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AIR

4

CLAT 2026



Arshnoor Singh

AIR

2

AILET 2025



Chaitanya Ghosh

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2

CLAT 2025



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YE POSTER NAHI, PROOF HAI!



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NISHANT PRAKASH LAW CLASSES

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Founded in 2011, Nishant Prakash Law Classes (NPLC) has earned the reputation of being the 'Gurukul for CLAT'—a space where commitment, discipline, and mentorship come together to build India's finest legal minds. Often referred to as the 'Super 30 of CLAT', NPLC is not just a coaching institute—it's a movement for serious law aspirants.

What makes NPLC truly unique is its strictly limited intake—only 90 students offline and 30 online each year. With batch sizes of just 25, every student is thoughtfully selected to ensure they are not just coached, but personally mentored. This one-of-its-kind model helps create a tightly-knit academic environment where no student is left behind, and every performance is tracked, sharpened, and elevated.

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Nishant Prakash



Nishant Prakash, founder and chief mentor at NPLC, is a nationally recognized legal educator and policy advisor. An alumnus of one of India's premier National Law Schools, Nishant left a thriving corporate law career to dedicate himself fully to teaching and mentoring the next generation of legal leaders. For over 13 years, he has built an unparalleled reputation as a transformational teacher, guiding students with precision, compassion, and personal accountability.

He has been associated with some of the country's top-tier law firms, including Luthra & Luthra, and holds expertise in Intellectual Property, Insurance, and Trade Law, with over 30 national and international publications to his credit.

A firm believer in long-term academic mentorship, Nishant combines academic rigour with real-world legal insights to prepare students for top law schools and successful careers. His work consistently bridges the gap between textbook learning and practical application, equipping students with a clear understanding of how law operates in the real world.

Know your Mentor



What sets Nishant apart is not just his knowledge, but his unwavering dedication to each student's growth. Every batch under his guidance is not just taught, but molded. He pushes students beyond their limits—while offering the support, discipline, and insight they need to thrive in competitive legal exams and beyond.

For parents looking for a mentor who truly takes ownership, and for students seeking more than just lectures—Nishant Prakash is the mentor who stays with you, every step of the way.

Their Next Chapter



NLSIU - Bengaluru

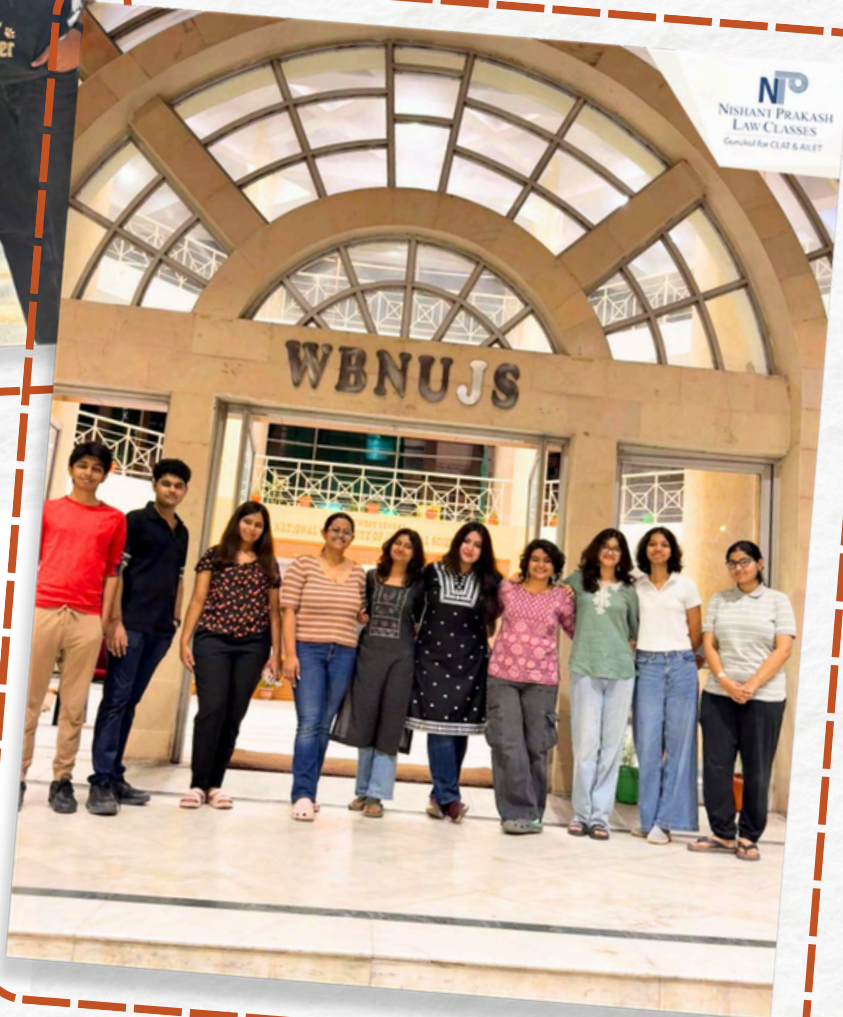
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Their Next Chapter



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**NISHANT PRAKASH
LAW CLASSES**

1 Does Israel's 'Yellow Line' violate the Lebanon ceasefire?

IN FOCUS

- Israel and Lebanon entered a **U.S.-backed 10-day ceasefire** on **16 April 2026** to enable negotiations toward a longer-term peace and security arrangement.
- Soon after the ceasefire began, Israel referred to a **“Yellow Line”** or **forward defence line** inside southern Lebanon and maintained troops in a **belt of Lebanese territory about 5 to 10 km deep** along the border.
- Lebanon objected to the continued Israeli military presence, demanded **Israeli withdrawal**, and opposed the destruction of villages and restrictions on civilian return in the area under Israeli control.
- The issue directly engages the legal framework created by the **Blue Line**, **UNIFIL**, and **UN Security Council Resolution 1701**, all of which remain central to the security architecture of southern Lebanon.

Israel's 'Yellow Line' in Lebanon

A unilateral military deployment line inside southern Lebanon



Background of the Israel–Lebanon Conflict

➤ 1948 and the first Arab–Israeli war

Lebanon fought alongside other Arab States in the 1948 war against the newly established State of Israel. Around 100,000 Palestinians who fled or were expelled during the war entered Lebanon, and Lebanon and Israel concluded an armistice in 1949. The refugee issue and the unresolved Palestine question became long-term structural drivers of instability in Lebanon's south.

➤ 1968 to 1973: Palestinian armed activity and Israeli reprisals

In 1968, Israeli commandos destroyed a dozen passenger aircraft at Beirut airport in response to an attack on an Israeli airliner by a Lebanon-based Palestinian guerrilla group. In 1970, the PLO relocated to Lebanon after its expulsion from Jordan, increasing cross-border raids and retaliatory attacks. In 1973, Israeli special forces killed three Palestinian guerrilla leaders in Beirut. During the 1970s, Palestinian raids into Israel and Israeli reprisals inside Lebanon intensified and contributed to worsening sectarian tensions as Lebanon moved toward civil war.

➤ 1978: Operation Litani and creation of UNIFIL

In 1978, Israel invaded southern Lebanon after a militant attack near Tel Aviv and established a narrow occupation zone in the south. The UN Security Council, through Resolutions 425 and 426, called for Israeli withdrawal and created the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). UNIFIL was tasked with confirming Israeli withdrawal, restoring international peace and security, and assisting the Lebanese Government in restoring effective authority in the area.

➤ 1982: Full-scale invasion and emergence of Hezbollah

In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon up to Beirut after escalating border fire. The siege of Beirut resulted in the evacuation of thousands of Palestinian fighters by sea. The Sabra and Shatila massacre followed the assassination of Lebanon's president-elect, and the period also saw the establishment of Hezbollah in Lebanon with support from Iran's Revolutionary Guards. The 1982 war fundamentally transformed Lebanon's internal and regional security order.

➤ 1985: Security zone and prolonged occupation

Israel withdrew from central Lebanon but retained forces in a formal occupation zone in the south, about 15 km deep, working with the South Lebanon Army (SLA). Hezbollah then emerged as the main force carrying out a long guerrilla campaign against Israeli troops and the SLA. This period entrenched the pattern of occupation, resistance, and repeated border conflict.

➤ 1996: Operation Grapes of Wrath

In 1996, after repeated Hezbollah attacks and rocket fire, Israel launched Operation Grapes of Wrath, a 17-day offensive in Lebanon. More than 200 people were killed in Lebanon, including 102 persons killed when Israel shelled a UN base near Qana. The operation reinforced international concern over the recurring civilian cost of Israel-Lebanon hostilities.

➤ 2000: Israeli withdrawal and the Blue Line

In May 2000, Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon, ending 22 years of occupation. The United Nations

then identified the Blue Line in 2000 as a line of withdrawal for the practical purpose of confirming that Israel had withdrawn from Lebanese territory. The withdrawal ended occupation but did not resolve all border disputes.

➤ 2006: War and Resolution 1701

In July 2006, Hezbollah crossed into Israel, captured two Israeli soldiers, and killed others, triggering a five-week war. Israeli airstrikes and ground operations followed, while Hezbollah launched sustained rocket fire into Israel. At least 1,200 people in Lebanon, mostly civilians, and 158 Israelis, mostly soldiers, were killed. The war ended with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which remains the main legal framework governing the frontier.

➤ 2023 and 2024: Renewed cross-border war

On 8 October 2023, Hezbollah began exchanging fire with Israel after the Hamas attack on southern Israel and the outbreak of the Gaza war. Hezbollah stated that its attacks were in support of Palestinians in Gaza. Israeli strikes hit border areas in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, while Hezbollah struck northern Israel. Tens of thousands of civilians fled homes on both sides of the border. In 2024, the conflict intensified further through major rocket and drone exchanges, large Israeli bombardments, assassinations of senior Hezbollah figures, and widespread destruction in Lebanon.

➤ 2026: Ceasefire and dispute over the Yellow Line

The latest phase began after renewed hostilities in March 2026, followed by a U.S.-brokered ceasefire on 16 April 2026. Israeli troops nevertheless remained inside southern Lebanon in a self-declared military belt, and the dispute over the Yellow Line became the central legal and political issue of the ceasefire period.

What is the Blue Line?

- The **Blue Line** is the **UN-identified line of withdrawal** between Lebanon and Israel. It was established by the United Nations in **2000** to confirm Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon. It is not the final international border; it is a practical withdrawal line for verification and monitoring.
- The Blue Line is central to the security regime in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL monitors incidents along it, reports violations, and uses it as the principal reference line for maintaining stability between the two sides. The United Nations has repeatedly treated movements and military activity north of the Blue Line as serious matters affecting the cessation of hostilities.

Difference Between the Blue Line and the Yellow Line

- The **Blue Line** is a **UN-created line of withdrawal** identified in **2000** for confirming Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. It has international legal relevance within the UN system, even though it is not a final international boundary.
- The **Yellow Line** is an **Israeli military deployment line** established unilaterally inside southern Lebanon during the 2026 ceasefire period. It is linked to Israeli troop deployment, demolitions, and restrictions on civilian return, and it does not have UN recognition or treaty status.
- The Blue Line belongs to the framework of **UN monitoring and ceasefire management**. The Yellow Line belongs to the framework of **unilateral military control and forward defence**. The legal controversy arises because the second operates inside territory already governed by the first.



United Nations

Security Council

S/RES/1701

11 August 2006

1701

UN Security Council Resolution 1701

The main legal framework for security in southern Lebanon

1



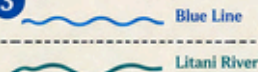
Adopted on 11 August 2006, Resolution 1701 ended the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war and established the main legal framework for security in southern Lebanon. It called for a full cessation of hostilities and laid down the principles of a longer-term arrangement between Israel and Lebanon.

2



The resolution required the deployment of Lebanese armed forces to southern Lebanon and the parallel withdrawal of Israeli forces. It also emphasised full respect for the Blue Line and the extension of the Lebanese State's authority over all Lebanese territory.

3



A core feature of Resolution 1701 is that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River must remain free of any armed personnel, assets, or weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL.

4



The resolution also refers to the need for the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon, so that there is no armed authority in the country other than the State.

5



Resolution 1701 also strengthened the role of UNIFIL, which thereafter became the principal international mechanism for monitoring the cessation of hostilities, supporting Lebanese deployment in the south, and helping maintain stability along the Blue Line.

UNITED NATIONS FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

Role of UNIFIL in Southern Lebanon

- UNIFIL was established in 1978 under Resolutions 425 and 426 after Israel's invasion of Lebanon. In 2006, its mandate was strengthened following Resolution 1701.
- Its present role includes monitoring the ceasefire, recording violations, supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces in their deployment in the south, and helping enforce the prohibition on unauthorised arms in that area. UNIFIL also functions as a liaison mechanism between Israel and Lebanon in the absence of normal diplomatic relations between the two States.
- UNIFIL remains the principal international peacekeeping presence in southern Lebanon. Its mandate was given a final extension until 31 December 2026, with the expectation that greater responsibility would gradually shift to Lebanese State institutions.

What Does the Current Lebanon Ceasefire Require?

- The 16 April 2026 ceasefire requires Lebanon, with international support, to take meaningful steps to prevent Hezbollah and other groups from carrying out attacks against Israeli targets. It also recognises Lebanon's security forces as having exclusive responsibility for Lebanon's sovereignty and national defence.
- The agreement preserves Israel's right to take necessary measures in self-defence against planned, imminent, or ongoing attacks, but it also states that Israel will not carry out offensive military operations in Lebanon by land, air, or sea during the ceasefire period.
- The ceasefire was designed as an initial 10-day cessation of hostilities, extendable by mutual agreement as talks progressed. It was later extended by three weeks on 23 April 2026 during U.S.-facilitated talks.
- The agreement does not expressly require Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon during the

ceasefire period, and it does **not explicitly require Hezbollah's immediate disarmament**, although it reinforces the position that State security institutions alone are the lawful armed authorities in Lebanon.

Israel's Security Justification for the Yellow Line

- Israel's stated justification is the creation of a **buffer zone** to shield northern Israel from **Hezbollah attacks**. Israeli officials have described the line as a **reinforced security strip** or **forward defence line**, and have linked it to the objective of preventing Hezbollah's return to the border belt.
- Israel has also maintained that its military activity in the area is directed against **Hezbollah infrastructure** embedded in southern Lebanese villages and that continued deployment is necessary to prevent renewed attacks, infiltration, or rocket fire.
- This justification is tied to the ceasefire clause preserving Israel's right to act in **self-defence**. Israel's position is that continued deployment and enforcement measures in the zone fall within that security logic.

DOES THE YELLOW LINE AMOUNT TO A BUFFER ZONE OR A DE FACTO OCCUPATION?

How the current facts on the ground are being interpreted

1 In operational terms: Buffer zone

In operational terms, the Yellow Line functions as a buffer zone. Israeli troops remain deployed in a belt of Lebanese land along the border, the area is being controlled militarily, and civilians are being prevented from returning to several localities within that strip.

3 What the UN framework matters for

The United Nations has continued to refer to Israeli forces being present north of the Blue Line. UN officials have also described a significant stretch of land under Israeli control, with massive demolition and no civilians allowed. That description places the Yellow Line in direct tension with the existing UN framework governing southern Lebanon.



2 Why some say it approaches de facto occupation

The case for de facto occupation becomes stronger because the Israeli military is not merely conducting temporary strikes from across the border. It is exercising sustained physical control over territory north of the Blue Line, carrying out demolitions, and excluding civilians from the area. These features go beyond a momentary battlefield response and resemble continuing territorial control. This is an inference drawn from the factual pattern on the ground.

4 Bottom line

The Yellow Line operates like a buffer zone in military terms, but the extent of physical control, demolitions, and exclusion of civilians makes the argument for de facto occupation much stronger.



Israeli troops remain north of the Blue Line



Civilians blocked from returning to several localities



UN officials describe a significant stretch of land under Israeli control

Lebanon's Objection: Sovereignty, Territory, and Civilian Access

- Lebanon's objection is based first on **sovereignty**. The Yellow Line lies **inside Lebanese territory**, and Lebanon rejects any Israeli military line north of the international frontier and north of the UN-recognised line of withdrawal.
- Lebanon has also objected to the **continued Israeli military presence**, the **destruction of homes and villages**, and the **restriction on civilian return** in the area under Israeli control. Lebanese officials have demanded Israeli withdrawal and an end to demolitions in the south.
- Hezbollah and allied Lebanese political figures have stated that continued Israeli presence on Lebanese land cannot be treated as a neutral security measure and have characterised it as **occupation**.

Role of the United Nations and International Community

- The **United Nations** remains the principal international legal and monitoring authority in this matter through the framework of the **Blue Line, Resolution 1701**, and the deployment of **UNIFIL**. The UN position continues to favour **full implementation of Resolution 1701, Israeli withdrawal from areas north of the Blue Line**, the **redeployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces**, and the safe return of civilians.
- The **United States** has played the leading diplomatic role in the present phase. It brokered the **10-day ceasefire**, published its terms through the State Department, facilitated the follow-up ambassador-level talks, and helped secure the **three-week extension** announced on **23 April 2026**.
- The broader international response has focused on preserving the ceasefire, preventing escalation, maintaining a UN presence in southern Lebanon, and avoiding the collapse of the 1701 framework. UN peacekeeping officials have also been examining the form of continued international presence that may remain after the planned end of the current UNIFIL mandate in **December 2026**.
- The legal and diplomatic position that emerges from the present framework is clear: the recognised mechanism for stabilising southern Lebanon remains **Resolution 1701, the Blue Line, Lebanese State authority, and UNIFIL**, not a unilateral military line established by one side inside the territory of the other.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following names did Israel use for its claimed border security position in southern Lebanon?
(a) Violet Line (b) Orange Line
(c) Purple Line (d) Yellow Line
2. Which of the following pairs forms part of the southern Lebanon security framework linked with UN Security Council Resolution 1701?
(a) Red Line, UNDOF (b) Blue Line, UNIFIL
(c) Grey Line, UNTSO (d) Pink Line, UNEP
3. Which of the following lines is associated with the established international monitoring arrangement near the Israel-Lebanon frontier?
(a) Blue Line (b) Teal Line
(c) Grey Line (d) Pink Line
4. Which of the following locations was attacked by Israeli commandos in 1968 after an Israeli airliner attack?
(a) Haifa Airport (b) Beirut Airport
(c) Amman Airport (d) Cairo Airport
5. Which of the following UN Security Council resolutions created UNIFIL after Operation Litani?
(a) Resolutions 425 and 426
(b) Resolutions 242 and 338
(c) Resolutions 661 and 678
(d) Resolutions 819 and 824
6. Which of the following events occurred after the assassination of Lebanon's president-elect during the 1982 war?
(a) Tyre and Sidon massacre
(b) Beirut and Tripoli massacre
(c) Qana and Nabatieh massacre
(d) Sabra and Shatila massacre
7. Which of the following forces worked with Israel in the southern occupation zone of Lebanon?
(a) North Lebanon Army (b) South Lebanon Army
(c) East Lebanon Army (d) West Lebanon Army
8. Which of the following names identifies Israel's 1996 seventeen-day offensive in Lebanon?
(a) Operation Litani Offensive Phase
(b) Operation Northern Shield Phase
(c) Operation Grapes of Wrath
(d) Operation Cedar Guard Phase
9. Which of the following resolutions remains the main legal framework for security in southern Lebanon?
(a) Resolution 425 (b) Resolution 1701
(c) Resolution 426 (d) Resolution 1559
10. Which of the following operations was linked with Israel's 1978 military action in southern Lebanon?
(a) Operation Litani (b) Operation Cedar
(c) Operation Galilee (d) Operation Shield
11. Which of the following areas must remain free from unauthorised armed personnel under Resolution 1701?
(a) Beirut Coast and Sidon Port
(b) Bekaa Valley and Tyre City
(c) Blue Line and Litani River
(d) Tripoli City and Qana Zone
12. Which of the following forces was created in 1978 under UN Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426?
(a) UNDOF (b) UNIFIL
(c) UNTSO (d) UNEF
13. Which of the following years marks Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon after 22 years of occupation?
(a) 2001 (b) 2000
(c) 2004 (d) 2003
14. Which of the following countries brokered the April 2026 Lebanon ceasefire?
(a) France (b) Russia
(c) Germany (d) United States

SOLUTIONS

1. (d) 2. (b) 3. (a) 4. (b) 5. (a) 6. (d) 7. (b) 8. (c)
9. (b) 10. (a) 11. (c) 12. (b) 13. (b) 14. (d)

2 IT Rules Amendments 2026: India's Digital Censorship Push

IN FOCUS

- The issue is in the news because the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2026** were notified on **10 February 2026** and came into force on **20 February 2026**. These amendments introduced a new compliance framework for **synthetically generated information (SGI)**, including deepfake-related due diligence, stronger platform obligations, tighter grievance timelines, and a sharply reduced takedown timeline upon “actual knowledge.”
- A second controversy arose when MeitY issued a **draft Second Amendment** on **30 March 2026** proposing that intermediaries must comply with Ministry-issued **clarifications, advisories, directions, SOPs, codes of practice, and guidelines**, and also proposing stronger oversight of digital media-related content under **Part III** of the 2021 Rules. The consultation deadline was first extended to **29 April 2026** and then to **7 May 2026**, after additional proposed changes required a continuous visible label throughout the visual display of synthetic content.



Ministry of Electronics &
Information Technology
Government of India



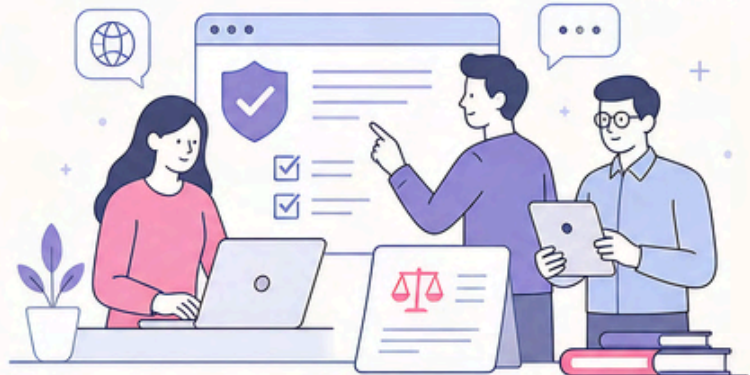
Safeguarding users' rights while
ensuring responsible digital platforms

my
GOV
मेरी सरकार

Information Technology Rules, 2021

Govt Notified IT Rules, 2021

Information Technology (Intermediary
Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code)
Rules, 2021



What happened?

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 were notified on 25 February 2021, replacing the earlier 2011 intermediary rules.



What do the Rules do?

The 2021 Rules prescribe due diligence obligations for intermediaries so they may continue to claim exemption from liability for third-party content. They also created a framework for regulating publishers of news and current affairs content and publishers of online curated content.



Legal basis under the IT Act, 2000

The Rules are linked to the broader structure of the Information Technology Act, 2000, especially Section 79. Section 79 gives intermediaries conditional protection from liability for third-party information if they satisfy statutory due diligence requirements and comply with guidelines prescribed by the Central Government.

Evolution of the IT Rules

- The rules have expanded in stages. The **2021 Rules** established the base framework. The **2022 amendments** required intermediaries to make reasonable efforts to prevent prohibited content, to respect users' constitutional rights, and created the **Grievance Appellate Committee** mechanism. The **2023 amendments** widened the regulatory field further, including changes relating to online gaming and controversial content-governance provisions.
- The regulatory trajectory became more contentious when the **Bombay High Court** in **September 2024** struck down the **2023 fact-check-unit amendment**, holding that it violated freedom of speech, made the executive the final arbiter of truth, used vague standards such as "false or misleading," and exceeded the scope of the parent statute. That judgment forms an important background to the present 2026 censorship debate.
- The **2025 amendment** then substituted **Rule 3(1)(d)**. It required removal or disabling of unlawful information within **36 hours** upon "actual knowledge," and defined such actual knowledge as arising either from a **court order** or a **reasoned written intimation** from an authorised government officer or agency specifying the legal basis and the exact location of the content. The **February 2026 amendment** retained this basic structure but reduced that compliance window from **36 hours to 3 hours** and overlaid a detailed SGI framework.

February 2026 Amendment: Deepfakes and Synthetic Media


- The notified **February 2026 amendment** primarily targets **synthetically generated information (SGI)**. MeitY's FAQ states that the amendment inserted definitions for "**audio, visual or audio-visual information**" and "**synthetically generated information**", and clarified that references to "information" in certain unlawful-content contexts include SGI as well. The amendment is directed chiefly at **deepfakes**, synthetic impersonation, deceptive audio-visual fabrication, and related online harms.
- The framework is not unlimited. MeitY clarified that **text-only outputs are not SGI** under the new definition, because SGI is limited to audio, visual, or audio-visual content. The FAQ also states that routine good-faith edits, accessibility improvements, and certain labelled creative uses are excluded, while unlawful uses of synthetic content remain fully covered.
- The amendment also creates a layered due diligence regime. Intermediaries facilitating SGI creation must provide stronger warnings to users, platforms must label permissible synthetic content prominently, and **Significant Social Media Intermediaries (SSMIs)** must obtain a **user declaration**, deploy **technical verification**, and ensure prominent labels before publication where content is confirmed as SGI. MeitY also clarified that user-awareness notices must now be given at least **once every three months**, instead of once every year.
- The grievance framework was also tightened. Under the amended system, ordinary grievances must be resolved within **7 days**, certain urgent removal requests must be decided within **36 hours**, and complaints involving nudity, sexual content, morphed imagery, or impersonation must be acted on within **2 hours**.

