

# Daily Current Affairs





4  
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2  
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1  
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0  
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1  
**Financial  
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10 MCQ QUIZ



- 
- “You cannot control the behavior of others, but you can always choose how you respond to it.”



as "hardcore terrorists" and termed the operation a "detention experiment".



# Focus on inclusion, not exclusion, SC tells EC

EPIC, Aadhaar should be accepted as identity documents in the Bihar SIR exercise, court says

Responding to the EC's argument that these can be forged, court says any document can be falsified

Judge says publication of the draft roll does not shrink powers of the court to overturn the EC

Krishnadas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Supreme Court on Monday pushed harder for the Election Commission (EC) to accept Aadhaar and the Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) as identity documents in the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral list in Bihar, saying "mass inclusion" and not "en masse exclusion" should be the outcome of the exercise in the poll-bound State.

With three more days left for the publication of the draft electoral roll on August 1, the EC continued to resist the court's suggestion, saying Aadhaar, EPIC, and ration cards could be forged easily.

On July 10, the top court had asked the EC to consider these three documents to ward off the spectre of mass disenfranchisement

even as petitioners, ranging from activists to political parties, called the SIR a "citizenship screening".

## Authenticity concern

"Any document on earth can be forged. Maybe one EPIC in a thousand may not be genuine. That can be taken up on a case-to-case basis," Justice Surya Kant, accompanied by Justice Joymalya Bagchi, addressed the poll body.

Justice Kant said Aadhaar and EPIC have a "presumption of correctness". Aadhaar has a system of being authenticated when in use. EPIC was issued by the EC itself.

"So, proceed with Aadhaar and EPIC... Include these two documents in the list of 11," Justice Kant said.

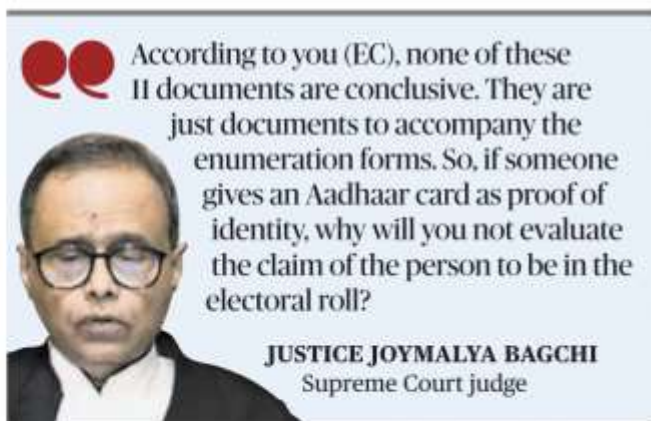
Justice Bagchi reasoned that none of the 11 'indicative' documents acceptable as proof of identity

were of a conclusive nature, be it residence or caste certificates.

"According to you, none of these 11 documents are conclusive. They are just documents to accompany the enumeration forms. So, if someone gives an Aadhaar card as proof of identity, why will you not evaluate the claim of the person to be in the electoral roll?" Justice Bagchi questioned the EC's logic.

## 'Only a draft'

Senior advocates K.K. Venugopal and Rakesh Dwivedi appeared for the EC. The petitioners were represented by senior advocates, including Kapil Sibal and Gopal Sankaranarayanan. The court, which rose early, said it would announce on Tuesday an early date and a proper schedule for hearing the final arguments in the case. Mr. Sankaranarayanan alerted



According to you (EC), none of these 11 documents are conclusive. They are just documents to accompany the enumeration forms. So, if someone gives an Aadhaar card as proof of identity, why will you not evaluate the claim of the person to be in the electoral roll?

JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI  
Supreme Court judge

the Bench about the proximity of the date of publication of the draft roll, August 1.

But Justice Kant was unperturbed, saying, "It was only a draft."

Noting that the petitioners had not insisted on any interim relief of the stay of the publication or a freeze on the SIR exercise, the judge assured the petitioners that publication of the draft roll would not shrink the powers of the court to

overturn any decision of the EC, provided the petitioners prove their case.

The senior lawyer said the publication of the draft roll would leave the 4.5 crore people excluded from it rudderless. The burden would be transferred onto them to prove their identity and citizenship, file objections, and even seek a review. At this point, Justice Bagchi drew the counsel's attention to the EC's affidavit, which

stated that voters who were in the existing 2025 electoral roll of Bihar would feature in the draft roll to be published on August 1, provided they submitted their enumeration forms, with or without documents.

The existing electoral roll was published in Bihar on January 7, 2015 after a special summary revision of the electoral roll. "In substance, each elector included in the 2025 electoral roll shall form part of the draft roll merely on submission of the enumeration form," the 88-page EC affidavit had submitted.

The electors who were unable to submit their enumeration forms with documents in time for the draft roll had another opportunity to be included in the final roll.

"This claims period is stipulated for another period of 31 days after publi-


cation of the draft roll, i.e., till September 1, 2025," the EC clarified. The final roll would be published on September 30.

"Even after the publication of the final roll, new electors can be enrolled up to the last date of nominations of the forthcoming Bihar elections... Any apprehension of huge disenfranchisement is misleading and non-existent," the EC has assured.

Further, the EC said electors whose names already feature in the electoral roll of Bihar in 2003 were exempted from furnishing documents to prove their eligibility.

"They are only required to file the partially pre-filled enumeration form along with the extract of the 2003 roll," the affidavit had said.

