party (paragraph 4). However, considering the need to strengthen the "anti-defection" law, paragraph 3 was amended in 2002. With the deletion of paragraph 3, there have been instances of two-third

What is the present case in Bengal? After the recent West Bengal polls, around 60 of the 103 MLAs elected from Trinamool Congress formed a separate faction led by Ritwick Banerjee, who was recognised as the Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly even after the party expelled him. Meanwhile, 20 of the 28 Lok Sabha MPs have submitted their decision to the Lok Sabha Speaker to merge themselves with the NCP. Their claim is that they constitute two-thirds of the legislature party and are hence authorised to take this step under the provisions of the Tenth Schedule without attracting paragraph 3.

What may be way forward? A plain reading of the Tenth Schedule allows only for merger of a political party with another political party or two-thirds of its legislature party. It does not authorise two-thirds of the legislature party in a House to merge with another political party to claim instantly non-third of members of the legislature party with the Congress and in September 2002 (in Goa when 8 out of 11 Congress MPs merged themselves with the BJP. The Bombay High Court upheld the merger of Goa's Congress Legislature Party with the BJP. Though an appeal is pending in the apex court. A similar merger occurred in April 2020 when 7 of 10 AAP MLA merged with the BJP.

Moreover, the authority to decide on the

disqualification of members is vested in the Speaker or Chairman. While they are expected to perform this constitutional role impartially, the presiding officers have often favoured the ruling dispensation. The Supreme Court in K. M. Singh case in 2020, recommended that the Parliament amend the Constitution to vest these powers in an independent tribunal headed by judges.

An authoritative Supreme Court judgment in the matters of merger and setting up of an independent tribunal to decide on disqualification may reduce the ambiguities surrounding the Tenth Schedule. However, it may not prevent the ingenious methods adopted by political parties to circumvent the Tenth Schedule. Any such measures may be viewed as a betrayal of the electorate by the elected representatives. A stricter measure, as recommended by the Law Commission in 1999, could be in amendment the Tenth Schedule and delete paragraph 4 that provides exemption from disqualification for merger of political parties. Any action by elected members of a legislature party against their political party should lead to disqualification that results in seeking fresh mandate from the people.

Ranganathan R. is a former IAS officer and author of "Cotroversies on Policy Shifting" — an annual journal on officers IAS Academy. Views expressed are personal.

# What does Tenth Schedule provide on party mergers?

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**What is the origin of Tenth Schedule?**

The defections of legislators during 1960s and 70s from their parent parties created political instability in many States bringing down elected governments. This prompted the 52nd constitutional amendment to introduce the 'anti-defection' law through the Tenth Schedule in 1985. This Schedule provides

that a member of a House of Parliament or State legislature who voluntarily gives up the membership of their 'political party' or votes against the instructions of their party in a House are liable for disqualification from such House. The 'political party' is the entire organisation of a party, while the 'legislature party' is all the members of a political party in a House of Parliament or State legislature.

The Tenth Schedule originally had two exceptions that would not render the members liable for disqualification viz., one-third of members of the 'legislature party' splitting to form a separate group (paragraph 3), or a merger of their 'political party' with another party that is approved by two-thirds of the members of its 'legislature party' (paragraph 4). However, considering the need to strengthen the 'anti-defection' law, paragraph 3 was omitted in 2003.

With the deletion of paragraph 3, there have been instances of two-third

members of a legislature party 'practically' defecting but claiming to be the original political party in order to escape disqualification. This happened in the case of Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party in June 2022 and July 2023 respectively.

There have also been instances where more than two-third members of a 'legislature party' in a house have merged themselves with another political party to escape disqualification. This happened in September 2019 (in Rajasthan) when all 6 Bahujan Samajwadi Party MLAs merged themselves with the Congress and in September 2022 (in Goa) when 8 out of the 11 Congress MLAs merged themselves with the BJP. The Bombay High Court upheld the merger of Goa's Congress Legislature Party with the BJP, though an appeal is pending in the apex court. A similar move occurred in April 2026 when 7 of 10 AAP Rajya Sabha MPs merged with the BJP.