March 2026 Draft Second Amendment

- The **draft Second Amendment**, published on **30 March 2026**, moves beyond synthetic media and attempts to strengthen compliance with Ministry-issued instruments and digital media oversight. The official notice states that the proposed changes seek to strengthen intermediary compliance with **clarifications, advisories, and directions** issued by the Ministry under **Part II**, and to enhance oversight under **Part III**,

which deals with the **Code of Ethics relating to Digital Media**.

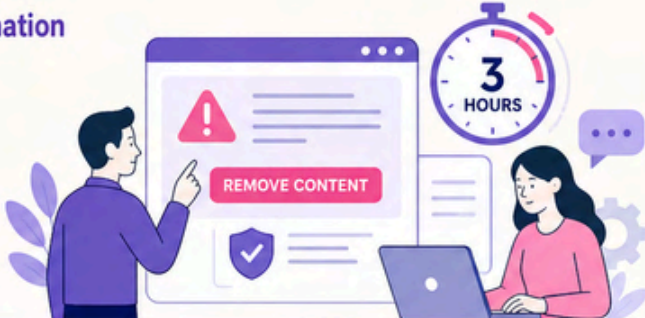
- The accompanying draft notification proposes a new **Rule 3(4)**. Under this provision, an intermediary would be required to comply with any **clarification, advisory, order, direction, standard operating procedure, code of practice, or guideline** issued by the Ministry in relation to implementation, interpretation, or operationalisation of Part II, so long as the instrument is issued in writing, specifies the legal basis, defines its applicability, and remains consistent with the Act and Rules. Compliance with such instruments would become part of the intermediary's **due diligence obligations under Section 79**.
- The draft also proposes changes to **Part III**. It would clarify that, for purposes of Rules **14, 15, and 16**, the digital media code could apply not only to publishers but also to **intermediaries** and to **news and current affairs content hosted by users who are not publishers**. It would also expand the functioning of the **Inter-Departmental Committee** so that it may hear not only grievance-based matters but also matters **referred by the Ministry**.




Faster response to specified unlawful information

Three-Hour Takedown Rule


Rule 3(1)(d) under the consolidated 2026 regime






What does the rule require?


One of the most controversial parts of the 2026 regime is the new three-hour takedown rule under Rule 3(1)(d). The consolidated 2026 Rules show that where an intermediary receives 'actual knowledge' that specified unlawful information is hosted on its platform, it must remove or disable access to that information within three hours of receiving such knowledge.



What counts as 'actual knowledge'?


The rule does not define 'actual knowledge' in open-ended terms. The amended text states that actual knowledge arises only in two ways: first, through an order of a court of competent jurisdiction; and second, through a reasoned written intimation issued by an authorised officer of the appropriate government or its authorised agency. The officer is generally not below the rank of Joint Secretary, and the legal basis and precise content location must be clearly specified.

- 1


Order of a court of competent jurisdiction
- 2



Reasoned written intimation by an authorised officer

Officer is generally not below the rank of Joint Secretary, and the legal basis and precise content location must be clearly specified.




Why is it significant?

MeitY's FAQ expressly states that the timeline has been reduced from 36 hours to 3 hours. The Ministry presents this as a faster response mechanism for unlawful information, especially deceptive SGI and comparable harms.



36
hours

→



3
hours

Expansion of Executive Power

- The strongest criticism of the March 2026 draft is that it would shift content regulation from formal statutory rules toward a more flexible executive regime based on **advisories, clarifications, directions,**

and codes of practice. Since compliance with these Ministry-issued instruments would count as part of due diligence under **Section 79**, the executive's interpretive documents would gain significant practical force for platforms seeking to preserve safe harbour.

- The proposed expansion of **Part III** also broadens executive reach. By applying the digital media oversight framework to **news and current affairs content hosted by non-publisher users** and by enabling matters to be referred directly by the Ministry to the **Inter-Departmental Committee**, the draft moves closer to a system where executive institutions can initiate scrutiny of content outside the traditional publisher category.

Impact on Digital News and Political Commentary

- The proposed **March 2026 draft** directly affects digital news and political commentary because it seeks to extend Part III not only to publishers but also to **intermediaries** and to **news and current affairs content hosted by non-publisher users**. This brings user-uploaded or platform-hosted current-affairs content into a more formal supervisory framework than before.
- The censorship concern becomes sharper because **Rule 14** would no longer be confined to complaint-driven proceedings. The **Inter-Departmental Committee** would be able to consider matters **referred by the Ministry**, which increases the role of executive initiation in content regulation.

Safe Harbour and Section 79

- **Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000** provides that an intermediary is not liable for third-party information if its role is limited to providing access or transmission and if it observes due diligence and other guidelines prescribed by the Central Government. The protection does not apply where the intermediary abets the unlawful act or fails to meet statutory conditions.
- The 2026 amendment explicitly addresses safe harbour. MeitY's FAQ states that removal or disabling of access to information, including SGI, in compliance with the Rules, including through reasonable technical measures or automated tools, will not by itself amount to violating the conditions under **Section 79(2)(a)** or **Section 79(2)(b)**. The Ministry presents this as a clarification designed to ensure that proactive compliance does not itself cost platforms their immunity.

Article 19(1)(a), Article 19(2), and Shreya Singhal

- Article **19(2)** permits the State to impose **reasonable restrictions** on that freedom only on specific grounds, including **sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, and incitement to an offence**.
- In **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India**, the Supreme Court struck down **Section 66A** and also read down the intermediary-liability regime. The Court held that **Section 79(3)(b)** remains valid only if "actual knowledge" is understood to mean knowledge obtained through a **court order** or a notification by the appropriate government or its agency concerning unlawful acts relatable to **Article 19(2)**. The Court also read down **Rule 3(4)** of the 2011 Rules in the same manner.
- This case remains central because every later attempt to tighten intermediary takedowns is measured against the constitutional limits recognised in *Shreya Singhal*: speech restrictions must stay within **Article 19(2)**, vague standards are suspect, and intermediary takedown obligations cannot be left to uncontrolled private or executive discretion.

Why Critics Call it a Digital Censorship Push

- Critics describe the 2026 direction as a **digital censorship push** for several reasons. First, the notified rules have shortened the principal takedown window from **36 hours to 3 hours**, which increases the likelihood

of rapid compliance without meaningful contest. Second, the draft Second Amendment would make compliance with Ministry-issued advisories, clarifications, directions, SOPs, and codes part of due diligence under **Section 79**, thereby enlarging the practical power of executive instruments over online speech.

- Third, the draft extends digital media oversight to **news and current affairs content hosted by non-publisher users** and allows the Ministry to refer matters directly to the **Inter-Departmental Committee**. Fourth, the background of the **Bombay High Court's 2024 decision** striking down the FCU rule strengthens the argument that executive truth-regulation and vague speech controls pose serious constitutional dangers.

Government's Justification

- The Government's stated justification is user safety, platform accountability, and regulatory certainty. MeitY's February 2026 FAQ states that the amendments were introduced in response to advances in **AI and machine learning** that made it easier to create deceptive synthetic content capable of causing **user harm, misinformation, impersonation, privacy violations, and threats to national integrity**. The Ministry frames the amendments as part of an effort to create an "**Open, Safe, Trusted and Accountable Internet**."
- With respect to the March 2026 draft, the Ministry states that the proposed amendments are **clarificatory and procedural**. It says they are intended to improve legal certainty, strengthen enforceability of Ministry directions, and ensure effective oversight of intermediary-hosted content, especially **news and current affairs** content. The additional **21 April 2026** notice also shows that the Ministry is treating the synthetic-content labeling issue as a continuing regulatory priority, including through the proposal of a **continuous and clearly visible display label** throughout the duration of visual SGI content.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following content categories falls within the SGI framework?
 - (a) Text-only generated content
 - (b) Plain-written digital content
 - (c) Manually typed digital content
 - (d) Audio-visual synthetic content
2. Which of the following provisions provides safe harbour protection to intermediaries?
 - (a) Section 66
 - (b) Section 79
 - (c) Section 69
 - (d) Section 67
3. Which of the following cases struck down Section 66A of the IT Act?
 - (a) Shreya Singhal Case
 - (b) Puttaswamy Privacy Case
 - (c) Anuradha Bhasin Case
 - (d) Kaushal Kishor Case
4. Which of the following mechanisms was created for appeals against platform grievance decisions?
 - (a) Content Grievance Committee
 - (b) Digital Grievance Committee
 - (c) Platform Grievance Committee
 - (d) Grievance Appellate Committee
5. Which of the following laws supports India's intermediary rules and safe harbour system?
 - (a) Information Technology Act
 - (b) Consumer Protection Act
 - (c) Competition Regulation Act
 - (d) Data Protection Act
6. Which of the following areas is governed under Part III of the IT Rules?
 - (a) Code of Ethics for Online Gaming
 - (b) Code of Ethics for Data Privacy
 - (c) Code of Ethics for Cyber Security
 - (d) Code of Ethics for Digital Media
7. Which of the following authorities issued clarifications on the synthetic-content framework?
 - (a) TRAI
 - (b) MeitY
 - (c) SEBI
 - (d) CCI
8. Which of the following complaint categories receives the fastest grievance response?
 - (a) Ordinary policy complaint
 - (b) Routine account complaint
 - (c) Morphed imagery complaint
 - (d) Standard content complaint
9. Which of the following output types is excluded from the SGI definition?
 - (a) Audio-only outputs
 - (b) Text-only outputs
 - (c) Visual-only outputs
 - (d) Video-only outputs
10. Which of the following labels is proposed for synthetic visual content?
 - (a) Continuous visible label
 - (b) Occasional visible label
 - (c) Temporary visible label
 - (d) Optional visible label
11. Which of the following routes can send matters to the Inter-Departmental Committee?
 - (a) Judicial referral route
 - (b) Publisher referral route
 - (c) Ministry referral route
 - (d) Consumer referral route
12. Which of the following courts struck down the fact-check-unit amendment?
 - (a) Delhi High Court
 - (b) Madras High Court
 - (c) Bombay High Court
 - (d) Kerala High Court
13. Which of the following constitutional provisions guarantees freedom of speech and expression?
 - (a) Article 18(1)(a)
 - (b) Article 19(1)(a)
 - (c) Article 20(1)(a)
 - (d) Article 21(1)(a)
14. Which of the following constitutional provisions lists reasonable restrictions on speech?
 - (a) Article 19(2)
 - (b) Article 19(1)
 - (c) Article 19(3)
 - (d) Article 19(4)
15. Which of the following requirements applies to SSIMs before publishing confirmed SGI?
 - (a) Publisher licence
 - (b) User declaration
 - (c) Judicial certificate
 - (d) Editorial approval

SOLUTIONS

1. (d) 2. (b) 3. (a) 4. (d) 5. (a) 6. (d) 7. (b) 8. (c)
 9. (b) 10. (a) 11. (c) 12. (c) 13. (b) 14. (a) 15. (b)

3 Defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026

IN FOCUS

- The **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026** was introduced in the **Lok Sabha on 16 April 2026** and was **negated in the Lok Sabha on 17 April 2026**. Its defeat became a major constitutional and political development because the Bill was designed to alter the existing framework of **delimitation, Lok Sabha representation, and the implementation of women's reservation**. The Bill formed part of a wider legislative package on delimitation introduced during the same session.
- The Bill did not fail because it lacked a simple majority. It failed because a constitutional amendment under **Article 368** requires a **special majority**, and the numbers in the Lok Sabha fell short of that threshold. In the voting held on **17 April 2026, 298 members voted in favour and 230 voted against, with 528 members participating**. That result was insufficient for the Bill to pass as a constitutional amendment. Once the Constitution Amendment Bill was voted down, the other two linked bills in the package became ineffective and were not pursued further.



131st Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2026

A proposal to reshape representation in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies

KEY CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS AT A GLANCE

1



What the Bill proposed

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 was a constitutional amendment proposal dealing with the future basis of representation in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. It proposed changes to Articles 55, 81, 82, 170, 330, 332, and 334A of the Constitution.

2



Why it was important

The proposed amendments were not narrow or technical. They affected the constitutional meaning of population, the timing and basis of delimitation, the maximum size of the Lok Sabha, the distribution of seats among States, and the constitutional trigger for implementation of women's reservation.

3



Representation and delimitation

The Bill sought to reintroduce the principle that seats in the Lok Sabha should once again be allocated to States broadly in proportion to population. It also proposed that Parliament should be able to decide by law when delimitation will be undertaken and which census figures will be used for that exercise.

4



Lok Sabha size and women's reservation

The Bill proposed to raise the constitutional ceiling of the Lok Sabha from 550 to 850 members, with up to 815 members from States and up to 35 members from Union Territories. It also proposed to alter the existing constitutional route for bringing into force one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

Background: Delimitation in India

- **Delimitation** means the process of fixing or redrawing the territorial boundaries of constituencies for legislative bodies. In the Indian system, delimitation is not merely an administrative exercise. It determines how population is translated into seats, how territorial constituencies are organised, and how the representative structure of Parliament and the State Assemblies is maintained over time. The Election Commission explains that this task is entrusted to a **Delimitation Commission**, which is also known as a **Boundary Commission**.
- India has constituted Delimitation Commissions **four times**, namely in **1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002**. The orders of a Delimitation Commission have the **force of law**. Those orders cannot ordinarily be modified by Parliament or the concerned State Legislature, and they come into force on a date specified by the **President of India**. This gives delimitation a final and binding character within the constitutional framework.
- The most recent full delimitation exercise was conducted under the **Delimitation Act, 2002**, and the final orders of that Commission were completed in **2008**. This means that India has not had a fresh national delimitation exercise after that period, even though population growth, migration, and urbanisation have significantly altered the demographic profile of the country.

Existing Constitutional Position on Delimitation Before the 2026 Bill

- Before the 2026 Bill was introduced, the Constitution still contained a population-based framework for representation, but that framework operated under a long constitutional freeze. **Article 81** provides that seats in the House of the People are to be allotted among the States in such a way that the ratio between the number of seats and the population of each State is, as far as practicable, the same for all States. It also provides that each State is to be divided into territorial constituencies in a way that maintains population equality as far as practicable. **Article 82** states that, upon completion of each census, the allocation of seats and the division of States into territorial constituencies shall be readjusted in such manner as Parliament may by law determine. Similar principles exist for State Legislative Assemblies under **Article 170**.
- However, this constitutional framework was modified by a series of earlier amendments. The **42nd Constitutional Amendment, 1976** froze the total number of seats allotted to each State in the Lok Sabha and the total number of seats in State Assemblies on the basis of the **1971 census**. That freeze was later extended by the **84th Constitutional Amendment, 2001** until the publication of the figures of the **first census after 2026**. A later amendment allowed internal readjustment of territorial constituencies on the basis of the **2001 census**, without altering the total number of seats allotted to the States. As a result, the Constitution presently preserves older inter-State seat shares even though the country's demographic realities have changed substantially.
- Under the existing constitutional text, the first full readjustment of representation after the freeze is tied to the **first census after 2026**. Until the relevant figures of that census are published, the Constitution continues to operate with older census references for different representational purposes. This constitutional arrangement is the starting point against which the 131st Amendment Bill must be understood.

Existing Constitutional Position on Delimitation Before the 2026 Bill

- The 2026 Bill was introduced in the context of sharp demographic changes across India. Population growth, regional imbalance, internal migration, and urbanisation have produced major differences in

constituency size and in the relationship between population and representation. The broader legislative package introduced in April 2026 sought to reopen the delimitation question rather than continue with the long constitutional freeze.

- The Bill was also directly linked to the operation of the **Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023**, which created **one-third reservation for women** in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. Under the present constitutional scheme, that reservation is not immediately operative. It is tied to a future delimitation exercise based on the **first census after the commencement of the 2023 amendment**. Since the reference date for the ongoing census is **1 March 2027**, and since the next Lok Sabha election is due in **2029**, the constitutional schedule makes it difficult for women's reservation to become operational before the 2029 general election. The 2026 Bill attempted to change that outcome by altering the constitutional trigger itself.

131st Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2026

Key Provisions of the Bill



1. Population-linked seat allocation

- One major feature of the Bill was that it proposed to restore the principle that seats in the Lok Sabha should be allotted to States in proportion to population.
- This would have moved the system away from long-preserved State seat shares based on older census figures and toward a fresh population-linked allocation.
- The Bill also retained the principle that constituencies within a State should continue to have broadly equal population.



2. Delimitation by parliamentary law

- A second major feature was that the Bill proposed that Parliament should decide by law when delimitation would be undertaken and which census would be used.
- Under the present Constitution, delimitation is textually linked to the census cycle.
- The proposed amendment would have shifted this decision into the domain of future parliamentary legislation.
- The linked delimitation framework introduced alongside the Bill was structured to enable the next delimitation exercise to proceed on the basis of the latest published census at the time of constitution of the Delimitation Commission, which in practice meant the 2011 census.



3. Expansion of the Lok Sabha

- A third major feature was the proposed expansion of the Lok Sabha.
- The Constitution currently provides for a maximum of 550 members, with up to 530 from States and up to 20 from Union Territories.
- The 131st Amendment Bill proposed to increase this constitutional ceiling to 850, with 815 members from States and 35 from Union Territories.
- This was a major institutional change because it would have altered the numerical size of the House of the People and the balance of parliamentary representation.



4. Women's reservation route

- A fourth major feature related to women's reservation.
- The 106th Amendment made one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies dependent on a delimitation exercise tied to the first census after the commencement of the 2023 Act.
- The 131st Amendment Bill proposed to remove that specific constitutional requirement and allow women's reservation to commence through the new delimitation route contemplated by the 2026 package.
- This made the Bill politically significant beyond the delimitation question itself.



Lok Sabha ceiling



Current constitutional ceiling: **550** (530 States + 20 Union Territories)



Proposed ceiling: **850** (815 States + 35 Union Territories)



Link with the Delimitation Bill, 2026 and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026

- The 131st Amendment Bill was one part of a larger three-bill package introduced in the Lok Sabha on **16**

April 2026. The other two bills were the **Delimitation Bill, 2026** and the **Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026**. These three bills were designed to work together. The constitutional amendment would change the constitutional framework, the Delimitation Bill would provide the statutory machinery for the next delimitation exercise, and the Union Territories Laws Amendment would extend similar consequences to certain Union Territories.

- The package was designed to enlarge the Lok Sabha, enable delimitation on the basis of the **2011 census**, and operationalise women's reservation through that earlier delimitation exercise. The Union Territories component was relevant particularly for **Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir**. Once the Constitution Amendment Bill failed in the Lok Sabha, the other two bills became infructuous and could not proceed meaningfully.

Proposed Delimitation Commission Structure

- The linked **Delimitation Bill, 2026** proposed that the Central Government would constitute a **Delimitation Commission** for carrying out delimitation. That Commission was to consist of a **Chairperson who is or has been a Judge of the Supreme Court**, the **Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner nominated by the Chief Election Commissioner**, and the **State Election Commissioner of the concerned State**. The Chairperson was to be appointed by the Central Government.
- The Delimitation Bill also proposed that each State would have **ten associate members**, consisting of **five members of the Lok Sabha from that State** and **five members of the State Legislative Assembly**. These associate members were meant to assist the Commission, but they were not given the power to vote or sign the Commission's final orders. The same bill provided that the delimitation exercise would be based on the **latest published census** as on the date the Commission was constituted.

Impact on Women's Reservation Under the 106th Amendment

- The **Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023** introduced one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. However, that amendment did not make the reservation operative immediately. It linked the commencement of reservation to a future delimitation exercise based on the **first census after the commencement of the 2023 Act**. This meant that the constitutional benefit existed in principle, but its actual implementation was deferred.
- The 131st Amendment Bill attempted to alter this position by removing the specific requirement that the reservation must wait for the first post-2023 census-based delimitation. The Bill therefore sought to bring forward the implementation of women's reservation by linking it to the new delimitation structure proposed in 2026. This was one of the most politically sensitive parts of the Bill, because it placed the issue of women's reservation within a much wider and more controversial debate on population-based seat reallocation and parliamentary restructuring.

Major Constitutional Issues Raised by the Bill

- One major constitutional issue concerned the question of **constitutional certainty**. Articles 81 and 82 currently tie delimitation to the census framework and preserve the existing freeze until the first census after 2026. The Bill would have changed this arrangement by allowing Parliament to decide by ordinary law when delimitation would take place and which census would be used. This would have shifted a structurally important constitutional matter away from fixed constitutional text and into future

parliamentary legislation.

- A second major constitutional issue concerned the **relative share of States in the Lok Sabha**. The proposed shift toward a delimitation exercise based on the **2011 census** would have changed the State-wise distribution of seats. The legislative material projected that, if the total number of seats remained unchanged, **Tamil Nadu** would fall from **39 to 32 seats**, **Kerala** would fall from **20 to 15 seats**, **Uttar Pradesh** would rise from **80 to 89 seats**, **Bihar** would rise from **40 to 46 seats**, and **Rajasthan** would rise from **25 to 30 seats**. These projected changes show that the Bill was not simply about technical constituency adjustment; it was about a redistribution of parliamentary weight across the Union.
- A third issue concerned the **increase in the size of the Lok Sabha without a corresponding change in the Rajya Sabha ceiling**. The Bill proposed to increase the Lok Sabha ceiling to **850**, while leaving the constitutional maximum of the Rajya Sabha unchanged at **250**. This would have altered the institutional ratio between the two Houses. It would also have reduced the relative share of Rajya Sabha members in the election of the **President** and **Vice-President**, and would have increased the numerical dominance of the Lok Sabha in a **joint sitting** under Article 108.
- A fourth issue concerned the possible increase in the maximum permissible size of the **Council of Ministers**. Under **Article 75**, the total number of Ministers cannot exceed **15% of the total number of members of the Lok Sabha**. If the Lok Sabha were increased from **543 to 815**, the permissible size of the Council of Ministers would increase from **81 to 122**. This gave the Bill implications not only for representation, but also for the structure and size of the executive.
- A fifth issue concerned the functioning of Parliament itself. A significantly larger Lok Sabha would necessarily mean that each individual member would have less time and fewer opportunities for speeches, questions, and ballot-based interventions. This was not merely a procedural inconvenience. It related to the quality of legislative participation and scrutiny in a greatly enlarged House.
- A sixth issue lay in the drafting itself. The constitutional amendment introduced the expression **“Delimitation Commission”** into the constitutional structure, but did not define that expression within the amendment text. That left part of the operational meaning to the linked statutory bill rather than to the constitutional amendment itself.

Federal and Political Implications of Delimitation

- The Bill reopened one of the most sensitive issues in Indian federalism, namely the relationship between **population growth** and **political representation**. The long constitutional freeze had prevented sharp inter-State changes in Lok Sabha seat shares. The proposed 2026 framework would have moved away from that freeze and toward a new allocation more closely linked to current population realities. That made the Bill politically sensitive for States whose parliamentary share was likely to decline under a fresh population-based redistribution.
- The Bill therefore carried implications far beyond electoral administration. It touched the larger political balance between northern and southern States, the constitutional consequences of population stabilisation, and the question of whether representation should shift sharply in response to demographic changes accumulated over decades. Because the Bill combined this representational issue with women’s reservation, it intensified both political and constitutional disagreement.

Why the Bill Was Opposed and Defeated

- The Bill was opposed because it combined several controversial structural changes in one constitutional package. It proposed to enlarge the Lok Sabha, change the constitutional basis of delimitation, reopen the question of State-wise representation, and alter the trigger for implementation of women’s reservation.

These were all matters of deep institutional significance, and they required broad cross-party consensus that the government was unable to secure.

- The Bill was defeated because it did not obtain the **special majority** required under **Article 368**. That Article requires not only a majority of the total membership of the House, but also a majority of not less than **two-thirds of the members present and voting**. Since the Bill also dealt with matters such as **Article 55** and representation of States in Parliament, it would have attracted further constitutional consequences if it had passed Parliament. However, the Bill failed at the Lok Sabha stage itself, because the **298 votes in favour** were insufficient against **230 votes against** in light of the special-majority requirement.

Immediate Consequences of the Defeat

- The immediate consequence of the defeat is that the **existing constitutional framework continues unchanged**. The current constitutional timetable tied to the **first census after 2026** remains in force. The proposed Lok Sabha expansion to **850**, the proposed delimitation based on the **2011 census**, and the proposed earlier constitutional activation of women's reservation did not become law.
- The defeat of the 131st Amendment Bill also meant that the two linked bills became infructuous. The 2026 delimitation package therefore collapsed in the Lok Sabha itself. In practical terms, this means that the constitutional debate over delimitation and women's reservation remains unresolved and will have to be confronted again through some future political and legislative process.