## ◆ Background

Topic	Details	
Issue	Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral roll in Bihar	
Supreme Court Stance	Emphasis on <b>mass inclusion</b> , not exclusion	
Concern	Risk of disenfranchisement due to rejection of EPIC, Aadhaar, etc. as identity proof	
Draft Electoral Roll Date	To be published on <b>August 1, 2025</b>	
Final Electoral Roll	<b>September 30, 2025</b>	

## 1. Supreme Court's Observations

- Aadhaar and EPIC have a **"presumption of correctness"**.
- Rejected EC's claim that documents like Aadhaar, EPIC, and ration cards could be forged — **"any document can be forged"**.
- Warned EC against creating a **"citizenship screening exercise"**.

## 2. Judges' Arguments

- Justice Surya Kant: If documents like Aadhaar are accepted widely, they should be valid for voter identification too.
- Justice Joymallya Bagchi: "If Aadhaar is submitted as proof of identity, why won't you accept the claim of the person to be in the electoral roll?"

## 3. EC's Response & Clarification

- EPIC says **existing 2025 roll** (based on 2015 SSR) will be carried into the draft roll for those who submitted enumeration forms.
- EC stated final roll will not disenfranchise citizens.
- Voters added in 2003 electoral roll **exempted** from furnishing documents again.

## 4. Petitioner's Stand



#### 4. Petitioners' Stand

- Alleged potential disenfranchisement of 4.5 crore voters.
  - Urged SC to freeze publication of draft roll (court declined as it is only a draft).
  - Advocates: Kapil Sibal, Gopal Sankaranarayanan.
- 

#### ◆ Legal & Electoral Significance

- Sets precedent on **validity of Aadhaar & EPIC** as acceptable voter ID.
- Reinforces **constitutional guarantee of universal suffrage**.
- Encourages **pro-people approach** in electoral reform.
- Safeguards against **administrative arbitrariness** in voter inclusion/exclusion.

**Q. With reference to the Supreme Court's observations on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Bihar's electoral roll, consider the following statements:**

- 1.** The Court directed the Election Commission to avoid exclusionary practices and instead focus on mass inclusion.
- 2.** The Supreme Court held that only Aadhaar can be used as valid proof of identity for electoral inclusion.
- 3.** The EC clarified that even those who could not submit documents for the draft roll would still have an opportunity to be included in the final roll.
- 4.** The publication of the draft roll by the EC cannot be reviewed or overturned by the Court.

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

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

# Teenager Divya outlasts Humpy, emerges India's first women's World Cup winner

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**

**I**ndian chess recorded yet another great moment on Monday, as Divya Deshmukh won the women's World Cup in the Georgian city of Batumi.

In the final, the 19-year-old defeated fellow-Indian Koneru Humpy in the tiebreakers.

While Humpy contesting the final wasn't much of a surprise – she is the World No. 5 and has been one of the best female players for the last couple of decades – not many would have anticipated Divya's stunning show. But, given her obvious talent and the way she has been playing for the past two years, it didn't come as a big surprise.

By winning the World Cup, one of the biggest events organised by the



**Grand finish:** Divya Deshmukh prevailed in the tiebreakers to win the women's chess World Cup in Batumi, Georgia, on Monday. FIDE

world chess governing body FIDE, Divya also achieved another significant milestone.

## **India's 88th GM**

She became India's 88th Grandmaster and is only the fourth Indian woman after Humpy, D. Harika and R. Vaishali to get that coveted

title. Last year, Divya had won the World junior championship at Gandhinagar with a dominant display. She also played a key role in India's historic gold in the Chess Olympiad at Budapest. India was the top seed there, though.

At the World Cup, the Indian women exceeded

expectations, with four of them making it to the quarterfinals.

## **Emulating Anand**

Only one Indian had won the World Cup before: Viswanathan Anand in Hyderabad, 2002.

By reaching the final, Divya and Humpy also booked tickets for the Candidates tournament, the qualifying event for the World championship.

Last year, five Indians, – three men and two women – featured in the Candidates at Toronto.

D. Gukesh won the open event, and went on to become, at 18, the youngest World champion in history by dethroning Ding Liren in an exciting finale in Singapore.

**GIRL WHO CAN BE THE QUEEN**

» PAGE 16



**Feature**

**Details**

Event

FIDE Women’s Chess World Cup

Winner

**Divya Deshmukh** (19 years old)

Venue

**Batumi, Georgia**

Final Opponent

**Koneru Humpy** (World No. 5)

Result

Won via **tiebreakers**

## 1. Historic Victory

- First Indian woman to win the Women's Chess World Cup.
- Joins Viswanathan Anand as only Indians to win a **Chess World Cup** title.
- Marked a significant leap for Indian women's chess on the global stage.

## 2. Grandmaster Achievement

- Divya became **India's 88th Grandmaster (GM)**.
- She is the **4th Indian woman GM** after Humpy, D. Harika, and R. Vaishali.

## 3. World Championship Candidates Qualification

- Both Divya and Humpy qualified for the **Candidates Tournament**, the gateway to the World Chess Championship.

## 4. Past Achievements

- Won **World Junior Championship** at Gandhinagar.
- Contributed to India's **gold medal win** in the Chess Olympiad at Budapest.

### ◆ **Broader Indian Performance in Global Chess**

- **D. Gukesh** (18 years old) became the **youngest World Chess Champion** after beating Ding Liren.
  - In the **2023 Candidates Tournament in Toronto**, **five Indians** (3 men, 2 women) featured.
-



**Q. With reference to Indian chess at the international level, consider the following statements:**

1. Divya Deshmukh is the first Indian woman to win the FIDE Women's Chess World Cup.
2. By winning the World Cup, Divya and Koneru Humpy qualified for the FIDE Candidates Tournament.
3. India has never won a team gold in the Chess Olympiad.
4. D. Gukesh became the youngest World Chess Champion by defeating Magnus Carlsen.

