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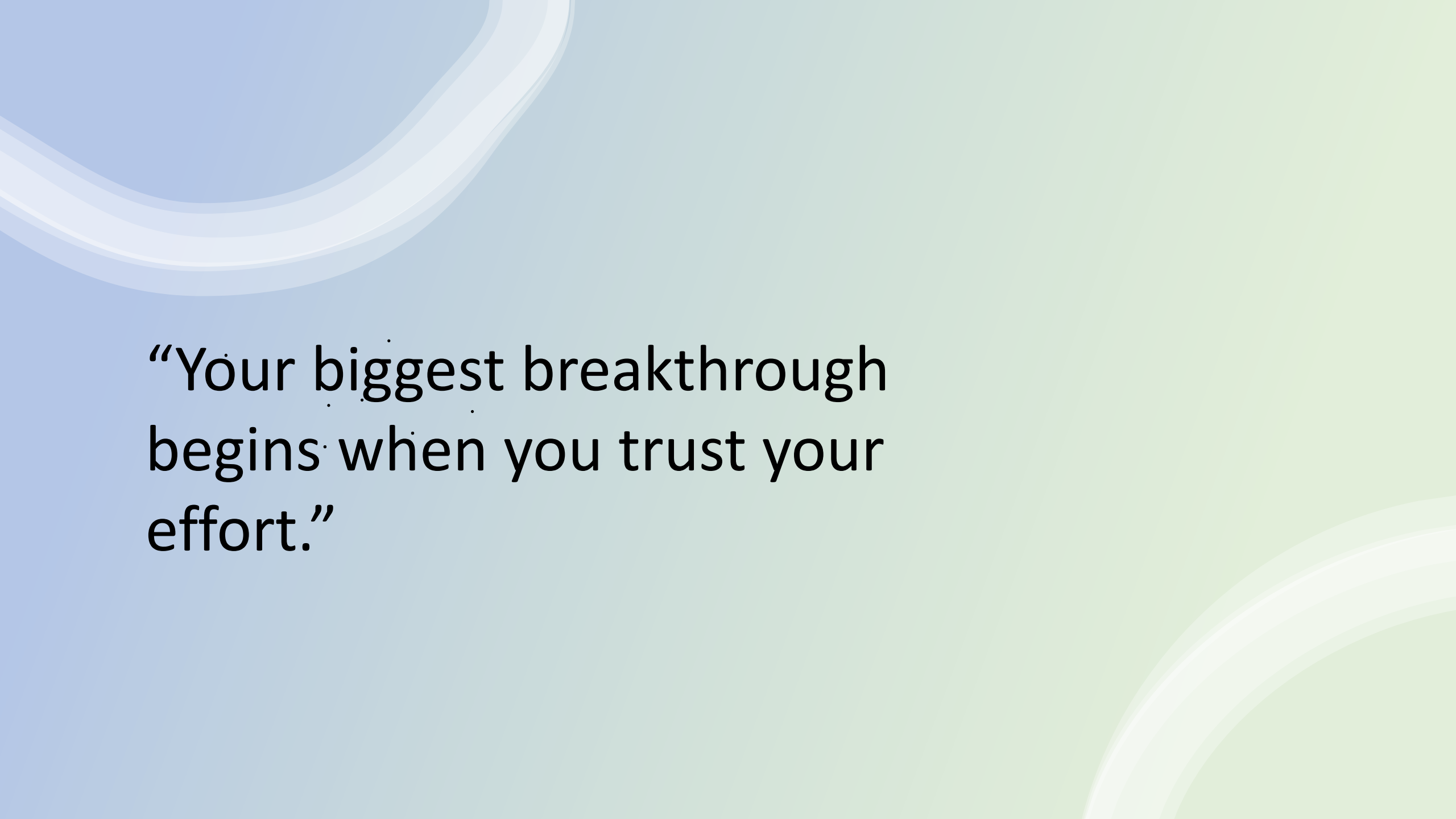


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**STANDING STRONG**  
Ladakhis serve as first line of defence: Shah  
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**PEAK DEMAND**  
Coal, solar to power India as temperatures rise  
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**NARCOTICS BINS BURST**  
NCB seizes 349 kg cocaine in Mumbai  
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**POLICING THE FREE**  
Far from a safe harbour  
Critics, comedians, and media face blocking orders, legal scrutiny  
GROUND ZERO 5 PAGE 7



**THOMAS CUP**  
Lakshya, Ayush power India into semifinals  
SPORTS 5 PAGE 14

**INSIDE**



**Israeli authorities detain two Gaza flotilla activists**  
NEW DELHI

BARCELONA Israeli authorities say they are taking two activists who led an aid flotilla bound for Gaza to Israel for questioning after they were captured by their forces in international waters of the Mediterranean Sea. **PAGE 12**



**Centre, Manipur govt. hold talks with insurgents**

NEW DELHI India fresh over in Manipur, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and the state government resumed talks with Maoist insurgent groups who are in a suspension of operations pact with the government. **PAGE 8**

**Karnataka opens grievance portal for jgg workers**

BANGALORE In a move to secure the rights of the growing platform-based labour force, the government of Karnataka has officially operationalised a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for jgg workers. **PAGE 4**

**HC bars access to husband's income details under RTI**

NEW DELHI The Delhi High Court has ruled that a man's net taxable income details cannot be disclosed to his estranged wife under the RTI act, holding that income tax returns are personal information exempt from disclosure. **PAGE 4**

# Govt. hikes price of commercial LPG, 5-kg cylinders, bulk diesel

Price of commercial LPG hiked by ₹993 a cylinder and that of 5-kg cylinder by ₹261, price of ATF for international carriers raised; govt. also reduces excise duty on export of diesel, aviation fuel, retail prices of petrol and diesel remain unchanged

**Bangalore, Shishu**  
NEW DELHI  
If marketing companies (OMCs) on Friday sharply hiked the price of commercial LPG by ₹993 per cylinder and that of 5-kg free trade LPG by ₹261 per cylinder. Further, the price of bulk diesel was raised from ₹32.7 to ₹34.9 per litre.



Fuel crisis: Commercial LPG cylinder delivery workers unload cylinders from a truck at a distribution centre. **2. MANJUNATH**

What the OMCs did not hike the price of LPG meant for domestic usage and that of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) for domestic scheduled carriers, the price of ATF for international airlines has been pushed up by ₹76.85 per kilolitre from ₹1,41,028 per kilolitre.

The prices of retail petrol and diesel remained unchanged. In a separate move, the Ministry of Finance reduced the excise duty on the export of diesel to ₹23 for every litre from ₹55.5 per litre and that of ATF to ₹23 per litre from ₹42 per litre, while the special additional excise duty (SAD) on the export of petrol continued to remain at ₹14.02 per litre.

## Congress slams government on hike in LPG rates

NEW DELHI The Congress on Friday slammed the Narendra Modi government over the latest price hike for commercial LPG cylinders, with leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi calling it the "bill for elections". **PAGE 4**

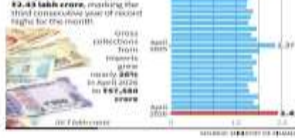
not have a local address point to avail a regular connection. Commercial LPG is used by businesses, both big and small, on a daily basis. Key among these are restaurants and hotels. Higher costs are expected to be passed on to their customers.

The hike in commercial LPG prices follows a ₹195.5 per cylinder hike on April 1, when the crisis in West Asia had completed a full month.

The latter primarily cuts to ensure the availability of these products in the domestic market and cushion against any impact on supplies. A reduction in the duty on exports in this change in the source. While the price of domestic LPG being unchanged other staples, the steep hike in prices of commercial LPG and that of 5-kg free trade LPG raises concern.

# GST collections rise to a record of ₹2.43 lakh crore in April

April GST collections rose to a record of ₹2.43 lakh crore in April



**L.A. Sharda, Ruchika**  
NEW DELHI

The government's Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue in April 2020 surged to an all-time high of ₹2.43 lakh crore, up 8.7% over April last year. Growth was once again driven by collections on imports, with revenue from domestic goods growing slower.

Tax experts, however, note that collections in April, which represent activity in March, typically come in higher as the calendar year ends. The government is targeting a "partial and staggered increase of 25% (only ₹15,000 crore) in April. The price of

Domestic ATF steady The unchanged price of ATF for domestic scheduled carriers comes as a relief. The Hindu had earlier reported that the India, India and Singapore had sought ATF price relief from the government.

On April 1, the price of ATF for scheduled domestic airlines was hiked by more than 5%. The Petroleum Ministry had earlier said that it was passing only a "partial and staggered increase of 25% (only ₹15,000 crore) in April. The price of

Data show that there has been a record collection every April ever since the GST was rolled out in 2017, except for April 2020, which was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

April 2020 GST collections cap off a resilient ₹236 for the GST regime, with gross revenues rising 8.7% year on year to about ₹2.43 lakh crore compared to April 2019, despite continued global uncertainty and West Asia-related geopolitical headwinds. Manoj Misra, partner & in-charge tax leader at Deloitte India, said,

"The data show that net collections, once refunds are accounted for, stood at ₹2.18 lakh crore in April 2020, up 7.3% over April last year. Notably, the data also show that the growth in collections was once again driven by imports. Gross

collections from imports grew nearly 26% in April 2020 to ₹27,000 crore. Collections from domestic goods rose by 4.3% to ₹1.85 lakh crore in the period.

Import-led revenues "Post GST 2.0, a steady 7.8% monthly growth seems to be emerging as the norm which is broadly in line with budget estimates," Pratik Jain, partner, Price Waterhouse & Co., said. "Notably, growth in import-led revenues continues to outpace domestic transactions, which could indicate some softness in consumption—possibly reflecting a moderation in discretionary spending amid uncertainties."

Manoj Misra, partner and tax controversy management leader at Grant Thornton Bharat, said that the growth in tax revenue from imports also "points to resilient external demand linkages and supply chain resiliability".

Mr. Jain, on the other hand, pointed out that the growth in revenue from domestic sales has remained steady, which reflects the nature of consumption activity in the economy. "Equally important is the steady performance of domestic GST revenues, which suggests that GST 2.0-led rate rationalisation and simplification measures are starting to support consumption and demand without eroding the tax base," he said.

## Watery grave



Rescue workers, including NDRF personnel, conduct operations to recover an overturned cruise boat at the Bangi Dam in Jalpaiguri district of Madhya Pradesh on Friday. Nine bodies have been recovered, while four persons, including three children, remain missing. **PTI/REUTERS/ANUPAMA**

# SC grants bail to Congress leader in case filed by Assam CM's wife

**Krishnaadas Rajasekhar**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has granted Congress leader Pawan Khera anticipatory bail in a criminal case instituted on a complaint filed by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Thava. Khera's wife, saying the case appears to be motivated by political rivalry and does not warrant custodial interrogation.

lightly. The order was published on May 1. "Criminal process must be applied with objectivity and circumvention to ensure that individual liberty is not imperilled by proceedings that may be coloured by political rivalry. We are further of the opinion that the allegations and counter-allegations, as apparent in the present case, prima facie, appear to be politically motivated and seemingly influenced by such rivalry, rather than disclosing a situation warranting custodial interrogation and the severity of the allegations can be tested at trial," the judge ordered.

He had also exhibited documents stating that she had a company called Amicus in the U.S. with an investment of more than \$10,000 crore, besides owning assets in Dubai. Mr. Khera had stated that Mr. Sarma's election affidavit had not disclosed any of these details of wealth.



**Pawan Khera**

The allegations and counter-allegations, prima facie, appear to be politically motivated and influenced by rivalry, rather than disclosing a situation warranting custodial interrogation and severity cover rescue fabricated with forged notes and QR codes. Mr. Khera was booked for conspiracy, forgery and criminal defamation.

"Under motive" The Congress leader, through senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, said the FIR was driven by an ulterior political motive and was intended to humiliate him with his arrest.

The Bench noted that the documents exhibited by Mr. Khera were already in the custody of the prosecution, and preliminary investigation had already commenced in the case. He said that the investigation, and preliminary investigation, had already commenced in the case. He said that the investigation, and preliminary investigation, had already commenced in the case.

## Iran offers U.S. a fresh proposal via Pakistan

**Stanley Johny**

Iran has delivered a new proposal for talks with the U.S. via Pakistan, which is acting as a mediator between the two sides, even as its Revolutionary Guards warned that American warships "will burn" like U.S. bases in the region, if Iran is attacked again. The proposal was handed over to Pakistan on Thursday evening, Iran's state media reported on Friday.

**FULL REPORT ON PAGE 12**

**IN BRIEF**



**TVK's temporary election office set up near Tiruchi**

A temporary election office of the TVK was set up near Tiruchi in the early hours of Friday. Police sources said the office, housed in a one-story, thatched pandal at the entrance of a house, belonged to Venkatesh, 48, secretary of the district farmers' wing of the party. The police said the structure served as an election office for the 14-constituencies constituency. Around 2,300 a.m., unidentified persons allegedly set fire to the pandal, which was gutted. On information, the police rushed to the spot and doused the flames with the help of residents.

**Nithin Kumar vacates CM's residence after four decades**

Janata Dal (United) national president Nithin Kumar on Friday vacated the Bihar Chief Minister's official residence, which he occupied for around two decades, and shifted to a new address. Mr. Kumar, who is now a Rajya Sabha MP, relinquished the Chief Minister's post on April 14, and the BJP's Kamraj Choudhary became the CM the next day. The JD(U) leader has served as the Chief Minister consecutively between 2005-2006. "We have shifted from 1 Anne Marg (the official CM residence) to 7 Chrysler Road, and will live there," Mr. Kumar said. The Anne Marg house was notified as the Bihar Chief Minister's residence in 2006.

**Documentary on Venugopal the latest 'casualty' in 'tussle' for post-election leadership**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
TIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A documentary detailing the life and times of All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary, K.C. Venugopal, appears to be the latest "casualty" in the organisational tussle in the Congress in Kerala over the post-poll leadership of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

According to a Congress insider, the party's high command had strongly conveyed to the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) general secretary to request the rank and file in the State to desist from publishing acrimonious material on leaders on "social, television and print media" till after the high command settles the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leadership question in consultation with elect-



Congress leader K.C. Venugopal during a recent outreach for party's Tamil Nadu chief, Setupanthagar, 102 years

ed party legislators and incumbent MPs after the Assembly election results on May 4.

"Extraordinary feat" However, the insider added, media reports that the high command had issued an "extraordinary feat" to stop the work on the documentary directed by Vinod Shrikara had no factual basis. The work on the documentary, which seeks to highlight Mr. Venugopal's 60 years in public life, he claimed, was still on.