Significance for Indian Constitutional Law

- The significance of the Bill lies in the scale of constitutional change it attempted. It was not confined to one procedural amendment. It sought to alter the relationship between the Constitution and ordinary law in the field of representation by moving crucial choices about the timing and census basis of delimitation out of the constitutional text and into future parliamentary legislation. It also sought to reshape the future distribution of parliamentary seats and to accelerate the operation of women's reservation.
- Its defeat preserved the constitutional status quo, but it did not remove the underlying constitutional questions. India still faces unresolved issues regarding the next delimitation exercise, the census basis that should be used, the balance between population and federal stability, the future size of the Lok Sabha, and the actual commencement of women's reservation. The failure of the Bill means that all of these questions remain open.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following constitutional provisions prescribes the requirement of a special majority for passing an amendment Bill?
(a) Article 352 (b) Article 356
(c) Article 368 (d) Article 370
2. Which of the following best defines delimitation?
(a) Allocation of public funds across regions
(b) Appointment of members to legislatures
(c) Regulation of voting procedures elections
(d) Redrawing boundaries of constituencies
3. The Delimitation Commission is also known by which of the following of the names?
(a) Boundary Commission (b) Finance Commission
(c) Planning Commission (d) Election Commission
4. Which of the following is not among the years in which Delimitation Commissions were constituted?
(a) 1952 (b) 1963
(c) 1973 (d) 1991
5. Who specifies the date from which Delimitation Commission orders become effective?
(a) President of India (b) Judiciary of India
(c) Executive of India (d) Legislature of India
6. Which of the following year marks the completion of final orders under the Delimitation Act, 2002?
(a) 2005 (b) 2006
(c) 2007 (d) 2008
7. Which of the following articles provides population-based allocation of seats in the House of the People?
(a) Article 80 (b) Article 81
(c) Article 82 (d) Article 83
8. Which of the following bodies is covered under Article 170 for similar principles of seat allocation and territorial constituency division at the State level?
(a) Union Legislative Councils
(b) District Planning Committees
(c) State Legislative Assemblies
(d) Central Advisory Councils
9. Which of the following constitutional amendments extended the freeze on Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats until figures of the first census after 2026 are published?
(a) 42nd Constitutional Amendment, 1976
(b) 84th Constitutional Amendment, 2001
(c) 86th Constitutional Amendment, 2002
(d) 91st Constitutional Amendment, 2003
10. Which of the following laws was linked with the 2026 Bill in relation to women's reservation?
(a) Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023
(b) Constitution (105th Amendment) Act, 2021
(c) Constitution (104th Amendment) Act, 2019
(d) Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, 2019
11. Which of the following reservations for women was created in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies under the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023?
(a) one-fifth reservation (b) one-sixth reservation
(c) one-third reservation (d) one-tenth reservation
12. Which of the following figures represents the total Lok Sabha ceiling proposed by the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026?
(a) 650 members (b) 750 members
(c) 850 members (d) 950 members
13. Which of the following Union Territory groups was particularly relevant to the Union Territories component of the 2026 delimitation package?
(a) Chandigarh, Ladakh, and Andaman and Nicobar
(b) Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir
(c) Lakshadweep, Daman, and Dadra Nagar
(d) Goa, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh
14. Which percentage ceiling applies to the Council of Ministers under Article 75 of the Constitution?
(a) 10% (b) 12%
(c) 20% (d) 15%

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (d) | 3. (a) | 4. (d) | 5. (a) | 6. (d) | 7. (b) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (a) | 11. (c) | 12. (c) | 13. (b) | 14. (d) | | |

4 India-Republic of Korea Strategic Vision 2026–2030

IN FOCUS

- The **Joint Strategic Vision for the India–ROK Special Strategic Partnership** was announced on **20 April 2026** during the **State Visit of President Lee Jae Myung of the Republic of Korea to India from 19–21 April 2026**. It was presented as the principal political outcome of the visit.
- The 2026 visit produced a broad package of outcomes beyond the vision document itself, including a **Comprehensive Framework for Partnership in Shipbuilding, Shipping & Maritime Logistics**, a **Joint Statement on Sustainability**, a **Joint Statement on Energy Resource Security**, multiple sectoral MoUs, the **launch of an Economic Security Dialogue**, the **ROK joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative**, and the decision to commemorate **2028–29 as the Year of India–ROK Friendship**.
- India officially described the new joint vision as **comprehensive in scope** and **forward-looking in ambition**, and stated that it would serve as the roadmap for the overall bilateral relationship as well as for the two countries' positions on important regional and global issues.

India–South Korea Relations

1962

Consular relations established

10 Dec 1973

Formal diplomatic relations established

Key diplomatic milestones

- **2010:** Ties elevated to a Strategic Partnership.
- **2015:** Upgraded to a Special Strategic Partnership during PM Narendra Modi's State Visit to Seoul.
- **2023:** The two countries commemorated 50 years of diplomatic relations.

Historical and cultural foundation

The relationship draws on older civilisational links. Korean tradition associates Princess Suriratna of Ayodhya with Queen Heo Hwang-ok. Rabindranath Tagore's 1929 poem 'Lamp of the East' remains widely known in Korea and is often cited as a symbol of cultural affinity.

India's role in Korea and modern engagement

- India contributed to developments on the Korean Peninsula after Korea's independence and during the Korean War.
- India served on the UN Commission in 1947 and deployed the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance.
- India sponsored a UN resolution before the 27 July 1953 ceasefire.
- Lt. Gen. K.S. Thimayya played a role in the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, and Custodian Forces–India helped address prisoner-of-war issues.
- The 2018 vision document, 'India and Republic of Korea: A Vision for People, Prosperity, Peace and our Future,' framed future cooperation.
- The 2025 bilateral brief records continuing leader-level and ministerial engagement, including 2025 meetings between PM Modi and President Lee Jae Myung on the sidelines of the G7 and G20 before the 2026 State Visit.

Partnership pillars:

People • Prosperity
• Peace • Future

What is the India–ROK Strategic Vision 2026–2030?

- The **India–ROK Strategic Vision 2026–2030** is a **five-year joint roadmap** intended to implement and deepen the **India–ROK Special Strategic Partnership** in the next phase of bilateral relations. The document states that the two leaders announced this vision for **“the next five years (2026–2030)”** in order to implement and add further content to the partnership.

- The vision is built around the idea that India and the Republic of Korea are **two resilient democracies of Asia, leading world economies**, and partners connected by **deep historical ties, mutual goodwill**, and **shared democratic and civilisational values**. It explicitly records that India views the Republic of Korea as an indispensable partner in its **Act East Policy**, while the Republic of Korea views India as a central pillar of its broader pragmatic diplomacy.
- The document is not confined to one sector. It covers **political exchanges, strategic trust, defence dialogue, economic security, industry, trade, finance, shipbuilding, technology, digital cooperation, space, critical minerals, energy, climate, multilateral coordination, education, culture, and people-to-people links**. This wide sectoral spread shows that the 2026–2030 vision is a multidimensional strategic plan rather than a single-issue bilateral statement.

India–ROK Strategic Vision 2026–2030

<h4>2026–2030</h4> <p>Five-year joint roadmap</p>	<h4>Special Strategic Partnership</h4> <p>Next-phase implementation vision</p>
<h4>What is the vision?</h4> <p>A joint five-year roadmap announced for 2026–2030 to implement and deepen the India–ROK Special Strategic Partnership. The document states that the two leaders launched this vision to add further content to the partnership in its next phase.</p>	<h4>Strategic framing</h4> <p>The vision describes India and the Republic of Korea as resilient Asian democracies, major world economies, and partners linked by historical ties, mutual goodwill, and shared democratic and civilisational values. India sees the Republic of Korea as an indispensable partner in its Act East Policy, while the Republic of Korea views India as a central pillar of its pragmatic diplomacy.</p>
<h4>Key areas covered</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political exchanges and strategic trust. • Defence dialogue, economic security, and industry. • Trade, finance, shipbuilding, and supply-chain cooperation. • Technology, digital cooperation, space, and critical minerals. • Energy, climate cooperation, and multilateral coordination. • Education, culture, and people-to-people links. <p>The wide sectoral spread shows that the 2026–2030 vision is a multidimensional strategic plan rather than a single-issue bilateral statement.</p>	

Vision pillars:

Trust
Growth
Technology
People

Strategic and Political Foundations

- The 2026 joint vision places strong emphasis on **high-level political guidance**. The two leaders agreed to hold **leader-level meetings annually**, either in one of the two countries or on the margins of international events, so that the Special Strategic Partnership continues to receive regular top-level direction.
- The two sides also agreed to intensify **ministerial and institutional dialogue**. The vision records that the **India–ROK Joint Commission led by the Foreign Ministers**, the **Finance Ministers’ Meeting**, and the **Joint Committee of the Science and Technology Ministers** would all be held in 2026. It further records that the **Defence Minister of India** would visit the Republic of Korea in **May 2026** for the joint inauguration of the war memorial commemorating India’s role in the Korean War.
- Parliamentary and sub-national exchanges were also built into the strategic framework. The two leaders supported regular exchanges between the Speakers and Members of the Indian Parliament and the Korean National Assembly, welcomed the establishment of India–ROK Parliamentary Friendship Groups, and

- encouraged stronger ties between States and Provinces as well as sister-city and friendship-city relationships, including Busan–Mumbai, Incheon–Kolkata, and Ulsan–Chennai.
- The political foundation of the vision also includes stronger engagement with future opinion-shapers. The two sides welcomed programmes and initiatives that would enable young legislators, diplomats, eminent personalities, media, and officials to exchange visits and build deeper understanding of common challenges and opportunities.

Economic Security Dialogue

- One of the most important new institutional innovations announced during the visit was the **launch of an India–ROK Economic Security Dialogue**. The Joint Strategic Vision states that this dialogue is intended to enhance **supply-chain resilience**, promote **market diversification**, and advance cooperation in **cutting-edge technologies** on the basis of mutual strategic trust.
- This dialogue reflects a broader shift in bilateral relations from traditional trade alone to **strategic economic coordination**. In the official special briefing, India stated that new areas of cooperation would include **shipbuilding, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, critical minerals, supply-chain resilience, and diversification**, which indicates that the economic partnership is now being framed through the lens of geoeconomic security as well as commercial gain.
- The Economic Security Dialogue also fits into the larger logic of the 2026 vision, which treats technology, industrial policy, critical inputs, and market access as interlinked rather than separate domains. The launch of this dialogue therefore marks a movement toward a more strategic and coordinated economic partnership between the two countries.

Industrial Cooperation and CEPA Upgrade

- The 2026 vision gives industry a central place. The two leaders welcomed the **MOU on the India–ROK Industrial Cooperation Committee**, which is intended to strengthen bilateral economic ties, expand trade and investment, and unlock new industrial opportunities. The sectors specifically identified include **automobiles, shipbuilding, chemicals, semiconductors, telecom equipment, displays, and secondary batteries**. The framework also covers cooperation on **strategic resources, critical minerals, rare earths, green hydrogen and its derivatives, nuclear power plant projects, and overseas resource development projects**.
- Trade and investment already provide an important base for this industrial agenda. The official bilateral brief records that the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** has been in force since **2010**, that bilateral trade for **January–October 2025** was **USD 21.5 billion**, that trade in **2024** stood at **USD 25.1 billion**, and that trade had reached a record **USD 27.8 billion in 2022**. It also notes that the Republic of Korea was India's **15th largest FDI investor**, with **USD 929 million** invested in **2024** and cumulative investment since 1980 reaching around **USD 10 billion**.
- The 2026 vision tries to build on this base by reviving the trade architecture itself. The two leaders welcomed the decision to **resume and expedite CEPA upgrade negotiations for early conclusion**, with the aim of realising the full potential of bilateral trade and promoting mutually beneficial exchanges in areas such as **digital trade, supply-chain collaboration, and the green economy**.
- The industrial pillar also extends to SMEs and steel. The two leaders welcomed an **MOU on SMEs** and directed their authorities to connect small and medium enterprises more effectively so that they can benefit from each other's markets. They also agreed to establish an **India–ROK Annual Steel Dialogue** and welcomed the **POSCO–JSW MOU** for establishing a **6 MMT integrated steel plant in Odisha**.

Shipbuilding, Shipping, and Maritime Logistics

- Shipbuilding and maritime logistics form one of the strongest pillars of the 2026–2030 vision.

- The two sides adopted an **India–ROK Comprehensive Framework for Partnership in Shipbuilding, Shipping and Maritime Logistics**, and India’s official outcomes list treated it as one of the principal outcomes of the visit.
- The Joint Strategic Vision connects this maritime push to India’s **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision** and recognises the Republic of Korea as a leading **shipbuilding and maritime nation**. The two leaders expressed support for a range of **business-to-business collaborations** covering **shipyard development, critical infrastructure for shipyard establishment, port operations, and shipping and maritime logistics in India**.
- The two sides also welcomed the opening of the **Korea Marine Equipment Association (KOMEA)** office in **Mumbai**, describing it as the first such office and noting that it would contribute to the development of the ancillary ecosystem needed to support the maritime industry. They also took note of the successful hosting of the **India–ROK Business Forum on 20 April 2026** and agreed to hold regular interactions among leading industry associations on the sidelines of the Industrial Cooperation Committee and its working groups.
- The maritime pillar is broader than shipyards alone. The outcomes list also included an **MOU on Cooperation in the Field of Ports** and an **MoU for Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Heritage**, showing that the 2026 framework integrates industrial, infrastructure, and heritage dimensions of maritime cooperation.

Technology, Digital Bridge, and Science Cooperation

- The 2026 vision identifies advanced technology as a major future-oriented pillar. The two leaders welcomed the launch of the **Framework for India–Korea Digital Bridge**, which focuses on **artificial intelligence, data governance, and digital businesses**. The document also specifically recognises the enabling role of **semiconductors** in supporting digital innovation and cooperation.
- The technology section of the joint vision goes beyond broad declarations. Prime Minister Modi briefed President Lee on the growth of the **semiconductor industry in India** and invited Korean businesses to take advantage of India’s incentives and market opportunities. The two leaders also endorsed deeper cooperation across **AI verticals**, especially in **research and talent nurturing**, and linked this to inclusive AI development ideas such as “**AI for All**” and “**MANAV**.”
- Science and technology cooperation has also been institutionalised through a specific **MOU on Cooperation in the Field of Science & Technology**, which was included in the outcomes list. The joint vision further records that the two sides would promote **joint R&D** through the next **Joint Committee on Science and Technology**, and strengthen links between their scientific institutions and human capital systems.
- Space cooperation also forms part of this future-facing technological agenda. The two leaders welcomed efforts to establish a **Joint Working Group between ISRO and KASA**, explore cooperation at the level of national space agencies, and hold an **India–ROK Space Day** in Bengaluru to connect startups, industries, and research institutions. They also encouraged exploration of mutual support for each other’s **satellite navigation systems**.

Energy Resource Security

- Energy and materials security were elevated to a distinct strategic issue during the visit. The outcomes list included a separate **India–Republic of Korea Joint Statement on Energy Resource Security**, and the official document states that India and the Republic of Korea share a common vision for an **open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific region** in this context.
- The Joint Strategic Vision explains the logic behind this pillar. It states that, in the context of turmoil in

- global energy and resource markets, India and the Republic of Korea as major importers of **hydrocarbons and key minerals** need to cooperate on **efficient energy use, mineral extraction, processing, recycling,** and the **co-development of alternative energies and materials** in an environmentally sustainable manner. It also stresses the importance of building **secure, resilient, and innovation-driven supply chains** across critical minerals and advanced technologies.

Indo-Pacific and Global Coordination

- The strategic vision gives a clear regional dimension to the relationship. The two leaders acknowledged the similarity of their visions of a **free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region based on the rule of law**, and Prime Minister Modi welcomed the **Republic of Korea joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)**.
- Security dialogue is also being upgraded. Following the **India-ROK Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue in February 2026**, the two sides agreed to aim for the **Joint Committee Meeting on Defence Industry Cooperation** and the inaugural **Defence and Foreign Affairs 2+2 Dialogue at Vice Minister level**. The joint vision also records cooperation against **terrorism and violent extremism**, including cross-border terrorism, terrorist financing, and the nexus between terrorism and transnational crime.
- The global coordination dimension is broader still. The two sides reaffirmed their support for a **rules-based, open, fair, equitable, transparent, inclusive, and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system** with the **WTO** at its core, agreed to enhance collaboration in multilateral fora including the **G20**, and reaffirmed commitments relating to **freedom of navigation and overflight, UNCLOS**, and peaceful dispute resolution. The vision also records India's support for the ROK's efforts toward **peace and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula**.

People-to-People, Culture, and Sports

- The 2026 vision gives a very prominent place to social, cultural, and educational cooperation. The two leaders supported stronger cultural linkages between institutions in both countries and welcomed the extension of the **Cultural Exchange Programme for 2026-2030**. They also welcomed the **MOU on Cultural and Creative Industries**, which includes support for collaboration in the **film sector, co-productions, training exchanges**, and technology-sharing in fields such as **animation** and **VFX**.
- The two sides also agreed to promote awareness of each other's heritage through initiatives such as **India Day in the ROK** and **Korea Day in India**. The vision recalls the shared **Buddhist heritage** of the two countries, welcomes India's donation of **200 artefacts** to the ROK, and notes Gimhae's efforts to deepen civilisational exchange. Sports cooperation was separately institutionalised through an **MOU on Cooperation in the Field of Sports**, covering exchanges of experts and personnel, programmes relating to coaching and sports science, and cooperation between sports authorities.
- Educational cooperation forms another major people-to-people pillar. The two leaders reaffirmed that education is a cornerstone of the partnership and welcomed stronger collaboration between **universities and secondary schools**, as well as **faculty exchange, student exchange**, and **joint academic initiatives**, especially in **AI** and **STEM**. They also supported the teaching of the **Korean language in India** and **Indian languages, especially Hindi, in the ROK**, and welcomed the launch of the **first Korea Education Centre in India in January 2026**.
- The people-to-people agenda is also supported by scholarships, academic networks, and mobility. The two sides welcomed the Global Korea Scholarship for Indian recipients and reciprocal Indian scholarships for Korean recipients through ICCR and AYUSH schemes, aimed to expand scholarship slots, supported cooperation between the 23 IITs and the KNU10 Consortium in Korea, and agreed to make visa and immigration processes more efficient while also strengthening air connectivity.

Year of India–ROK Friendship 2028–29

- India and the Republic of Korea decided to commemorate **2028–29 as the Year of India–ROK Friendship**. This was listed among the principal announcements made during the State Visit and is also repeated in the Joint Strategic Vision itself.
- The decision gives the strategic partnership a public-diplomacy and symbolic dimension. The two leaders stated that the Year of Friendship would be marked through **a series of cultural activities**, thereby ensuring that the 2026–2030 strategic roadmap is not confined to governments, ministries, and corporations, but is also translated into wider societal and cultural engagement.
- This commemoration also fits naturally into the logic of the partnership’s recent milestones. The two sides had already commemorated **50 years of diplomatic relations in 2023**, and the Joint Strategic Vision notes that **2025 marked ten years of the Special Strategic Partnership**. The Year of Friendship therefore extends a sequence of symbolic and political milestones into the next phase of bilateral relations.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which of the following leaders' State Visit was associated with the announcement of the India–ROK Strategic Vision?
 - Prime Minister Fumio Kishida
 - President Yoon Suk Chan Yeol
 - President Emmanuel Macron
 - President Lee Jae Myung
- Which of the following best describes the purpose of the India–ROK Strategic Vision?
 - Overall bilateral relationship roadmap
 - Limited trade negotiation framework
 - Temporary climate cooperation platform
 - Regional tourism promotion mechanism
- India views the Republic of Korea as an indispensable partner under which policy?
 - Act East Policy
 - Look West Policy
 - Digital India Mission
 - Neighbourhood First Policy
- The Republic of Korea views India as a central pillar of which diplomatic approach?
 - Indo–Pacific outreach diplomacy
 - Broader pragmatic diplomacy
 - Cultural heritage diplomacy
 - Maritime security diplomacy
- India–ROK relations were upgraded to which of the following recognised bilateral status?
 - Special Strategic Partnership
 - Comprehensive Economic Partnership
 - Ordinary Diplomatic Partnership
 - Regional Dialogue Partnership
- Princess Suriratna of Ayodhya is later remembered in Korean tradition by which of the following names?
 - Queen Mira Bai
 - Queen Ahilya Bai
 - Queen Heo Hwang-ok
 - Queen Rani Durgavati
- Which of the following poems by Rabindranath Tagore is remembered in Korea?
 - Song of the Ocean
 - Bridge of the East
 - Lamp of the East
 - Voice of the Nation
- Which of the following new dialogues was launched to strengthen supply-chain resilience and technology cooperation?
 - Cultural Exchange Dialogue
 - Economic Security Dialogue
 - Maritime Heritage Dialogue
 - Parliamentary Friendship Dialogue
- Which of the following areas formed a major maritime cooperation pillar under the India–ROK Strategic Vision 2026–2030?
 - Shipbuilding, shipping, and maritime logistics
 - Tourism, shipping, aviation, and cultural mobility
 - Textiles, handicrafts, logistics and retail markets
 - Banking, insurance, funds and fiscal taxation
- In which of the following Indian cities the Korea Marine Equipment Association office was opened?
 - Chennai
 - Kolkata
 - Bengaluru
 - Mumbai
- The India–Korea Digital Bridge focuses on which group of areas?
 - Ports, shipping, logistics, maritime heritage
 - AI, data governance, digital businesses
 - Tourism, films, music, cultural festivals
 - Taxation, banking, insurance, fiscal reforms
- Which of the following agency pairs was linked to the proposed space cooperation working group?
 - ISRO and KASA agencies
 - DRDO and NASA agencies
 - ISRO and JAXA agencies
 - KASA and ESA agencies
- Which of the following was highlighted under energy and resource security cooperation?
 - Luxury goods
 - Critical minerals
 - Tourism services
 - Media exports
- Which of the following initiatives did the Republic of Korea join under the regional cooperation dimension?
 - Indian Ocean Rim
 - Global Green Growth
 - International Solar Alliance
 - Indo–Pacific Oceans Initiative

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

15. Which of the following commemorative initiatives was agreed by India and the Republic of Korea?
- (a) Year of Defence Cooperation
 - (b) Year of India-ROK Friendship
 - (c) Year of Judicial Exchange
 - (d) Year of Taxation Reform

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (d) | 2. (a) | 3. (a) | 4. (b) | 5. (a) | 6. (c) | 7. (c) | 8. (b) |
| 9. (a) | 10. (d) | 11. (b) | 12. (a) | 13. (b) | 14. (d) | 15. (b) | |

5 Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026

IN FOCUS

- The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming (**PROG Act, 2025**), enacted by Parliament in August 2025, established a comprehensive legal framework to govern India's online gaming sector, imposing a complete ban on **online money games** while providing an enabling environment for e-sports and online social games.
- MeitY finalised the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026, following extensive inter-ministerial consultations and vetting by the Department of Legal Affairs, with the Rules scheduled to come into force on 1 May 2026.
- The Rules establish the **Online Gaming Authority** of India (OGAI) as a unified, digital-first national regulator, introduce a selective determination and registration mechanism, and prescribe mandatory user protections, a two-tier grievance system, and proportionate civil penalty powers.

India's Expanding Digital Gaming Landscape

- Online games are defined as those played on electronic or digital devices, operated through software using the internet or other electronic communication technologies, and enabling real-time interaction and competition among players irrespective of geographical location.
- Online games in India are broadly categorised into two legally distinct groups:
 - Skill-based games, which prioritise skill over chance, are legally permitted in India; prominent examples include platforms such as Game 24X7, Dream11, and Mobile Premier League (MPL).
 - Games of chance, whose outcomes depend primarily on luck rather than skill, are classified as illegal; roulette is a commonly cited example of a format that attracts participants primarily for monetary rewards.
- As of 2025, approximately 591 million Indians are active online gamers, representing around 40% of the national population and nearly 20% of all gamers globally.
- In 2023, India was identified as the world's largest gaming market by user base, recording 568 million gamers and 9.5 billion app downloads during that year.
- The online gaming industry accounts for approximately 30% of the new media ecosystem's revenue, amounting to around USD 3.8 billion, and is characterised as the fastest-growing segment within that ecosystem.
- Between 2020 and 2023, the sector recorded a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 28%; the market is projected to reach USD 9.2 billion by 2029, while a separate projection estimates a market size of USD 8.6 billion by 2028.
- The rapid growth of the sector has been accompanied by rising concerns over addiction, financial fraud, and inconsistent state-level regulations, with platforms such as Dream11, PokerBaazi, WinZO, and MPL emerging as major participants in the real-money gaming segment directly affected by the new framework.