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

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

# Nuns are innocent, say kin of tribal women

Arrest of Keralite nuns in Chhattisgarh triggers protests; siblings of the purported victims reject allegations of trafficking and forcible conversion; they say the tribal women were accompanying the nuns to Agra for a job with the consent of family members; Chhattisgarh Chief Minister defends arrest

Shubhomoy Sikdar  
BAPUR

They are the Chhattisgarh. Police arrested three persons, including two Keralite nuns, on charges of trafficking and forcibly converting a few tribal women, the latter's family members have denied the police claim.

The kin said the women accompanied the nuns and a man from Narayanpur of their own volition, and that they are innocent.

However, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, on Monday, backed the arrests saying that "through inducement, an attempt was being made by the arrestees to engage in human trafficking and conversion".

The arrest sparked widespread protests from Delhi to Kerala on Monday.

Nuns Freeth Mary and Vandana Francis, and Sukamari Mandavi from Narayanpur were arrested on July 25 after a local fugranga dal member, Ravi Nigam, filed a complaint with the police saying that Mr. Mandavi had brought three women to the Karg railway station, from where they were taken to Agra with the two nuns.

"They are being framed." Speaking to *The Hindu* on the phone on Monday evening, the sisters of two of the women rejected claims of forcible conversion, and said they themselves had consented to be taken to Agra for a job. Their family members did not have any objections either, the women said.

"Our parents are no longer alive and I sent my sister with the nuns for her to take up a nursing job in



In solidarity: Kerala Congress(M) workers protest in Kottayam on Monday over the arrest of the nuns in Chhattisgarh. (Vijaya Mohan)

Agra. I myself had taken up a job with them in Lucknow and I realised a similar move would help her to become self-sufficient. And my sister was completely in agreement. The sisters (nuns) are innocent. Even the boy (Mandavi) is being framed... we sent our sis-

ter with him," said the elder sister of one of the three women, over phone from a police station in Delhi. The younger sister of another woman who was in Narayanpur demanded the release of the nuns and said her sister left home on July 24, and that

the family had converted to Christianity five years ago.

In a related development post the arrests, all three families gave a written submission to the Narayanpur Police on July 26 saying that they were aware that the women were being taken for jobs, said Narayanpur Superintendent of Police Robinson George.

On the question of families' consent and the basis for arrest, a Government Railway Police (GRP) officer said they were in the process of gathering corroborative evidence.

Safety issue, says CM Even as senior police officers in the GRP or the State police were unavailable for comment, the Chief Minister backed the move and claimed the issue of women's safety was being g-

ven a "political colour".

Three daughters from Narayanpur were promised nursing training and subsequent job placements. They were handed over to two nuns at the Durg station by a person from Narayanpur, who were taking the girls to Agra. Through inducement, an attempt was being made to engage in human trafficking and conversion," Mr. Sai said.

"This is a serious matter related to women's safety. The investigation is still ongoing. The matter is under judicial review, and the law will take its course."

"Chhattisgarh is a peaceful State where people of all religions and communities live in harmony. It is extremely unfortunate to give a political colour to the issue related to the safety of our Bharat daughters," he wrote on X.



But to hardship: Residents waiting on a street at a locality in Bhavani inundated by Cauvery water on Monday. (S. Senthil)

## Cauvery in spate, low-lying areas in T.N.'s Bhavani flooded

The Hindu Bureau  
ERODE/CHAMPAUR

With 1 lakh cu feet being let into the Cauvery from the Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu, floodwater has entered

low-lying residential areas in the Bhavani municipal limits. Officials are monitoring the situation and issuing advisories.

The river enters Erode district at Nettiampettai and flows through Annamalai, Bhavani, Erode city, and Kodumudi before entering Karur district. Several houses in low-lying areas along the river are vulnerable to flooding. The old bridge connecting Bhavani and Kodumudi has been closed.

An official of the Disaster Management Department said 42 villages have been identified across 30 revenue villages in the district.

"So far, water has not entered any houses. That could happen only if the discharge exceeds 1.70 lakh cu feet," the official said. A team of the National Disaster Response Force is stationed in Bhavani.

while a State Disaster Response Force team is carrying out the Armed Reserve Ground in Erode city. The official said 52 relief centres were identified.

Boat services cancelled Boat services between Nettiampettai in Erode and Pandalampatti in Salem district have been suspended. Devotees are also barred from bathing at the ghats in Bhavani, Kodumudi and the Kodumudi Sangameswar Temple.

With 16,700 cu feet being discharged from the Bhavanasagar dam into the Bhavani, water has entered low-lying areas near the old bus stand at Koppam in Bhavani. Tourists have been barred from the Kodumudi Arinchi.

The inflow at Hogenakal touched 1.20 lakh cu feet as of Monday evening. The Cauvery water flow in Nilgiris district saw a sharp rise shortly after 1 a.m., when the water level at the gauging station in Kiriattur recorded 1.06 lakh cu feet. The water level is expected to rise further, with Karnataka increasing the outflow from its reservoirs.

## Protests intensify in Kerala over arrests

The Hindu Bureau  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The protests over the arrest of two Keralite nuns on "questionable charges" of kidnapping, human trafficking, and forced conversion at Durg railway station in Chhattisgarh last Friday gathered momentum in Kerala and New Delhi on Monday.

They also seemed to assume a politically bipartisan character with MPs from Kerala, both from the

United Democratic Front and the Left Democratic Front, protesting simultaneously outside Parliament, denouncing the "unquestionable charges" of kidnapping, human trafficking, and forced conversion.

The leaders also denounced the Hindu right-wing's "extreme role" in the arrest of sister Vandana Francis and sister Freeth Mary of the order of the Aasi Sisters of Mary Immaculate.