**Bengaluru's beloved bookstore slowly picks up pieces after floods damage collections**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Bookworms, one of the beloved bookstores of Indhupalle in Bengaluru, slowly picked up the pieces and limped back to normalcy after the April 29 rains ruined the bookstore, damaging nearly 8,000 books. The books that were drenched in water are now being stored out in the sun. While some are partially damaged, many titles have been damaged extensively.

A big collection of author signed books and collectible books are also damaged. The store's flow runs into several lakhs. "There is another room full of books that are also flooded. We are yet to clear them from that room. Only



after that will we be able to assess the damage correctly," said Krishna Gowda, owner of the bookstore. "The incident has created a lot of chaos in the area, and several customers have visited the bookstore and

**In a first, Karnataka govt. unveils digital grievance portal for gig workers**

They can lodge complaints on pay, working conditions and other disputes on the portal; these grievances will be automatically routed to aggregators for settlement; govt. to monitor the process

**Shilpa Elassabath**  
BENGALURU



The gig workers had so far operated without a formal or legal dispute resolution framework. ICE PHOTO

In a move to secure the rights of the growing platform-based labour force, the Government of Karnataka has officially operationalised a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for platform-based gig workers. The mechanism, a first of its kind in India, has been developed by the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Board in collaboration with the Department of Government.

**Transparency** With the new initiative coming into force, gig workers can now officially lodge grievances, including regarding pay, working conditions, and platform-specific disputes, through the Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS) portal. This creates a formal link between the lakhs of gig workers in Karnataka and the technology aggregators they serve. This is expected to bring transparency and legal recourse for a

workforce that has so far operated without a formal dispute resolution framework. Under the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Board (KPBGW) Act and Rules, every aggregator platform must constitute an Internal Dispute Resolution Committee (IDRC). Grievances filed on the IPGRS will be automatically routed to the respective platform's IDRC, which will be addressed and settled within a strictly defined time frame. The government will act as a central facilitator, monitoring the process to ensure a smooth and transparent flow of communi-

cation between workers and platforms. "Every voice is heard" Labour Minister Santhosh Kumar said that Karnataka, technology capital of the country, is leveraging this potential for gig workers, as well. "By launching this system, we are ensuring that the gig economy is no longer an informal space, but a structured one where every worker's voice is heard," he said. In far, details of 12 lakh active gig workers have been shared by platforms, according to G. Manjunath, Additional Labour Commis-

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Due to the hard work of DMK cadres in the run up to the Assembly election, the party will secure the desired result on counting day on May 4, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said in Chennai on Friday.

Addressing party workers on the occasion of International Workers' Day at the May Day Park, Mr. Stalin said there would be no change in the government, adding that he was not seeing this based on the exit polls, but because he understood the feelings of the party workers.

"The election results will be out in a couple of days, and I believe you will get good news," the Chief Minister said. Mr. Stalin said the state would continue to be guided by the DMK's principle of "governing for everyone". He noted that Chennai was the first city in India to celebrate the Day, under the leadership of labour organiser M. Singaravelu. Recalling the Dravidian movement's struggles, including academicians from Boston University, King's College, and other stakeholders, including DMK members, he said,

**Hard work by DMK cadre will yield results on May 4, says Stalin**



CM Stalin at an event to mark International Workers' Day in Chennai on Friday. ICE PHOTO

Tranandhi ensured it became a paid and legally recognised holiday. He added that sustained efforts by DMK leaders led to its adoption as a paid public holiday across the country during the tenure of former Prime Minister V.P. Singh.

**Workers' dignity** Mr. Stalin said workers' dignity, rights, and fair compensation remain central to the government's approach. He also noted that the May Day Memorial Park in Chennai was established under Karunanidhi's leadership, reflecting his commitment to labour welfare. Calling for continued collective effort, Mr. Stalin urged the cadres and the public to work together in upholding workers' rights.

**Stray dog issue: Punjab Minister orders officials to take immediate steps**

**From Trust of India**  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Minister Sanjeev Arora on Friday directed municipal corporations, commissioners and the additional deputy commissioners to take immediate, coordinated and result-oriented action to effectively tackle the growing issue of stray dogs across Punjab.

Mr. Arora, the Minister for Industries and Commerce, Investment Promotion, Power and Local Government, described the matter as a serious public safety and public health concern, emphasising that the increasing number of stray dogs in urban and semi-urban areas has become a significant challenge for the State. He urged the officials to take immediate steps to address the issue, highlighting that incidents of dog bites, attacks on children and elderly persons, and aggressive packs roaming in residential areas have created fear and insecurity among the public.

**No move to drop Urdu language from job recruitment eligibility list, says J&K CM**

**Pasquada Ashu**  
BISHNAGAR

Jaamun and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said no decision has been taken to drop Urdu as a mandatory qualification for lower and middle ranking posts in the Revenue Department. Accusations by political opponents of spreading misinformation, the Chief Minister said, government has merely sought public feedback. "There is no move to drop Urdu. We only sought views on present recruitment issues with me and I have no intention of dropping it," Mr. Abdullah said. The Chief Minister accused the opposition of "instigating the Urdu issue as a 'divis-

**The Hindu Bureau**  
PAMNATHUR

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, on Friday, launched a blistering attack against the Opposition, accusing it of pursuing destructive politics, while praising that only performance-driven leadership would have a place in his government.

Addressing a public meeting in conjunction with the May Day and the 66th Anniversary of the State's formation in Krishna district on Friday, Naidu made it clear that underperforming MLAs would not be re-nominated.

Striking a chord with the residents, Mr. Naidu highlighted Krishna district's importance in the State's growth story, noting that it ranked among the top regions for development and



Andhra Pradesh CM N. Chandrababu Naidu interacting with children at an anganwadi centre in Krishna district on Friday.

revenue generation. Targeting the previous regime led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Chief Minister alleged that crucial projects such as the Polavaram irrigation project and Amaravati capital city were derailed due to "negligence and incoherent governance." He said that partially completed works too were neglected.

# In a first, Karnataka govt. unveils digital grievance portal for gig workers

They can lodge complaints on pay, working conditions and other disputes on the portal; these grievances will be automatically routed to aggregators for settlement; govt. to monitor the process

**Shilpa Elizabeth**  
BENGALURU

**I**n a move to secure the rights of the growing platform-based labour force, the Government of Karnataka has officially operationalised a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for platform-based gig workers. The mechanism, a first of its kind in India, has been developed by the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Board in collaboration with the Department of e-Governance.

## Transparency

With the new initiative coming into force, gig workers can now officially lodge grievances, including regarding pay, working conditions, and platform-specific disputes, through the Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS) portal.

This creates a formal bridge between the lakhs of gig workers in Karnataka and the technology aggregators they serve. This is expected to bring transparency and legal recourse for a



The gig workforce has so far operated without a formal or legal dispute resolution framework. FILE PHOTO

workforce that has so far operated without a formal dispute resolution framework.

Under The Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act and Rules, every aggregator platform must constitute an Internal Dispute Resolution Committee (IDRC). Grievances filed on the IPGRS will be automatically routed to the respective platform's IDRC to be addressed and settled within a strictly defined timeframe. The government will act as a central facilitator, monitoring the process to ensure a smooth and transparent flow of communica-

tion between workers and platforms.

## 'Every voice is heard'

Labour Minister Santosh Lad said that Karnataka, technology capital of the country, is leveraging this potential for worker welfare as well. "By launching this system, we are ensuring that the gig economy is no longer an informal space, but a structured one where every worker's voice is heard," he said.

So far, details of 12 lakh active gig workers have been shared by platforms, according to G. Manjunath, Additional Labour Commis-

sioner and CEO of the Board.

Schemes for gig workers, depending on the platform they are working for, are also being worked out and will be placed for deliberation in the next board meeting.

"The schemes will vary based on the type of platforms. For example, cab rides are mostly undertaken by men whereas urban domestic activity is undertaken mostly by women. It may also be based on the contribution made, and the quantum of gig work done by a gig worker. Some gig workers work for more than eight hours, while some may work on a few gigs. So, workload, nature of work, and time period of work could vary," Mr. Manjunath explained.

"It has to be scientifically structured based on their effort and labour. We are working with experts, including academicians from Briston University, King's College, and IISc, and other stakeholders, including board members," he said.

## 12 Lakh

Active Gig Workers registered in Karnataka (12 लाख सक्रिय)

## First

Digital Grievance Portal for Gig Workers in India (भारत में पहला)

## IPGRS

Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System Portal

## IDRC

Internal Dispute Resolution Committee (हर aggregator में)

## 2026

Operationalised by Karnataka Govt. (संचालित किया गया)

### KEY DEVELOPMENT (EN) — मुख्य विकास

- Karnataka Govt. operationalised a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for platform-based gig workers
- Developed by Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers' Board + Dept. of e-Governance
- First of its kind in India — gig workers can now lodge official complaints on pay, working conditions and platform-specific disputes
- Grievances filed on IPGRS will be automatically routed to respective platform's IDRC
- Every aggregator platform must constitute an Internal Dispute Resolution Committee (IDRC) — under Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security & Welfare) Act
- Govt. will monitor as central facilitator — smooth, transparent communication between workers and platforms
- 12 lakh active gig workers' details shared by platforms so far (G. Manjunath, Addl. Labour Commissioner)

### मुख्य विकास (HI) — KEY DEVELOPMENT

- कर्नाटक सरकार ने प्लेटफॉर्म-आधारित गिग वर्कर्स के लिए विशेष शिकायत निवारण तंत्र संचालित किया
- कर्नाटक प्लेटफॉर्म-आधारित गिग वर्कर्स बोर्ड + ई-गवर्नेंस विभाग द्वारा विकसित IPGRS पोर्टल पर शिकायतें दर्ज होंगी — वेतन, कार्य परिस्थिति, प्लेटफॉर्म विवाद
- प्रत्येक aggregator को IDRC (आंतरिक विवाद समाधान समिति) गठित करनी होगी
- शिकायतें स्वचालित रूप से platform के IDRC को भेजी जाएंगी — एक निश्चित समय-सीमा में निपटारा
- सरकार केंद्रीय सुविधाकर्ता के रूप में प्रक्रिया की निगरानी करेगी
- Labour Minister Santosh Lad: 'गिग अर्थव्यवस्था अब अनौपचारिक नहीं, संरचित जगह बनेगी'

# Background, Legal Framework & Constitutional Basis | पृष्ठभूमि, कानूनी ढाँचा और संवैधानिक आधार

## GIG ECONOMY — BACKGROUND | गिग अर्थव्यवस्था पृष्ठभूमि

- Gig workers: Platform-based independent workers (Swiggy, Uber, Zomato, Ola, Amazon, Urban Company, Dunzo)
- India: ~15 million+ gig workers (NITI Aayog 2021); expected to reach 2.35 crore by 2030
- No employment contract → NO job security, benefits, ESI, PF, minimum wage protection
- ILO Report 2025: 8.4 lakh people die from psychosocial work risks annually — gig workers most at risk

## CODE ON SOCIAL SECURITY 2020 | सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता 2020

- **Code on Social Security, 2020: First time 'gig workers' and 'platform workers' defined in Indian law**
- First ever recognition of gig economy workers' rights in Indian legislation
- Provides for ESIC & EPFO coverage for gig workers — implementation pending
- Consolidates 9 labour laws including ESI Act, PF Act, Maternity Benefit Act
- NITI Aayog 2022 report 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy' recommended protections
- सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता 2020: पहली बार 'गिग वर्कर' और 'प्लेटफॉर्म वर्कर' को कानूनी परिभाषा

## KARNATAKA ACT — KEY LEGAL FRAMEWORK | कानूनी ढाँचा

- **Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act**
- Mandates: Every aggregator MUST constitute IDRC (Internal Dispute Resolution Committee)
- IPGRS = Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System — gig workers' complaints portal
- Grievances auto-routed to platforms' IDRC — settled within defined timeframe
- Government = Central facilitator; monitors process; ensures transparency

## CONSTITUTIONAL & DPSP BASIS | संवैधानिक आधार

- Article 21: Right to Life includes right to livelihood and dignified work
- Article 38 (DPSP): State to secure social order; reduce income inequalities
- Article 41 (DPSP): Right to work, education and public assistance
- Article 42 (DPSP): Just and humane conditions of work; maternity relief
- Article 43 (DPSP): Living wage + decent conditions of work for all workers
- Article 246A + 7th Schedule: Labour = Concurrent List — both Centre and State can legislate
- अनुच्छेद 21, 38, 41, 42, 43 (DPSP); श्रम = समवर्ती सूची (केंद्र + राज्य दोनों)

## Gig Worker (गिग वर्कर)

Platform-based independent worker with no employment contract; earns per task/gig. E.g., Swiggy delivery, Uber driver, Urban Company technician

## Aggregator (एग्रीगेटर)

A digital platform that connects service providers (workers) with customers. E.g., Swiggy, Ola, Uber, Zomato — legally responsible for worker welfare under Karnataka Act

## IDRC (IDRC)

Internal Dispute Resolution Committee — mandatory body every aggregator must form under Karnataka Act to address worker grievances within defined timeframe

## IPGRS (IPGRS)

Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System — govt. portal where gig workers file complaints; auto-routes to platform's IDRC; government monitors

## Platform Worker (प्लेटफॉर्म वर्कर)

Worker who works through an online platform (app/website); broader than gig worker; includes part-time & full-time; defined first time in Code on Social Security 2020

## Social Security Code 2020

One of 4 Labour Codes that consolidates 9 laws; first legal recognition of gig/platform workers; ESIC+EPFO coverage possible; implementation pending

CONFIRMED PYQs — पुष्टि किए गए पूर्व वर्ष प्रश्न

UPSC 2022 Prelims: 'Gig economy' workers are defined for the FIRST TIME in Indian law under which legislation? **ANS: Code on Social Security, 2020**

UPSC 2021 Prelims: Article 41 (DPSP) directs State to provide? **ANS: Right to work, education and public assistance**

SSC CGL 2023: How many Labour Codes were passed in 2020? **ANS: 4 Labour Codes (Wages, IR, Social Security, OSHWC)**

MCQ 1 — DIRECT

- Q. Karnataka's Digital Grievance Portal for gig workers routes complaints through which portal?
- (a) DigiLocker
- (b) IPGRS (Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System)
- (c) CPGRAMS
- (d) PM-Kisan Portal
- **ANS: (b) IPGRS — complaints auto-routed to platform's IDRC**
- **नोट: CPGRAMS = central govt.; IPGRS = Karnataka's gig worker specific**