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025

The PROG Act, 2025 establishes a comprehensive legal framework to regulate and promote the online gaming sector while ensuring a safe and responsible digital environment across the country.

The Act classifies online games into three distinct categories:

- **E-sports**, recognised as legitimate, competitive, skill-based sporting activities;
- Online social games, which are primarily skill-based and oriented towards entertainment or social interaction; and
- Online money games, which involve financial stakes and are entirely prohibited under the Act.

- The Act imposes a complete prohibition on online money games, banning their offering, advertisement, and associated financial transactions; banks and financial institutions are specifically barred from processing payments linked to such platforms.
- Authorities under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 are empowered to block online gaming platforms found to be operating unlawfully within India.
- The Act carries nationwide applicability, extending to both domestic platforms and offshore platforms accessible within India.
- Section 19 of the Act empowers the Central Government to make rules to carry out its provisions, forming the legislative basis for the PROG Rules, 2026.



The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026

- The PROG Rules, 2026 serve as the operational architecture of the PROG Act, 2025, organised into 6 Parts and 26 Rules covering the principal pillars of the regulatory framework.
- The Rules aim to provide a clear, transparent, and time-bound mechanism to classify online games, establish a unified digital-first regulator, create a statutory registration regime for e-sports and notified categories of social games, and prescribe procedures for inquiry and civil penalties under Section 12 of the Act.
- The Rules seek to protect citizens, especially children and vulnerable users, from the financial, psychological, and social harms associated with predatory online money gaming platforms and addictive design patterns, while ensuring regulatory certainty for compliant industry participants through predictable timelines and a digital-first process.

Online Gaming Authority of India

- The OGAI is constituted as an attached office of MeitY, headquartered in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, and is mandated to function as a digital-first office to the greatest extent practicable.
- The Authority is chaired by the Additional Secretary, MeitY, in an ex officio capacity, and includes Joint Secretary-level representatives from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Department of Financial Services (DFS) under the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, and the Department of Legal Affairs under the Ministry of Law and Justice.
- The OGAI's functions include maintaining and publishing public lists of online money games, issuing codes of practice and operational directions, adjudicating user complaints, entertaining appeals against service provider decisions, and coordinating enforcement actions with financial institutions and law enforcement agencies.

Classification and Determination Mechanism

- The Rules prescribe a **determination test** under Part III (Rules 8 to 11) to classify whether an online game constitutes an online money game, triggered in three situations: suo motu action by the Authority; an application by a service provider seeking to offer the game as an e-sport; or a notification by the Central Government requiring a category of social games to be classified.
- Rule 9 enumerates the objective factors for determination, including the payment of fees or stakes, the expectation of monetary winnings, the structure of the revenue model, and the manner in which rewards or in-game assets are redeemed or monetised outside the game.
- The determination process is, as far as practicable, to be completed within 90 days of receipt of a complete application or of notice issued in a suo motu proceeding, with the outcome recorded in a determination order specific to the particular game and service provider.

Registration Framework

- Registration under Part IV (Rules 12 to 19) is not universally mandated; it is required only for online games intended to be offered as e-sports, or for specific categories of online social games notified by the Central Government on the basis of risk to users including children, scale of participation, volume of financial transactions, and country of origin.
- Upon successful determination and registration, the OGAI issues a digital **Certificate of Registration** bearing a unique registration number, valid for a period of up to 10 years.
- The Rules explicitly provide that an online money game is entirely ineligible for recognition or registration as an e-sport under the **National Sports Governance Act, 2025**.
- Registered service providers are required to prominently display determination or registration details on the interface through which the game is offered, designate a point of contact for regulatory purposes, comply with data retention directions, and observe directions issued in relation to the facilitation of payments.

User Safety and Consumer Protection

- Rule 2(1)(i) introduces the concept of **user safety features**, defined as technical, procedural, operational, behavioural, or system-related safeguards appropriate to the risk profile of the game.
- Mandated safeguards include age verification and age-gating, time restrictions, parental controls, user reporting tools, counselling support, and fair-play and integrity monitoring.
- Service providers are required to disclose their user safety features and internal grievance mechanisms at the time of application for determination or registration, as prescribed under Rule 23.

Grievance Redressal and Appellate Mechanism

- Every online game service provider offering an online social game or e-sport is required to establish and maintain a functional grievance redressal mechanism at the platform level.
- A user dissatisfied with the provider's resolution, or in the case of non-redressal, may approach the OGAI within 30 days of the service provider's decision, and the Authority is required to endeavour to dispose of the appeal within a further 30 days.
- A second appeal lies before the Appellate Authority, designated as the Secretary, MeitY, who is required to dispose of such appeals within 30 days of receipt.

Enforcement Through the Financial Ecosystem

- A significant feature of the regulatory framework is the inclusion of banks and payment gateways as active enforcement participants, requiring them to verify a game's regulatory status before processing any transactions and to comply with the OGAI's directions, particularly those restricting payments linked to online money games.
- **Financial intermediaries**, including banks and payment gateway operators, are thus positioned as a primary compliance layer within the broader enforcement architecture, supplementing direct regulatory oversight by the OGAI.

Data Storage and Evolving Regulatory Scope

- Gaming platforms offering online social games or e-sports are required to store user data within India as a condition of registration, ensuring continued domestic regulatory oversight over platform-level information.
- **Data localisation** requirements form part of the framework's broader approach to maintaining jurisdictional oversight of user data and enabling regulatory access to platform information when required.
- The OGAI is further empowered to issue future guidelines on advertising, user safety, and operational compliance, allowing the regulatory framework to adapt to the evolving dynamics of the digital gaming ecosystem.

Civil Penalties and Enforcement Proceedings

- Proceedings under Part V (Rules 21 to 22) are to be conducted in digital mode unless physical presence is deemed necessary, and must be concluded within 90 days of receipt of a complaint.
- Penalties are calibrated to be proportionate, with the OGAI required to take into account factors including the gain derived from non-compliance, the loss caused to users, the recurrence of violations, the gravity of the offence, and the mitigation efforts undertaken by the service provider.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- Which of the following ministries is associated with finalising the online gaming rules?
 - Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India
 - Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India
 - Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India
 - Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, India
- What administrative status is assigned to the Online Gaming Authority of India?
 - Attached office under MeitY digital governance
 - Independent commission
 - Sports tribunal
 - Enforcement cell
- Who chairs the Online Gaming Authority of India?
 - Secretary from Sports Ministry
 - Additional Secretary of MeitY
 - Finance Secretary from DFS
 - Home Secretary from MHA
- Which of the following sets correctly represents the legal categories of online games?
 - Arcade games, offline games, and payment games
 - E-sports, social games, and money game formats
 - Betting clubs, casual games, and fantasy markets
 - Console games, mobile games, and website formats
- What is the regulatory treatment of online money games?
 - Recognised as permitted sport activities
 - Registered freely through standard procedure
 - Promoted as entertainment-oriented games
 - Prohibited from offering and advertising
- Which of the following mechanisms can be used to block unlawful online gaming platforms?
 - State consumer forums through local orders
 - Authorities under Information Technology Act powers
 - Private advertising councils through formal notices
 - District gaming clubs through formal resolutions
- Which of the following provisions gives rule-making power to the Central Government?
 - Section 8
 - Section 12
 - Section 19
 - Section 23
- How are the online gaming rules structurally organised?
 - 4 parts and 18 operational rules
 - 6 parts and 26 operational rules
 - 8 parts and 32 operational rules
 - 10 parts and 44 operational rules
- Which of the following sets correctly identifies triggers for the determination process?
 - Court order, advertiser request, government notification
 - Authority action, provider application, government notification
 - Bank inquiry, police report, user complaint, government notification
 - State order, media report, industry campaign, government notification
- Which of the following factors are considered during determination of an online game?
 - Logo colour, staff attendance, office location
 - App font, marketing slogan, brand theme
 - Employee uniform, office policy, hiring plan
 - Fees, winnings, revenue design, asset monetisation
- What is the scope of a determination order?
 - Every game offered by every provider
 - Every provider using similar gaming software
 - Advertisers and payment partner firms only
 - Particular game and service provider assessed
- Which of the following online games require registration under the rules?
 - All online games offered through websites
 - All online advertisements for gaming services
 - E-sports and notified online social-game categories
 - All digital services using interactive software
- What document is issued after successful registration?
 - Digital certificate with unique registration number
 - Advertising permit with promotional approval number
 - Employee identity card with compliance seal
 - Tax clearance slip with design approval

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

14. What is the position of an online money game regarding e-sport recognition?

- (a) It cannot receive e-sport recognition
- (b) It qualifies after brand approval
- (c) It qualifies after payment verification
- (d) It qualifies after software certification

15. Where must registered providers display registration or determination details?

- (a) Office notice boards for visitors
- (b) Internal email templates for employees
- (c) User-facing interface of the game
- (d) External advertisements for social media

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (d) | 2. (a) | 3. (b) | 4. (b) | 5. (d) | 6. (b) | 7. (c) | 8. (b) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (d) | 11. (d) | 12. (c) | 13. (a) | 14. (a) | 15. (c) | |

6 Startup India's Record Growth in FY 2025-26

IN FOCUS

- The Government of India recognized more than 55,200 startups during Financial Year (FY) 2025-26, marking the highest number of startups recognized in a single year since the launch of the **Startup India Initiative** in January 2016.
- The cumulative count of recognized startups crossed 2.23 lakh as on 31 March 2026, generating over 23.36 lakh direct jobs, with more than 1.07 lakh recognized startups having at least one woman director or partner, accounting for approximately 48% of the total.
- Startup recognition grew by 51.6% year-on-year in FY 2025-26 compared to FY 2024-25, while direct employment created by recognized startups rose by 36.1% during the same period.

Origin and Architecture of the Startup India Initiative

- The Startup India Initiative was formally launched on 16 January 2016 with an Action Plan comprising schemes and incentives aimed at building a robust ecosystem for nurturing innovation, encouraging private investment, and supporting startups across all sectors and geographies.
- The Initiative is implemented by a dedicated Startup India team under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (**DPIIT**), which functions as the nodal authority for startup recognition, policy formulation, and scheme administration.
- A startup is defined as a small, new, or young company founded by entrepreneurs to introduce a new product or service, disrupt an existing market, or create an entirely new market segment.
- The key objectives of the Initiative are to nurture innovation by creating a conducive environment for scaling innovative products and solutions; to promote entrepreneurship by simplifying regulatory requirements for new businesses; to enable access to investment and capital at various stages of the startup lifecycle; and to drive sustainable economic growth through large-scale employment generation, supporting India's transition from a job-seeking to a job-creating economy.
- National Startup Day is observed annually on 16 January to recognize and promote the Indian startup ecosystem, coinciding with the anniversary of the Initiative's launch.
- The Initiative encompasses a range of major support pillars:
 - The **Fund of Funds** for Startups (FFS), a flagship scheme under the Startup India Action Plan, is managed by the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore, designed to invest in Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)-registered **Alternative Investment Funds** (AIFs) that in turn invest in startups, thereby expanding domestic risk capital without directly burdening the fiscal exchequer.
 - The **Credit Guarantee Scheme** for Startups (CGSS) enables collateral-free loans to startups through eligible financial institutions, operationalised by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC), with risk coverage from a government-backed trust to improve debt financing access for startups that lack collateral or established credit histories.
 - The Startup India **Seed Fund Scheme** (SISFS), with a total corpus of Rs 945 crore, provides financial assistance for early-stage requirements including proof of concept development, product prototyping, and initial market entry and validation.
 - The Startup India Hub functions as a single-window digital platform connecting startups with investors, mentors, incubators, academic institutions, corporates, and government bodies to enable ecosystem-wide collaboration.

Interesting Facts on Startup India Initiative

• • • Origin, objectives, and support architecture • • •

1



Launch of the Initiative

Startup India was formally launched on 16 January 2016 with an Action Plan of schemes and incentives to build a robust innovation ecosystem across sectors and geographies.

2



Nodal authority

The Initiative is implemented by a dedicated Startup India team under DPIIT, which handles startup recognition, policy formulation, and scheme administration.

3



What is a startup?

A startup is a small, new, or young company created by entrepreneurs to introduce a new product or service, disrupt an existing market, or create a new market segment.

4



Core objectives

The Initiative aims to nurture innovation, promote entrepreneurship through simplified regulation, improve access to capital, and drive growth through large-scale employment generation.

5



National Startup Day

National Startup Day is observed every year on 16 January, marking the anniversary of the Initiative's launch and celebrating India's startup ecosystem.

6



Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)

Managed by SIDBI, the FFS has a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore and invests in SEBI-registered AIFs that in turn invest in startups.

7



Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS)

CGSS supports collateral-free loans through eligible financial institutions and is operationalised by NCGTC to improve debt financing access.

8



Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)

With a corpus of Rs 945 crore, SISFS supports proof of concept, product prototyping, and early market entry or validation.

9



Startup India Hub

The Startup India Hub is a single-window digital platform linking startups with investors, mentors, incubators, academic institutions, corporates, and government bodies.

10



States' Startup Ranking Framework (SRF)

The SRF evaluates States and UTs on startup-friendly policies and implementation, promoting competitive federalism through ranked categories.

11



Mentorship and investor connect

The MAARG Portal and Startup India Investor Connect Portal help bridge founders with mentors, advisors, and investors.

12



Benefits for recognized startups

Recognized entities may receive compliance self-certification, patent application assistance, and tax exemptions.



Startup India seeks to turn India from a job-seeking economy into a job-creating economy.



- The States' Startup Ranking Framework (SRF) assesses States and Union Territories (UTs) on the basis of startup-friendly policies and their implementation, promoting competitive federalism by classifying them as Best Performers, Top Performers, Leaders, Aspiring Leaders, and Emerging Startup Ecosystems.
- Mentorship and networking are supported through platforms including the Mentorship, Advisory, Assistance, Resilience, and Growth (MAARG) Portal and the Startup India Investor Connect Portal, which bridge the gap between founders, mentors, and investors.
- Recognized entities under the Initiative are eligible for various government benefits, including compliance self-certification, patent application assistance, and tax exemptions.

Record Growth in FY 2025-26: Key Statistics

- More than 55,200 startups were recognized during FY 2025-26, surpassing all previous annual records since the Initiative's inception in 2016, compared to 36,400+ startups recognized in FY 2024-25.
- Direct jobs created by recognized startups rose from 3,66,870+ in FY 2024-25 to 4,99,400+ in FY 2025-26, reflecting an increase of 36.1% year-on-year.
- The cumulative number of recognized startups stood at over 2.23 lakh as of 31 March 2026, with the ecosystem generating more than 23.36 lakh direct jobs since the Initiative's launch.
- India has emerged as one of the largest startup ecosystems globally on the basis of the number of DPIIT-recognized startups, and the ecosystem has experienced sharp growth in the formation of unicorns, defined as startups valued at USD 1 billion or more, rising from 4 unicorns in 2014 to over 120, with a combined valuation exceeding USD 350 billion.
- The sharp annual rise in recognized startups and employment generation reflects a maturing ecosystem with stronger institutional support, greater access to capital, and increasing investor interest.

Geographic Spread Across States and Union Territories

- Startups are now present across all States and UTs in India, reflecting geographic inclusivity and a decentralisation of innovation beyond traditional economic centres.
- Maharashtra leads the country with 38,660+ recognized startups and 4,13,900+ direct jobs created, followed by Karnataka with 22,600+ startups and 2,46,000+ jobs, and Uttar Pradesh with 21,960+ startups and 2,11,580+ jobs.
- Delhi has 21,120+ recognized startups generating 2,36,640+ direct jobs, while Gujarat accounts for 19,270+ startups and 2,14,800+ jobs.
- Other significant startup hubs include Tamil Nadu (14,830+ startups; 1,52,900+ jobs), Telangana (12,520+ startups; 1,36,570+ jobs), Haryana (11,620+ startups; 1,39,600+ jobs), Kerala (8,620+ startups; 74,130+ jobs), and Rajasthan (8,100+ startups; 83,100+ jobs).
- While major urban centres such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR continue to lead, nearly 50% of startups now originate from Tier II and Tier III cities, indicating the deepening decentralisation of entrepreneurial activity.

Financial Support: Flagship Scheme Performance

- Under the FFS, more than Rs 7,000 crore has been disbursed to over 135 AIFs by the end of FY 2025-26, and these AIFs have collectively invested more than Rs 26,900 crore in over 1,420 startups, multiplying capital availability by drawing in both public and private sources of funding.
- In FY 2025-26 alone, the amount disbursed to AIFs under FFS 1.0 stood at Rs 1,039+ crore, compared to Rs 980+ crore in FY 2024-25.
- Building on this performance, the Government has notified Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 with an expanded corpus of Rs 10,000 crore, with the objective of deepening venture capital penetration in emerging sectors such as deep technology, artificial intelligence, and clean energy.
- The CGSS was expanded in FY 2025-26 by increasing the guarantee cover per borrower from Rs 10 crore to Rs 20 crore, enhancing the extent of guarantee coverage, and reducing the annual guarantee fee for

- lenders in identified sectors.
- By the end of FY 2025-26, more than 410 loans amounting to over Rs 1,250 crore have been guaranteed under the CGSS, compared to 130 loans worth Rs 305 crore in FY 2024-25, reflecting increased lender confidence in startup financing.
- Under the SISFS, 219 incubators have been selected across India, the entire corpus of Rs 945 crore has been fully committed, and these incubators have approved funding of over Rs 605 crore to more than 3,400 startups; the scheme has been extended to enable continued disbursement and completion of approved activities.

Public Procurement and Intellectual Property

- The **Government e-Marketplace** (GeM) has emerged as an important platform for enabling startup participation in public procurement, with more than 38,600 startups onboarded on the platform as of FY 2025-26.
- The number of startups onboarded on GeM increased from 5,140+ in FY 2024-25 to 6,540+ in FY 2025-26, while the total number of orders placed to startups rose from 1,19,620+ to 1,40,260+ during the same period.
- The total value of orders placed to startups on GeM increased significantly from Rs 14,103+ crore in FY 2024-25 to Rs 19,190+ crore in FY 2025-26, reflecting growing government trust in startup-led solutions and expanding financial opportunities for the sector.
- Startup-led innovation has also strengthened intellectual property generation, with more than 19,400 patent applications filed by startups in cumulative terms, and annual patent filings growing from over 2,850 in FY 2024-25 to more than 4,480 in FY 2025-26.

Complementary Programmes Strengthening the Ecosystem

- The **Atal Innovation Mission** (AIM), implemented by NITI Aayog, fosters a culture of innovation through Atal Tinkering Labs, Community Innovator Fellowships, incubators, the Youth Co:Lab program, and mission-driven innovation programmes.
 - AIM 2.0 focuses on scaling innovation and closing ecosystem gaps through initiatives such as the Language Inclusive Program of Innovation (LIPI) for vernacular innovation, the Deeptech Reactor to support commercialisation of long-gestation deep-tech innovations, and the Atal Sectoral Innovation Launchpads (ASIL) program to create iDEX-like platforms within central ministries for procuring startup solutions.
- The Generation-Next Support for Innovative Startups (GENESIS) is a deep-tech startup platform under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), focused on scaling technology startups with particular emphasis on Tier II and Tier III cities.
- The MeitY Startup Hub (MSH) serves as a national platform connecting incubators, Centres of Excellence, academic institutions, and industry to promote technology-led startups.
- The Technology Incubation and Development of Entrepreneurs (TIDE) 2.0 Scheme, a MeitY initiative, supports Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and emerging-technology startups in areas such as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, robotics, clean technology, and healthcare.
- The National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI), launched by the Department of Science and Technology, converts ideas and innovations into scalable startups through incubator networks and seed support mechanisms.
- The Startup Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), implemented under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), promotes rural entrepreneurship and self-employment at the grassroots level.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following authority functions as the nodal body for startup recognition?
 - (a) Department of Financial Services and Investor Support
 - (b) Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade
 - (c) Department of Science and Technology Innovation Mission
 - (d) Department of Rural Development and Livelihood Support
2. Which of the following institutions manages the Fund of Funds for Startups?
 - (a) Small Industries Development Bank of India
 - (b) Securities and Exchange Board of India
 - (c) National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company
 - (d) Khadi and Village Industries Commission
3. Which of the following schemes supports collateral-free borrowing for startups?
 - (a) Startup India Seed Fund Scheme support
 - (b) Fund of Funds for Startups support
 - (c) Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups support
 - (d) States Startup Ranking Framework support
4. Which of the following platforms acts as a broad digital connector for the startup ecosystem?
 - (a) Startup India Investor Connect Portal
 - (b) Startup India Hub digital platform
 - (c) MAARG mentorship support portal
 - (d) Government e-Marketplace startup platform
5. What does the States' Startup Ranking Framework evaluate?
 - (a) Startup valuation and investor profit levels
 - (b) Bank lending and loan recovery patterns
 - (c) Founder education and personal experience
 - (d) Startup policies and implementation by governments
6. Which of the following portals is associated with mentorship and advisory support?
 - (a) Government e-Marketplace procurement platform
 - (b) Startup India Investor Connect platform
 - (c) MAARG mentorship and advisory portal
 - (d) States Startup Ranking Framework portal
7. Which of the following platforms connects startup founders with investor networks?
 - (a) MAARG mentorship and advisory portal
 - (b) Startup India Investor Connect Portal
 - (c) Government e-Marketplace startup platform
 - (d) States Startup Ranking Framework portal
8. Which of the following observances promotes India's startup ecosystem?
 - (a) National Public Procurement Day
 - (b) National Startup Day observance
 - (c) National Technology Incubation Day
 - (d) National Rural Enterprise Day
9. Which of the following definitions correctly describes a unicorn startup?
 - (a) Startup creating large formal employment
 - (b) Startup filing many patent applications
 - (c) Startup valued at one billion US dollars
 - (d) Startup selling through public procurement
10. Which of the following states leads in recognised startups and related employment?
 - (a) Maharashtra startup ecosystem
 - (b) Karnataka startup ecosystem
 - (c) Uttar Pradesh startup ecosystem
 - (d) Gujarat startup ecosystem
11. Which of the following platforms supports startup participation in public procurement?
 - (a) MAARG mentorship support portal
 - (b) Startup India Investor Connect Portal
 - (c) DPIIT startup recognition platform
 - (d) Government e-Marketplace procurement platform
12. Which of the following bodies implements the Atal Innovation Mission?
 - (a) NITI Aayog national policy institution
 - (b) Ministry of Electronics and IT
 - (c) Department for Promotion of Industry
 - (d) Ministry of Micro Small Enterprises
13. GENESIS is associated with which ministry?
 - (a) Ministry of Rural Development
 - (b) Department of Science and Technology
 - (c) Ministry of Electronics and IT
 - (d) Ministry of Micro Small Enterprises

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

14. What type of startups are supported under TIDE 2.0?

- (a) Rural livelihood enterprise startups
- (b) Public procurement seller startups
- (c) State ranking support startups
- (d) ICT and emerging-technology startups

15. Which of the following bodies implements the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme?

- (a) Khadi and Village Industries Commission
- (b) Small Industries Development Bank
- (c) National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company
- (d) National Institution for Transforming India

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (a) | 3. (c) | 4. (b) | 5. (d) | 6. (c) | 7. (b) | 8. (b) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (a) | 11. (d) | 12. (a) | 13. (c) | 14. (d) | 15. (a) | |

7 Workers Unrest in Noida and Labour Reforms

IN FOCUS

- The factory workers' protests across Noida's industrial belt have emerged as one of the largest instances of **industrial labour unrest** in India in recent times, marked by incidents of stone-pelting, attempts to breach police barricades, and a police lathicharge, drawing national attention to structural wage and working condition grievances.
- Following a 35% **minimum wage** hike in Haryana in April 2026 after protests in Faridabad, Gurugram, and Manesar, workers in Noida recognised that their wages were comparatively lower, a situation worsened by shortages in liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) supplies and rising living costs; trade unions subsequently demanded monthly wages of Rs 18,000 to Rs 25,000, along with fixed working hours, paid holidays, and overtime compensation.
- The Uttar Pradesh (UP) government responded with an interim wage hike of approximately 21%, which fell short of union demands, while comparable industrial actions have been documented at the Samsung Sriperumbudur plant in Tamil Nadu over low wages and union non-recognition, at the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) Panipat refinery demanding an eight-hour workday and safer conditions, and at plants operated by the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) at Patratu and Adani's Raikheda facility in Raipur.