Union Minister of State

for Minority Affairs George Githani said that the matter was sub judice and he could not risk hawarding an opinion until the court pronounced the verdict. He stated that BJP's Kerala president Rajeev Chandrasekhar was working closely with the Central and Chhattisgarh governments, as well as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, to secure the early release of the nuns.

Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding justice for the "unfairly incarcerated" nuns.

Leader of the Opposition V.K. Anand said the attacks against Christians in BJP-ruled States had multiplied after Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power at the Centre. Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president Sunny Joseph, MLA, said Christians in the BJP-ruled States lived in fear of persecution.

## Action against nuns 'disturbing': Stalin

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin has opposed the arrest and alleged harass-

ment of two Keralite nuns on charges of kidnapping, human trafficking, and forced conversion in Chhattisgarh.

He said he was deeply disturbed to see the Cath-

olic nuns being "subjected to harassment and false accusations" by the ruling Dal in Chhattisgarh.

"Communal vigilantism" "This targeted anti action against two Keralite nuns is a clear sign of communal vigilantism enabled by state machinery," Stalin said. "India's minorities deserve dignity and equal rights, not fear," Mr. Stalin said in a post on X.

## IN BRIEF



MINISTRY OF T AND R SINGAPORE

### Have come to Singapore to set the record straight, says Naidu

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said he had come to Singapore to set the record straight and rebuild a transparent, investor-friendly environment for a crucial diplomatic and investment-oriented engagement with the Singapore government on Day 2 of his official visit on Monday. In a meeting with Dr. Tan See Lian, Singapore's Minister for Manpower, Trade and Industry, Mr. Naidu outlined a range of opportunities for collaboration — in areas such as green hydrogen, logistics infrastructure, data centre ecosystems.

### RCB stamped: suspension of four police officers revoked

The Karnataka government on Monday revoked the suspension of four among the five police officials, including then City Police Commissioner R. Dhanababu. The suspension was ordered in the aftermath of the stampede at the M. Chinnaswamy stadium, which resulted in the death of 11 persons on June 4. This comes days after the John Michael Cunha Commission report that recommended "appropriate legal action" against the officials. The government said that both the judicial and managerial inquiries had been completed and reports were submitted.

### Kerala HC disposes of 2023 PIL filed by Nilambur MLA

The Kerala High Court has disposed of a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed in July 2023 by the newly elected Nilambur MLA Aravindan Shoukath and others, seeking steps to improve the living conditions of the tribal and marginalised communities who were residing in the region. The Bench said that Mr. Shoukath, who was elected MLA in June, is now better placed to redress issues faced by tribespeople. This was after Mr. Shoukath's counsel sought that his name be deleted from the list of petitioners and to withdraw the case.

## Plastic purge



Sustainable step: Workers deployed by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority clear plastic waste from Hussain Sagar Lake on Hyderabad on World Nature Conservation Day on Monday. (S. Senthil)

## Seven held in raid on unregistered fertility lab in Secunderabad

The Hindu Bureau  
HYDERABAD

Seven individuals were detained following a raid on Sunday by Health department officials on an unregistered fertility centre in Secunderabad. The accused were found doing unauthorised reproductive procedures in violation of the Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Act, 2022.

The arrests come right after an illegal surrogacy and baby-selling racket was busted in the area. The raid was carried out around 10 p.m. by a team led by Deputy Chief Surgeon Dr. P. Sridhar.

According to the complaint submitted by Dr. Sridhar, the centre was being run without registration from the relevant authority and had been collecting semen and eggs without authorisation. The facility has been sealed and a case registered.

## Kerala's golden jackals show adaptability to human-dominated landscapes: study

The Hindu Bureau  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An extensive citizen science study has estimated that Kerala is home to a population of 20,000 to 30,000 golden jackals (*Canis aureus* var.).

In one of the most comprehensive assessments of the elusive canid in the state to date, the research undertaken by NGO Aranyakam Nature Foundation has shed light on the widespread presence of the species in Kerala's varied landscapes, from coastal belts to peri-urban

settlements. The study found that only 2% of jackal sightings were from protected forest areas.

The study led by former Director of the Kerala Forest Research Institute P.K. Easa, S. Dhruvaraj, and

Sandeep Das involved over 2,000 participants and recorded more than 5,000 sightings across 674 villages.

The study found that only 2% of jackal sightings were from protected forest areas. Instead, jackals thrive in open lowland regions, particularly those below 200 metres in elevation. Their preferred habitats include coconut groves (28%), rural settlements (25%), and even urban areas (5.6%), showing a remarkable adaptability to human-altered environments.

However, concerns linger about poultry predation, cases of rabies and the species' increasing reliance on organic waste, especially in coastal areas. Their dependency on anthropogenic waste raises ecological and public health concerns. The report also flags an increasing threat of hybridisation with stray dogs, which could compromise the jackals' genetic integrity. The study calls for urgent realignment of conservation policies to protect landscapes beyond protected areas.

## HC rejects Karnataka government's appeal over delay of 381 days

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

Stating that there is a clear bar in the Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, to entertain an appeal beyond 180 days after the pronouncement of verdict by trial courts, the High Court of Karnataka has refused to entertain an appeal filed by the State government after 381 days.

In view of the statutory bar, the delay of 381 days in filing the appeal cannot be condoned," the court said. Justice V. Srikrishna dismissed the order while dismissing an appeal filed by the State government against the September 7, 2023 verdict of a sessions court, acquitting six persons from the charges of insulting a member of the SC community in public.



Appeal against a 2023 order acquitting six persons in case for insulting an SC person.

view and other offences alleged to have been committed in 2014. Meanwhile, the court said it would be open for the State Public Prosecutor to bring to the notice of the State legislature on the requirement to amend the statute, if need be, to provide remedy for litigation in circumstances where the delay occurs due to reasons not attributable to a negligent litigant, but due to bona-fide reasons.