MCQ 2 — STATEMENT-BASED

- Q. Which statements about Karnataka Gig Workers Portal are CORRECT?
- 1. First such digital portal in India
- 2. Every aggregator must form IDRC under Karnataka Act
- 3. Workers can complain on pay, conditions, platform disputes
- 4. Centre Govt. developed this portal
- (a) 1,2,3 (b) 2,3,4 (c) 1,3,4 (d) 1,2,3,4
- **ANS: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only — Centre did NOT develop it**
- **केंद्र नहीं, Karnataka सरकार ने विकसित किया**

## 10 REVISION POINTS (EN + HI)

- 1. Karnataka = India's FIRST state to operationalise digital grievance portal for gig workers via IPGRS
- 2. Developed by: Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers' Board + Dept. of e-Governance
- 3. Every aggregator MUST constitute IDRC under Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security & Welfare) Act
- 4. 12 lakh active gig workers in Karnataka; details shared by platforms
- 5. Code on Social Security 2020: First legal recognition of 'gig workers' and 'platform workers' in India
- 1. कर्नाटक = भारत में पहला राज्य जिसने गिग वर्कर्स के लिए IPGRS पोर्टल संचालित किया
- 2. निर्माण: Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers' Board + ई-गवर्नेंस विभाग
- 3. प्रत्येक aggregator को IDRC बनाना अनिवार्य; IPGRS पर शिकायतें auto-route
- 4. कर्नाटक में 12 लाख सक्रिय गिग वर्कर्स; platforms ने विवरण साझा किए
- 5. सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता 2020: पहली बार 'गिग वर्कर' और 'प्लेटफॉर्म वर्कर' को कानूनी परिभाषा

## MAINS ANGLES + ESSAY TOPICS

- GS-3: Gig economy and labour welfare — India's informal sector transformation; Code on Social Security 2020; Karnataka Act model
- GS-2: State legislation on labour; Centre-State relations (Labour = Concurrent List); technology-enabled governance
- GS-4: Ethics of platform economy — dignity of gig workers; corporate responsibility of aggregators; algorithmic management
- Essay: 'The gig economy: India's new informal sector challenge' | 'Technology, labour and social protection in 21st century India'
- GS-3: गिग अर्थव्यवस्था और श्रम कल्याण; सामाजिक सुरक्षा संहिता 2020
- GS-2: श्रम पर राज्य कानून; समवर्ती सूची; प्रौद्योगिकी-सक्षम शासन
- GS-4: प्लेटफॉर्म अर्थव्यवस्था की नैतिकता; aggregators की जिम्मेदारी
- निबंध: 'गिग अर्थव्यवस्था: भारत की नई अनौपचारिक क्षेत्र चुनौती'

● MULTI-LANE FREE FLOW BARRIER-LESS TOLLING SYSTEM BECOMES OPERATIONAL AT GUJARAT'S CHORYASI TOLL PLAZA NEAR SURAT; 18 MORE TO FOLLOW

# India's 1st barrier-less toll booth opens: How will it speed up ride

**Dheeraj Mishra**  
New Delhi, May 1

IN A significant move, National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) Friday operationalised India's first Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) barrier-less tolling system at the Choryasi toll plaza on the Surat-Bharuch section of NH-48 in Gujarat.

This marks a major milestone in the electronic toll collection (ETC) infrastructure of the country, which was started in 2014.

Under the existing tolling system, vehicles have to stop at the fee plaza to pay the user fee. The MLFF system removes the need for a boom barriers and stopping of vehicles for toll collection. In this advanced system, the toll is collected after high-performance Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) readers and Automatic Number Plate Recognition

(ANPR) cameras read the FASTag and Vehicle registration Number (VRN).

The new system is expected to reduce travel time, decongest highways (especially near toll plazas), improve fuel efficiency and lower vehicular emissions.

## Road to MLFF

NHAI took a series of decisions which created an enabling platform for the rollout of MLFF. This was done to create a robust legal framework so that the road users do not find loopholes to avoid toll charges as MLFF has minimum human interventions to cross-check the errors.

One of the earliest decision was mandating the use of High Security Registration Plates (HSRP). This was done to ensure that specially designed ANPR cameras can read number plates, even in MLFF



The MLFF system works without a boom barrier and vehicles are not supposed to stop for toll payment. EXPRESS

system. The other key decision was 'One Vehicle, One FASTag'. It stopped the usage of single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle.

The NHAI and Ministry of

Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) recently took two key decisions in run-up to the implementation of MLFF in Choryasi. In March, MoRTH issued new National Highway Fee rules to deal with the unpaid

user fee cases, meaning that the vehicle passing at the toll gate are recorded but the toll is not paid. It says that in such cases, commuters will have to pay double the applicable toll amount at the respective toll plaza. However, if it is paid within 72 hours, only the original user fee will apply.

An e-notice will be issued with the vehicle details, the date and location of occurrence and the user fee payable.

The rules also paved the way for integrating the National Electronic Toll Collection system with the National Vehicle Registry for enforcement measures and the realisation of unpaid user fees.

Apart from this, last month, NHAI issued direction to all FASTag-issuing banks to immediately validate Vehicle Registration Numbers (VRNs) or license plate numbers linked to the FASTags they have issued.

The agency also directed banks to blacklist FASTags found linked to incorrect or invalid VRNs. The direction was issued because in the absence of human intervention in toll deduction system in MLFF at the toll gate, a mismatch in the VRN linked to the FASTag could see commuters pass without paying the fee.

## MLFF to come at other plazas too

IHMCL has awarded the contract for MLFF at 18 toll plazas. A senior IHMCL official said that the government has planned to implement MLFF at over 200 toll plazas every year. "There are around 800 public funded toll plazas. Our priority is to first implement the system at these places. Now the tenders are also being awarded in bundles," he said.

FULL REPORT ON  
[WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM](http://WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM)

# India's First

## Barrier-Less

# Toll Booth Opens

*MLFF System at Choryasi, Surat (NH-48, Gujarat)*



Multi-Lane Free Flow | RFID + ANPR | NHAI + MoRTH | 18 more plazas to follow

Current Affairs | UPSC CSE / State PSC / SSC / Railway

भारत का पहला बाधा-मुक्त टोल बूथ: MLFF प्रणाली | चोर्यासी, गुजरात

# Why in News | India's 1st MLFF Barrier-Less Toll | चर्चा में क्यों | भारत का पहला MLFF बाधा-मुक्त टोल बूथ

## MLFF

Multi-Lane Free Flow  
(बहु-लेन मुक्त प्रवाह)  
System — India's 1st

## NH-48

Surat-Bharuch Section  
(चोर्यासी टोल प्लाजा,  
गुजरात)

## 2014

ETC (Electronic Toll  
Collection) infrastructure  
started in India

## 18+

More plazas to get  
MLFF (IHMCL contract  
awarded)

## 200+

Toll plazas/year govt.  
plans to implement  
MLFF system

### KEY DEVELOPMENT (EN) — मुख्य विकास

- NHAI (National Highways Authority of India) operationalised India's first Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) barrier-less tolling at Choryasi toll plaza, Surat-Bharuch section, NH-48, Gujarat
- Vehicles NO longer need to stop — toll collected via RFID readers + ANPR cameras (Automatic Number Plate Recognition)
- Cameras read FASTag + Vehicle Registration Number (VRN) automatically
- Expected benefits: Reduce travel time, decongest highways, improve fuel efficiency, lower vehicular emissions
- 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' policy — usage of single FASTag for multiple vehicles stopped
- Mandatory High Security Registration Plates (HSRP) — so ANPR cameras can read in MLFF system
- IHMCL = Indian Highways Management Company Limited — awarded MLFF contract for 18 plazas

### मुख्य विकास (HI) — KEY DEVELOPMENT

- NHAI (राष्ट्रीय राजमार्ग प्राधिकरण) ने चोर्यासी टोल प्लाजा, NH-48, गुजरात पर भारत का पहला MLFF बाधा-मुक्त टोलिंग संचालित किया
- वाहनों को रुकना नहीं होगा — RFID रीडर + ANPR कैमरे से स्वचालित टोल संग्रह
- कैमरे FASTag + Vehicle Registration Number (VRN) पढ़ेंगे
- लाभ: यात्रा समय कम, राजमार्ग विकंजेशन, ईंधन दक्षता, उत्सर्जन में कमी
- 'एक वाहन, एक FASTag' — एकाधिक वाहनों के लिए एकल FASTag का उपयोग बंद
- अनिवार्य HSRP (High Security Registration Plates) — ANPR कैमरे MLFF में नंबर प्लेट पढ़ सकें
- यदि FASTag + VRN मेल नहीं खाते: बिना भुगतान गुजरा → दोगुना शुल्क; 72 घंटे में भुगतान पर केवल मूल शुल्क

# Technology, Policy Framework & How MLFF Works | प्रौद्योगिकी, नीति ढाँचा और MLFF कैसे काम करता है

## HOW MLFF WORKS — MLFF कैसे काम करता है

### Step 1: Vehicle approaches toll plaza — NO BOOM BARRIER

Step 2: Overhead gantry with RFID readers scans FASTag on windshield

Step 3: ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras photograph VRN (Vehicle Registration Number)

Step 4: System cross-matches FASTag with National Vehicle Registry (NVR)

Step 5: Toll deducted automatically from linked bank account — vehicle keeps moving

If VRN mismatch: Recorded as 'user fee case' → e-notice issued → double toll if not paid in 72 hours

If FASTag blacklisted: Banks directed to validate VRN/license plate linked to FASTag

National Electronic Toll Collection system integrated with National Vehicle Registry for enforcement

चरण: वाहन आता है → RFID FASTag स्कैन → ANPR VRN फ़ोटो → National Vehicle Registry से मिलान → टोल कटा → वाहन आगे बढ़ा

## KEY TECHNOLOGIES | मुख्य प्रौद्योगिकियाँ

RFID (Radio Frequency Identification): Chip in FASTag communicates with overhead readers; contactless; works at highway speeds

ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition): AI-powered cameras; reads VRN even in MLFF; requires HSRP for clarity

FASTag (RFID-based): Passive RFID tag on windshield; linked to bank prepaid account; mandatory for all vehicles (since Feb 2021)

HSRP (High Security Registration Plates): Tamper-proof plates with laser-etched VRN; mandatory for MLFF

IHMCL — Indian Highways Management Company Limited — subsidiary of NHAI

## ROAD TO MLFF — KEY DECISIONS | मुख्य निर्णय

- Mandatory HSRP — ANPR cameras can read in MLFF (no human needed)
- 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' — single FASTag per vehicle; no linking multiple vehicles
- New National Highway Fee Rules (March) — deals with unpaid user fees
- MoRTH directions to FASTag banks: Validate VRNs; blacklist incorrect FASTag-VRN pairs
- National ETC ↔ National Vehicle Registry integration for enforcement

# Constitutional, Economic & Historical Context — MLFF | संवैधानिक, आर्थिक और ऐतिहासिक संदर्भ — MLFF

## POLITY & INSTITUTIONS | संस्थागत ढाँचा

NHAI (National Highways Authority of India): Statutory body under NHAI Act 1988; under MoRTH; responsible for development, maintenance and management of national highways

MoRTH (Ministry of Road Transport and Highways): Nodal ministry; issued new National Highway Fee Rules; directed FASTag banks

IHMCL (Indian Highways Management Company): NHAI subsidiary; manages ETC (Electronic Toll Collection) infrastructure; awarded MLFF contracts

Art. 246 + Entry 23 (Union List): 'Highways declared by Parliament to be national highways' — Centre's exclusive domain; NH development = Centre's responsibility

## ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE | आर्थिक महत्व

Reduce idle fuel consumption at toll plazas: India loses millions of litres of fuel due to stop-and-go at toll plazas

Reduce logistics costs: India's logistics cost = ~13-14% of GDP (vs 8% in USA, 10% global average); toll delays add cost

PM GatiShakti National Master Plan: MLFF aligns with PM GatiShakti — seamless multi-modal connectivity, reduce logistics costs

Reduce vehicular emissions: Less idling = less CO<sub>2</sub>/NO<sub>x</sub>; aligns with India's NDC targets under Paris Agreement

## HISTORY OF TOLLING IN INDIA | भारत में टोलिंग का इतिहास

Pre-2014: Manual toll collection — long queues, leakage, corruption

2014: Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) infrastructure started in India

Feb 2021: FASTag made mandatory for all vehicles (by MoRTH); 100% FASTag-only lanes

March 2024: MoRTH issued new National Highway Fee Rules — deal with unpaid user fees

2026 (May 1): India's first MLFF barrier-less toll operational at Choryasi, Gujarat (NH-48)

## GLOBAL CONTEXT | वैश्विक संदर्भ

MLFF already operational in: USA (E-ZPass), Singapore (ERP2 — world's most advanced), Germany (Autobahn), Sweden, South Korea, Australia

Singapore's ERP2 (2023): Uses GPS + On-Board Unit — fully dynamic pricing by congestion level — most advanced in world

India's 800 public toll plazas: MLFF to first be implemented on all — then expanded

Global logistics: OECD nations average 7-9% logistics cost/GDP; MLFF contributes to reducing India's 13-14%

CONFIRMED PYQs — पुष्टि किए गए पूर्व वर्ष प्रश्न

UPSC 2023 Prelims: FASTag uses which technology for toll collection? **ANS: RFID (Radio Frequency Identification)**

SSC CGL 2022: NHAI was established under which Act? **ANS: National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988**

Railway RRB 2023: National Highways in India fall under which List of 7th Schedule? **ANS: Union List (Entry 23)** | UPSC 2022: PM GatiShakti aims to? **ANS: Multi-modal connectivity and reduce logistics costs**

MCQ 1 — DIRECT (UPSC/SSC/RAILWAY PATTERN)

- Q. India's first Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) barrier-less tolling system was operationalised on which National Highway?
- (a) NH-44 (Delhi-Kanyakumari)
- (b) NH-48 (Surat-Bharuch section, Gujarat)
- (c) NH-8 (Delhi-Mumbai)
- (d) NH-27 (East-West Corridor)
- ANS: (b) NH-48, Choryasi toll plaza, Surat-Bharuch, Gujarat
- नोट: NHAI ने May 2026 में संचालित किया; 18 और plazas आने वाले हैं

MCQ 2 — STATEMENT-BASED (UPSC PATTERN)