The Noida Protests: Immediate Triggers and Institutional Failures

- The surge of violent protests across industrial hubs including Noida, Faridabad, Manesar, and Surat is regarded not merely as a local law-and-order issue but as a manifestation of deep-seated systemic failures in India's labour ecosystem, with significant implications for industrial peace and economic stability.
- The Haryana government's 35% minimum wage hike in April 2026 created a visible regional wage disparity, raising expectations among workers in Noida and neighbouring regions within Uttar Pradesh, and serving as the proximate trigger for large-scale mobilisation.
- Protests were further fuelled by a false expectation circulating among workers that the new Labour Codes guaranteed a flat Rs 20,000 minimum wage, a rumour stemming from a misreading of a Central Government notification, indicating the extent of information gaps within the workforce regarding the new legislative framework.
- The Indian Labour Conference, the primary national forum for structured dialogue between the government, employers, and workers, has not convened since 2015, and the four Labour Codes were passed without the tripartite dialogue that such a forum would have facilitated, contributing to an erosion of institutional industrial relations mechanisms.
- In the aftermath of the protests, residential societies displayed photographs of domestic workers who had participated in the Noida demonstrations at building gates to bar their entry, raising serious civil rights concerns that were not addressed substantively by either the State or Central government.
- The Uttar Pradesh government's formation of a High-Level Committee occurred after the violence had escalated, reflecting a reactive rather than anticipatory approach to industrial relations.

Structural and Economic Drivers of the Unrest

- The minimum wage system in India follows a two-component structure comprising a base wage revised every five years and a variable component linked to inflation, updated twice annually using the **Consumer Price Index** for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW); between 2021 and 2026, the CPI-IW surged by nearly 25%,

The Noida Protests

Immediate Triggers and Institutional Failures



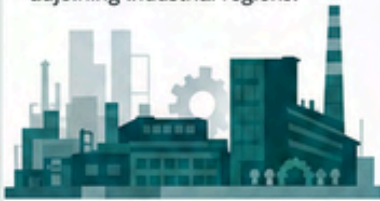
Not just a local law-and-order issue

The protests across Noida, Faridabad, Manesar, and Surat reflected deeper structural weaknesses in India's labour ecosystem, with consequences for industrial peace and economic stability.



1 Immediate trigger

The Haryana Government's wage revision became the proximate trigger for large-scale worker mobilisation in adjoining industrial regions.



35%
minimum wage hike in Haryana in April 2026

This created a visible regional wage gap and raised expectations among workers in Noida and nearby parts of Uttar Pradesh.

2 Rumour and information gap

₹20,000

Many workers believed the new Labour Codes guaranteed a flat ₹20,000 minimum wage. The claim was based on a misreading of a Central Government notification, revealing serious information gaps about the new legal framework.



3 Breakdown of tripartite dialogue

Since 2015

The Indian Labour Conference — the main national forum for dialogue among government, employers, and workers — has not met since 2015. The four Labour Codes were passed without the tripartite engagement such a forum would have enabled.



4 Civil rights concern



After the protests, some residential societies displayed photographs of domestic workers who had joined the demonstrations and barred their entry at building gates. This raised serious civil-rights concerns that were not substantively addressed by either the State or Central Government.

5 Reactive response



The Uttar Pradesh Government formed a High-Level Committee only after violence had escalated, reflecting a reactive rather than anticipatory approach to industrial relations.



What the protests revealed



wage disparities can quickly spill across State borders



misinformation worsens labour unrest



institutional dialogue mechanisms have weakened



delayed state response increases the risk of escalation

- but states delayed updating the base wage component, resulting in inadequate overall wage growth despite periodic inflation-linked revisions.
- The Code on Wages, 2019 establishes a statutory right to minimum wages for all employees across both organised and unorganised sectors; under the earlier Minimum Wages Act, 1948, this right applied only to scheduled employment covering approximately 30% of workers, whereas over 90% of India's workforce operates in the informal sector, rendering the statutory right largely non-binding in the absence of credible enforcement.
- Input cost pressures arising from US tariffs and the 2026 West Asia conflict have squeezed factory profit margins, contributing directly to delayed wage payouts and heightened job insecurity, while factory workers, who are predominantly migrants, are disproportionately affected by surging local rent costs, food prices, and reliance on heavily inflated essentials including LPG cylinders.
- The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code, 2020 shifts daily shift regulations from the earlier Factories Act, 1948 framework to executive rules and, while prescribing a 48-hour work week, does not clearly define daily working hours, rest intervals, or spread-over limits; this regulatory ambiguity has allowed some employers to enforce 12-hour shifts under a four-day workweek format without adequate overtime compensation.
- Since labour is a subject on the Concurrent List of the Constitution, delays by states in finalising rules under the Labour Codes have created a transitional legal grey area, leaving workers without clear enforceable safeguards during the period of legislative transition.
- The share of contract labour in the formal manufacturing sector has reached its highest level since 1997-98; rather than discouraging this trend, the provisions of the Labour Codes incentivise continued reliance on contract workers while simultaneously restricting the scope of legal strikes, which together with the energy crisis and rising food prices precipitated the Noida protests.
- The Industrial Relations Code, 2020 expands the threshold for prior government approval in cases of lay-offs, retrenchment, and factory closures from 100 to 300 workers, with states empowered to raise this threshold further; while intended to simplify compliance and encourage formalisation, this provision reduces de facto job security for a large section of industrial workers.
- Most workers involved in the protests are contractual employees who lack formal appointment letters, making them legally invisible and excluding them from entitlements such as Provident Fund (PF) savings, Employees' State Insurance (ESI) health coverage, paid leave, and severance protection; when global demand drops due to supply chain disruptions, such workers are dismissed instantly without notice or compensation.
- Gig platform workers face additional structural vulnerabilities, including unilateral reductions in piece-rate wages such as per-delivery payouts, earnings governed entirely by algorithmic systems without human recourse, and deliberate classification as "independent contractors" or "partners" rather than employees, which circumvents minimum wage obligations and traditional employer liability norms.
- Fragmented labour representation arising from the absence of a uniform national framework for trade union recognition and collective bargaining has weakened workers' ability to negotiate wages and conditions, with recognition processes and bargaining rights left largely to state-level determination.

India's Four Labour Codes: Consolidated Regulatory Architecture

- To rationalise India's complex and archaic labour regulatory framework, the Central Government consolidated 29 central labour laws into four distinct codes, enacted in 2019 and 2020, with the overarching goal of balancing worker protection with business flexibility, promoting digitalisation, and establishing a future-ready labour market.
- The **Code on Wages**, 2019 merges four earlier statutes, namely the Payment of Wages Act, 1936; the

INDIA'S FOUR LABOUR CODE: CONSOLIDATED REGULATORY ARCHITECTURE

29 central labour laws were consolidated into four codes in 2019 and 2020 to simplify compliance, strengthen worker protection, support digitalisation, and create a future-ready labour market.



THE REFORM

- Central Government replaced 29 older central labour laws with 4 labour codes.
- The reform seeks to balance worker welfare with business flexibility.
- The framework emphasises simplified compliance, digital processes, and broader coverage.

THE 4 CODES



CODE ON WAGES, 2019

- Merges 4 laws: Payment of Wages, Minimum Wages, Payment of Bonus, and Equal Remuneration.
- Introduces a universal minimum wage and a Central floor wage.
- Overtime must be paid at not less than 2x wages.
- Bars gender discrimination, including transgender identity.



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CODE, 2020

- Merges the Trade Unions Act, Standing Orders Act, and Industrial Disputes Act.
- Recognises Fixed Term Employment with parity of benefits; gratuity after 1 year.
- A union with 51% membership becomes the negotiating union; otherwise a negotiating council is formed.
- Prior approval threshold for lay-offs, retrenchments, and closure rises from 100 to 300 workers.



CODE ON SOCIAL SECURITY, 2020

- Merges 9 laws into a single social security framework.
- Extends benefits to organised, unorganised, gig, and platform workers.
- Provides wider ESI coverage and a Social Security Fund for gig and platform workers.
- Covers home-to-work travel accidents and broadens protection for inter-state migrant workers.



OSH & WORKING CONDITIONS CODE, 2020

- Consolidates 13 laws on occupational safety, health, and working conditions.
- Working hours capped at 8 per day and 48 per week; overtime at double wages with consent.
- Allows women to work at night with consent and mandatory safety safeguards.
- Provides unified e-registration, health check-ups, appointment letters, and a National Worker Database.

KEY STRUCTURAL FEATURES



Inspector-cum-Facilitator model encourages compliance support.



Digital registration, records, and compliance processes are promoted.



Fixed-term employees get parity of benefits.



Gig, platform, and migrant workers receive wider statutory recognition.



Labour regulation shifts toward consolidation and standardisation.

WHY IT MATTERS



SIMPLER LABOUR LAW ARCHITECTURE



BROADER WORKER COVERAGE



STRONGER WAGE AND SAFETY STANDARDS



EASIER COMPLIANCE AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

- Minimum Wages Act, 1948; the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965; and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, into a single unified framework, bringing uniformity in wage rules, ensuring fair and timely payment, promoting gender equality, and simplifying compliance while strengthening worker rights.
 - It establishes a universal minimum wage applicable to all workers across organised and unorganised sectors, as well as a statutory floor wage set by the Central Government on the basis of living standards, below which no state government may fix its minimum wages, thereby creating a national baseline.
 - Overtime compensation is mandated at no less than twice the normal wage rate, and employers are held liable for delayed or non-payment of wages, with decriminalisation and compounding provisions ensuring fines take precedence over imprisonment for first offences.

- The Code prohibits discrimination in hiring, wages, and working conditions on the basis of gender, including transgender identity, and introduces an Inspector-cum-Facilitator system oriented towards guidance and compliance facilitation rather than purely punitive enforcement.
- The **Industrial Relations Code, 2020** combines and simplifies provisions from **the Trade Unions Act, 1926, the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946,** and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, seeking to balance worker rights with industrial stability through streamlined rules on union recognition, employment terms, and dispute resolution.
 - It provides for **Fixed Term Employment (FTE)** with full parity of benefits relative to permanent employees and eligibility for gratuity after one year of service, and requires employers to deposit 15 days' wages per retrenched worker into their account within 45 days to support re-skilling and re-employment.
 - A trade union with 51% membership is recognised as the sole negotiating body; where no single union meets this threshold, a negotiating council is constituted from unions each holding at least 20% worker representation.
 - The threshold for mandatory prior government approval for lay-offs, retrenchments, and closures is raised from 100 to 300 workers, with states empowered to raise this further; mandatory women's representation in grievance bodies and the adoption of digital processes for registration and record-keeping are also prescribed.
- The **Code on Social Security, 2020** merges nine existing social security statutes, including **the Employees' Compensation Act, 1923, the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948, and the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952,** into a single unified framework, extending benefits to all workers including those in the unorganised, gig, and platform sectors.
 - Wages are defined uniformly to cover basic pay, dearness allowance, and retaining allowance, with at least 50% of total remuneration counted for calculating social security, gratuity, and pension benefits.
 - The Employees' State Insurance (ESI) scheme is extended to apply nationwide, with establishments having fewer than 10 employees permitted to opt in voluntarily, while hazardous occupations and plantations are mandatorily covered.
 - New definitions for "aggregator," "gig worker," and "platform worker" are introduced to enable social security coverage for these categories, supported by a dedicated Social Security Fund financed partly through compounding penalties, covering life, health, disability, and old-age benefits.
 - Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) inquiries must be initiated within five years and completed within two years (extendable by one year), ensuring time-bound resolution and preventing cases from being reopened suo motu.
 - Accidents occurring during travel between an employee's home and workplace are deemed employment-related and qualify for compensation; the definition of inter-state migrant workers is broadened to include those hired directly, through contractors, or those who migrate independently, with entitlement to annual travel allowances and portability of ration card benefits under the Public Distribution System (PDS).
 - Fixed-term employees are eligible for gratuity after one year of service, and the definition of dependents is expanded to include maternal grandparents and parents-in-law.
- The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 consolidates 13 earlier labour laws including the Factories Act, 1948, the Plantations Labour Act, 1951, and the Mines Act, 1952, aiming to ensure safer working conditions while simplifying compliance for businesses.
 - Working hours are capped at 8 hours per day and 48 hours per week, with overtime paid at double wages and only with worker consent, and a unified electronic registration system is introduced with a

- threshold of 10 employees.
- The Code's provisions can apply even to establishments with a single employee where the work involves high risk, and night work for women is permitted in all establishments provided consent is given and employers ensure adequate safety arrangements.
- The definition of inter-state migrant workers is expanded to include those hired directly, through contractors, or who migrate on their own initiative, ensuring portability of social security and PDS benefits across states.
- A National Worker Database is to be developed for unorganised workers including migrants to improve access to employment opportunities and welfare schemes, and free annual health check-ups along with the issuance of formal appointment letters are prescribed as part of health and formalisation measures.

The Right to Strike in India: Legal Standing and Restrictions

- The **right to strike** refers to the collective refusal by workers to perform their duties in order to press demands for better wages, improved working conditions, or changed labour practices, and is generally recognised across political systems as a legitimate, though last-resort, instrument of collective bargaining.
- The right to protest is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution of India; however, the right to strike is not a fundamental right but a statutory right, deriving its legal basis from the fundamental right to form associations under Article 19, and is subject to reasonable restrictions imposed by the state.
- The right to strike received its first limited recognition under the Trade Unions Act, 1926 and was subsequently regulated under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947; both enactments have since been subsumed under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020.
- Under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, a mandatory 60-day notice period is required before a strike can be called, and strikes are prohibited during conciliation proceedings, significantly narrowing the scope of legally protected industrial action available to workers.
- At the international level, the right to strike is recognised under the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), of which India is a founding member.

The International Labour Organization and Tripartite Social Dialogue

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the only tripartite United Nations (UN) agency, bringing together governments, employers, and workers of 187 member states to set international labour standards, develop policies, and devise programmes promoting decent work for all; India is a founding member of the Organisation.
- The ILO was established in 1919 through the Treaty of Versailles as an affiliated agency of the League of Nations, and became the first specialised agency of the United Nations in 1946; it received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969 in recognition of its contributions to international labour standards and social justice.
- The ILO is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **ILO Convention No. 144**, adopted in 1976 and formally designated the Convention on Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards), promotes the foundational principle on which the ILO was established: **tripartite consultation** among governments, employers, and workers in the development and implementation of international labour standards.
- Tripartism under Convention No. 144 mandates structured national consultation processes among the three social partners and promotes a broader national culture of social dialogue on social and economic issues that extend beyond the specific domain of labour standards formulation.
- The non-convening of the Indian Labour Conference since 2015 and the passage of the four Labour Codes without the tripartite consultation that such a forum would have facilitated are identified as contributing factors to the weakening of institutional industrial relations mechanisms in India and the escalation of worker unrest across multiple industrial clusters.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following issues became central in the Noida industrial labour unrest?
 - (a) University admission procedures and hostel allocation rules
 - (b) Agricultural procurement disputes and crop storage rules
 - (c) Urban housing permits and municipal zoning changes
 - (d) Factory wages and working-condition grievances
2. Which of the following misinformation contributed to worker mobilisation in Noida?
 - (a) Labour Codes assured a uniform minimum wage
 - (b) Tax exemptions were promised to factory workers
 - (c) Free housing was guaranteed to all workers
 - (d) Promotions were assured to all contract workers
3. Which of the following forums is linked with structured labour dialogue in India?
 - (a) Police coordination forum for industrial disputes
 - (b) Indian Labour Conference for tripartite dialogue
 - (c) Procurement review board for public contracts
 - (d) Tax appeal forum for factory employers
4. Which of the following structures describes India's minimum wage system?
 - (a) Base wage and inflation-linked variable component
 - (b) Export wage and import-linked payment component
 - (c) Rent wage and profit-linked payment component
 - (d) Bonus wage and productivity-only component
5. What does the Code on Wages extend across employment sectors?
 - (a) Wage protection only for permanent factory staff
 - (b) Wage protection only for registered supervisors
 - (c) Wage protection only for export-sector employees
 - (d) Minimum wage right for all employees
6. Which of the following codes is associated with workplace safety and conditions?
 - (a) Code on fiscal compliance and taxation
 - (b) Occupational Safety and Health Code
 - (c) Code on foreign trade regulations
 - (d) Code on banking supervision rules
7. Which of the following constitutional lists includes labour as a subject?
 - (a) Concurrent List with shared legislative power
 - (b) Union List with exclusive central control
 - (c) State List with only state-level control
 - (d) Municipal List with local body control
8. Which of the following worker categories is described as especially vulnerable?
 - (a) Permanent managerial employees in industrial offices
 - (b) Retired pensioners from government departments
 - (c) Contractual workers lacking formal appointment letters
 - (d) Senior officials handling factory administration
9. Which of the following provisions affects approval for lay-offs and closures?
 - (a) School admission approval before academic enrolment
 - (b) Municipal approval before factory colour changes
 - (c) Prior government approval threshold for termination
 - (d) Agricultural approval before crop procurement sales
10. Which of the following employment arrangements receives benefit parity under the Industrial Relations Code?
 - (a) Informal domestic assistance without appointment records
 - (b) Fixed-term employment with benefit parity provisions
 - (c) Casual street vending with municipal licensing rules
 - (d) Seasonal farming work under procurement arrangements
11. Which of the following bodies may become the sole negotiating body?
 - (a) Employer association with district-level membership
 - (b) Police committee with industrial jurisdiction
 - (c) Consumer forum with workplace complaint powers
 - (d) Trade union with required worker membership
12. Which of the following code extends coverage to gig and platform workers?
 - (a) Code on Social Security worker coverage
 - (b) Code on Wages payment structure
 - (c) Industrial Relations Code bargaining rules
 - (d) Occupational Safety Code workplace rules

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

13. Which of the following components form the uniform wage definition for social security?

- (a) Basic pay, dearness allowance, retaining allowance
- (b) House rent, travel rebate, export incentive
- (c) Advertising bonus, festival gift, meal coupon
- (d) Procurement credit, tax refund, sales commission

14. Which of the following schemes is extended nationwide under the social security framework?

- (a) Public procurement seller registration scheme
- (b) Employees' State Insurance coverage scheme
- (c) School admission verification scheme
- (d) Advertising approval certification scheme

15. Which of the following travel-related accidents qualifies for compensation?

- (a) Travel between employee home and workplace
- (b) Private travel for festival shopping purposes
- (c) Leisure travel during unrelated personal holidays
- (d) Tourism travel outside employment purposes

SOLUTIONS

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|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (d) | 2. (a) | 3. (b) | 4. (a) | 5. (d) | 6. (b) | 7. (a) | 8. (c) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (b) | 11. (d) | 12. (a) | 13. (a) | 14. (b) | 15. (a) | |

8 India-New Zealand FTA

IN FOCUS

- India and New Zealand signed a historic **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** on 27 April 2026, concluded in a record nine months after negotiations were formally announced on 16 March 2025, making it the fastest concluded FTA in India's trade history and the ninth such agreement spanning 38 developed countries signed by India in recent years.
- The FTA eliminates duty on 100% of Indian exports to New Zealand across all 8,284 tariff lines, erasing an average applied tariff of 2.2%, while New Zealand has committed to invest USD 20 billion in India over 15 years, and the agreement creates a pathway of at least 5,000 Temporary Employment Entry Visas for skilled Indian professionals.
- India has offered tariff liberalisation on 70.03% of its tariff lines, covering approximately 95% of bilateral trade value, while protecting sensitive domestic sectors including dairy, selected agricultural products, arms, and specific gems and jewellery under a 29.97% exclusion list.

Trade Agreements: Types, Nature, and Objectives

- A Free Trade Agreement is a pact between two or more countries to remove or reduce tariffs, quotas, and non-tariff barriers on the vast majority of goods traded between them, with the objective of expanding market access, facilitating trade in services, and promoting bilateral investment flows; unlike Preferential Trade Agreements, which reduce duties only on a limited set of products, FTAs aim for comprehensive, near-total tariff elimination typically covering 90-95% of traded goods.
- The key objectives of FTAs include the elimination or reduction of customs duties on the vast majority of goods categories, the reduction of non-tariff barriers by harmonising or easing restrictive regulatory requirements, and the facilitation of greater trade in services and bilateral investment flows.



Trade agreements are classified into five distinct types, ordered by increasing depth of economic integration:

- A Partial Scope Agreement covers trade on only a limited number of goods and represents the lowest level of trade integration.
- A Free Trade Agreement reduces tariffs among member countries across the majority of goods categories, while each member retains its own independent tariff structure in relation to non-members.
- A Customs Union establishes a common external tariff applicable uniformly to non-member countries, representing a deeper level of integration than an FTA.

Trade with the **Kiwis**

Bilateral merchandise trade (FY25): \$1.3 bn



Key exports: ATF, textiles, pharmaceuticals, machinery, petroleum products

Key imports: Wood, steel and aluminium scrap, coking coal, turbojets, and agri/animal products (shorn wool, milk albumin, apples, kiwifruit)



Services trade (2024):



What's in **FTA**

- NZ's average applied tariff (2.2% in 2025) to fall to zero after implementation
- India offers market access on 70.03% of tariff lines, covering 95% of NZ's exports by value; 29.97% tariff lines excluded
- **The big gainers in India:** Textiles and apparel, leather and headgear, ceramics, carpets, automobiles and auto components
- Apples, kiwifruit and manuka honey from NZ subject to TRQ, MIP and seasonal limits, balancing consumer choice with farmer protection
- Exclusions mainly include dairy, most animal products, select vegetables & pulses, sugar, artificial honey, fats & oils, arms & ammunition, gems & jewellery, and copper

“CONCLUDED IN JUST NINE MONTHS, THIS HISTORIC MILESTONE REFLECTS A STRONG POLITICAL WILL AND SHARED AMBITION TO DEEPEN ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES”



Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister,
India

“INDIA IS THE WORLD'S MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY AND FASTEST-GROWING ECONOMY, AND THAT CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOBS FOR KIWIS, EXPORTS, AND GROWTH”

Christopher Luxon,
Prime Minister,
New Zealand



Mobility provisions

- Minimum 20 hours/week work permitted for students in NZ
- Extended post-study work visas for STEM graduates
- 5,000 professional visas in IT, engineering, health care, AYUSH, yoga, music and Indian cuisine for up to 3 years
- 1,000 working holiday visas, granting multiple entries in 12 months

The FTA is expected to be signed in 2-3 months after legal scrubbing, and to come into force within six to seven months. New Zealand will need parliamentary approval.

- A Common Market extends integration further by enabling the free movement of production factors, including labour and capital, across member countries.
- An Economic Union represents the highest level of integration, combining a common market with coordination across fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policies.

India-New Zealand Bilateral Relations: Historical and Contemporary Foundations

- Indian soldiers served alongside Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) forces at Gallipoli in 1915 during the First World War, forming the earliest recorded historical connection between India and New Zealand.
- Formal diplomatic relations between India and New Zealand were established in 1952; both nations share membership of the Commonwealth, function as vibrant democracies with common law traditions, and advocate for a rules-based global order.
- New Zealand is currently India's second-largest trading partner in Oceania, with total trade in goods and services reaching USD 2.4 billion in 2024; India imports wool, iron and steel, fruits and nuts, and aluminium from New Zealand, while exporting pharmaceuticals, machinery, textiles, and precious stones and metals.
- Merchandise bilateral trade grew from USD 855 million in 2015-16 to USD 1,298 million in 2024-25, with India's exports to New Zealand rising by 130% over the decade compared to a 7.21% increase in imports, maintaining a consistent positive trade balance in India's favour.
- India's services exports to New Zealand grew by 13% in 2024, reaching USD 634 million, with major sectors including travel, IT, and business services.
- A bilateral defence agreement signed in early 2025 has enhanced regular military engagements and naval port visits; New Zealand has also expressed increasing interest in aligning with India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) for joint exercises and maritime domain awareness.
- New Zealand supports India's bid for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), and is a member of the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).
- Around 300,000 persons of Indian origin and non-resident Indians (NRIs) reside in New Zealand, constituting approximately 5-6% of its population and serving as a cultural and economic bridge supporting stronger bilateral ties and demand for Indian goods and services.
- With a per capita income of approximately USD 49,380 to USD 52,000 and overseas investment of USD 422.6 billion as of March 2025, representing nearly 8% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) invested annually abroad, New Zealand is among the higher-income economies in Oceania.

The FTA: Negotiation, Signing, and Political Context

- FTA negotiations between India and New Zealand were announced on 16 March 2025 and concluded in December 2025, a span of nine months, making it the fastest concluded FTA for India and described by Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal as the seventh trade agreement signed in nearly four years.
- The FTA was formally signed on 27 April 2026, covers 20 chapters including trade in goods, trade remedies,

- dispute settlement, and legal provisions, and was characterised by Goyal as "another defining milestone in India's engagement with the developed world," framing it as advancing the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that the agreement would benefit Indian farmers, youth, women, MSMEs, artisans, startups, students, and innovators, and would open new avenues for growth and deepen synergies across sectors.
- New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon stated that the FTA would open a dynamic new market and help diversify New Zealand's export base, with the objective of doubling the value of New Zealand's exports over 10 years and placing New Zealand exporters on a level playing field with competitors already holding preferential access in India.
- The FTA serves as a gateway for India to emerge as a key supplier of skilled workforce and as a platform for future cooperation in AYUSH, Yoga Instruction, culinary arts, music, IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction services, while also positioning the agreement as an entry point into the broader Oceania and Pacific Island markets.