## *Plastic purge*



**Sustainable step:** Workers deployed by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority clear plastic waste from Hussain Sagar Lake in Hyderabad on World Nature Conservation Day, on Monday. G. RAMAKRISHNA



Aspect	Details
Name	World Nature Conservation Day
Date	July 28 (annually)
Origins / History	<p>Emerged around <b>1998–2000</b>, initiated by conservationists (including in India) to raise awareness about human impact on natural resources and biodiversity</p> <p><a href="#">NGOFeed</a> <a href="#">Citizens' Environmental Coalition +1</a> <a href="#">Days Of The Year +10</a></p>
Purpose	<p>Promote sustainable use of soil, water, air, flora, fauna; encourage conservation of ecosystems for future generations</p> <p><a href="#">National Today</a> <a href="#">Days Of The Year</a></p>
2025 Theme	<p><b>“Connecting People and Plants, Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation”</b></p> <p>— emphasizes integrating digitization (e.g., AI, GIS, apps, drones) with on-ground conservation and supports India’s LiFE initiative</p> <p><a href="#">Jagranjosh.com</a> <a href="#">PW Live</a></p>

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**Key Focus Areas (2025)**

- Biodiversity conservation
- Sustainable resource use
- Climate action
- Community engagement & equity
- Policy advocacy

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**Typical Activities**

Tree plantation drives, awareness workshops, clean-up campaigns, use of digital campaigns & heritage events

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# Text & Content

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Unclaimed deposits with banks at the end of June 2025**

**67,003** crore. As of June 30, 2025, public sector banks were saddled with unclaimed deposits of Rs. 336.26 crore while the private sector had Rs. 67.75 crore, as per the Reserve Bank of India.

**Number of helicopter accidents in the past five years in India**

**12** The government said these accidents killed 10 people in the last five years. Seven of them took place in Uttarakhand, four in Maharashtra and one in Chhattisgarh. The DGCA has initiated additional surveillance and safety audits of helicopter operations for the Chandigarh Yatra.

**Amount of food to be airdropped by Spain into Gaza**

**12** tonnes. Spain said it would airdrop 12 tonnes of food into Gaza as the threat of famine makes the Palestinian territory after 21 months of war. The operation is a rare example of a European nation joining West in relief efforts in conflict-ridden Gaza. The delivery would take place from Jordan.

**Projected increase in Italy's above-65 population in 2050**

**34.6** per cent. Italy's working age population is set to shrink by more than a fifth over the next 25 years, national statistics agency Istat said. In the same period, the percentage of people aged 65 is projected to rise at least by 10%.

**Number of digital payment transactions in the last six years**

**65,000** crore. The Indian digital payment landscape witnessed over 65,000 crore transactions amounting to more than \$12,000 lakh crore in the past six financial years.

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## What is Maharashtra's new security Bill?

What does the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill entail? How does it propose to counter 'urban Naxals'? Which other States have similar laws? Which party opposed the Bill in the State's Legislative Assembly? What are the main objections being raised against the Bill by civil rights activists?

### EXPLAINER

**Vinaya Dushpande Pandit**

**The story so far:** The Maharashtra Legislature passed the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill or a bill to provide for effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of Left Wing Extremist organisations or similar organisations, during the recent monsoon session of the Maharashtra Assembly. The Bill has been termed as 'oppressive, ambiguous and open to misuse' by opposition leaders.

**What is the Bill?** The Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill was brought in to counter 'urban Naxalism', as per the government of Maharashtra. The Bill states that, 'the menace of Naxalism is not only limited to remote areas of the Naxal affected areas but its presence is increasing in the urban areas also through the Naxal front organisations. The spread of active front organisations of the Naxal groups gives constant and effective support in terms of logistics and safe refuge to their armed cadres. The related literature of Naxals shows 'safe houses' and 'urban dens' of the Maoist network in the cities of the State of Maharashtra'. The Maharashtra government claims that the State has become a safe haven for 'urban Naxal' organisations. It has said that over 60 such organisations exist in Maharashtra, and that current laws are ineffective against them. However, civil rights activists say that the State government has not yet made public the list of these organisations, despite repeated requests. They have alleged that the Bill has been brought about to control left-wing organisations and civil rights activists who had rallied against the BJP in the 2024 Parliamentary elections.

**What about other States?** Maharashtra is the fifth State after



Chief Justice of the Maharashtra High Court (C. P. Radhakrishnan) presiding over a meeting with Maharashtra Governor C. P.

Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha to enact a Public Security Act "for more effective prevention of unlawful activities of such organisations". The government has claimed that the other States have banned 46 front organisations under similar laws. But civil rights activists contend that the Public Security Acts in other States were brought in before the promulgation of more stringent pieces of legislation like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. They said that the Maharashtra government itself has claimed to have curbed left-wing extremist to only two districts of the State, with the help of currently existing laws, thus questioning the need for such a stringent Act at this time.

**When was the Bill introduced?** The Bill was first introduced by the earlier

Bill, which was passed by a majority by a voice vote. Two delegations have since met the Governor requesting him to not sign the Bill and send it back to the Legislature instead.

**What are the objections to the Bill?** The opposition has said that the Bill empowers the government to declare organisations 'illegal' without due process, allows suppression of facts in public interest, allows the government to extend ban on an organisation without any limit on the duration; has the potential to criminalise regular opposition under an ambiguous definition of 'illegal activity'; exclude lower courts from jurisdiction, effectively closing off easy judicial remedies; provides full protection to State officials acting in 'good faith'; and creates grounds for ideologically motivated action against opposition groups, activists and movements. The government has said that democratic and peaceful protests as well as journalists will not come under the Bill's ambit, but the ambiguity in the Bill has given rise to fear that it might be used against farmers' organisations, students' groups, and civil rights groups under the label of 'threat to public order'.