- Q. Consider statements about India's MLFF system:
- 1. MLFF uses RFID and ANPR cameras; vehicles do not stop
- 2. ETC infrastructure in India was started in 2014
- 3. FASTag was made mandatory in February 2023
- 4. IHMCL is a subsidiary of NHAI
- (a) 1,2,4 (b) 1,2,3 (c) 2,3,4 (d) 1,2,3,4
- ANS: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only — FASTag mandatory in Feb 2021, NOT 2023
- FASTag अनिवार्य: फरवरी 2021 (2023 नहीं) — Statement 3 गलत

# 10 Revision Points + ETC vs MLFF Comparison — Roads | 10 पुनरावृत्ति बिंदु + ETC बनाम MLFF तुलना

## 10 REVISION POINTS (EN + HI)

- 1. MLFF = Multi-Lane Free Flow: No boom barrier; RFID + ANPR cameras; vehicle does not stop
- 2. Location: Choryasi toll plaza, Surat-Bharuch section, NH-48, Gujarat — India's FIRST
- 3. NHAI operationalised; ETC infrastructure started 2014; FASTag mandatory since Feb 2021
- 4. One Vehicle, One FASTag — HSRP mandatory for ANPR readability
- 5. IHMCL awarded MLFF contract for 18 plazas; 200+ plazas/year planned
- 1. MLFF: बूम बैरियर नहीं; RFID + ANPR; वाहन नहीं रुकता
- 2. स्थान: चोर्यासी, NH-48, गुजरात — भारत में पहला
- 3. NHAI; ETC 2014; FASTag अनिवार्य फरवरी 2021
- 4. एक वाहन, एक FASTag; ANPR के लिए HSRP अनिवार्य
- 5. IHMCL ने 18 plazas के लिए MLFF contract दिया; 200+ प्रति वर्ष योजना

## ETC vs MLFF vs GLOBAL BEST | तुलना

Feature	Old ETC / FASTag	MLFF (India)
Stop required?	Yes (slow lane)	NO
Boom barrier?	Yes	NO
Technology	RFID only	RFID + ANPR
VRN check?	Manual/limited	Auto ANPR
Queue?	Yes	No
Evasion?	Manual check	Auto double toll
India example	All existing plazas	NH-48 Choryasi



Indian Skimmer Conservationist  
Wins Whitley Award 2026

<b>News Context</b>	Indian conservationist <b>Parveen Shaikh</b> wins <b>Whitley Award 2026</b>
<b>Award Given By</b>	UK-based <b>Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN)</b>
<b>Nickname of Award</b>	<b>"Green Oscars"</b> of conservation
<b>Field Recognised</b>	<b>Wildlife conservation (grassroots level)</b>
<b>Species Focus</b>	<b>Indian Skimmer (Rynchops albicollis)</b>
<b>Conservation Model</b>	<b>Community-led conservation approach</b>
<b>Associated Organisation</b>	<b>Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)</b>
<b>Key Habitat</b>	River ecosystems, especially <b>Chambal River</b>
<b>Species Status</b>	<b>Endangered</b> (IUCN Red List)
<b>Unique Feature of Bird</b>	Lower mandible longer → skims water surface to catch fish
<b>Global Distribution</b>	India hosts <b>~90% of global population</b>
<b>Major Threats</b>	Habitat loss, river pollution, sand mining, human disturbance

**Global Distribution**

India hosts **~90% of global population**

**Major Threats**

Habitat loss, river pollution, sand mining, human disturbance

**Impact of Initiative**

Population increased from **~400 (2017) → ~1000 (2025)**

**Key Strategy Used**

Local **"river guardians"** for nest protection and monitoring

**Future Expansion**

Expansion to **Prayagraj (Ganga–Yamuna confluence)**

**New Measures Planned**

GPS-based monitoring, predator-proofing, community involvement

**Importance for Exams**

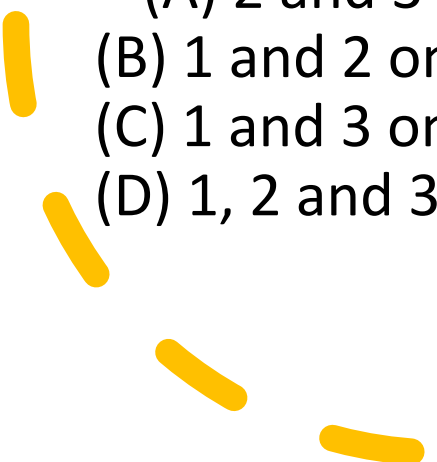
Example of **community participation in conservation success**



- **Q. Consider the following statements:**

- Indian Skimmer is primarily found in forest ecosystems.
- India hosts the majority of the global population of Indian Skimmer.
- Whitley Award is given for grassroots wildlife conservation efforts.

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

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

UNIQUE DESIGNS

## Chettinad's paradox of fame

Questions remain on whether the revival of the aesthetic will help sustain what is left.

MAGAZINE • PAGE 4



## How heat-action plans are turning into mandates

SCIENCE • PAGE 50



## Can Vantara solve Colombia's Hippo issue?

FAQ • PAGE 8

## Ruturaj shins bright as CSK crushes MI

SPORT • PAGE 13

INSIDE

## Gunpowder dump goes off, kills 4 policemen

**BAPUR** Four members of the Chhattisgarh Police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) were killed in an explosion while trying to dispose of a gun powder dump during a search operation in the State's Kanker district on Saturday, a senior police officer said. **• PAGE 4**

## SC to examine plea against apnoea test

**NEW DELHI** The Supreme Court has found prima facie a "ring of death" that the apnoea test is not a conclusive assessment of brain death. A Bench headed by Chief Justice N. Gopal Gowd said that the test may by itself induce brain death as it required stopping or reducing central blood flow. **• PAGE 5**

## Toll rises to 11 in Jabalpur Bargi dam tragedy

**BHOPAL** Two more bodies were recovered from the Jabalpur's Bargi dam reservoir, taking the toll in the cross tragedy to 11, officials said. A high level committee has been formed to probe the incident. **• PAGE 5**

## U.S. to withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany

**WASHINGTON** The U.S. will withdraw about 5,000 troops from Germany in the next six to 12 months, the Pentagon said on Friday, as the U.S. and Germany leaders slug it out over the U.S. war with Iran. **• PAGE 32**

# SC backs EC circular on counting staff

Dismissing Trinamool's plea, it questions need for proportionate representation. Trinamool had said that EC was skewing playing field in favour of BJP by appointing more Central officers at counting centres; court says poll body is not required to consult political parties in such decisions

**Kolkata** The Supreme Court on Saturday called it a "fallacy" nursed by the Trinamool Congress that West Bengal Government services' employees owe allegiance to it and Central employees were loyal to or controlled by the party ruling the Centre. They are employees of the government and are part of the Election Commission in the exercise of their electoral duties during the poll time, it said. The oral observations were made while disposing of a petition filed by the Trinamool, which alleged that the EC was deliberately skewing the playing field in favour of the rival Bharatiya Janata Party by appointing more Central officers, disregarding state employment, at counting centres across West Bengal.

Justice P.S. Narasimha, leading a Special Bench,



questioned the Trinamool's perceived need to have a "proportionate representation" of officers drawn from both Centre and state services at counting centres on May 9. "This is yet another fallacy, that is not belonging to state government services have a different allegiance... These are but employees of the government. Give them some credit," Justice Narasimha said.

**Control of EC** Justice Jyoti Basu, also a member of the Bench, said that since these officers were deployed for poll duties, they belonged to the EC. "All these persons, whether Central or State employees, are in the control of the EC in the discharge of electoral duties," Justice Basu said.

The special sitting, merely 48 hours before counting started in West Bengal, was convened at a petition filed by the Trinamool challenging an April 13 circular issued by the State's Additional Chief Electoral Officer directing that at least one counting supervisor and assistant at each counting table would be a Central government or Central Public Sector Unit employee.

The party, represented by advocate Kapil Sibal and Sanjay Gargi, said the circular was a "textbook example of unjust executive action".

"The Trinamool is the main opponent to the BJP, which admittedly runs and controls the Central government. It is obvious and well known that the Central government employees would be directly under the control of the Centre and likely to be amenable to the control of persons in the BJP. Such direct control of the BJP over them gives rise to an apparent risk of bias, influence, and partisan conduct during the process of counting votes," the Trinamool submitted.

"Cannot be a wild horse" Mr. Sibal said the EC's power under Article 224 (power to conduct, superintend and control) cannot be a "wild horse", giving them "freedom to do what they like and anytime they like".

He read out from the April 13 circular, which said that in view of the "apprehensions expressed from various quarters regarding possible irregularities during the process of counting of votes", he asked the court about the source of the EC's "so-called apprehensions" that the counting process would be marred by irregularities. "Such 'apprehensions' raise a finger at the State government... There must be some data to back those 'apprehensions'," Mr. Sibal said.

Mr. Sibal said the Trinamool was informed of the April 13 circular only on April 25. He said the Central government already had its employees in the form of officers observing the counting booths.

Justice Basu observed that the EC could take decisions on the ground based on its subjective satisfaction, and there was no question of conferring with political parties on calls that had to be taken.

The senior advocate pointed out that the April 13 circular itself required the "random selection" of both State and Central government employees for counting duty through a dedicated module containing personal databases incorporated in the ECNet. He said the circular should be complied with strictly. "You want strict compliance" of the challenged circular? You came here challenging the circular, and now you are saying "follow the circular", Mr. Sibal asked.

Senior advocate Dama Babudat Sen, for the EC, said the poll body was judiciously following the circular.

He said the Returning Officer, drawn from the State government service, had the overarching power to make a random selection of counting supervisors and counting agents from pools of Central and State employees.

## EC announces repolling in all 285 stations of Falta in Bengal

**Kolkata** The Election Commission on Saturday announced repolling for the Falta Assembly seat in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on May 21. Polling will be held in all 285 stations in the constituency. The votes will be counted on May 24. On May 4, election results will be declared for 293 of 294 Assembly seats in the State, barring Falta.

The EC notification announcing the repolling stated that during the polling on April 26, complaints had been received "alleging application of inadmissible tape/perfume on Ballot Unit buttons of EVMs in favour of or against parties, intimidation and obstruction of voters, and physical, unauthorised and illegal presence of political party cadres inside Polling Stations".

RELATED REPORTS

• PAGE 4

## Locking horns

Two tigers fighting at the Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam on Saturday. HTU (A) KANWAR



## NGT directs southern States to use clean air funds

**Jacob Kooda** **TOW DELHI** The National Green Tribunal's Southern Zone Bench in Chennai has directed all five southern States and the Puducherry Union Territory to ensure "strict and time-bound implementation" of their State Action Plans (SAPs) under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

The judgment flags persistent particulate pollution across the region and warns that continued under-utilisation of clean air funds could attract environmental compensation. These directions

## FIR against MP who left AAP sparks row in Punjab

**The Hindu Bureau CHANDIGARH** Days after seven Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MPs, six of them from Punjab, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Punjab Police have allegedly filed two FIRs under non-bailable Sections against Sanjay Gargi and Kapil Sibal, the MPs who made the switch.

The move drew sharp criticism from Opposition parties in the State, who termed it a setting of political vendetta.

The BJP on Saturday alleged that the FIR was a "planned conspiracy" to distract people from Punjab. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's alleged "divisive state" during the proceedings of the State Assembly on May 1, BJP national spokesperson Shivraj Prasad Prasadwala termed the FIR as AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal's vendetta. Mr. Kejriwal was releasing the Finance Commission report, he alleged.

"This title lodging of FIRs is a calculated attempt to divert public attention from the controversy surrounding Chief Minister Mann's alleged appointment in Karnataka, and the establishment of an 'appropriate institutional arrangement' for airshed-level coordination among southern States. A compliance report is due in six months.

## U.S. not committed to pacts, 'renewed conflict likely': Iran

**Agence France-Presse Associated Press TEHRAN** A senior Iranian military officer said on Saturday that renewed fighting with the U.S. was "likely" hours after President Donald Trump said he was not satisfied with an Iranian negotiating proposal. In a letter to U.S. Congressional leaders, Mr. Trump said Iran has "not been terminated" as the ceasefire was holding.

Iran delivered the new draft to mediator Pakistan on Thursday evening, state media reported, without detailing its contents. The deal, launched by the U.S. and Israel, has been on hold since April 8, with one failed round of talks having taken place in Pakistan since then.

"No promises" Mohammad Jafar Asadi, a senior figure in the Iranian military's central command, said "a renewed conflict between Iran and the U.S. is likely", in quotes published by Iran's Fars news agency. Evidence has shown that the U.S. is not committed to any promise of agreement, he said.

The U.S. has warned shipping firms that they could face sanctions for making payments to Iran, but it is unclear if the deal could pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

## U.S. warns shipping firms about Strait of Hormuz

**U.S. warns shipping firms against going for safe passage through Strait, Reuters**

Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejl said on Friday that his country had "never shied away from negotiations", but would not accept an "imposition" of power terms.

The White House has declined to provide details on the latest Iranian proposal, but news site Axios reported that U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff had submitted amendments to a provision one putting "Iran's nuclear programme back on the negotiating table".

The changes reportedly include demands that Iran not move enriched uranium from fortified sites or resume activity there during talks.

News of the Iranian proposal briefly pushed oil prices down nearly 2%, though they remain about 50% above pre-war levels amid the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

# NGT directs southern States to use clean air funds

**Jacob Koshy**

NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal's Southern Zone Bench in Chennai has directed all five southern States and the Puducherry Union Territory to ensure "strict and time-bound implementation" of their State Action Plans (SAP) under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

The judgment flags persistent particulate pollution across the region and warns that continued under-utilisation of clean air funds could attract environmental compensation.

These directions as-



The Bench flagged that more than 86% of utilised funds went to road dust control, with just 6.6% on vehicular emissions. FILE PHOTO

sume significance as they put the spotlight on air pollution governance in the southern States – an issue that largely dominates the northern regions, particu-

larly Delhi-NCR.

The tribunal recorded that Karnataka had received ₹597.54 crore between 2019-20 and 2023-24, with Bengaluru alone re-

ceiving ₹541.1 crore but utilising only 13% by October 2024. A subsequent affidavit reported that 76% of total funds released up to 2025-26 had been utilised by September 2025.

However, the Bench flagged that more than 86% of utilised funds went to road dust control, with just 6.6% on vehicular emissions and 4.1% on biomass burning – describing this as "disproportionate expenditure" that must be "rationalised". "In the event of continued under-utilisation or ineffective deployment of funds, the tribunal may consider imposition of environmental

compensation. The State of Karnataka and its Urban Local Bodies, particularly Bengaluru, shall ensure effective utilisation of funds allocated under NCAP and the Finance Commission within a time-bound manner," the order noted.