Core Provisions and Structural Features of the Agreement

- The FTA eliminates duty on 100% of Indian exports to New Zealand across all 8,284 tariff lines, securing zero-duty access for the full range of goods including textiles, apparel, leather, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and auto components.
- India's tariff liberalisation offer of 70.03% of tariff lines is structured across four categories:
 - 30.00% of tariff lines will see immediate duty elimination upon entry into force, covering wood, wool, sheep meat, and raw leather hides.
 - 35.60% of tariff lines are subject to phased elimination over 3, 5, 7, and 10 years, covering petroleum oil, malt extract, vegetable oils, selected electrical and mechanical machinery, and peptones.
 - 4.37% of products will receive tariff reductions rather than full elimination, covering wine, pharmaceutical drugs, polymers, aluminium, and iron and steel articles.
 - 0.06% of products are subject to **tariff rate quota** (TRQ) arrangements, including Manuka honey, apples, kiwifruit, and albumins including milk albumin, each managed with Minimum Import Price conditions and seasonal restrictions.
- India has retained 29.97% of its tariff lines in a protected exclusion list encompassing dairy products (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese), sensitive agricultural products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds), sugar, artificial honey, fats and oils, arms and ammunition, gems and jewellery, copper articles, and aluminium articles.
- New Zealand has committed to invest USD 20 billion in India over 15 years, reinforcing long-term economic and strategic cooperation; a **Rebalancing Clause** is incorporated into the agreement to provide a framework for addressing any shortfall in investment delivery, ensuring robust and tangible economic outcomes.
- The FTA establishes joint strategies to promote investment, research and innovation, technology flows, and skill development, particularly in renewable energy, digital services, and modern infrastructure.

Services, Mobility, and Professional Pathways

- New Zealand has offered its best-ever services commitment, giving India market access in **118 services sectors** and MFN treatment in **139 sub-sectors**, including IT, education, finance, tourism, healthcare, engineering, and construction.
- The FTA facilitates trade in AYUSH systems for the first time, covering Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, Homeopathy, and Naturopathy, along with Maori health practices, supporting India's wellness

- and medical value travel sectors.
- The FTA introduces the Temporary Employment Entry Visa, with at least 5,000 visas for skilled Indian professionals, allowing stays of up to three years in sectors such as IT, healthcare, engineering, education, construction, AYUSH, yoga, culinary arts, and music teaching.
- New Zealand has signed its first-ever Student Mobility and Post-Study Work Visa Annex with India, allowing Indian students to work 20 hours per week while studying and providing extended post-study work visas for STEM graduates and doctorate holders.
- The Working Holiday Visa scheme allows 1,000 young Indians annually to travel and work in New Zealand for up to 12 months through multiple-entry access.

Agricultural Cooperation and Farmer Support

- The FTA creates an **Agricultural Productivity Partnership** with Action Plans for kiwifruit, apples, and honey, covering Centres of Excellence, better planting material, grower training, research, orchard management, post-harvest systems, and food safety.
- All TRQs for New Zealand agricultural products are linked with **Agriculture Productivity Action Plans** and monitored by a **Joint Agriculture Productivity Council**, balancing market access with protection for sensitive Indian farm sectors.
- The FTA enables an **MRA for organic products** through shared standards via Australia, supporting Indian exports such as basmati rice, flax seeds, Isabgol, soyabean oil cake, organic black tea, and Arabica Cherry AB.
- India currently exports **2,401.53 metric tonnes** of organic products to New Zealand, and the MRA is expected to expand exports from India's basket of more than **80 organic products**.
- Wider agricultural cooperation covers **horticulture, honey, forestry, livestock, fisheries, apiculture, and the wine sector**

Sectoral Gains for India: Trade and Industry

- In **textiles and clothing**, New Zealand will eliminate tariffs of up to **10%**, giving Indian exporters zero-duty access in apparel, made-ups, carpets, fibres, yarn, fabric, handicrafts, and handlooms.
- New Zealand imports USD **1.27 billion** worth of apparel globally, with major demand in casual wear, jackets, formal wear, and sportswear; India's current textile exports to New Zealand are around USD **0.1 billion**.
- The **Apparel Export Promotion Council** has projected that India's garment exports to New Zealand could treble within two years of the FTA coming into force.
- In **engineering goods**, tariffs of up to **10%** are eliminated, benefiting Indian exports such as transformers, cables, electrical equipment, and other engineering products.
- New Zealand's engineering imports average USD **23.3 billion** annually, while India's engineering exports to New Zealand stood at USD **136.34 million** in FY 2024-25.
- In **pharmaceuticals**, tariffs of up to **5%** are eliminated, and acceptance of GMP and GCP inspection reports from regulators such as the US FDA and EMA will reduce duplicative inspections and speed up approvals.
- India's pharmaceutical exports to New Zealand stood at USD **57.51 million** in FY 2024-25, with the FTA expected to improve competitiveness and compliance efficiency.
- Duty-free access is also secured for **gems and jewellery, leather, footwear, sports goods, electronics, chemicals, plastics, and marine products**, improving price competitiveness and employment potential.
- India will gain duty-free access to inputs such as **wooden logs, coking coal, and waste and scrap metals**, helping reduce production costs for Indian manufacturing.

State-wise Distribution of FTA Benefits

- **Maharashtra** will benefit in pharmaceuticals, auto components, processed food, and chemicals, especially

- through export hubs such as Mumbai, Pune, and Nashik.
- Gujarat will gain in petroleum products, chemicals, plastics, and gems and jewellery, with export growth expected from Jamnagar, Dahej, and Surat.
- Tamil Nadu is expected to benefit from tariff removal on textiles, apparel, leather, and auto components, especially in Tiruppur and Coimbatore.
- Uttar Pradesh will benefit in leather goods, carpets, and handicrafts from Kanpur, Moradabad, and Bhadohi, with gains expected for MSMEs and artisan-led sectors.
- Punjab, Haryana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, Telangana, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir, and the northeastern states are expected to gain across tea, spices, marine products, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, metal products, organic agriculture, and GI products.
- GI-linked products such as Darjeeling tea, Kashmiri handicrafts, saffron, Madhubani paintings, and makhana are expected to gain from improved recognition and export access.
- Chhattisgarh is specifically expected to benefit in iron and steel products, with improved export viability and value addition in metal industries.

Regulatory, Legal, and Institutional Framework

- New Zealand has committed to amend its intellectual property laws within **18 months** to provide EU-level protection for Indian **Geographical Indications**, enabling wider GI registration beyond wines and spirits.
- The FTA includes **Product Specific Rules of Origin** to ensure genuine value addition, supported by verification and safeguard mechanisms to prevent misuse or circumvention.
- Dedicated **SPS and TBT chapters** provide for faster market access applications, simplified certification, import permits, and electronic SPS certification while maintaining safety standards.
- Customs provisions require standard cargo clearance within **48 hours**, and express shipments and perishables within **24 hours**, supported by AEOs, automation, and paperless single-window systems.
- Trade remedy safeguards allow duties to be raised or tariff cuts paused during import surges, but such measures cannot exceed the lower applicable MFN rate.
- The FTA includes a chapter on **Culture, Trade, Traditional Knowledge, and Economic Cooperation**, covering AYUSH, audio-visual industries, tourism, sports, traditional knowledge, and cooperation with Maori communities.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following sectors was kept protected by India under the exclusion list in the India-New Zealand FTA?
(a) Textiles and apparel
(b) Machinery components
(c) Pharmaceutical products
(d) Dairy products
2. Which of the following represents the highest level of trade integration among trade agreements?
(a) Customs Union
(b) Economic Union
(c) Free Trade Agreement
(d) Partial Scope Agreement
3. Which of the following countries is described as India's second-largest trading partner in Oceania?
(a) Australia
(b) Fiji
(c) New Zealand
(d) Papua New Guinea
4. Which of the following trade agreements covers only a limited number of goods?
(a) Partial Scope Agreement
(b) Free Trade Agreement
(c) Common Market
(d) Economic Union
5. Which of the following was included among the priority sectors under the Temporary Employment Entry Visa pathway?
(a) Arms manufacturing
(b) Dairy farming
(c) Sugar refining
(d) Information technology
6. Which of the following Indian exports gains from New Zealand accepting comparable regulator inspection reports in healthcare products?
(a) Textiles
(b) Pharmaceuticals
(c) Marine products
(d) Leather goods
7. Which of the following communities is linked with New Zealand's indigenous cultural cooperation under the agreement?
(a) Inuit
(b) Aboriginal
(c) Maori
(d) Sami
8. Which of the following cities is identified with Maharashtra's expected gains under the FTA?
(a) Pune
(b) Kanpur
(c) Surat
(d) Bhadohi
9. Which of the following items is placed under tariff rate quota arrangements?
(a) Cotton apparel
(b) Auto components
(c) Wooden logs
(d) Manuka honey
10. Which of the following Indian areas was facilitated through the services chapter for traditional medicine?
(a) Digital India
(b) AYUSH systems
(c) Skill India
(d) Make in India
11. Which of the following sectors in New Zealand imports is identified as having major potential for Indian export growth under the agreement?
(a) Defence equipment
(b) Space technology
(c) Textiles and apparel
(d) Nuclear materials
12. Which of the following types of trade agreement allows countries to maintain independent tariff structures for non-members?
(a) Free Trade Agreement
(b) Customs Union
(c) Common Market
(d) Economic Union
13. Which of the following sectors is identified as benefiting in Chhattisgarh under the agreement?
(a) Textile exports
(b) Tourism services
(c) Iron and steel products
(d) Marine fisheries
14. Which of the following visa schemes allows young individuals to travel and work temporarily in New Zealand?
(a) Student Visa
(b) Working Holiday Visa
(c) Business Visa
(d) Transit Visa
15. Which of the following initiatives promotes resilience in infrastructure and includes New Zealand as a member?
(a) WTO
(b) IMF
(c) CDRI
(d) NATO

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (d) | 2. (b) | 3. (c) | 4. (a) | 5. (d) | 6. (b) | 7. (c) | 8. (a) |
| 9. (d) | 10. (b) | 11. (c) | 12. (a) | 13. (c) | 14. (b) | 15. (c) | |

9 AAP MPs Join BJP History of 10th Schedule

IN FOCUS

- Seven of the ten Rajya Sabha members of the **Aam Aadmi Party** (AAP), constituting two-thirds of its strength in the Upper House, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on 24 April 2026, with AAP MP Raghav Chadha, who had been removed as the party's deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha three weeks earlier, announcing that he and six others had decided to "merge with the BJP."
- Prior to the development, the AAP held 10 Rajya Sabha seats, seven from Punjab and three from Delhi; following the announced merger of the seven-member faction, the party's representation in the Rajya Sabha was reduced to three members.
- The move has triggered a significant constitutional debate on whether the action constitutes a valid "merger" under Paragraph 4 of the **Tenth Schedule** of the Constitution, with legal experts divided on whether the two-thirds legislature party consent, in the absence of a corresponding merger at the national party level, is sufficient to attract the exemption from disqualification under the anti-defection law.

The AAP-BJP Development:

Political and Constitutional Context

- The AAP had 10 members in the Rajya Sabha immediately before the development, with seven elected from Punjab and three from Delhi; the seven MPs who announced the merger with the BJP thus constituted exactly two-thirds of the AAP's Rajya Sabha legislature party, a fraction that holds constitutional significance under Paragraph 4(2) of the Tenth Schedule.
- Raghav Chadha had been removed from the position of AAP's deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha approximately three weeks before the announcement, forming part of the immediate political background to the merger declaration.
- The AAP's Punjab unit and its legislative representation in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha remain within the party; the Rajya Sabha MPs who switched to the BJP were originally elected by the AAP MLAs of Punjab, creating, in the assessment of legal experts, a disconnect between the electoral base and the party affiliation of the legislators who have switched.
- A disqualification petition may now be moved before the Rajya Sabha Chairman, whose decision on the matter would be open to judicial review.

Origin:

Anti-Defection Law

- Defection refers to the switching of political allegiance by an elected representative, particularly when a member of a political party leaves it to join another party or becomes independent after being elected on a specific party ticket.
- The anti-defection law was enacted in 1985 through the **52nd Amendment Act**, which introduced the Tenth Schedule into the Constitution of India, establishing a legal deterrent against opportunistic party-switching by Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs).
- The law was introduced in response to the **Aaya Ram Gaya Ram** culture of the 1960s and 1970s, a phrase derived from the conduct of Haryana MLA Gaya Lal in 1967, who changed his party affiliation three times within a fortnight; between 1967 and 1972, nearly 2,000 cases of defection occurred, with approximately 50% of legislators switching parties, in some cases multiple times, leading to the collapse of several State governments.

- The law was enacted during the Rajiv Gandhi administration, and the recommendations of the Vandana Kumar Committee formed the basis for defining what would constitute a split and a merger under the Tenth Schedule.
- The Tenth Schedule provides that a member of a House belonging to any political party becomes disqualified if they voluntarily give up membership of their political party; if they vote or abstain from voting in the House contrary to any direction issued by their party without prior permission, and such act has not been condoned by the party within 15 days; or, in the case of an independent member, if they join any political party after the election.
- A nominated member of a House becomes disqualified if they join any political party after the expiry of six months from the date of taking their seat.
- The Supreme Court has held that "voluntarily giving up" party membership can be inferred from a member's conduct even without a formal resignation from the party.
- The power to decide on questions of disqualification under the Tenth Schedule is vested exclusively in the presiding officer of the House: the Speaker in the case of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, and the Chairman in the case of the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils; decisions of the presiding officer are open to judicial review but not to challenge within the House itself.
- The **91st Constitutional Amendment** of 2003 strengthened the law by deleting the provision relating to exemption from disqualification in the case of a "split" involving one-third of a legislature party, retaining only the "merger" exception; it also provided that members disqualified on grounds of defection would be ineligible to be appointed as ministers or to hold any remunerative political post.
- The 91st Amendment further capped the size of the Council of Ministers at 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha at the Central level, and at 15% of the Legislative Assembly at the State level (subject to a minimum of 12 ministers per state).
- Two exceptions to the disqualification provisions are recognised under the Tenth Schedule:
 - A member elected as Speaker or Chairman of the House may voluntarily give up party membership to maintain the impartiality of the office, and may rejoin the party after ceasing to hold that office, without incurring disqualification.
 - A member is protected from disqualification if they leave their party as a consequence of a merger of the original political party with another party, subject to the fulfilment of the conditions prescribed under Paragraph 4.

The Merger Provision: Evolution and the Two-Interpretation Debate

- The Tenth Schedule as originally enacted in 1985 recognised two exceptions under which members would not incur disqualification: the "split" exception under Paragraph 3, which protected legislators from disqualification if at least one-third of the members of the legislature party defected; and the **merger exception** under Paragraph 4, which protects a legislator from disqualification if they act in accordance with a merger of their original political party with another.
- The split exception under Paragraph 3 was deleted by the 91st Constitutional Amendment of 2003 due to its widespread misuse to engineer defections; following its deletion, the two-thirds threshold for a merger under Paragraph 4 became the sole collective exception available to legislators seeking to avoid disqualification.
- Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule operates through two inter-related sub-paragraphs: Sub-paragraph (1) provides that a member will not be disqualified if their original political party merges with another political party and they act in accordance with such merger; Sub-paragraph (2) provides that such a merger shall be "deemed to have taken place" only if not less than **two-thirds threshold** of the members of the legislature party concerned have agreed to it.
- The critical legal ambiguity in Paragraph 4 lies in whether its two sub-paragraphs are to be read conjunctively or disjunctively, and this question has generated directly competing interpretations:

The Anti-Defection Laws

Origins, disqualification rules, and key exceptions

The Tenth Schedule was added to curb opportunistic party-switching and protect legislative stability.



1 WHAT IS DEFECTION?

Defection means switching political allegiance after election, especially when a member elected on one party ticket joins another party or acts against that mandate.

2 WHY THE LAW WAS NEEDED

The law responded to the 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram' era. Between 1967 and 1972, nearly 2,000 defections destabilised several State governments.

~2,000
defections
(1967-72)

3 CONSTITUTIONAL ORIGIN

Enacted in 1985 through the 52nd Amendment, which inserted the Tenth Schedule into the Constitution.

1985 | 52nd Amendment |
Tenth Schedule

4 WHEN A MEMBER IS DISQUALIFIED

- Voluntarily gives up party membership.
- Votes or abstains against the party whip without permission, and the act is not condoned within 15 days.
- An independent member joins a political party after election.
- A nominated member joins a political party after 6 months from taking the seat.

15 days
condonation

6 months
for nominated
members

5 SUPREME COURT VIEW

'Voluntarily giving up' can be inferred from conduct, even without a formal resignation.

6 WHO DECIDES?

The Speaker or Chairman decides disqualification under the Tenth Schedule. The decision is subject to judicial review.

7 THE 91ST AMENDMENT, 2003

- Removed the 'split' exception; only merger protection remains.
- Disqualified members cannot become ministers or hold remunerative political posts.
- Council of Ministers capped at 15% of House strength (minimum 12 in States).

2003 | Split exception removed

8 TWO KEY EXCEPTIONS

1 A member elected as Speaker/ Chairman may resign from the party for neutrality and rejoin later without disqualification.

2 A member is protected when leaving the party as part of a valid merger under Paragraph 4.



WHY IT MATTERS

The law discourages opportunistic floor-crossing, strengthens party discipline, and seeks to preserve the stability of elected governments.



- On a conjunctive reading, a valid merger requires both an actual merger of the original political party at the national organisational level and the agreement of at least two-thirds of the legislature party; the consent of the two-thirds is merely a condition to make the pre-existing national-level party merger effective.
- On a disjunctive reading, a merger is "deemed" to have occurred as soon as two-thirds of the legislature party agrees to join another party, even without any corresponding merger at the level of the national party organisation.
- Two-thirds of the AAP's Rajya Sabha legislature party having announced the merger means the numerical condition of Paragraph 4(2) is satisfied; the unresolved question is whether this alone is sufficient without a corresponding merger of the AAP as a national party with the BJP.
- Legal experts have noted a fundamental disconnect in the AAP-BJP situation: the MLAs of Punjab who originally elected these Rajya Sabha MPs continue to belong to the AAP, while the MPs themselves have switched to the BJP, creating a structural anomaly between the electoral base of the legislators and the party affiliation they have adopted.

Landmark Judgements

- In *Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu and Others* (1992), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the Tenth Schedule and ruled that decisions of the presiding officer under the anti-defection law are subject to judicial review, though they are not subject to challenge on the grounds of internal proceedings of the House; the decision also affirmed that such decisions are left to the discretion of the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha.
- In *Ravi S. Naik v. Union of India* (1994), the Supreme Court held that the Speaker or Chairman of the relevant legislative body has the authority to disqualify an elected representative for defection, and established that an MP or MLA can be found to have voluntarily given up party membership from their conduct, even without a formal resignation.
- In *G. Viswanathan v. Hon'ble Speaker, Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly* (1995), the Supreme Court held that the Speaker of a Legislative Assembly possesses the power to decide on defection cases and that the Speaker's decision is final, subject only to judicial review in defined circumstances.
- In *Rajendra Singh Rana v. Swamy Prasad Maurya* (2007), arising from a claim by 37 MLAs of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) to a formal split, the Supreme Court held that for the split exception to apply, a split in the legislature party must stem from a corresponding split in the original political party, dismissing the "two hat theory" that a split in the legislative wing alone was sufficient to infer a split in the original party.
- In *Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. The Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly* (2020), the Supreme Court directed that the Speaker must decide disqualification cases within three months, holding that undue delay defeats the purpose of the Tenth Schedule; the Court also recommended the establishment of an independent tribunal to ensure neutrality and speed in adjudicating defection cases.
- In **Subhash Desai v. Principal Secretary, Governor of Maharashtra** (2023), a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court held that the "original political party" and the "legislature party" are distinguishable and separate entities, and that the Tenth Schedule would become unworkable if the two were conflated; it declared that a legislature party cannot act independently from the political party, and that the power to appoint a party Whip vests in the political party and not the legislature party, observing that to hold otherwise would allow legislators to sever the connection between themselves and the political party that fielded them, which the Tenth Schedule was specifically designed to prevent.
- In the Goa Congress merger case, the Bombay High Court (Goa Bench) ruled in February 2022 that since 10 of the 15 Congress MLAs constituted two-thirds of the legislature party, their merger with the BJP amounted to a "deemed merger" under Paragraph 4(2), adopting a disjunctive reading of the provision without requiring a national-level party merger; this ruling was upheld by the same Bench in January 2025

- in relation to a repeat merger of 8 of 11 Congress MLAs in the assembly constituted after the 2022 elections, and a Special Leave Petition (SLP(c) 5256/25) challenging the 2025 ruling is currently pending before the Supreme Court.
- In *Padi Kaushik Reddy v. State of Telangana (2025)*, the Supreme Court urged Parliamentary reforms to ensure timely and fair adjudication of defection cases and called for a re-examination of the Speaker's role in deciding such petitions.

Reform Proposals and Comparative Perspectives

- The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) recommended that disqualification questions under the Tenth Schedule be decided by the President or the Governor on the advice of the Election Commission, rather than by the Speaker or Chairman, to remove partisan influence from the adjudicatory process.
- The Supreme Court has itself suggested the establishment of an independent tribunal to decide defection cases, a reform aimed at ensuring both neutrality and adherence to mandatory time limits.
- Former Vice President Hamid Ansari suggested that the scope of the anti-defection law be restricted to votes that could directly lead to a loss of confidence in the government, thereby preserving a degree of legislative independence on non-critical issues.
- Other proposed reforms include raising the disqualification threshold from two-thirds to three-fourths, allowing independent members to join parties under defined conditions, and providing a statutory grace period for members who have defected to demonstrate continued political alignment.
- Several major democracies, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, France, Australia, Germany, and Italy, do not have laws prohibiting politicians from switching parties or becoming independents; the United Kingdom and other Westminster-tradition democracies may permit parties to expel defecting members, but do not impose statutory disqualification, reflecting a different model of balancing party discipline with individual legislative freedom.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following parties did seven AAP Rajya Sabha members join?
 - (a) Indian National Congress parliamentary group
 - (b) Aam Aadmi Party parliamentary group
 - (c) Bharatiya Janata Party legislative group
 - (d) Communist Party parliamentary group
2. Which of the following constitutional provisions is central to the merger exemption?
 - (a) Paragraph 6 of Tenth Schedule
 - (b) Paragraph 7 of Tenth Schedule
 - (c) Paragraph 5 of Tenth Schedule
 - (d) Paragraph 4 of Tenth Schedule
3. Who decides defection petitions involving Rajya Sabha members?
 - (a) Speaker of the Lok Sabha
 - (b) President of India directly
 - (c) Chairman of the Rajya Sabha
 - (d) Election Commission of India
4. What does defection generally mean in legislative politics?
 - (a) Contesting elections through party campaign
 - (b) Reviewing bills through committee process
 - (c) Joining public service after retirement
 - (d) Switching political allegiance after election
5. Which of the following amendments inserted the Tenth Schedule into the Constitution?
 - (a) 44th Constitutional Amendment Act
 - (b) 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act
 - (c) 91st Constitutional Amendment Act
 - (d) 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act
6. Which of the following conduct can attract disqualification for a party member?
 - (a) Attending regular House proceedings
 - (b) Addressing public meetings outside
 - (c) Voluntarily giving up party membership
 - (d) Raising constituency development issues
7. When can a nominated member face disqualification?
 - (a) Joining party after permitted period
 - (b) Missing committee meetings repeatedly
 - (c) Giving speeches outside Parliament
 - (d) Asking questions inside the House
8. Which of the following anti-defection exceptions was removed due to misuse?
 - (a) Split exception for breakaway groups
 - (b) Merger exception for party groups
 - (c) Consultation exception for party meetings
 - (d) Adjournment exception for House delays
9. Which of the following exceptions remains as a collective protection route?
 - (a) Split exception for smaller breakaways
 - (b) Merger exception for qualifying groups
 - (c) Speech exception for parliamentary debates
 - (d) Delay exception for pending petitions
10. Which of the following interpretations requires both party merger and legislative consent?
 - (a) Conjunctive reading of merger clause
 - (b) Disjunctive reading of merger clause
 - (c) Procedural reading of voting rules
 - (d) Ministerial reading of appointment rules
11. Which of the following interpretations treats two-thirds legislative consent as enough?
 - (a) Conjunctive reading of merger clause
 - (b) Disjunctive reading of merger clause
 - (c) Internal whip-based discipline reading
 - (d) Judicial review-based process reading
12. Which of the following cases upheld Tenth Schedule validity and judicial review?
 - (a) Ravi Kumar Gupta v. Union of India
 - (b) Subhash Desai v. Principal Secretary
 - (c) Keisham Meghachandra Singh case
 - (d) Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu
13. Which of the following cases linked conduct with voluntary party abandonment?
 - (a) Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu
 - (b) Subhash Desai v. Principal Secretary
 - (c) Ravi S. Naik v. Union
 - (d) Keisham Meghachandra Singh case
14. Which of the following cases separated the original party and legislature party?
 - (a) Ravi S. Naik v. Union
 - (b) Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu
 - (c) Keisham Meghachandra Singh case
 - (d) Subhash Desai v. Principal Secretary
15. What reform did the Second Administrative

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Reforms Commission suggest?