For example, section 2(f) of the Bill criminalises speech (spoken or written), signs, gestures or visual representations which 'tend to interfere' with public order or 'cause concern'. The opposition has said that such a provision allows authorities to criminalise expression, assembly, criticism, ridicule and dissent merely by indicating that they pose a potential threat. There is no requirement of actual violence, immediate harm or intent.

**What next?** The Bill will become a law once the Governor gives his assent to it. It has been passed by both the Houses and has been sent to him. Meanwhile, civil rights activists and political parties have said they will continue to protest against the bill and will approach the court against it.

### THE GIST

The Bill was first introduced by the earlier Mahayuti government at the tag end of the monsoon session of the Maharashtra Assembly in 2024.

The Bill states that, 'the menace of Naxalism is not only limited to remote areas of the Naxal affected States but its presence is increasing in the urban areas also through the Naxal front organisations'.

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## Why were Tablighi Jamaat members given a clean chit?

How was the media used to spread misinformation about the *Jad* organised by Tablighi Jamaat members?

**Ziva Us Salam**

**The story so far:** The Delhi High Court last week acquitted all 70 Tablighi Jamaat members accused of housing foreign participants of a congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 in violation of lockdown protocol. The court ruling came in the *Muhammed Anwar versus State of NCT of Delhi* case.

**What happened in March 2020?** The Tablighi Jamaat members, who came in for heavy criticism in media and political circles for attending a *Jad* (religious congregation) in Nizamuddin Markaz (Jamaat's headquarters in New Delhi), were given a clean chit by Justice Neena Hansal Krishna who noted that the said *Jad* was planned before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Incidentally,

the *Jad* which began on March 12, 2020, culminated on March 13, a day before the Delhi government capped all religious gatherings above the size of 50 and imposed the Delhi Epidemic Diseases, COVID Regulations 2020. Earlier, on March 12, 2020, the Union Health Ministry had stated that the coronavirus was not a national health emergency as there were only 81 cases in India at that time. It also charged after the imposition of the lockdown on March 23 at midnight. While most Indian participants had returned by then, foreign nationals were still at the Jamaat headquarters, awaiting resumption of international flights to their respective destinations. The congregation included participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, Kuwait, Ghana and Sri Lanka. However, soon after the imposition of the nationwide lockdown, the Delhi Police had issued a notice against the Indian and foreign participants of the Tablighi Jamaat congregation for allegedly

violating the lockdown and orders prohibiting the assembly of people. The men were booked under provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Epidemic Diseases Act, the Disaster Management Act and the Foreigners Act. These FIRs accused Indian nationals of either hosting foreigners in mosques or accommodating them at their homes. They were charged before the High Court which dismissed them last week, a little over five years after the incident.

**What did the court state?** "There is nothing on record to show that they had congregated after the resumption of the congregation under section 144 Criminal Penal Code. These participants were already present in the Markaz. After the imposition of the lockdown, there was no way possible for them to have dispersed, rather, stepping out of the house would have been a violation of the complete

lockdown and also of the potential of spreading of communicable disease of COVID-19," the court stated.

The court also noted that the imposition of section 144 banning large gatherings was not announced through a gazette notification nor was it properly published. Hence, the Tablighi Jamaat members were possibly unaware of such a notification. "There is no averment to show that any information was actually conveyed to the petitioners," the court stated. It also observed there was no subterfuge in the chargesheet that the accused were COVID-positive or had defied the government's restriction order during the pandemic.

Incidentally, eight foreign participants had been acquitted back in October 2020 by the south-east district court in Saket, New Delhi. Later in December, 36 more foreign participants were acquitted.

**What was the media's role?** A large section of the media had then accused the Tablighi Jamaat volunteers of being the principal reason for the spread of the disease in the country. Terms like Corona Jihad, Islamic Insurrection and Corona Terrorism were loosely bandied about and many fake videos were shared accusing the Tablighi members of agitating on food to spread the disease. The Delhi government, in its daily medical dispatches, used to have a separate column for Tablighi Jamaat COVID cases.

### THE GIST

The *Jad* which began on March 12, 2020 culminated on March 13, a day before the Delhi government capped all religious gatherings above the size of 50 and imposed the Delhi Epidemic Diseases, COVID Regulations 2020.

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# Why were Tablighi Jamaat members given a clean chit?

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Ziya Us Salam

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**T**he Delhi High Court last week acquitted all 70 Tablighi Jamaat members accused of housing foreign participants of a congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 in violation of lockdown protocol. The court ruling came in the *Mohammed Anwar versus State of NCT of Delhi* case.

## What happened in March 2020?

The Tablighi Jamaat members, who came in for heavy criticism in media and political circles for attending a *jod* (religious congregation) in Nizamuddin Markaz (Jamaat's headquarters in New Delhi), were given a clean chit by Justice Neena Bansal Krishna who noted that the said *jod* was planned before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Incidentally,

the *jod* which began on March 12, 2020 concluded on March 15, a day before the Delhi government capped all religious gatherings above the size of 50 and imposed the Delhi Epidemic Diseases, COVID Regulations-2020. Earlier, on March 13, 2020, the Union Health Ministry had stated that the coronavirus was not a national health emergency as there were only 81 cases in India at that time. It all changed after the imposition of the lockdown on March 24 at midnight. While most Indian participants had dispersed by then, foreign nationals were still at the Jamaat headquarters, awaiting resumption of international flights to their respective destinations. The congregation included participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, Kuwait, Ghana and Sri Lanka.