The tribunal issued 13 directions, including sector-wise implementation roadmaps within six months, monthly review meetings in Karnataka, and the establishment of an "appropriate institutional arrangement" for airshed-level coordination among southern States. A compliance report is due in six months.

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## NGT

Southern Zone Bench, Chennai — directed 5 states + Puducherry

## NCAP

National Clean Air Programme — funds under-utilised

## ₹597cr

Karnataka received 2019-24 for clean air (₹541cr → Bengaluru)

## 86%

Utilised funds went to road dust control (disproportionate)

## 13

Directions issued by NGT: sector roadmaps, monthly reviews

### KEY FINDINGS (EN) — मुख्य निष्कर्ष

- NGT Southern Zone Bench (Chennai) directed all 5 southern states (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala) + Puducherry to ensure 'strict and time-bound implementation' of State Action Plans (SAP) under NCAP
- Karnataka received ₹597.54 crore (2019-20 to 2023-24); Bengaluru alone received ₹541.1 crore but utilised only 13% by October 2024
- Subsequent affidavit: 76% of total funds released up to 2025-26 had been utilised by September 2025
- BUT: 86% of utilised funds went to road dust control; only 6.6% on vehicular emissions; 4.1% on biomass burning — 'disproportionate expenditure' to be rationalised
- NGT 13 Directions: Sector-wise roadmaps (6 months); monthly review meetings in Karnataka; 'appropriate institutional arrangement' for airshed-level coordination among southern states
- Compliance report due in six months; under-utilisation or ineffective deployment = environmental compensation

### मुख्य निष्कर्ष (HI) — KEY FINDINGS

- NGT दक्षिणी क्षेत्र पीठ (चेन्नई) ने 5 दक्षिणी राज्यों + पुडुचेरी को NCAP के तहत राज्य कार्य योजनाओं के 'कड़े और समयबद्ध कार्यान्वयन' का निर्देश
- कर्नाटक को ₹597.54 करोड़ मिले (2019-24); बेंगलुरु अकेले को ₹541.1 करोड़ लेकिन अक्टूबर 2024 तक केवल 13% उपयोग
- बाद के शपथपत्र में 2025-26 तक 76% का उपयोग बताया
- 86% उपयोगित धन सड़क धूल नियंत्रण पर; केवल 6.6% वाहन उत्सर्जन पर — 'अनुपातहीन व्यय' को तर्कसंगत बनाना होगा
- NGT के 13 निर्देश: क्षेत्र-वार रोडमैप (6 महीने); मासिक समीक्षा बैठकें; airshed समन्वय
- छह महीने में अनुपालन रिपोर्ट; अप्रयुक्त निधि → पर्यावरणीय क्षतिपूर्ति

## NGT — NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL | राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण

- Established under NGT Act 2010; commenced July 18, 2010
- Principal Bench: New Delhi; Zonal Benches: Chennai (Southern), Bhopal (Central), Pune (Western), Kolkata (Eastern)
- Powers: Hear cases related to environmental laws; can award compensation; can impose penalties
- Jurisdiction: Environment Protection Act 1986, Forest Conservation Act 1980, Water Act 1974, Air Act 1981, Biological Diversity Act 2002
- Cannot try offences under IPC — only civil environmental liability
- NGT Act 2010; मुख्यालय: नई दिल्ली; दक्षिणी पीठ: चेन्नई; वायु अधिनियम 1981 के तहत अधिकार क्षेत्र

## AIR QUALITY STANDARDS & SCIENCE | वायु गुणवत्ता मानक

- NAAQS (National Ambient Air Quality Standards): Set by CPCB; PM2.5 = 60  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  (24hr avg); PM10 = 100  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
- AQI (Air Quality Index): 6 categories — Good (0-50), Satisfactory, Moderate, Poor, Very Poor, Severe (401+)
- PM2.5: Fine particles <2.5 micrometers — enter lungs + bloodstream; cause CVD, lung cancer
- Airshed: Geographic area where air quality is interconnected across administrative boundaries — e.g., Indo-Gangetic Plain
- AQI 6 श्रेणियाँ; PM2.5 <2.5 माइक्रोमीटर; Airshed = भौगोलिक क्षेत्र जहाँ वायु गुणवत्ता आपस में जुड़ी

## NCAP — NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME | राष्ट्रीय स्वच्छ वायु कार्यक्रम

- Launched: January 2019 by MoEFCC (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change)
- Goal: Achieve 20-30% reduction in PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations by 2024 (base year 2017); extended to 40% by 2026
- Covers: 131 Non-Attainment Cities (cities with air quality worse than National Ambient Air Quality Standards for 5 consecutive years)
- Southern cities covered: Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram among others
- Funding: Central + State + Urban Local Bodies; NCAP + 15th Finance Commission grants
- लक्ष्य: 2026 तक PM2.5 और PM10 में 40% कमी; 131 गैर-प्राप्ति शहर; MoEFCC द्वारा 2019 में शुरू

## HISTORY & POLITY | इतिहास और राजव्यवस्था

- Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981: Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) under MoEFCC; State PCBs
- Environment Protection Act, 1986: Umbrella legislation; empowers Centre to take measures for environmental protection
- Article 21 (Right to Life): SC in M.C. Mehta vs Union (1996) — right to clean air = part of Art. 21
- Article 48A (DPSP): State shall endeavour to protect and improve environment
- Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duty): Every citizen's duty to protect and improve natural environment
- अनुच्छेद 21, 48A (DPSP), 51A(g) (मौलिक कर्तव्य); वायु अधिनियम 1981; EPA 1986; M.C. Mehta मामला

CONFIRMED PYQs — पुष्टि PYQ (UPSC / SSC / BANK / RAILWAY)

UPSC 2023 Pre: NGT was established under? **ANS: NGT Act, 2010**

UPSC 2022 Pre: NCAP launched by which ministry? **ANS: MoEFCC (Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change), 2019**

SSC CGL 2023: Article 48A (DPSP) deals with? **ANS: Protection and improvement of environment** | UPSC 2021: Fundamental Duty to protect environment? **ANS: Article 51A(g)**

MCQ 1 — DIRECT (UPSC/SSC/BANK PATTERN)

- Q. The National Green Tribunal's Southern Zone Bench is located in which city?
- (a) Bengaluru
- (b) Hyderabad
- (c) Chennai
- (d) Kochi
- **ANS: (c) Chennai**
- Note: Principal Bench = New Delhi; Other benches: Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata; Southern = Chennai

MCQ 2 — STATEMENT-BASED (UPSC PATTERN)

- Q. Consider statements about NCAP:
- 1. NCAP was launched in January 2019 by MoEFCC
- 2. It covers 131 Non-Attainment Cities
- 3. Original target was 20-30% reduction in PM2.5 & PM10 by 2024
- 4. NGT Act was passed in 2012
- (a) 1,2,3 (b) 2,3,4 (c) 1,2,4 (d) 1,2,3,4
- **ANS: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only — NGT Act passed in 2010, NOT 2012**
- NGT अधिनियम 2010 में पारित, 2012 में नहीं — Statement 4 गलत

## 10 REVISION POINTS (EN + HI)

- 1. NGT Southern Zone Bench (Chennai) directed 5 southern states + Puducherry under NCAP
- 2. Karnataka received ₹597.54 cr (2019-24); Bengaluru ₹541.1 cr — only 13% utilised by Oct 2024
- 3. 86% spent on road dust control; only 6.6% on vehicular emissions — 'disproportionate'
- 4. NGT issued 13 directions; sector-wise roadmaps in 6 months; monthly reviews in Karnataka
- 5. NCAP: January 2019, MoEFCC; 131 Non-Attainment Cities; 40% PM2.5/PM10 reduction by 2026
- 1. NGT दक्षिणी क्षेत्र पीठ ने 5 राज्यों + पुडुचेरी को NCAP के तहत निर्देश
- 2. कर्नाटक ₹597 करोड़; बेंगलुरु ₹541 करोड़ — केवल 13% उपयोग अक्टूबर 2024
- 3. 86% सड़क धूल पर; 6.6% वाहन उत्सर्जन — 'अनुपातहीन व्यय'
- 4. NGT के 13 निर्देश; 6 महीने में रोडमैप; पर्यावरणीय क्षतिपूर्ति की चेतावनी
- 5. NCAP: जनवरी 2019, MoEFCC; 131 शहर; 2026 तक 40% कमी लक्ष्य

## MAINS ANGLES + ESSAY TOPICS

- GS-3 (Environment): NCAP effectiveness; particulate pollution in South India; air quality governance; CPCB role; AQI monitoring
- GS-2 (Governance/Polity): NGT's role in environmental governance; Art. 21 (right to clean air); Art. 48A (DPSP); Art. 51A(g) (Fundamental Duty); Centre-State coordination on environment
- GS-3 (Economy): Cost of air pollution — WHO estimates India loses 1.4% GDP; logistics cost of pollution on agriculture
- GS-3: Airshed approach — trans-boundary air pollution; PM2.5 vs PM10; seasonal variation (winter smog, summer dust)
- Essay: 'Clean air as a fundamental right: India's challenge of governance vs aspiration'
- GS-3: NCAP प्रभावशीलता; दक्षिण भारत में वायु प्रदूषण; CPCB; AQI
- GS-2: NGT; अनुच्छेद 21 (स्वच्छ वायु); 48A (DPSP); 51A(g) (मौलिक कर्तव्य)
- निबंध: 'स्वच्छ वायु मौलिक अधिकार के रूप में: शासन और आकांक्षाओं की चुनौती'

## Speculation rises on Cabinet expansion as Samrat goes to Delhi

Anandhan Sengupta  
 PATNA

Ahead of leaving for Delhi on Saturday evening, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met his predecessor and JD(U) president Tejendra Khatiwada at his new official residence, fuelling speculation about the possibility of impending Cabinet expansion.

Mr. Choudhary's Cabinet expansion is likely to take place on May 6, in Patna, after the results of the four State Assembly elections are announced on May 4.

Mr. Choudhary is likely to meet senior BJP leaders in Delhi, including party president Nitish Sinha and Union Home Minister Anish Shah, on Sunday.

Party insiders told *The Hindu* that the list of probable Ministers of his Cabinet might get the final shape during the meeting with Mr. Shah and Mr. Sinha.

"In all likelihood, it's all about the list to get final shape for his possible Cabinet expansion," a senior JD(U) leader, preferred by the twinned, told *The Hindu*.

The NDA sources said



Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary with JD(U) chief finish Kumar in Patna on Saturday.

some new and young faces, preferably women, are likely to be inducted into the Cabinet.

However, no official confirmation on the expansion has come yet.

**'In Nitish's footsteps'**  
 Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister, Vijay Kumar Choudhary, is continuing to preside over the meetings, preparations in Patna, said, "Mr. Samrat Choudhary is carrying forward the work and road maps laid down by Mr. Kumar and earlier, he had categorically asserted this to follow."

Party sources had earlier told *The Hindu* that both the BJP and JD(U) had agreed to have five Ministers each in the Cabinet, along with four Ministers from three other alliance parties.

## Gunpowder dump goes off, kills four policemen

Gunpowder hidden by Maoists exploded due to high temperatures and chemical reaction, say police; three die on the spot, one while treatment; incident happened during search operation

Rajshomey Mishra  
 RAIPUR

Four members of the Chhittorgarh Police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) were killed in an explosion while trying to dispose of a gunpowder dump during a search operation in the State's Sanker district on Saturday, a senior police officer said.

The victims were in a forested area under the Chhototehithya police station when sacks of gunpowder, found in an abandoned Maoist hideout, exploded.

"*Primo facie*, during the search operation to recover the material dumped earlier by the Maoists, a computer, a printer, etc. were recovered in the first dump. In another dump nearby, few sacks of firecracker powder weighing 400 kgs, which were shipped earlier by the Maoists, were recovered. With the help of the bomb disposal squad, the team in-charge and other mem-



The victims were in a forested area when sacks of gunpowder, found in an abandoned hideout, exploded in Sanker. (N. Prasad)

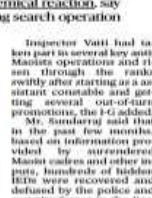
bers were preparing to take them out of the dump and destroy them safely," Kanher Superintendent of Police Akhlesh Choudhary said.

According to Dr. Babubhai, the gunpowder exploded possibly due to high temperature and the chemical reaction, resulting in severe burn injuries that killed the victims. He inspected the site and said a detailed ballistic and forensic examination was under way to ascertain the ex-



The victims were in a forested area when sacks of gunpowder, found in an abandoned hideout, exploded in Sanker. (N. Prasad)

act cause of the blast. P. S. Sankar, Inspector General of Police (Sanker Range), called the incident "unfortunate" and "god's death". He said that in-spector Babubhai and constables Krishna Kumar and Sanjay Gopal were seriously injured and died on the spot. Another constable, Paramanand Kumar, died later during treatment. They were all from the DRG, a specialised anti-insurgency unit of the Chhittorgarh Police.



The victims were in a forested area when sacks of gunpowder, found in an abandoned hideout, exploded in Sanker. (N. Prasad)

Chief Minister Vishnu Das had paid his tributes to the deceased security personnel. "I pay my humble tributes to the martyred and I pray to God to grant peace to the departed souls," he said.

The government stands with the bereaved families to bear this unbearable loss," he said. "The government stands with the bereaved families with complete sensitivity and firmness. Their courage, dedication and heroism will always be remembered. Om Shanti".

## Centre launches emergency alert system for citizens

Deena Triant of India  
 NEW DELHI

Mobile phones across the country went alive after Union Telecom Minister Jyotirajaditya Scindia launched the cell broadcast alert system on Saturday that will warn citizens about emergency and natural disasters in their area.

The Department of Telecom had already alerted citizens about the trial run of the service on April 20 to avoid panic, with an appeal to ignore any alerts they receive.

The text message read, "Extremely Severe Alert, India launched Cell Broadcast using indigenous technology for instant disaster warning service for all citizens. Alert citizens, act now. No action is required by the public upon receipt of this message. This is a test message. Government of India."

The alert system was sent across the network of all telecom operators and is based on the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), under the guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah, as an official statement said.

Through this system, critical information related to disasters, emergencies, and public safety will be transmitted directly and instantly to citizens' mobile phones, the statement said. The system is based on the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) as recommended by the UN body International Telecommunication Union.



Women show their mobile phones after receiving an alert message on Saturday. (I)

Scindia, today launched the Cell Broadcast Alert system, developed indigenously by C-DOT in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), under the guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah, as an official statement said.

Through this system, critical information related to disasters, emergencies, and public safety will be transmitted directly and instantly to citizens' mobile phones, the statement said. The system is based on the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) as recommended by the UN body International Telecommunication Union.