- (a) Decision by President or Governor on Election Commission advice
- (b) Final decision by Speaker or Chairman without judicial review
- (c) Final decision by political party leadership alone
- (d) Decision by police authorities after party complaints

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (c) | 2. (d) | 3. (c) | 4. (d) | 5. (b) | 6. (c) | 7. (a) | 8. (a) |
| 9. (b) | 10. (a) | 11. (b) | 12. (d) | 13. (c) | 14. (d) | 15. (a) | |

10 RBI Monetary Policy Reform

IN FOCUS

- The **Monetary Policy Committee** (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25% in its April 2026 review, maintaining a neutral stance amid heightened global uncertainty driven by the 2026 West Asia conflict, rising crude oil prices, and supply chain disruptions, while adopting a cautious wait-and-watch approach pending further data.
- The Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate remains at 5.00%, and both the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate remain at 5.50%; real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for 2025-26 is estimated at 7.6% based on the Second Advance Estimates under the new GDP series with base year 2022-23, while the growth forecast for 2026-27 has been revised down to 6.9% due to global financial volatility and supply-side shocks.
- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation projection for 2026-27 has been raised to 4.6% using the new CPI series (base year 2024=100), with elevated food inflation and persistently high energy prices identified as the primary upside risks, while domestic growth continues to be supported by robust private consumption, fixed investment, a buoyant services sector, and healthy balance sheets of financial institutions.

Global Headwinds and Domestic Pressures Shaping the April 2026 Policy

- The economic backdrop changed substantially between the February 2026 and April 2026 MPC reviews, with the **West Asia conflict** emerging as the dominant risk factor; energy infrastructure of major oil-exporting economies has been damaged, the **Strait of Hormuz** is virtually closed, and global oil prices continue to hover above USD 100 per barrel, with some analysts warning of prices crossing USD 110 per barrel if the conflict prolongs.
- The escalation of the US-Iran conflict triggered shortages and a spike in LPG prices, driving broad-based input cost inflation across consumption sectors; given the high linkage of crude derivatives to packaging, logistics, and raw materials, the situation is expected to compress corporate margins, delay demand recovery, and disrupt supply chains across multiple sectors.
- The yield on India's benchmark 10-year government bond crossed the 7% mark amid inflation concerns, and the Indian rupee depreciated by 2.34% since the conflict began, with bond market yields rising sharply as investors factored in the risk of a tighter future policy stance.
- Foreign investors withdrew Rs 1.37 lakh crore from Indian markets during March and April 2026, contributing to a decline in foreign exchange reserves; India's forex reserves reportedly declined by approximately USD 40 billion since the onset of the West Asia conflict.
- DBS Bank revised its FY2026-27 inflation forecast upward to 4.6% from an earlier projection of 4.0%, with an upside risk of 50-60 basis points if crude prices remain above USD 110 per barrel for consecutive quarters; real GDP growth was trimmed to 6.5% from a prior estimate of 7.0% for FY2026-27, as higher inflation was assessed to impinge on the real growth rate even while lifting the nominal pace.
- A wider energy import bill combined with subdued goods export demand could widen India's current account deficit to approximately 1.8% of GDP, against a baseline projection of 1.3% of GDP; this, combined with subdued capital flows, raised the prospect of a third consecutive balance of payments deficit in FY2026-27 following deficits in FY2024-25 and FY2025-26, which analysts described as a first for the Indian economy.

The Reserve Bank of India

INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATION,
STRUCTURE, AND CORE MANDATE



1. FOUNDATION

- RBI established on 1 April 1935 under RBI Act, 1934.
- Central Office opened in Calcutta and shifted permanently to Mumbai in 1937.



सत्यमेव जयते

2. NATIONALISATION

- RBI was initially privately owned.
- Nationalised in 1949 and fully owned by Government of India.



3. CORE MANDATE

- Regulates bank note issue.
- Maintains reserves for monetary stability.
- Operates the currency and credit system.
- Maintains price stability while keeping growth in mind.

4. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Central Board
of Directors

- Governor + up to 4 Deputy Governors
- 10 directors from various fields
- 2 Government officials
- 4 directors from Local Boards

1934

1935

1937

1949

2016



5. MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE



- Created on statutory basis after the 2016 amendment.
- 6 members.
- Chaired by RBI Governor.
- Meets at least 4 times a year.
- Each member has one vote.
- Governor has a casting vote.

6. INFLATION FRAMEWORK



The MPC sets the CPI inflation target at 4% with a tolerance band of +/-2%.

7. MONETARY POLICY REPORT



The RBI releases the Monetary Policy Report every six months, with inflation analysis and forecast for the next 6 to 18 months.

8. DISTINCTION

Monetary policy vs fiscal policy

MONETARY POLICY



Managed by RBI; regulates money supply and credit conditions.

FISCAL POLICY



Managed by Ministry of Finance; governs taxation and Government spending.

- In its February 2026 policy review, the MPC had unanimously held the repo rate unchanged at 5.25% following a 25-basis point cut in December 2025; it also lifted its FY2025-26 GDP forecast to 7.4% from 7.3% and revised its CPI inflation projection upward to 2.1% from 2.0%, with the average for FY2025-26 estimated at 2.0-2.2%.
- Economists noted that since the energy shock is primarily supply-driven and potentially transient, monetary policy may be a blunt and ineffective tool in the short term to arrest inflationary expectations; if the energy shock persists, the growth drag could begin to outweigh the inflation shock, leading some analysts to compare it to the pandemic episode rather than the 2022 oil price shock.
- The MPC's policy outlook was described as shifting from a "benign inflation, strong growth" scenario toward a more cautious balancing act, where the central bank may need to respond to renewed inflationary pressures while simultaneously sustaining economic growth momentum.

Monetary Policy: the Regulatory Framework

- Monetary policy is the process through which the RBI regulates the money supply in the economy using various monetary instruments under its control, with the primary objective of achieving price stability; the CPI (Combined) inflation target is set within a range of 2-6% by the Government of India in consultation with the RBI.
- Secondary objectives of monetary policy include promoting economic growth, generating employment, and ensuring exchange rate stability.
- The tools of monetary policy are broadly divided into quantitative tools, which affect the overall volume of credit, and qualitative tools, which direct credit toward or away from specific sectors.
- **Quantitative tools of monetary policy include:**
 - Reserve ratios, comprising the **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)**, which is the percentage of a bank's Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL) that must be maintained as cash reserves with the RBI, and the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR), which requires banks to hold a fixed portion of their NDTL as liquid assets such as cash, gold, and unencumbered government securities.
 - Open Market Operations (OMO), involving the purchase and sale of government securities by the RBI to inject or absorb liquidity from the banking system.
 - The repo rate, which is the rate at which the RBI offers overnight liquidity to commercial banks against government and other approved securities as collateral, and the reverse repo rate, which is the rate at which the RBI absorbs overnight liquidity from banks in exchange for eligible government securities.
 - The Bank Rate, which is the rate at which the RBI is willing to purchase or rediscount bills of exchange or other commercial papers, and at which it lends long-term unsecured funds to commercial banks without collateral; the repo rate, by contrast, governs short-term fund lending against collateral for liquidity management.
 - The Marginal Standing Facility (MSF), which is the facility through which scheduled commercial banks may borrow overnight funds by pledging their SLR portfolio up to a specified limit at a penal interest rate.
 - The Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF), which consists of overnight as well as term repo and reverse repo auctions used to manage daily liquidity conditions in the banking system.
 - The Market Stabilisation Scheme (MSS), under which special bonds are issued by the RBI on behalf of the Government to absorb surplus liquidity when regular government bond issuances are insufficient; these bonds generally carry a tenure of less than six months, though maturity may vary by requirement.



• **Qualitative tools of monetary policy include:**

- Margin Requirement, which is the difference between the market value of an asset and its maximum loan value, adjusted under selective credit control to regulate speculative lending.
- Consumer Credit Control, involving the setting of rules on minimum down payments and maximum repayment periods for instalment credit used to purchase consumer goods.
- Credit Rationing, through which the RBI may limit or direct the volume of loans extended by commercial banks to specific sectors, such as restricting real estate lending to prevent excessive credit concentration.
- Moral Suasion, which involves the RBI urging commercial banks through informal communication to adopt specific lending or reserve practices in line with prevailing economic conditions.
- Direct Action, comprising formal steps taken by the RBI against banks that fail to comply with specified conditions or regulatory requirements.

The Repo Rate: Mechanism and Wider Economic Implications

- The repo rate (Repurchase Agreement Rate) is the interest rate at which commercial banks borrow overnight funds from the RBI, providing government securities as collateral and agreeing to repurchase them at a higher price inclusive of interest at a specified future date.
- The repo rate serves as the primary tool for managing short-term liquidity conditions in the banking system, enabling banks to meet temporary funding requirements without resorting to longer-term borrowing.
- An increase in the repo rate raises the cost at which banks borrow from the RBI, which translates into higher interest rates on loans extended to consumers and businesses, resulting in slower credit expansion and reduced aggregate spending, thereby moderating inflationary pressures.
- A reduction in the repo rate lowers the cost of borrowing for banks, enabling them to pass on lower interest rates to borrowers, reducing Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) on home, vehicle, personal, corporate, and small business loans, and stimulating credit-led consumption and investment.
- In the broader macroeconomic context, a repo rate cut may reduce investment returns on savings instruments, potentially redirecting consumer funds toward equities, mutual funds, or real estate; it may also exert downward pressure on the currency by reducing the attractiveness of domestic assets to foreign investors, raising import costs while improving export competitiveness.
- Sustained rate cuts that stimulate excessive credit growth and spending can push up prices over time, risking a breach of the RBI's CPI inflation target of 4% within a tolerance band of plus or minus 2%.
- In the April 2026 policy review, the MPC held the repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, with analysts noting that a status quo on the policy rate provides relief to borrowers by keeping EMIs stable, while the central bank monitors evolving global and domestic conditions before taking further action; the Bank of Baroda noted the possibility of rate hikes if oil prices remain above USD 100 per barrel for a prolonged period and inflation breaches the upper tolerance band of 6%.

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The 4% Inflation Target: Historical Genesis and Policy Formalisation

- The 4% CPI inflation target that currently anchors India's monetary policy framework has its origins in recommendations made over four decades before its formal adoption, with the **Chakravarty Committee** (1982-85) being the first institutional body to articulate it.
- The Chakravarty Committee was constituted by the then RBI Governor Manmohan Singh under Sukhamoy Chakravarty to review the monetary policy framework; its key recommendations included emphasising price stability as a core objective of monetary policy, proposing an average annual inflation of 4% (measured in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)) to balance competing economic priorities, advocating monetary targeting through control of M3 money supply (defined as M1, comprising currency held by the public and demand deposits of commercial banks, plus net time deposits of commercial banks), and recommending market-driven government borrowing and an active government securities market to reduce dependence on RBI monetisation.
- The **Urjit Patel Committee** (2014) formalised the inflation targeting framework by recommending the adoption of CPI inflation as the nominal anchor, setting the target at 4% with a tolerance band of plus or minus 2%, thereby operationalising the 4% figure first proposed by the Chakravarty Committee approximately 40 years earlier.
- India formally adopted the flexible inflation targeting framework in 2016 following the May 2016 amendment to the RBI Act, 1934, aligning India's monetary policy architecture with global best practices; the framework entrusts the MPC, constituted under Section 45ZB of the amended Act, with determining the policy rate required to maintain inflation within the mandated band.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following bodies decides the policy repo rate?
 - (a) Ministry of Finance Policy Division
 - (b) Banking Regulation Supervisory Department
 - (c) Government Securities Management Office
 - (d) Monetary Policy Committee of RBI
2. Which of the following policy stances was maintained by the MPC?
 - (a) Accommodative monetary policy stance
 - (b) Tightening monetary policy stance
 - (c) Neutral monetary policy stance
 - (d) Suspended monetary policy stance
3. Which of the following RBI facilities absorbs bank liquidity without collateral?
 - (a) Marginal Standing Facility window
 - (b) Bank Rate rediscounting window
 - (c) Statutory Liquidity Ratio requirement
 - (d) Standing Deposit Facility window
4. What is the ownership status of the Reserve Bank of India?
 - (a) Fully owned by Government of India
 - (b) Fully owned by scheduled commercial banks
 - (c) Fully owned by private shareholder groups
 - (d) Fully owned by foreign central institutions
5. Where is the Central Office of the RBI located?
 - (a) Delhi
 - (b) Kolkata
 - (c) Chennai
 - (d) Mumbai
6. Which of the following categories forms part of the RBI Central Board's official directors?
 - (a) Regional board deputy directors
 - (b) Governor and Deputy Governors
 - (c) Elected legislative members
 - (d) Constitutional court judges
7. Which of the following legal provisions provides the basis for the MPC?
 - (a) Section 12FC of Finance Act
 - (b) Section 24GA of Banking Act
 - (c) Section 45ZB of RBI Act
 - (d) Section 30AS of Currency Act
8. What is the main objective of the MPC?
 - (a) Administering direct tax collection
 - (b) Fixing public expenditure priorities
 - (c) Managing electoral expenditure accounts
 - (d) Determining policy rate for inflation target
9. Which of the following arrangements anchors India's monetary policy framework?
 - (a) Wholesale price only framework
 - (b) Fixed exchange rate framework
 - (c) CPI target with tolerance band
 - (d) Government revenue target framework
10. What is the primary domain of monetary policy?
 - (a) Money supply and credit regulation
 - (b) Customs duties and tariff regulation
 - (c) Public expenditure and taxation
 - (d) Electoral spending and auditing
11. What does the Cash Reserve Ratio require banks to maintain?
 - (a) Liquid asset holdings with banks
 - (b) Cash reserves maintained with RBI
 - (c) Overnight borrowing against securities
 - (d) Informal persuasion of commercial banks
12. What does Open Market Operation involve?
 - (a) Buying and selling government securities
 - (b) Maintaining reserve ratios with RBI
 - (c) Regulating consumer instalment credit
 - (d) Communicating informal lending guidance
13. What does the Bank Rate relate to?
 - (a) Overnight collateral borrowing rate
 - (b) Surplus liquidity absorption rate
 - (c) Rediscounting bills and papers
 - (d) Liquid asset holding ratio
14. Which of the following instruments are part of the Liquidity Adjustment Facility?
 - (a) Taxes and customs duties
 - (b) Procurement and tender rules
 - (c) Export and import permits
 - (d) Repo and reverse repo auctions
15. Which of the following committees first articulated the inflation objective linked with price stability?
 - (a) Administering direct tax collection
 - (b) Fixing public expenditure priorities
 - (c) Managing electoral expenditure accounts
 - (d) Determining policy rate for inflation target

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- (a) Urjit Patel Committee framework
- (b) Chakravarty Committee monetary review
- (c) Narasimham Committee banking review
- (d) Fiscal Responsibility Committee review

SOLUTIONS

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. (d) | 2. (c) | 3. (d) | 4. (a) | 5. (d) | 6. (b) | 7. (c) | 8. (d) |
| 9. (c) | 10. (a) | 11. (b) | 12. (a) | 13. (c) | 14. (d) | 15. (b) | |

NPLC's LNAT Achievers

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LNAT (2021 - 2022)



Surbhi Sachdeva

LNAT (2022 - 2023)



Kartikay Kataria

LNAT (2023 - 2024)



Adi Singh

LNAT (2024 - 2025)



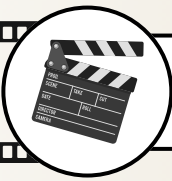
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MEDIA COVERAGE

India's Top Revolutionary Educationist: Talks About His Journey From Working In Premier Law Firm To Become The Most Sought After Educationist In Country Imparting Legal Education



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



India's Top Law Coach Speaks On Cracking Law Entrances

LAW TODAY

Super 30 of law entrance bags 5 out of top 10 in AILET and CLAT

ABHI SINGHA ■ NEW DELHI

When your students bag three out of top 10 slots in elite law entrance test - All India Legal Entrance Test or AILET - it speaks volumes about your passion, diligence and grit. Nishant Prakash, the unsung corporate lawyer turned teacher, will simply grin on extraordinary humility. The AILET results on Thursday saw a burst of messages and phone calls. Just days ago, Prakash had another round of celebrations with a strike rate of over 90% by his students in the

Common Law Admission Test (CLAT), for admissions to over 20 law universities across India. Out of 60 students that he provided training to, 54 ended up with a seat either in CLAT or AILET. Two of his students featured in top 10 in CLAT as well. Manoj Kumar, the small town of Bihar, Nishant growing up with him. Tandon University at Raipur, and mentorship of legal luminaries like Ram Jethmalani and KK Venugopal. After this, I was fortunate to work with Luthra & Luthra Law Offices at New

Delhi with specialising in Intellectual Property Rights, Insurance and Trade Law," says Prakash. However, despite a thriving law of teaching took him to rather an unconventional path - of teaching. "Hailing from Bihar, such dramatic shift to my career was frowned upon for it meant checks and wading into uncertain territories. With a mild change in passion should take place. In 2014, he set up Nishant

Prakash Law Classes and in just 10 years, he has established a reputation covered by law aspirants nationwide, transcending the industry to become a leader in education reform. Further solidifying his role in education reform, he is part of a high-level committee implementing the National Education Policy 2020, his broader impact on the national education framework. Also, recognised as the "Super 30" of law entrance training, Nishant's commitment to education underscores his effectiveness in guiding students to secure admissions in top law

schools appointed him to advise on the pivotal initiative of "Transforming Legal Education in India," positioning him as a key contributor to national legal education reform. Further solidifying his role in education reform, he is part of a high-level committee implementing the National Education Policy 2020, his broader impact on the national education framework. Also, recognised as the "Super 30" of law entrance training, Nishant's commitment to education underscores his effectiveness in guiding students to secure admissions in top law

Assam News

Renowned Educationist Nishant Prakash in Committee for Implementation of New Education Policy in Assam

Indian sprinter Hima Das, General Secretary of Assam Cricket Association Devajit Lon Saikia, and scientist Uddhab Bharali are also in the committee.



NEW DELHI | SATURDAY | DECEMBER 10, 2022

An Interview With India's leading Educationist; How Important Is To Join Coaching Institute To Crack An Aptitude Based Exam Like CLAT

CLAT candidates aggrieved over 'errors'; consortium denies laxity

Krishnakumar Rajasekhar NEW DELHI

A petition challenging the correctness of the provisional answer key of the postgraduate Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) held in December 1 for admission to 24 national law universities has been filed in the Supreme Court. The petition alleged that the provisional answer key had significant errors, including incorrect answers to 12 questions. Persons associated with the legal representation of the Consortium of National Law Universities (CNLU), which conducts the test, said the final answer key was out by the time the case came up on December 9. The consortium announced the release of the final answer key and results to December 7 from December 10. "The provision-

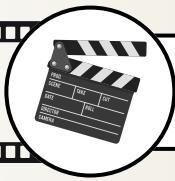


The petition alleged that the provisional answer key had significant errors, including incorrect answers to 12 questions.

al answer key had mistakes which were not resolved even in the final answer key," Manoj Kumar, advocate who appeared before the court, said. "There are precedents when the Supreme Court has granted interim relief in petitions challenging the final answer key, it becomes easier to seek relief in my opinion, it is like that. In the apex court as relief is applicable all across India, seeking relief before High Court's may create difficulty in terms of conflicting judgments and operation of jurisdiction." A corporate lawyer-turned-CLAT mentor, Nishant Prakash, alleged that the CLAT (undergraduate) was also conducted in an equally unprofessional manner. "Four questions

of the logical reasoning section were absolutely wrong which were later retracted by the consortium in the final answer key. Three more answers in the provisional answer keys were changed later upon the students' grievance. I strongly believe that the consortium cannot be absolved just by withdrawing these questions and leaving the majority of students trying these questions and could not complete the paper," he said. S. Shanmukumar, Director of the Gujarat National Law University and vice-president, CNLU Government, said "extreme care is always taken to avoid mistakes." "In law, the questions and the answer options in the paper are interpreted differently by different people," he said.





MEDIA COVERAGE

BUREAUCRATS INDIA
Date: December 18, 2025

With a 90% strike rate, Delhi-based Nishant Prakash's students secure top ranks in CLAT and AILET



New Delhi: With both CLAT and AILET Rank 4 going to his students, corporate-professional-turned-mentor Nishant Prakash on Thursday announced that 70 of his 78 students had qualified in India's two toughest law entrance examinations, with nine securing positions in the top 100.

The declaration of CLAT 2026 and AILET 2026 results has set off the next phase of admissions to India's premier law universities, once again underscoring the intense national competition among aspirants.

Against this backdrop, students trained at Nishant Prakash Law Classes (NPLC) posted a strong, widely distributed set of national 4 ranks across both examinations, reinforcing the institute's consistent presence at the top. Of the 78 candidates from NPLC, 70 qualified in CLAT or AILET.

Hindustan Times 100
Date: December 31, 2025

CLAT and AILET 2026: How two AIR 4 rankers prepared, handled pressure and adapted when the paper changed



SIDDHANT (AILET AIR 4)
ARSHNOOR SINGH (CLAT AIR 4)

Arshnoor Singh, who secured All India Rank 4 in CLAT 2026 and AIR 202 in AILET, and Siddhant Rohit, who secured ...

Arshnoor Singh and Siddhant Rohit successfully navigated CLAT and AILET by prioritising adaptability and mock testing in preparation.

For law aspirants, entrance exams such as CLAT and AILET are as much a test of temperament as of preparation. That lesson comes through clearly in the journey of Arshnoor Singh, who secured All India Rank 4 in CLAT 2026 and AIR 202 in AILET, and Siddhant Rohit, who secured All India Rank 4 in AILET 2026 and AIR 4 in CLAT 2026.

Both students began preparing for these exams at Nishant Prakash Law Classes (NPLC) in Delhi. At ultimate ... imposed ...

India's Top Revolutionary Educationist: Talks About His Journey From Working In Premier Law Firm To Become The Most Sought After Educationist In Country Imparting Legal Education




दिल्ली को काजून सिखानी वास्तव बिहारी

Nishant Prakash Law Classes



CLAT Consortium has recently changed the pattern for CLAT. How do you see this?

Nishant Prakash students secure top ranks in CLAT, AILET

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

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Arshnoor
Siddhant Rohit AILET (AIR 4)

1 OCI Card Eligibility Expansion in Sri Lanka

IN FOCUS

During a two-day official visit to Sri Lanka, Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan announced the extension of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card eligibility for Indian-origin people in Sri Lanka from the fourth generation to the sixth generation. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri confirmed that OCI cards will now be issued on the basis of documents provided by the Sri Lankan government, simplifying the application process. The move is aimed at addressing long-standing identity and documentation challenges faced by Indian-origin Tamils - descendants of plantation labourers brought during British colonial rule - many of whom were rendered stateless after Sri Lankan independence in 1948. The decision strengthens India's diaspora engagement and deepens bilateral ties under India's Neighbourhood First policy. Vice-President Radhakrishnan also held discussions with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake on energy cooperation, housing projects, the USD 450 million Cyclone Ditwah aid package, and fishermen-related concerns.

About the OCI Scheme

- The OCI scheme was introduced in 2005 through an amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955, to maintain ties with the global Indian diaspora without allowing dual citizenship.
- OCI cardholders receive lifelong, multiple-entry visa access to India and are exempt from registering with local police for long stays.
- They are granted parity with Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in educational and economic fields, but cannot vote, hold constitutional posts, or acquire agricultural land.
- The Person of Indian Origin (PIO) scheme was merged with the OCI scheme in 2015 to eliminate duplication and simplify administration.
- The recent expansion allows individuals of Indian origin in Sri Lanka up to the sixth generation to apply, with Sri Lankan government-issued documents accepted as valid proof of ancestry.

India-Sri Lanka Relations: Key Facts

- Indian-origin Tamils in Sri Lanka descend from labourers brought from Tamil Nadu during British colonial rule to work on tea, rubber, and coffee plantations; they form a distinct socio-economic group known as plantation Tamils.
- The Ceylon Citizenship Act (1948) rendered a large section of Indian-origin Tamils stateless after Sri Lankan independence, depriving them of basic rights and recognition for decades.
- India's USD 450 million aid package for Cyclone Ditwah recovery and its financial assistance during Sri Lanka's 2022 debt crisis are cited as key examples of India acting as a "first responder" under its Neighbourhood First policy.
- Key bilateral cooperation areas discussed during the visit include a proposed energy hub in Trincomalee involving fuel pipelines and oil tank farms, trade, education, tourism, and India-funded housing projects.
- Fishermen's issues remain a contentious and recurring bilateral concern, with both sides agreeing to address them through a humanitarian approach that considers livelihoods of fishing communities on both sides.