However, soon after the imposition of the nationwide lockdown, the Delhi Police had filed FIRs against hundreds of Indian and foreign participants of the Tablighi Jamaat congregation for allegedly

violating the lockdown and orders prohibiting the assembly of people. The men were booked under provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Epidemic Diseases Act, the Disaster Management Act and the Foreigners Act. These FIRs accused Indian nationals of either hosting foreigners in mosques or accommodating them at their homes. They were challenged before the High Court which dismissed them last week, a little over five years after the incident.

## What did the court state?

"There is nothing on record to show that they had congregated after the promulgation of the Notification under Section 144 Criminal Penal Code. These petitioners were already present in the Markaz. After the imposition of the lockdown, there was no way possible for them to have dispersed; rather their stepping out of the houses would have been a violation of the complete

lockdown and also of the potential of spreading of communicable disease of COVID-19," the court stated.

The court also noted that the imposition of Section 144 banning large gatherings was not announced through a gazette notification nor was it properly published. Hence, the Tablighi Jamaat preachers were possibly unaware of such a notification. "There is no averment to show that any information was actually conveyed to the petitioners," the court stated. It also observed there was no whisper in the chargesheets that the accused were COVID-positive or had defied the government order by stepping out during the pandemic.

Incidentally, eight foreign participants had been acquitted back in August 2020 by the south-east districts court in Saket, New Delhi. Later in December, 36 more foreign participants were acquitted.

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A large section of the media had then accused the Tablighi Jamaat volunteers of being the principal reason for the spread of the disease in the country. Terms like Corona Jihad, Islamic Insurrection and Corona Terrorism were loosely bandied about and many fake videos were shared accusing the Tablighi members of spitting on food to spread the disease. The Delhi government, in its daily medical dispatches, used to have a separate column for Tablighi Jamaat COVID cases.

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The court noted that the imposition of Section 144 banning large gatherings was not announced through a gazette notification nor was it properly published.

Topic	Details
Case	Mohammed Anwar vs State of NCT of Delhi
Judgement	Delhi High Court acquitted 70 Tablighi Jamaat members
Reason	No evidence of violation of COVID-19 protocols or government orders

## 1. Jod (Religious Gathering):

- Held from **March 12–15, 2020** at Nizamuddin Markaz, New Delhi.
- Preceded Delhi Govt's order banning gatherings (issued on March 16, 2020).
- Foreigners from Indonesia, Malaysia, Ghana, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, etc. attended.

## 2. Lockdown & FIRs:

- Nationwide lockdown began **March 24, 2020**.
- FIRs were filed under:
  - **IPC**
  - **Epidemic Diseases Act**
  - **Disaster Management Act**
  - **Foreigners Act**



### 3. Court's Observations:

- No **conclusive notification** under **Section 144 CrPC** was gazetted.
- Petitioners were already present before lockdown.
- No evidence they **violated lockdown or spread COVID**.
- No indication that accused were **COVID-positive**.
- Media portrayal led to misinformation and communal targeting.

### 4. Media's Role:

- Terms like "**Corona Jihad**", "**Islamic Insurrection**", etc. were used.
  - Fake videos circulated to malign Tablighi Jamaat.
  - Delhi Govt's daily health bulletin had separate COVID column for Tablighi Jamaat.
-

# China rolls out childcare subsidy to boost birth rate

KAROLINE KAN  
July 28

**CHINA ANNOUNCED THAT** it will start handing out childcare subsidies across the nation, in its latest push to boost birthrates after a worrying drop in recent years.

The government will spend 3,600 yuan (\$502) a year per child under age three, according to the official *Xinhua News Agency*. The assistance, effective retrospectively from January 1 this year and available regardless of the first-, second- or third-child, is meant as an incentive for young couples wary of rising costs of child-rearing.

The policy is expected to benefit more than 20 million families each year, *Xinhua* reported. China has previously offered tax breaks and has been

working to offer more affordable daycare services, it said.

The latest measure follows China's population shrinking for a third straight year in 2024. New births at 9.54 million last year was only half of the 18.8 million registered in 2016 when China lifted its one-child policy.

Diminishing birthrate is a worry for the world's second-largest economy, where the working-age population has been declining in a threat to labour supply and productivity. The country, which lost its title as the most-populous nation to India in 2023, may see its population drop further to 1.3 billion by 2050 and below 800 million by 2100, according to the UN's demographic modeling.

That outlook stems from



China's new births at 9.54 million in 2024 was only half of the 18.8 million registered in 2016 when China lifted its one-child policy

BLOOMBERG

the alarming drop in marriage rates. Last year, the country recorded the lowest marriage rate in almost half a century,

down 20% from a year before. In a decade, marriages plummeted from 13.47 million couples in 2013 to 6.11 mil-

lion in 2024.

Chinese are also marrying older, with the average age of first marriage rising from 24.9

in 2010 to 28.7 in 2020. In a country where most births occur within marriages, the declining marriage rate could mean a significant drop in births this year.

The childcare subsidies can be availed online or offline, *Xinhua* reported, adding that each province will determine the specific disbursement schedule based on local circumstances.

Many cities have rolled out their own subsidies in recent years, especially aimed at encouraging couples to have more than one child. While there are no national surveys on families preference for having more children, a 2023 poll in Guangdong province found half of the people surveyed would like to have more than one child, and 6.5% wanted three.

Hohhot, the regional capital of Inner Mongolia, made national headlines in March for its generous subsidies of 50,000 yuan to couples who have a second child and 100,000 yuan for a third or more. Some cities also provide subsidies for buying homes.

Some of these incentives have paid off. In 2023, Tianmen in central China's Hubei province started to offer couples with second child more than 90,000 yuan subsidy and even more for a third child — cash payments, childcare subsidies, and housing support. The city saw a 17% increase in births in 2024 compared to the previous year, according to the city's officials. So far, subsidies have been arbitrary and made available by lower-tier cities.