"Indigenous technology" (Union Minister for Communications, Jyotirajaditya Scindia, today launched the Cell Broadcast Alert system, developed indigenously by C-DOT in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), under the guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah, as an official statement said.

## West Bengal tea garden workers seek ILO intervention over wages

Shilpi Sabharwal  
 BIRLAHATA

Highlighting the government's failure to protect the rights of tea plantation workers, the Kisanha Banga Chha Mahasangha (KBCMS), a non-political trade union representing these workers in West Bengal, has sought international intervention by filing a petition before the International Labour Organisation.

"The representation documents a persistent and deliberate failure of the government to secure compliance with binding international obligations under ratified ILO Conventions, including those prohibiting forced labour, mandating equal pay for equal work, and protecting the rights of indigenous and tribal populations among others," the KBCMS said in a statement.

The tea plantation workers union has invoked the Article 24 jurisdiction of the ILO which allows employers or workers organisations to make a repre-



At the heart of the KBCMS complaint has been the government's failure to protect the rights of tea plantation workers. An attention against any member State, alleging its effective observance of a ratified Convention.

sentation against any member State, alleging its effective observance of a ratified Convention.

Simultaneously, the State's failure to fix and enforce a statutory minimum wage for plantation workers, despite the sector being a scheduled employment, has entrenched a regime of poverty wages that fall far below even the most conservative estimates of a living wage," the statement said.

The representation was made to the ILO seeking international intervention to hold the Indian government accountable for its continuing failure to give effect to ratified Conventions, and to refer the

## Accused in ₹2,672-crore bank fraud case among two extradited from UAE

Deborah K. Pandey  
 NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has coordinated the return of two fugitives from the United Arab Emirates. One of them is wanted in an alleged ₹2,672-crore bank fraud case.

Randhir Pareek, now arrested by the CBI, was accused in a case against Kishanbhai Shree Ganesh Jewellery House (G) Ltd. He was brought from the UAE on May 1. As a promoter of the company, he was allegedly involved in cheating a consortium of 25 banks led by the State Bank of India.

"The accused, in conspiracy with other promoters and directors, facilitated diversion of bank funds through a network of overseas entities and business activities, including in the UAE," said the agency.

The allegedly managed export-related operations and financial transactions of the company and its as-

## Govt. eases FDI norms for firms with 10% Chinese stake

Deena Triant of India  
 NEW DELHI

The decision to allow overseas companies with 10% stake shareholding of up to 10% to invest in India under the automatic route has come into effect from May 1, as the Finance Ministry has notified the changes under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

In March, the Union Cabinet approved amendments to the provisions of 2020 of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

As per the amendments, foreign companies having a Chinese or Hong Kong shareholding of up to 10% will be eligible to invest in India in sectors where foreign direct investment (FDI) is permitted under the automatic route, subject to sectoral conditions.

However, these relaxed FDI rules do not apply to entities registered in China or Hong Kong or other court fees sharing and business with India.

## Court denies bail to woman accused in TCS case

The Hindu Bureau  
 MADHAI

A local court in Noida on Saturday rejected the anti-sacrilege bail applications of Nisha Khan in a religious case involving allegations of sexual exploitation and forced religious conversions at a TCS unit in Noida.

The prosecution noted that her contested plea was necessary in view of "the serious nature of the offence registered against her". Ms. Nisha Khan is likely to appear against the decision in the Noida High Court.

A local court in Noida granted four days' police custody to four arrested accused in the case till May 5.

## First case under new anti-sacrilege law registered in Punjab

Deena Triant of India  
 CHANDIGARH

Punjab Police registered the first case under the new anti-sacrilege law after four pages of religious scripture were found in a shawl area in Sri Mukhar Sahib district.

The FIR has been registered against unknown persons, Deputy Superintendent of Police Harjeet Singh said on Saturday.

The page of the Gurka Sa-

## 'Decision-making stays with managers in organisations though AI adoption is rising'

The Hindu Bureau  
 CHANDIGARH

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is taking over a lot of activities that managers were doing in organisations earlier. But, taking decisions with empathy remain with humans, said speakers at a webinar on "The New Age Manager: Leading in an AI Driven, Uncertain World" held on Saturday.

The webinar is a part of the "Future Career Conversations" series, jointly organised by SRM Institute of Science & Technology and *The Hindu*.

The webinar was moderated by Mr. Ronaditya Pravecha, Deputy Editor at *The Hindu*, and Geetha Ramamurthi,



should be taken by humans," she said. Role of managers has changed from being executors to becoming supervisors that managers were doing in organisations earlier. There are organisations that are using AI agents as part of their workflow.

But managers should be able to innovate using AI. Some roles are disappearing, but many new specific activities and new tasks that people do not have to do, report speakers at the webinar on "The New Age Manager: Leading in an AI Driven, Uncertain World" held on Saturday.

## permeating organisations rapidly are robotics, AI and generative AI. At the core of managers who are operating in the technology space, every employee has access to AI. So, access to AI is not an issue. But, taking decisions with empathy remain with humans, said speakers at a webinar on "The New Age Manager: Leading in an AI Driven, Uncertain World" held on Saturday.

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## Govt. eases FDI norms for firms with 10% Chinese stake

Deena Triant of India  
 NEW DELHI

The decision to allow overseas companies with 10% stake shareholding of up to 10% to invest in India under the automatic route has come into effect from May 1, as the Finance Ministry has notified the changes under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

In March, the Union Cabinet approved amendments to the provisions of 2020 of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

As per the amendments, foreign companies having a Chinese or Hong Kong shareholding of up to 10% will be eligible to invest in India in sectors where foreign direct investment (FDI) is permitted under the automatic route, subject to sectoral conditions.

However, these relaxed FDI rules do not apply to entities registered in China or Hong Kong or other court fees sharing and business with India.

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# Centre launches emergency alert system for citizens

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

Mobile phones across the country went abuzz after Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia launched the cell broadcast alert system on Saturday that will warn citizens about emergency and natural disasters in their area.

The Department of Telecom had already alerted citizens about the trial run of the service on April 29 to avoid panic, with an appeal to ignore any alerts they receive.

The test message read: "Extremely Severe Alert. India launched Cell Broadcast using indigenous technology, for instant disaster alerting service for its citizens. Alert citizens, safe nation. No action is required by the public upon receipt of this message. This is a test message- Government of India."

The alert system was sent across the network of all telecom operators across the country, except in poll-bound States.

**'Indigenous technology'**  
"Union Minister for Communications, Jyotiraditya



Women show their mobile phones after receiving an alert message on Saturday. PTI

Scindia, today launched the Cell Broadcast Alert System, developed indigenously by C-DOT in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), under the guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah," an official statement said.

Through this system, critical information related to disasters, emergencies, and public safety will be transmitted directly and instantly to citizens' mobile phones, the statement said. The system is based on the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) as recommended by the UN body International Telecommunication Union.

## C-DOT

Developed indigenously by Centre for Development of Telematics

## NDMA

National Disaster Mgmt Authority — collaborated for this system

## CAP

Common Alerting Protocol — ITU/UN recommended standard

## All

Telecom networks alerted (except poll-bound states)

## Apr 29

Trial run date; Scindia launched on Saturday (May 3)

### KEY DEVELOPMENT (EN) — मुख्य विकास

- Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia launched the Cell Broadcast Alert System — will warn citizens about emergencies and natural disasters in their area
- Developed indigenously by C-DOT (Centre for Development of Telematics) in collaboration with NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) under guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah
- Based on CAP (Common Alerting Protocol) as recommended by ITU (International Telecommunication Union) — a UN specialised agency
- System transmits critical disaster/emergency information directly and instantly to citizens' mobile phones
- Test message on April 29: 'Extremely Severe Alert. India launched Cell Broadcast using indigenous technology, for instant disaster alerting service. Alert citizens, safe nation. No action required.'
- Sent across all telecom operators' networks — EXCEPT in poll-bound states (to avoid disruption)

### मुख्य विकास (HI) — KEY DEVELOPMENT

- केंद्रीय दूरसंचार मंत्री Jyotiraditya Scindia ने Cell Broadcast Alert System लॉन्च किया — नागरिकों को आपातकाल और प्राकृतिक आपदाओं के बारे में चेतावनी देगा
- C-DOT (सेंटर फॉर डेवलपमेंट ऑफ टेलीमैटिक्स) ने NDMA के सहयोग से स्वदेशी तकनीक से विकसित; गृह मंत्री Amit Shah के मार्गदर्शन में
- ITU (अंतर्राष्ट्रीय दूरसंचार संघ) की सिफारिश पर CAP (कॉमन अलर्टिंग प्रोटोकॉल) पर आधारित
- महत्वपूर्ण: नागरिकों के मोबाइल फोन पर सीधे और तुरंत आपदा/आपातकाल की जानकारी
- 29 अप्रैल को परीक्षण संदेश भेजा गया: 'Extremely Severe Alert — स्वदेशी तकनीक से तत्काल आपदा सतर्क सेवा'
- सभी telecom operators के नेटवर्क पर भेजा गया — चुनाव-बाधित राज्यों को छोड़कर

## C-DOT + CELL BROADCAST TECHNOLOGY

- C-DOT (Centre for Development of Telematics): India's premier telecom R&D centre; established 1984; under Dept. of Telecom (DoT); developed multiple indigenous telecom technologies
- Cell Broadcast: Technology that sends text messages to ALL mobile phones in a geographic area simultaneously — unlike SMS which is one-to-one; cannot be blocked by the user; does not require internet
- CAP (Common Alerting Protocol): International standard for emergency alerts; recommended by ITU; used globally (WEA in USA, J-Alert in Japan, EU-Alert in Europe)
- भारत स्वदेशी CAP-आधारित: C-DOT द्वारा 1984 से R&D; Cell Broadcast = एक साथ सभी मोबाइल को संदेश; इंटरनेट की जरूरत नहीं

## POLITY & CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS

- Entry 31 (Union List): Posts and telegraphs; telephones; wireless; broadcasting — Centre's exclusive domain
- Disaster Management Act 2005: Section 6 — NDMA powers; Section 8 — NDMA functions including early warning systems
- Article 21: Right to life — includes right to be warned about imminent dangers (life-saving alerts)
- DoT (Department of Telecom) under Ministry of Communications — nodal for telecom regulation; works with TRAI
- Entry 31 = Union List; DM Act 2005 — धारा 6, 8; अनुच्छेद 21 = जीवन का अधिकार (आसन्न खतरे की चेतावनी सहित)

## NDMA + DISASTER MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

- NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority): Established under Disaster Management Act, 2005; Chairperson = Prime Minister of India; responsible for laying down national policies on disaster management
- Disaster Management Act, 2005: Post-2004 Tsunami; provides 3-tier structure — NDMA (national) + SDMA (state) + DDMA (district)
- NDRF (National Disaster Response Force): Established under DM Act 2005; 16 battalions; rescue and relief
- NDMA के अध्यक्ष = प्रधानमंत्री; DM Act 2005 (2004 tsunami के बाद); 3-स्तरीय: NDMA-SDMA-DDMA; NDRF = 16 बटालियन

## GLOBAL COMPARISONS & ITU

- ITU (International Telecommunication Union): UN specialised agency; HQ Geneva; regulates global telecom; CAP is its recommended standard for emergency alerts
- USA: WEA (Wireless Emergency Alerts) — FEMA-operated; used for tornado, amber alerts, presidential alerts
- Japan: J-Alert — world's most sophisticated EWS; earthquake/tsunami alerts in seconds
- EU: EU-Alert under Cell Broadcast; each member state implements nationally
- ITU = UN की विशेष एजेंसी; HQ जिनेवा; USA = WEA (FEMA); Japan = J-Alert; EU = EU-Alert

CONFIRMED PYQs — पुष्टि PYQ (UPSC / SSC / BANK / RAILWAY)

UPSC 2022 Pre: Disaster Management Act, 2005 was enacted following which disaster? **ANS: 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami**

UPSC 2021 Pre: Chairperson of NDMA is? **ANS: Prime Minister of India**

Railway RRB 2023: C-DOT is India's premier telecom R&D institution. It functions under? **ANS: Dept. of Telecommunications (DoT)** | SSC 2022: ITU is a specialised agency of? **ANS: United Nations (HQ Geneva)**

MCQ 1 — DIRECT (UPSC/SSC/BANK PATTERN)

- Q. India's Cell Broadcast Alert System was developed indigenously by which organisation?
- (a) ISRO
- (b) DRDO
- (c) C-DOT (Centre for Development of Telematics)
- (d) TRAI
- **ANS: (c) C-DOT — in collaboration with NDMA, under Dept. of Telecom**
- Note: C-DOT est. 1984; developed in partnership with NDMA; launched by Jyotiraditya Scindia

MCQ 2 — STATEMENT-BASED (UPSC PATTERN)

- Q. Consider statements about Cell Broadcast Alert System:
- 1. Based on CAP (Common Alerting Protocol) recommended by ITU
- 2. NDMA Chairperson is the Home Minister of India
- 3. Developed indigenously by C-DOT in collaboration with NDMA
- 4. Cell Broadcast sends alerts to ALL phones in a geographic area
- (a) 1,3,4 (b) 1,2,3 (c) 2,3,4 (d) 1,2,3,4
- **ANS: (a) 1, 3 and 4 — NDMA Chairperson is PM, NOT Home Minister**
- NDMA के अध्यक्ष = प्रधानमंत्री, गृह मंत्री नहीं — Statement 2 गलत

## 10 REVISION POINTS (EN + HI)

- 1. Cell Broadcast Alert System launched by Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia
- 2. Developed indigenously by C-DOT (est. 1984, under DoT) + NDMA collaboration
- 3. Based on CAP (Common Alerting Protocol) — ITU (UN agency, HQ Geneva) recommended
- 4. NDMA: DM Act 2005; Chairperson = PM of India; post-2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami
- 5. Trial run on April 29; test message sent across all telecom operators (except poll-bound states)
- 1. Cell Broadcast Alert System — Jyotiraditya Scindia (दूरसंचार मंत्री) द्वारा लॉन्च
- 2. C-DOT (1984, DoT के तहत) + NDMA ने स्वदेशी रूप से विकसित
- 3. CAP (ITU अनुशंसित) पर आधारित
- 4. NDMA: DM Act 2005; अध्यक्ष = प्रधानमंत्री; 2004 tsunami के बाद
- 5. 29 अप्रैल परीक्षण; सभी telecom operators को भेजा (चुनाव राज्यों को छोड़कर)

## MAINS ANGLES + ESSAY TOPICS

- GS-2 (Governance): Disaster management framework; NDMA; DM Act 2005; early warning systems; Centre-State-District 3-tier structure
- GS-3 (Disaster Management + Science): Cell Broadcast technology; CAP; indigenous development (C-DOT); disaster risk reduction; Sendai Framework 2015-30
- GS-2 (Science/Polity): Entry 31 (Union List) — telecom as Centre's domain; ITU as UN agency
- Essay: 'Disaster management in India: From reactive response to proactive preparedness'
- Interview: 'C-DOT developed India's emergency alert indigenously. What does this signify for India's telecom capabilities?'
- GS-2: आपदा प्रबंधन; NDMA; DM Act 2005; 3-स्तरीय संरचना
- GS-3: Cell Broadcast; CAP; स्वदेशी विकास; Sendai Framework
- निबंध: 'भारत में आपदा प्रबंधन: प्रतिक्रियाशील से सक्रिय तैयारी की ओर'

**IN BRIEF**

**Prasoon Joshi appointed  
Prasar Bharati Chairman**

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has appointed noted lyricist and writer Prasoon Joshi as the Chairman of Prasar Bharati. "Prasoonji is a rare creative spirit celebrated across the world in advertising, literature, art and cinema, yet his heart beats unshakably for India. His words carry the fragrance of our soil, and his vision reflects the timeless essence of our culture," I&B Minister Anshu Vaidya said. Mr. Joshi had earlier served as the Chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), Mumbai, since August 2017. In December 2023, then Prasar Bharati Board Chairman Nayeen Khamis Zehal had resigned from the position.