**What is the present case in Bengal?**

After the recent West Bengal polls, around 60 of the 80 MLAs elected from Trinamool Congress formed a separate faction led by Ritabrata Banerjee, who was recognised as the Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly even after the party expelled him. Meanwhile, 20 of the 28 Lok Sabha MPs have submitted their decision to the Lok Sabha Speaker to merge themselves with the NCPI. Their claim is that they constitute two-thirds of the legislature party and are hence authorised to take this step under the provisions of the Tenth Schedule without attracting disqualification.

**What may be way forward?**

A plain reading of the Tenth Schedule allows only for merger of a political party with another party that is approved by two-thirds of its legislature party. It does not authorise two-thirds of the legislature party in a house to merge itself with another political party to claim immunity from defection. However, in the recent instance with respect to proposed merger of Trinamool Lok Sabha MPs with NCPI as well as the merger of Rajya Sabha MPs of AAP with the BJP, this is what has happened. It is also subject to interpretation whether a merger of an 'original political party' can happen only with another political party that already has members in the legislative house. Moreover, the authority to decide on the

disqualification of members is vested in the Speaker or Chairman. While they are expected to perform this constitutional role impartially, the presiding officers have often favoured the ruling dispensation. The Supreme Court in K. M. Singh case in 2020, recommended that the Parliament amend the Constitution to vest these powers in an independent tribunal headed by judges.

An authoritative Supreme Court judgement in the matters of merger and setting up of an independent tribunal to decide on disqualification may reduce the ambiguities surrounding the Tenth Schedule. However, it may not prevent the ingenious methods adopted by political parties to circumvent the Tenth Schedule. Any such manoeuvres may be viewed as a betrayal of the electorate by the elected representatives. A stricter measure, as recommended by the Law commission in 1999, could be to amend the Tenth Schedule and delete paragraph 4 that provides exemption from disqualification for merger of political parties. Any action by elected members of a legislature party against their political party should lead to disqualification that results in seeking fresh mandate from the people.

*Rangarajan R. is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified'. He currently trains at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal.*

Topic	Details
Anti-Defection Law	Tenth Schedule
Added By	52nd Constitutional Amendment Act
Year	1985
Prime Minister	Rajiv Gandhi
Objective	Prevent political defections
Disqualification Authority	Speaker/Chairman
Judicial Review	Allowed (1992)
Major Amendment	91st Constitutional Amendment, 2003

## Constitutional Amendments Asked Frequently

Amendment	Year	Importance
52nd Amendment	1985	Added Tenth Schedule
91st Amendment	2003	Removed split provision

## What is Defection?

Situation	Disqualified?
Voluntarily giving up party membership	Yes
Voting against party whip	Yes
Abstaining against whip	Yes
Independent member joining party after election	Yes
Nominated member joining party after six months	Yes

## Original Exceptions (1985)

### Before 2003

Provision	Requirement
Split	One-third members
Merger	Two-thirds members

### Exam Fact

Split provision removed in 2003

## Current Position (After 91st Amendment)

Provision	Status
Split (1/3rd)	✗ Removed
Merger (2/3rd)	✓ Allowed

## Merger Rule under Tenth Schedule

To avoid disqualification:

Condition	Requirement
Merger of original political party	Required
Support of legislature party	Minimum 2/3 members

## Formula

Total Members

Required for Merger

30

20

60

40

90

60

300

200

## Landmark Supreme Court Cases

Year

Case

Importance

1992

Kihoto Hollohan Case

Judicial review allowed

2020



Keisham Meghachandra Singh Case

Speaker should decide within reasonable period

2020

K M Singh Case

Suggested tribunal instead of Speaker



Year	State	Event
2019	Rajasthan	BSP MLAs merged with Congress
2022	Goa	Congress MLAs joined BJP
2022	Maharashtra	Shiv Sena split crisis
2023	Maharashtra	NCP split controversy
2026	Parliament	TMC–NCPI merger claim (current issue)

# Word of the day

## **Salvo:**

an outburst resembling the discharge of firearms or the release of bombs a sudden outburst of cheers

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**Synonyms:** Volley, Burst

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**Usage:** *The jets dropped a salvo of bombs over the target area. There was a sudden salvo of approval.*

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**Pronunciation:** [newsth.live/salvo](http://newsth.live/salvo)

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**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /'sæl.vəʊ/



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