—BLOOMBERG

## 1. Subsidy Details:

- 3,600 yuan (~\$502) per child under age 3 per year.
- Applicable regardless of whether the child is the first, second, or third.
- Beneficiaries: **20 million+ families annually**.
- Distributed online/offline, based on local provincial rules.

## 2. Background:

- Births dropped to **9.54 million** in 2024.
- Was **18.8 million** in 2016 (post one-child policy lift).
- Country may drop below **800 million** population by 2100.
- Average age of first marriage rose from **24.9 (2010)** to **28.7 (2020)**.
- **Marriage registrations:** 13.47M (2013) → 6.11M (2023).



### 3. Other Initiatives:

- **Hohhot (Inner Mongolia):**
  - 50,000 yuan for second child
  - 100,000 yuan for third child
- **Tianmen (Hubei):**
  - 90,000 yuan for second child
  - Cash/housing/childcare aid for third child
  - Resulted in **17% increase** in births in 2024

### 4. Policy Motivation:

- Offset high cost of child-rearing.
- Reverse falling marriage and birth trends.
- Maintain economic productivity with better working-age population share.

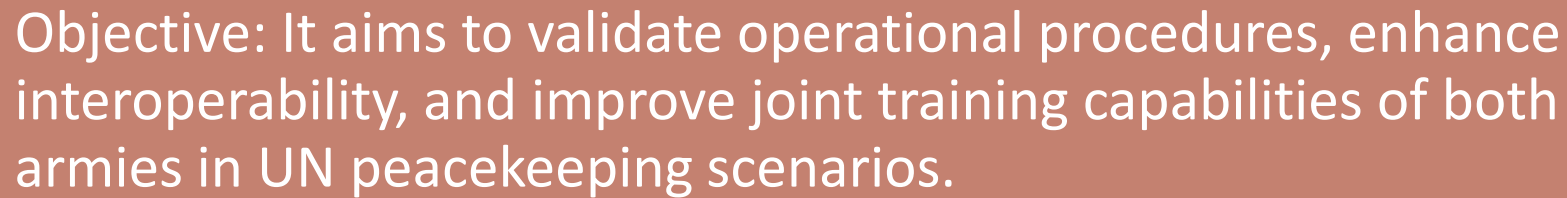


# Exercise Bold Kurukshetra 2025

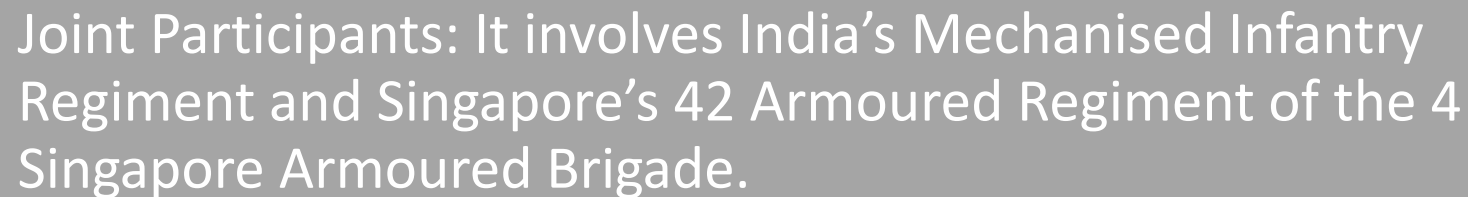
The 14th edition of Exercise Bold Kurukshetra 2025, a joint military exercise between India and Singapore, commenced on 28th July in Jodhpur.

An orange rectangular box with rounded corners containing text. A large, light-orange downward-pointing arrow is positioned to the right of the box, pointing towards the box below.


Objective: It aims to validate operational procedures, enhance interoperability, and improve joint training capabilities of both armies in UN peacekeeping scenarios.

A brown rectangular box with rounded corners containing text. A large, light-brown downward-pointing arrow is positioned to the right of the box, pointing towards the box below.

Joint Participants: It involves India's Mechanised Infantry Regiment and Singapore's 42 Armoured Regiment of the 4 Singapore Armoured Brigade.

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First initiated in **2005**, the annual Bold Kurukshetra exercise reflects **deep-rooted military ties** between **India and Singapore**.

**UN Chapter VII** authorizes **military/non-military actions** (sanctions, blockades, troop deployment) for **international peace enforcement**.

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A close-up, blue-tinted photograph of a line graph on a document. A silver pen is pointing to a peak in the graph. The graph shows a fluctuating line with several peaks and troughs. The text "Financial Conditions Index" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font. The background is slightly blurred, showing some numbers like "2,5" and "2,47" on the right side.

# Financial Conditions Index



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed a daily-frequency Financial Conditions Index (FCI) to assess India's financial market health in real-time to aid policymakers and analysts.

Objective: The FCI will serve as a composite indicator to measure tight or easy financial conditions relative to historical average since 2012.

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- **Components:** The FCI tracks 20 financial market indicators across money markets, government securities (G-Secs), corporate bonds, equities, and forex markets.
  - **Positive values** of the standardised FCI indicate tighter conditions, while **negative values** suggest easier financial conditions.
- **Trends:** During the RBI's sample period, the **tightest financial conditions** were recorded in **July 2013** (*taper tantrum*, FCI at 2.826) driven by **bond and forex market stress**, while the **easiest conditions** occurred in **June 2021** (*post-Covid*, FCI at -2.197) due to the **RBI's liquidity measures**.

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# Word of the day

## **Flout:**

treat with contemptuous disregard; laugh at with contempt and derision

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**Synonyms:** scoff, barrack, gibe, jeer

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**Usage:** *He always flouts the rules.*

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**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/floutpro

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**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /flaʊt/

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Thank you 😊