**Four-year-old girl raped, killed  
in Pune village; accused held**

A four-year-old girl was sexually assaulted and killed at Nasarpur village in Pune district of Maharashtra. The police have arrested a 69-year-old man, and residents observed a complete ban on all activities on Saturday after the body was found. The incident came to light on Friday after the girl went missing in the afternoon. The CCTV footage later showed the accused leading the girl by hand towards a cattle shed. The police said the child was assaulted inside the shed, after which the accused killed her by hitting her with a stone. The police have filed a case against him under charges of rape, rape, and under the provisions of the POCSO Act.

**Varsity in Gujarat introduces  
'Modi Tattva' in sociology**

A first-of-its-kind module on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership philosophy has been added to the sociology syllabus of the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule University of Kashi, Gujarat. The module, titled "Modi Tattva", forms part of a paper on the "Sociology of Personality", under the university's BA and MA programmes in sociology. Department head Vivek Singh, who confirmed the development to *The Hindu*, said Modi Tattva reflects the need to examine Prime Minister's leadership within established sociological frameworks. It will be taught alongside content on the Rashtriya Swamivachak Sangh and other historical figures.

**Uttarakhand youth kills self  
alleging police harassment**

A 20-year-old youth was found hanging from a bridge, with his hands on chains, in the Gairwal district in Uttarakhand on Saturday. Before his alleged suicide, the victim posted a video on social media accusing local police of physical assault after they seized his motorcycle. The police identified the deceased as Pratik Kumar, a resident of Ratuva village, and informed his family. The incident came to light after a local resident alerted authorities through an emergency call. Officials learned that the man had recorded a video before the incident, alleging mistreatment by the police. (persons in distress can call Tele-MANAS helpline - 144101)

**SUDOKU**

1 8 4 2 6 5  
3 7 9 2 8 9  
2 4 6 9 7 6  
3 1 7 9 1  
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4 6 3 3 2

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7 2 5 9 1 8 3 4 6  
8 3 4 6 7 5 2 1 9  
6 7 9 1 5 4 6 3 2

**SC to examine plea against  
apnoea test for brain death**

Petitioner claims apnoea test may by itself induce brain death as it requires stopping or reducing cerebral blood flow; court asks AIMS to form expert team, submit recommendations in 2 months

**The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI**



Supreme Court Bench

The Supreme Court has found prima facie a "flag of trouble" in a doctor's plan that the apnoea test, alleged to be widely used in Kerala, is not a conclusive assessment of brain death. A Bench of Justices Vikram Patil and Sanjiv Mukherjee referred the constitutionality of the apnoea test to the court. The court included in its order the petitioner's contention that the best possible procedure to conclusively assess the parameters of brainstem death would be to subject the patient to appropriate ancillary or supplemental tests, including electroencephalography (EEG), four-vessel cerebral angiography, radionuclide (radioisotope) angiography, or CT angiography. "It is urged that, in terms of internationally accepted medical standards, including the guidelines of the World Health Organization, the apnoea test ought to be resorted to only as a confirmatory test and not as the sole or primary basis for determining brain-stem death," the Bench said in an April 28 order published on Saturday. The State of Kerala, represented by Advocate Nisha Rishon Shomekar, maintained that the prescribed statutory procedure were duly followed before any patient was declared brain-dead. Counsel submitted that the apprehensions expressed by Mr. Ganapaty were unfounded and not supported by credible scientific material. The State, however, said it was not in a position to dispute the contention raised by the petitioner that the apnoea test was the most prevalent in India. The petitioner alleged that had credible information indicating serious malpractices prevailing in Kerala in relation to organ transplantation procedures. According to the petitioner, patients admitted to various hospitals in critical condition were declared brain-dead even in cases where the clinical parameters prescribed under the law did not justify such a determination. The court has directed the Head of the Department of Neurology, AIIMS, New Delhi, to constitute an expert team on the issue. The matters have been identified as Viraj Sant, 9, a resident of Jabalpur, and

**Jabalpur tragedy toll  
rises to 11 as bodies  
of 2 children found**

Two more bodies were recovered from the Jabalpur's Bargi dam reservoir on Saturday, taking the toll in the cruise tragedy to 11, officials said.



11 bodies have been recovered and 28 rescued. Anu

According to officials, at least 200 personnel of the Indian Army, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Madhya Pradesh's State Disaster Emergency Response Force (SDERF), and local administration as well as local fishermen are involved in the search operation that has been going on for three days now, in an expanded area with the help of advanced equipment. Speaking to *The Hindu*, Jabalpur Collector Bhagvendra Singh said that, on Saturday evening, bodies of two children were found floating about 100 metres from the accident spot. The children have been identified as Viraj Sant, 9, a resident of Jabalpur, and

**Judicial officer  
found dead in  
Delhi; probe  
launched**

A Delhi judicial services officer died allegedly by suicide in the Sadafgarh area, the police said on Saturday.

A family member told the police that Anand Kumar Sharma, 30, had been serving as secretary of the District Legal Services Authority Karkardooma Courts since October 2025. According to official records, he has dealt with various criminal and civil matters while holding different positions in judicial magistracy first class and as a civil judge. A probe is under way to ascertain the circumstances leading to his death. "We are examining all possible angles," an officer said. (Persons in distress can contact Tele-MANAS at 144101 for help.)

**A pioneer artist takes Swang, a folk art, from  
village gatherings to international audiences**

Swang, or Swang, is a centuries-old dialogue-driven folk form from Haryana. It blends music, poetry, facts, and drama in an open-air setting. Among its best-loved stories is *Jaan Chor*, the tale of a witty, Robin Hood-like thief who outsmarts the rich and corrupt.



Swang artist Sanjay Kumar, performing with a co-artist in a Swang, a folk play. Anu, Anu

Under Mr. Kashyap's direction, the journey has been reimagined without losing its rustic spirit. Sustaining legacy Mr. Kashyap has brought together veteran folk artists and young performers, creating an intergenerational exchange on stage. Traditional live music, local dialects and expressive acting were retained, while pacing and staging were adapted for modern audiences. "This journey is not just about a play, but about reclaiming and sustaining a cultural legacy," Mr. Kashyap said. "From the walls of Haryana to international stages, *Swang Jaan Chor* represents the voice of the people and the timeless relevance of folk traditions," he added. Gathering to global Over two decades, Mr. Kashyap has not just taken Swang from open-air chaupals to structured theatrical stages but also collaborated with artists like Sandhya Sharma and Alpesh Solanki, bringing women into lead roles in a traditionally male-dominated art form. He also helped introduce Swang into schools and colleges and staged at the National School of Drama (NSD), while bringing *Swang Jaan Chor* to the *Swang*, or *Swang*, is a centuries-old dialogue-driven folk form from Haryana. It blends music, poetry, facts, and drama in an open-air setting. Among its best-loved stories is *Jaan Chor*, the tale of a witty, Robin Hood-like thief who outsmarts the rich and corrupt. Under Mr. Kashyap's direction, the journey has been reimagined without losing its rustic spirit. Sustaining legacy Mr. Kashyap has brought together veteran folk artists and young performers, creating an intergenerational exchange on stage. Traditional live music, local dialects and expressive acting were retained, while pacing and staging were adapted for modern audiences. "This journey is not just about a play, but about reclaiming and sustaining a cultural legacy," Mr. Kashyap said. "From the walls of Haryana to international stages, *Swang Jaan Chor* represents the voice of the people and the timeless relevance of folk traditions," he added. Gathering to global Over two decades, Mr. Kashyap has not just taken Swang from open-air chaupals to structured theatrical stages but also collaborated with artists like Sandhya Sharma and Alpesh Solanki, bringing women into lead roles in a traditionally male-dominated art form. He also helped introduce Swang into schools and colleges and staged at the National School of Drama (NSD), while bringing *Swang Jaan Chor* to the

international audiences. From there, *Jaan Chor* moved to village chaupals, then to university stages, Lakshmi Chauri Dhanraj Singh, Pandit Manoj Rain, Chander Rishi, and Anu. (Persons in distress can contact Tele-MANAS at 144101 for help.)

**Meena Muthiah, noted educationist  
and philanthropist, passes away**

Meena Muthiah, educationist, philanthropist, and prominent citizen of Chennai, passed away in Coimbatore on Saturday. She was 91.



MEENA MUTHIAH (2023-2026)

Successor to her late husband, she died in her sleep around 8 a.m. at her summer getaway in Coimbatore. Her mortal remains will be flown to Chennai on Saturday evening. On Sunday, the funeral obsequies will be performed at the Mylapore crematorium between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Distinguished legacy A graduate of Madras University in 1954, Dr. Muthiah completed her Master's and subsequently in 2002, the Ph.D. from Anna University. Her doctoral thesis was on the Origin and Development of Tanjore Painting. With the Kamara Rajah Muthiah and Preetha Reddy. Vice-Chairperson, Women emancipation While her philanthropy pertained across a wide range of causes, much of her work revolved around

**She shaped destinies,  
altered trajectories  
of countless people**

mentation of women through education. The Raghuji Chettinad School, which started in 1916, enrolled 6,000 students and included a playgroup, a wing for music, performing arts and painting, an academy for linguistic and technological education, and day-time boarding for children. Apart from the educational institutions, Dr. Muthiah was, at different stages and in different capacities, associated with the Saraswati Society, Tamil Nadu, Shree Relief Association, Madras Voluntary Blood Bank, Bangalore Medical Trust and Research Centre, Kanakasanthan Clinical and Research Centre, Voluntary Health Services, Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare Board for two terms, Indian Cultural Centre, Victoria Technical Institute and its women's section, International Red Cross, University Women's Association, Tamil Nadu Women's Club Association, Women's Co-operative Stores, and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. She remained an unwavering supporter of stage and screen, nurturing artistic expression with enduring zeal. At the helm of several eminent institutions, she led with singular purpose to give back to society in ways both meaningful and transformative. Deeply moved by the plight of the underprivileged, persons with disabilities, and the marginalised, she devoted her life to alleviating suffering and restoring dignity to those in need. The recipient of numerous national and international honours, her contributions have been celebrated across distinguished platforms, earning her admiration far and wide. As we mourn her tragic demise, we reflect upon a life richly lived in the service of others. May we forever draw quiet strength from the noble sweep of her endeavours. (Dr. Preetha Reddy is the Vice-Chairperson of Apollo Hospitals)



## Prasoon Joshi appointed Prasar Bharati Chairman

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has appointed noted lyricist and writer Prasoos Joshi as the Chairman of Prasar Bharati.

“Prasoonji is a rare creative spirit celebrated across the world in advertising, literature, art and cinema, yet his heart beats unmistakably for India. His words carry the fragrance of our soil, and his vision reflects the timeless essence of our culture,” I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. Mr. Joshi had earlier served as the Chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), Mumbai, since August 2017. In December 2025, then Prasar Bharati Board Chairman Navneet Kumar Sehgal had resigned from the position.

## Prasoon Joshi

Noted lyricist,  
writer, ad-man  
appointed Chairman

## I&B Min.

Ministry of Info &  
Broadcasting —  
appointing authority

## CBFC

Prasoon Joshi  
served as CBFC  
Chairperson since 2017

## 2025

Dec 2025: Navneet  
Kumar Sehgal  
resigned as Chairman

## Prasar Bharati

Autonomous PSB:  
Doordarshan +  
All India Radio

### KEY DEVELOPMENT (EN) — मुख्य विकास

- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) appointed Prasoon Joshi as Chairman of Prasar Bharati
- Prasoon Joshi: Noted lyricist (Rang De Basanti, Taare Zameen Par), writer, advertising professional; celebrated globally in advertising, literature, art and cinema
- Joshi earlier served as Chairperson of CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification), Mumbai — since August 2017
- In December 2025, then Prasar Bharati Board Chairman Navneet Kumar Sehgal had resigned from the position — vacancy then filled by Prasoon Joshi
- Prasar Bharati = India's public service broadcaster: Doordarshan (TV) + All India Radio (AIR)

### मुख्य विकास (HI) — KEY DEVELOPMENT

- I&B मंत्रालय ने प्रसून जोशी को प्रसार भारती के अध्यक्ष के रूप में नियुक्त किया
- प्रसून जोशी: प्रख्यात गीतकार (रंग दे बसंती, तारे ज़मीन पर), लेखक, विज्ञापन पेशेवर; विज्ञापन, साहित्य, कला और सिनेमा में वैश्विक पहचान
- जोशी पहले अगस्त 2017 से CBFC (सेंट्रल बोर्ड ऑफ फिल्म सर्टिफिकेशन), मुंबई के अध्यक्ष के रूप में कार्यरत थे
- दिसंबर 2025 में, तत्कालीन प्रसार भारती बोर्ड अध्यक्ष Navneet Kumar Sehgal ने पद से इस्तीफा दिया था
- प्रसार भारती = भारत का सार्वजनिक सेवा प्रसारक: दूरदर्शन (TV) + आकाशवाणी (AIR)

## PRASAR BHARATI — COMPLETE PROFILE

- Prasar Bharati = Broadcasting Corporation of India; established under Prasar Bharati Act, 1990; became operational November 23, 1997
- Public Service Broadcaster (PSB) — autonomous statutory body; oversees Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR)
- HQ: New Delhi; Chairman + CEO + Board Members — appointed by President of India on recommendation of a Selection Committee
- Doordarshan: est. 1959; national public television; ~47 channels; DD National, DD News, DD Kisan etc.
- All India Radio (Akashvani): est. 1936; 470+ stations; reaches 99%+ of India's territory
- Prasar Bharati Act 1990; 23 Nov 1997 से संचालित; DD (1959) + AIR (1936); HQ नई दिल्ली

## CONSTITUTIONAL + REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- Article 19(1)(a): Freedom of speech and expression — includes freedom of press and broadcasting
- Entry 31 (Union List, 7th Schedule): Posts and telegraphs; telephones; wireless; broadcasting — Parliament's exclusive domain
- Ministry of I&B: Nodal ministry for information, broadcasting, films, press; I&B Minister = Ashwini Vaishnaw
- TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, 1997): Regulates telecom and cable TV; independent regulator
- अनुच्छेद 19(1)(a); Entry 31 Union List; I&B Ministry; TRAI (1997) — केबल TV नियमन

## CBFC — CENTRAL BOARD OF FILM CERTIFICATION

- CBFC (Central Board of Film Certification): Established under Cinematograph Act, 1952; HQ Mumbai
- Formerly called 'Censor Board' — certifies films for public exhibition; grants U, UA, A, S certificates
- Under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B Ministry)
- Chairperson appointed by Central Govt; Members from different regions and walks of life
- Prasoon Joshi was CBFC Chairperson since August 2017; he introduced digital processes and reduced backlogs
- CBFC = Cinematograph Act 1952; HQ मुंबई; U/UA/A/S सर्टिफिकेट; प्रसून जोशी = 2017 से अध्यक्ष

## HISTORY OF BROADCASTING IN INDIA

- 1927: All India Radio established (as Indian State Broadcasting Service)
- 1936: Renamed to All India Radio (Akashvani name given by Tagore-era poet)
- 1959: Doordarshan launched (first TV broadcast from Delhi)
- 1982: Doordarshan goes national — satellite-based network (colour TV introduced at Asian Games)
- 1990: Prasar Bharati Act passed; 1997: Prasar Bharati became operational as autonomous body
- 1927 = AIR; 1959 = DD; 1982 = रंगीन TV; 1990 = Prasar Bharati Act; 1997 = स्वायत्त निकाय

CONFIRMED PYQs — पुष्टि PYQ (UPSC / SSC / BANK / RAILWAY)

UPSC 2022 Pre: Prasar Bharati is India's public service broadcaster established under? **ANS: Prasar Bharati Act, 1990**

SSC CGL 2023: Doordarshan was launched in which year? **ANS: 1959 (September 15, 1959, from Delhi)**

UPSC 2021: CBFC is established under? **ANS: Cinematograph Act, 1952** | Bank PO 2023: Akashvani is name of? **ANS: All India Radio (AIR)**

MCQ 1 — DIRECT (UPSC/SSC/BANK PATTERN)

- Q. Prasar Bharati — India's public service broadcaster — became operational as an autonomous body in which year?
- (a) 1990
- (b) 1993
- (c) 1997
- (d) 2000
- **ANS: (c) 1997 — November 23, 1997**
- Note: Prasar Bharati Act was passed in 1990 but it became OPERATIONAL on November 23, 1997

MCQ 2 — STATEMENT-BASED (UPSC PATTERN)

- Q. Consider statements about Prasar Bharati:
- 1. Established under Prasar Bharati Act, 1990
- 2. Chairman appointed by Prime Minister directly
- 3. Oversees both Doordarshan and All India Radio
- 4. Doordarshan was first launched in 1959
- (a) 1,2,3 (b) 1,3,4 (c) 2,3,4 (d) 1,2,3,4
- **ANS: (b) 1, 3 and 4 — Chairman appointed by President of India (not PM directly)**
- अध्यक्ष = राष्ट्रपति द्वारा नियुक्त (PM नहीं) — Statement 2 गलत

## 10 REVISION POINTS (EN + HI)

- 1. Prasoon Joshi (lyricist/writer) appointed Prasar Bharati Chairman by I&B Ministry
- 2. Prasar Bharati = India's PSB; Prasar Bharati Act 1990; operational Nov 23, 1997
- 3. Comprises: Doordarshan (est. 1959, ~47 channels) + AIR/Akashvani (est. 1936, 470+ stations)
- 4. Chairman appointed by President of India; I&B Minister = Ashwini Vaishnaw
- 5. CBFC: Cinematograph Act 1952; HQ Mumbai; Prasoon Joshi = CBFC Chairperson since Aug 2017
- 1. प्रसून जोशी (गीतकार/लेखक) I&B मंत्रालय द्वारा प्रसार भारती अध्यक्ष नियुक्त
- 2. प्रसार भारती = भारत का PSB; अधिनियम 1990; 23 नवंबर 1997 से संचालित
- 3. दूरदर्शन (1959, ~47 चैनल) + AIR/आकाशवाणी (1936, 470+ स्टेशन)
- 4. अध्यक्ष = राष्ट्रपति द्वारा नियुक्त; I&B मंत्री = Ashwini Vaishnaw
- 5. CBFC: Cinematograph Act 1952; HQ मुंबई; प्रसून जोशी = 2017 से CBFC अध्यक्ष

## MAINS ANGLES + ESSAY TOPICS

- GS-2 (Polity/Governance): Prasar Bharati autonomy debate; public service broadcasting vs private; I&B Ministry role; Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech); TRAI regulation
- GS-2 (Polity): Entry 31 (Union List) — broadcasting under Centre; Film Certification; CBFC's quasi-judicial role
- GS-4 (Ethics): Role of public broadcaster in democracy; political neutrality; accountability of autonomous bodies; creative freedom vs regulation
- Essay: 'Public service broadcasting in the age of OTT: Relevance, challenges and the road ahead'
- Interview: 'Prasoon Joshi brings creative perspective to Prasar Bharati. What does this mean for India's public broadcasting?'
- GS-2: प्रसार भारती स्वायत्तता; PSB बनाम निजी; अनुच्छेद 19(1)(a); TRAI
- GS-4: लोकतंत्र में PSB की भूमिका; राजनीतिक तटस्थता; OTT युग में प्रासंगिकता
- निबंध: 'OTT के युग में सार्वजनिक सेवा प्रसारण: प्रासंगिकता और चुनौतियाँ'

# Mitigating costs of start-stop war



**ACROSS THE AISLE**  
BY P CHIDAMBARAM

**T**HE US-ISRAEL war against Iran is not a distant war. It is in West Asia neighbouring the Indian sub-continent. Millions of Indians live and work in the region. Millions of Indian Shia Muslims have a strong bond with the people of Iran. India has traditionally claimed a long and historical relationship with Iran. Over the years, India has also claimed closer trade and economic relations with Iran — an example is the development of Chabahar port. Those claims have frayed under the BJP government. One of the reasons is the close friendship between the prime minister of Israel, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu, and the prime minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi.

## No more wanted

In the good old days, India would have been the most sought-after peacemaker in the case of a conflict. This time, however, since the war started on February 28, 2026, both the US and Israel have studiously avoided India. It is Iran that has maintained a semblance of 'briefing' India from time to time. India has been partial to Israel —

the latest episode is the Indian veto of the BRICS countries' draft resolution critical of Israel. Nevertheless, the US-Israel axis has kept India 'out' and, instead, courted Pakistan as the intermediary.

India can no longer pretend that the West Asian war has not affected the country. It has damaged the economies of most countries of the world, especially those countries that have vital stakes in global trade, global supply chains and maritime interests. Let us look at some Indian economic indicators since February 28, 2026 when the war started (see table).

The world is familiar with President Trump's bluff and bluster. No one believed him when he boasted that Iran's Air Force and Navy had been obliterated; or there are no more Iranian military assets; or the 'regime' in Iran had changed (once or twice?); or the American draft proposals had been accepted by Iran; or there was (at different times) a ceasefire. Mr Trump stops the war, then starts it again, and then announces a pause. Meanwhile, Israel continues to attack Iran and Lebanon, and Iran retaliates. The world knows the war that was started on February 28 did not ever stop.

## Not all is normal

The government claims that 'all is normal'. The RBI seems more aware of the costs and consequences of the war. In its April Bulletin, the RBI flagged the 'pressures on the global supply chains', 'CPI inflation driven by fuel and food', 'bond yields', 'slowdown in imports' and 'volatile FII flows', and warned that "If the conflict

	FEBRUARY 28, 2026	APRIL 28, 2026
BRENT crude oil	USD 67 / barrel	USD 110 / barrel
LPG cylinder (domestic)	Rs 853	Rs 913
LPG cylinder (commercial)	Rs 1,740	Rs 2,078
Inflation CPI (y-o-y)	3.21%	3.40%
Inflation WPI (y-o-y)	2.13%	3.88%
Foreign exchange reserves	USD 728 billion	USD 703 billion
Exchange rate (vs USD)	Rs 91.10	Rs 94.20
Sensex (BSE)	81,287	76,887
Nifty 50 (NSE)	25,179	23,996
Unemployment rate	4.9%	5.1 %

**The government claims that 'all is normal'. The RBI seems more aware of the costs and consequences of the war**

persists and supply chains are not restored early, it may create challenges to the domestic economy..." Except for maintaining the prices of petrol and diesel (presumably because of elections), the government has done precious little. It seems to be a bystander watching the events as they unfold with a silent prayer that they do not scald or scar the Indian economy.

The people of India are resilient and stoical. They know they can expect little help from the government. They are anxious to protect the jobs and incomes they have. Faced with the higher LPG price and undependability of supply, homes and eateries have begun to use firewood. The average family has cut back on consumption and dipped into savings. On the surface, there is no disruption or despair but, traveling in the countryside, one can see the people are worried. The prime minister has been totally immersed in the four-state Assembly elections and the mischievous campaign to *re-enact*

the Bill for women's reservation that Parliament had passed in September 2023. He may return to governance after May 5.

## Govt can do more

The government can do more to ease the living of the people and boost incomes:

- It can pay the arrears of wages under MGNREGA and re-start the works-programme that is in limbo since the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was repealed and purportedly re-enacted.

- The rural roads programme (PMGSY) can be accelerated and the Rs 19,000 crore allotted in 2026-27 can be spent in 6-8 months (unlike the unspent Rs 6,871 crore in 2025-26), and more money can be allotted.

- In 2025-26, the BE for the Drinking Water mission (*Jal Jeevan*) was Rs 67,000 crore but the RE was a miserable Rs 17,000 crore. The budgeted expenditure of Rs 67,670 crore for 2026-27 can be front-loaded and funds released to the state governments promptly.

- Unlike the promise made during the Covid epidemic (and breached), the government should explicitly stipulate an amount of money for absorbing the losses in lending to MSMEs and direct the banks to disburse the loans quickly, and jumpstart the sector that is still in the doldrums.

Expenditure on provision of 'public goods', creation of jobs, and boosting incomes of the people are effective counter-measures to the costs and consequences of the Trump-Netanyahu war — certainly better than stunned passivity.

### Context of Conflict

- Refers to Israel–Iran Conflict 2026 (start: Feb 28, 2026)
- Part of broader West Asia instability
- Impacts global trade, energy, supply chains

### India's Position

- Initially neutral; vetoed BRICS resolution critical of Israel
- US-Israel axis bypassed India, used Pakistan as intermediary
- India balancing ties: Israel (defence) + Iran (energy, Chabahar port)

### Economic Impact on India

- War disrupts:
  - Global supply chains
  - Maritime trade routes
  - Energy imports (India imports ~85% crude oil)
- Inflationary pressure via fuel & food

### Key Economic Indicators (Before vs After War)

**(Feb 28 → Apr 28, 2026)**

- Crude Oil: \$67 → \$110/barrel ▲
- LPG (Domestic): ₹853 → ₹913 ▲
- LPG (Commercial): ₹1740 → ₹2078 ▲
- CPI Inflation: 3.21% → 3.40% ▲
- WPI Inflation: 2.13% → 3.88% ▲
- Forex Reserves: \$728B → \$703B ▼
- Exchange Rate: ₹91 → ₹94.2/\$ ▼ (Depreciation)
- Sensex: 81,287 → 76,887 ▼
- Nifty: 25,179 → 23,996 ▼
- Unemployment: 4.9% → 5.1% ▲

<b>RBI's Observations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Highlighted risks:</li><li>• Supply chain disruptions</li><li>• Imported inflation (fuel, food)</li><li>• Volatile capital flows (FII outflows)</li><li>• Slowing imports &amp; growth</li></ul>
<b>Nature of War ("Start-Stop")</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Characterized by pauses &amp; resumptions</li><li>- Policy uncertainty → investor anxiety</li><li>- Impacts long-term planning &amp; markets</li></ul>
<b>Domestic Impact (India)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rising LPG → households shift to firewood</li><li>- Reduced consumption → demand slowdown</li><li>- Savings depletion by middle class</li><li>- Rural distress visible</li></ul>
<b>Government Response (Criticism)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Seen as passive (except fuel price control)</li><li>- Lacks proactive economic cushioning measures</li></ul>
<b>Suggested Government Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Pay pending wages under <u>MGNREGA</u></li><li>- Accelerate <u>PMGSY</u> spending</li><li>- Increase allocation for <u>Jal Jeevan Mission</u></li><li>- Support MSMEs via credit infusion</li><li>- Public expenditure boost for jobs &amp; demand</li></ul>
<b>Macro-Economic Insight (Exam)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- War → Cost-push inflation</li><li>- Currency depreciation due to capital outflows</li><li>- Stock market fall due to uncertainty</li><li>- Supply shock → stagflation risk</li></ul>

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**Government Response (Criticism)**

- Seen as passive (except fuel price control)
- Lacks proactive economic cushioning measures

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**Suggested Government Measures**

- Pay pending wages under MGNREGA
- Accelerate PMGSY spending
- Increase allocation for Jal Jeevan Mission
- Support MSMEs via credit infusion
- Public expenditure boost for jobs & demand

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**Macro-Economic Insight (Exam)**

- War → Cost-push inflation
- Currency depreciation due to capital outflows
- Stock market fall due to uncertainty
- Supply shock → stagflation risk

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**Strategic Importance for India**

- West Asia critical for:
  - Energy security
  - Diaspora (remittances)
  - Trade routes (Hormuz Strait)

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