2 India's Economic Ranking Decline

IN FOCUS

According to the IMF's World Economic Outlook (WEO) 2026, India has slipped to the 6th largest economy globally, with a nominal GDP estimated at approximately USD 4.15 trillion. This marks a reversal from 2022, when India had overtaken the United Kingdom to become the 5th largest economy. The decline is not a result of any structural economic weakness but is attributed to two primary factors: a downward revision of India's GDP estimates following a base year change, which revised the 2025-26 GDP from Rs. 357 lakh crore to Rs. 345 lakh crore, and significant depreciation of the Indian rupee against the US dollar, which reduced the dollar value of India's GDP in international comparisons. Meanwhile, the British pound and Japanese yen performed relatively better, allowing the UK (USD 4.27 trillion) and Japan (USD 4.38 trillion) to rank ahead. Despite the decline, India remains among the fastest-growing major economies, with growth projected at 6-6.5%, and the IMF projects India will become the 4th largest economy by 2027 and the 3rd largest by 2031, overtaking Germany.

How Global Economic Rankings Are Measured

- The IMF determines global economic rankings using nominal GDP expressed in US dollar terms, calculated through two variables: GDP in local currency and the exchange rate against the US dollar.
- A depreciating domestic currency directly reduces a country's dollar-value GDP and thus its global ranking, even when real domestic output is rising.
- Dollar-based comparisons are highly sensitive when economies are closely grouped in size; the US leads at over USD 32 trillion and China at around USD 20 trillion, while India, Japan, Germany, and the UK are all clustered around the USD 4 trillion mark, making their rankings volatile.
- Beyond exchange rates, GDP base year revisions affect rankings by correcting earlier overestimates, improving statistical accuracy but temporarily reducing a country's apparent economic size in global comparisons.

Key Reasons for India's Ranking Decline

- India revised its GDP estimates using a new base year, which showed earlier figures had overstated the economy's size; the 2025-26 GDP was revised downward from Rs. 357 lakh crore to Rs. 345 lakh crore.
- Significant depreciation of the Indian rupee against the US dollar reduced the international dollar value of India's GDP, while currencies like the British pound and Japanese yen held relatively stronger, pushing the UK and Japan ahead of India in rankings.
- External economic pressures, including rising crude oil import bills, global geopolitical tensions, and supply chain disruptions, indirectly weakened the rupee and added macroeconomic instability.
- IMF projections indicate India is likely to regain 4th position by 2027 and become the 3rd largest economy by 2031, overtaking Germany, indicating the current decline is temporary and externally driven.

3 First Semiconductor Fab in India

IN FOCUS

The Government of India has officially notified the establishment of India's first semiconductor fabrication plant within a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Dholera, Gujarat. The facility is being developed by Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited, covers approximately 66 hectares, and involves a proposed investment of Rs. 91,000 crore. It is dedicated to the production of semiconductors, electronic hardware, software, and IT/ITES services, and is projected to generate around 21,000 jobs, primarily for engineers and skilled workers. The plant will use advanced cleanroom processes such as photolithography, doping, and etching to manufacture microchips on ultra-pure silicon wafers. To support this and similar projects, the government amended the SEZ Rules, 2006, reducing the minimum land requirement for sector-specific SEZs from 50 hectares to 10 hectares, among other regulatory reforms. The initiative is a key component of India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, aimed at building an end-to-end domestic semiconductor value chain and reducing dependence on imported chips.

About the Dholera Semiconductor SEZ

- India's first semiconductor fabrication SEZ is located in Dholera, Gujarat, and is being developed by Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited with a proposed investment of Rs. 91,000 crore.
- The SEZ covers approximately 66 hectares and is dedicated to semiconductors, electronic hardware, software, and IT/ITES services, with an estimated employment generation of 21,000 people.
- A semiconductor fabrication plant (fab) produces microchips on ultra-pure silicon wafers inside Class 1 cleanrooms using nanoscale processes such as photolithography, doping, metallization, and etching; these chips power devices ranging from smartphones and vehicles to defence systems and AI platforms.
- To support capital-intensive semiconductor investments, the government amended SEZ Rules, 2006, reducing the minimum land requirement for sector-specific SEZs from 50 hectares to 10 hectares, introducing flexibility in encumbrance norms, allowing free-of-cost supplies in Net Foreign Exchange (NFE) calculations, and permitting domestic sales in the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) subject to applicable duties.

India's Semiconductor Ecosystem: Other Key Projects

- Micron Semiconductor Technology India is setting up a semiconductor Assembly, Testing, Marking, and Packaging (ATMP) facility in Sanand, Gujarat, with an investment of approximately Rs. 13,000 crore.
- Aequs Group is developing an electronic component manufacturing SEZ in Dharwad, Karnataka.
- Kaynes Semicon and CG Semi are investing in assembly, testing, and packaging operations with investments of Rs. 681 crore and Rs. 2,150 crore respectively.
- India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 aims to build a complete domestic semiconductor value chain, from chemicals and gases to chip-making machinery, positioning India as a globally competitive hub for semiconductor and electronics production.
- Semiconductors are critical for national security, digital infrastructure, and industrial competitiveness; India currently imports a large share of its requirements, making domestic fabrication capacity strategically vital for reducing supply chain vulnerability.

4 10 Years of the Unified Payments Interface

IN FOCUS

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI), launched on April 11, 2016 by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), completed 10 years of operations in 2026. From recording just 17.86 million transactions worth Rs. 6,952 crore in FY17, UPI has scaled to 218.98 billion transactions totalling nearly Rs. 285 lakh crore in FY26, processing 21.70 billion transactions worth Rs. 28.33 lakh crore in January 2026 alone - accounting for 81% of all retail digital transactions in India. The platform has grown from 216 member banks in 2021 to 691 by January 2026, serves approximately 400 million active users, and commands 49% of global real-time payment transaction volume. The IMF has recognised UPI as the world's largest real-time payment system by volume, and both the IMF and World Bank have acknowledged it as the gold standard for inclusive Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). UPI is now operational or linked with payment systems in the UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius, and Qatar.

About UPI: Architecture, Features and Evolution

- UPI was developed by NPCI, an umbrella organisation for retail payments and settlement systems, initiated by the RBI and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA), and launched on April 11, 2016; it replaces complex banking inputs like account numbers and IFSC codes with a Virtual Payment Address (VPA), requiring only a mobile number and PIN or OTP for instant, round-the-clock, interoperable transactions.
- UPI supports both push transactions (sending money) and pull transactions (requesting money), covering peer-to-peer (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) payments; the Zero Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) policy was instrumental in driving merchant adoption.
- UPI 2.0, launched in 2018, introduced one-time mandates for pre-authorisation, invoice-in-the-inbox for payment verification, and signed intent or QR codes for enhanced security.
- UPI 123Pay enables feature phone users without internet access to transact, while UPI Lite supports low-value offline transactions; UPI AutoPay handles recurring mandates such as utility bills and EMIs, with approximately 500 million monthly autopay debits recorded.
- Integration of RuPay Credit Cards on UPI has blurred the boundary between payments and credit, enabling pre-approved credit lines for underserved users under Credit on UPI.
- BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money) is the government-promoted NPCI-developed mobile application serving as the front-end interface for UPI.
- Effective April 1, 2026, the RBI mandated two-factor authentication (2FA) for all digital payment transactions, adding biometrics, PINs, or secure tokens alongside OTPs to reduce cyber fraud.

Structural Foundations and Strategic Significance

- India's digital payments transformation rests on the JAM Trinity - a concept first proposed in the Economic Survey of 2014-15 - comprising Jan Dhan (PMJDY, launched 2014), Aadhaar, and Mobile connectivity; its first major expression was the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, which routed welfare payments directly into beneficiaries' accounts.
- The RBI had introduced RTGS in 2004 and IMPS in 2010 as early digital milestones, but both required IFSC codes and account numbers and remained limited to those within the formal banking ecosystem; UPI addressed this gap through interoperability and simplified authentication.
- JAM Trinity and UPI together form part of India's broader "India Stack," a multi-sectoral Digital Public Infrastructure built on interoperability, open standards, and population-scale digital public goods.
- UPI has enabled MSMEs, small traders, and informal workers to build a digital financial record, facilitating

- access to formal credit and reducing dependence on informal moneylenders, while strengthening DBT delivery for schemes such as PM-KISAN.
- France's President Emmanuel Macron publicly noted India's achievement of processing over 20 billion transactions monthly through UPI; India commands 49% of global real-time payment transaction volume, making it the undisputed global leader in this space.

5 11 Years of Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana

IN FOCUS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi commemorated the 11th anniversary of the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) on April 8, 2026, highlighting its cumulative disbursement of over 57 crore loans amounting to Rs. 40.07 lakh crore since its launch on April 8, 2015, under the vision of "Funding the Unfunded." Launched under the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, PMMY provides collateral-free institutional credit to non-corporate, non-farm micro and small enterprises. The scheme peaked at 6.67 crore loans worth Rs. 5.41 lakh crore in FY 2023-24 and sanctioned Rs. 5.65 lakh crore by March 2026. Over 12 crore accounts belong to first-time entrepreneurs integrated into the formal banking system. Women constitute approximately 67% of all beneficiaries, while over 51% belong to SC, ST, and OBC categories. MUDRA Ltd., a subsidiary of SIDBI, serves as the apex refinancing institution and reported its highest-ever annual profit of Rs. 827 crore in FY 2024-25. The scheme aligns with India's Viksit Bharat 2047 vision of inclusive grassroots economic growth.

About PMMY: Structure and Loan Categories

- PMMY is built on three foundational pillars: Banking the Unbanked, Securing the Unsecured, and Funding the Unfunded; eligible beneficiaries include individuals, proprietary concerns, partnership firms, and private and public limited companies engaged in manufacturing, trading, services, and agri-allied non-farm activities.
- PMMY operates through a three-tier structure: MUDRA Ltd. (subsidiary of SIDBI) as the apex refinancing institution that does not lend directly; Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) including Scheduled Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks, NBFCs, and MFIs for last-mile credit delivery; and beneficiary micro-enterprises as the third tier.
- The Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU), administered by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC), provides guarantee coverage for PMMY loans, mitigating credit risk and enabling collateral-free lending.
- Loan categories under PMMY: Shishu (up to Rs. 50,000; 74% of total loans), Kishor (Rs. 50,001 to Rs. 5 lakh; 24%), Tarun (Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 10 lakh; 2%), and Tarun Plus (Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh for high-performing Tarun repayers; announced in Union Budget 2024-25; currently 0.004% of total loans).
- The MUDRA Card functions as a RuPay debit card with an overdraft feature, providing flexible working capital credit to small entrepreneurs through a digitised transaction model.
- The JanSamarth Portal serves as a unified digital gateway covering 14 credit-linked government schemes and over 200 lenders, reducing administrative hurdles for first-time applicants.

Key Achievements and Challenges

- Over 57 crore loans amounting to Rs. 40.07 lakh crore have been disbursed cumulatively since 2015; more than 12 crore accounts belong to first-time entrepreneurs pulled out of informal moneylender networks into the formal banking system.
- Women account for approximately 67% of all PMMY beneficiaries, making it a major instrument of women's economic empowerment; over 51% of beneficiaries belong to SC, ST, and OBC categories, reinforcing its role in advancing social equity.
- MUDRA Ltd. reported its highest-ever annual profit of over Rs. 827 crore in FY 2024-25, reflecting institutional health of the refinancing architecture.
- As loan limits increase to Rs. 20 lakh under Tarun Plus, maintaining low Non-Performing Asset (NPA) levels remains a key concern for lending institutions given the collateral-free nature of disbursements.

- A segment of Shishu-category borrowers continues to struggle to transition from subsistence-level activity to scalable business growth, while digital literacy gaps in remote areas limit the full reach of the JanSamarth Portal despite its availability.

6 New Deportation Policy for Illegal Migrants

IN FOCUS

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) introduced a comprehensive new deportation policy in February 2026, directing every state and Union Territory to establish district-level special task forces to detect, identify, and deport illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar. Key features include a 90-day upper limit for nationality verification of suspected migrants, mandatory monthly status reports to the MHA on foreigners missing or overstaying visas, and the launch of the Foreigners Identification Portal (FIP) to capture biometric and demographic details of intercepted illegal foreign nationals. States must operationalise holding centres with 10-feet-high barbed wire boundaries, with minimum amenities including kitchens, medical facilities, and creche facilities for children; holding centres must not be operated from within existing jails. Illegally obtained documents such as Aadhaar cards, PAN cards, and driving licences must be uploaded for cancellation, and deported individuals are to be blacklisted through the Bureau of Immigration. The policy operates within the legal framework of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, which replaced four older immigration laws and granted statutory backing to the Bureau of Immigration for identification, detention, and deportation of illegal migrants.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- The Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 consolidates four earlier laws: the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920; the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; the Foreigners Act, 1946; and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000; it mandates compulsory reporting of foreign nationals by hotels, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities, and requires airlines and shipping companies to share advance passenger and crew data with immigration authorities.
- The Act empowers the Central Government to regulate or shut down premises frequented by foreigners on security grounds, and provides statutory backing to the Bureau of Immigration to identify, detain, and deport illegal migrants.
- Under Article 258(1) of the Constitution, the Central Government has delegated the power to identify and deport illegally staying foreign nationals to state governments and UT administrations.
- The Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 empowers District Magistrates to set up tribunals to legally determine whether a person is a foreigner; Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs) under this framework are currently unique to Assam, and the new holding centre guidelines also apply to individuals declared foreigners by these tribunals.
- India is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 or its 1967 Protocol; accordingly, state governments are not empowered to grant "refugee" status to individuals such as Chin refugees who crossed into Mizoram following the 2021 Myanmar military coup.

Historical Context and Border Arrangements

- Illegal migration into India dates to large-scale population movements during the Partition of 1947 from East Pakistan and a major influx during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War; sustained migration into Assam led to the Assam Movement and the Assam Accord of 1985, which fixed March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date for identifying illegal migrants in Assam.
- Estimates suggest India may have between 12 million and 20 million illegal migrants, though exact figures remain uncertain due to lack of reliable data; the issue has become linked with internal security concerns, identity politics, and resource pressures, prompting measures including border fencing and National Register of Citizens (NRC) debates.
- India maintains a free-border arrangement with Nepal; it previously maintained a Free Movement Regime (FMR) with Myanmar allowing people to move within 10 kilometres on either side of the border, though this has

- been under review following the 2021 Myanmar military coup.
- The 2021 Myanmar military coup triggered a large influx of Chin refugees into Mizoram, highlighting the tension between India's domestic immigration enforcement framework and the absence of a formal domestic refugee protection law.

7 Reconstitution of NITI Aayog

IN FOCUS

The Government of India reconstituted NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) in April 2026, appointing Ashok Kumar Lahiri as Vice-Chairperson, succeeding Suman K. Bery, and inducting five new full-time members: Rajiv Gauba, Prof. K. V. Raju, Prof. Gobardhan Das, Prof. Abhay Karandikar, and Dr. M. Srinivas. Notably, three of the five new full-time members have strong backgrounds in health, biotechnology, and deep tech, marking a departure from NITI Aayog's traditionally economist-heavy composition and signalling a sharper focus on science, technology, and health sectors. NITI Aayog was established on January 1, 2015, through a Union Cabinet resolution, replacing the Planning Commission, which had been set up in 1950. Unlike the Planning Commission, which followed a top-down approach and could impose policies and allocate funds to states, NITI Aayog functions as an advisory think tank with no mandate to impose policies on states and no power to allocate funds. It is an extra-constitutional, non-statutory body whose Chairperson is the Prime Minister and whose CEO is appointed by the Prime Minister for a fixed tenure at Secretary rank.

Composition and Structure of NITI Aayog

- Chairperson: The Prime Minister of India; Vice-Chairperson: Appointed directly by the PM and holds the rank of a Cabinet Minister.
- Governing Council: The highest decision-making body, comprising Chief Ministers of all states and UTs with legislatures, and Lieutenant Governors of other UTs.
- Full-Time Members: Experts from fields such as economics, science, health, and agriculture, appointed on a full-time basis; Part-Time Members: Maximum 2, rotational, from relevant institutions.
- Ex-Officio Members: Maximum 4 from the Union Council of Ministers, nominated by the PM; Special Invitees: Experts, specialists, and practitioners with domain knowledge.
- Regional Councils: Formed on a need basis to address specific regional issues, comprising CMs and Lt. Governors of the relevant region, chaired by the PM or a nominee.
- CEO: Appointed by the PM for a fixed tenure at Secretary rank, heading the Secretariat established as deemed necessary.

Key Functions, Initiatives, and NITI Aayog vs Planning Commission

- NITI Aayog functions as the apex public policy think tank of India, promoting cooperative federalism by treating states as equal partners using a bottom-up approach, and competitive federalism by encouraging healthy inter-state competition across sectors such as health, education, and water management.
- Key functions include designing strategic and long-term policy frameworks, maintaining a state-of-the-art knowledge and research resource centre, and actively monitoring and evaluating the implementation of government programmes.
- Major initiatives: Aspirational Districts Programme (transforming 112 of India's most underdeveloped districts), Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, e-AMRIT Portal (electric vehicles), and the Methanol Economy programme.
- Key indices released: SDG India Index, Fiscal Health Index, State Health Index, Composite Water Management Index, Good Governance Index, India Innovation Index, and Export Preparedness Index.
- Critical differences from the Planning Commission: NITI Aayog has no mandate to impose policies on states and no power to allocate funds to ministries or state governments, whereas the Planning Commission imposed policies on states (top-down approach) and allocated funds to ministries and state governments; NITI Aayog's CEO is appointed by the PM, whereas Planning Commission secretaries were appointed through the usual process.

8 National Panchayati Raj Day 2026

IN FOCUS

National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated across India on April 24 every year to mark the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which came into force on April 24, 1993, and granted constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The day was declared a national observance in 2010 by the then Prime Minister. The 2026 national event was held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, organised by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, where a special message from Prime Minister Narendra Modi was read out and disseminated to local bodies across all states and UTs. Key releases on the occasion included the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)-2.0, measuring the performance and development of panchayats nationwide, and three illustrated books under the Panchayat Dharohar Initiative, covering the rural heritage of Tripura, Tirupati, and Uttarkashi. Digital governance tools including e-GramSwaraj and the SabhaSaar Portal were highlighted as primary instruments for transparency and ease of governance in rural India. Celebrations were conducted at state, district, block, and gram panchayat levels, with thousands of Gram Sabhas convening across the country.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 and Evolution of PRIs

- The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was enacted in December 1992 and came into force on April 24, 1993; it granted constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions and established a mandatory three-tier structure: Gram Panchayat (village level), Panchayat Samiti (block level), and Zila Parishad (district level).
- Key provisions introduced by the amendment: mandatory elections every five years, reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women, establishment of State Election Commissions to oversee PRI elections, and creation of State Finance Commissions for equitable financial devolution to PRIs.
- The Balwantrai Mehta Committee (1957) first recommended the three-tier system of rural governance; the first Gram Panchayat was established on October 2, 1959 at Nagaur, Rajasthan, followed by Andhra Pradesh on October 11, 1959.
- Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882, known as the "Magna Carta of Local Self-Government" in India, aimed to transfer administrative and financial responsibilities from provincial government to local bodies; Lord Mayo's Resolution (1870) had earlier introduced the concept of elected representatives in urban municipalities.

Significance, Awards, and Key Facts

- PRIs serve as the constitutional foundation of grassroots democracy in India; over 1.4 million women representatives actively shape policy and leadership in rural India through mandatory reservation provisions under the 73rd Amendment.
- Gram Sabhas, social audits, and grievance redressal systems function as transparency and accountability mechanisms within the PRI framework, enabling direct citizen participation in local governance.
- PRIs act as key implementers of government schemes related to health, education, sanitation, and rural employment, serving as the critical administrative link between the state and the village.
- National Panchayat Awards are conferred annually on National Panchayati Raj Day; award categories include the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar (DDUPSVP), Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar, Gram Urja Swaraj Vishesh Panchayat Puraskar, Carbon Neutral Vishesh Panchayat Puraskar, and Panchayat Kshamta Nirmaan Sarvottam Sansthan Puraskar.
- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj organises the national event; digital governance tools e-GramSwaraj and the SabhaSaar Portal serve as primary instruments for transparency and ease of governance in rural India.

9 Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary as India's 99th Ramsar Site

IN FOCUS

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change designated Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary in Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh, as India's 99th Ramsar site in April 2026, taking Uttar Pradesh's tally to 12 Ramsar sites. Shekha Jheel is a 25-hectare freshwater perennial wetland that came into existence in 1852 following the construction of the Upper Ganga Canal, which divides the lake into two parts. Located on the Central Asian Flyway, it supports over 166 water bird species including the painted stork, bar-headed goose, and northern pintail, alongside mammalian fauna such as blackbuck (a Schedule I species) and blue bull (nilgai). Dominant tree species include Terminalia arjuna and Syzygium cumini. Key threats include siltation caused by unscientific mound construction in 1991, loss of forest cover due to land distribution schemes, invasive alien species such as Lantana camara, Parthenium hysterophorus, and Water Hyacinth, aggressive water chestnut farming reducing foraging surface for migratory birds, and severe eutrophication caused by uncontrolled Water Hyacinth growth. In 2025, India added 11 new Ramsar sites, and in 2026, three new sites were added: Patna Bird Sanctuary (UP), Chhari-Dhand Wetland Conservation Reserve (Kutch, Gujarat), and Shekha Jheel (UP).

Ramsar Convention and India's Framework

- The Ramsar Convention, also known as the Convention on Wetlands, is an intergovernmental treaty adopted in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, entered into force in 1975; it designates wetlands of international importance as Ramsar sites.
- The Montreux Record, adopted in Montreux, Switzerland in 1990, identifies Ramsar sites requiring priority conservation attention at national or international level; India's wetlands on the Montreux Record include Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) and Loktak Lake (Manipur).
- The largest Ramsar site in the world is Pantanal, South America; World Wetlands Day is observed on February 2 every year.
- The Ramsar Convention came into force in India in 1982; India's domestic regulatory framework for wetlands is the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, notified by MoEF&CC under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, which decentralises wetlands management and provides for the constitution of State Wetlands Authorities or UT Wetlands Authorities.

India's Ramsar Sites: Key Facts and Recent Additions

- India has a total of 99 Ramsar sites as of April 2026; the largest Ramsar site in India is Sunderbans, West Bengal; the smallest is Vembannur Wetland Complex, Tamil Nadu; Tamil Nadu has the maximum number of Ramsar sites among all states with 14.
- Three Ramsar sites added in 2026: Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh) - an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) supporting migratory birds; Chhari-Dhand Wetland Conservation Reserve (Kutch, Gujarat) - a unique desert wetland crucial for flamingos and cranes; and Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh) - a freshwater wetland on the Central Asian Flyway supporting rich avifauna and groundwater recharge.
- Notable Ramsar sites added in 2025 include Khichan or Phalodi (Rajasthan), famous for Demoiselle cranes and community-led conservation; Khecheopalri Wetland (Sikkim), a sacred wetland with high cultural value; Gogabeel Lake (Bihar), one of Bihar's largest oxbow lakes and a hotspot for migratory birds; and Kopra Jalashay (Chhattisgarh), an inland wetland supporting aquatic biodiversity.
- Other well-known Indian Ramsar sites include Chilika Lake (Odisha), Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), Harike Lake (Punjab), Loktak Lake (Manipur), and Wular Lake (Jammu and Kashmir).

10 Privilege Notice and Parliamentary Privileges in India

IN FOCUS

A privilege notice was submitted in Parliament against the Prime Minister of India, alleging breach of parliamentary privilege following remarks made after the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026. A Privilege Notice (or Motion) is a formal notice submitted by a Member of Parliament alleging a breach of parliamentary rights, immunities, or the dignity of the House, moved under Rule 222 in the Lok Sabha and Rule 187 in the Rajya Sabha. The Speaker (Lok Sabha) or Chairman (Rajya Sabha) serves as the first level of scrutiny and may admit or withhold consent; if admitted, leave of the House is granted if at least 25 members support it. Once admitted, the House may debate directly or refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges, a Standing Parliamentary Committee with semi-judicial functions, comprising 15 members in the Lok Sabha (nominated by the Speaker) and 10 members in the Rajya Sabha (nominated by the Chairman). Parliamentary privileges are primarily derived from Articles 105 and 194 of the Constitution, and no comprehensive law codifying these privileges has been enacted to date, a position consistently recommended by the Committee of Privileges in 1994 and 2008 to preserve the exclusive jurisdiction of the House over its own affairs.

Constitutional and Legal Framework of Parliamentary Privileges

- Parliamentary privileges are special rights, immunities, and exemptions enjoyed by each House of Parliament, its committees, and members; they extend to the Attorney General of India but not to the President, who has separate constitutional immunities under Article 361.
- Constitutional basis: Article 105 grants MPs freedom of speech and immunity from legal proceedings for anything said or voted in Parliament; Article 122 bars courts from questioning parliamentary proceedings on procedural grounds; Articles 194 and 212 extend similar privileges to Members of State Legislatures.
- Individual privileges include freedom of speech in Parliament, immunity from court proceedings for legislative acts, and protection from arrest in civil cases during session and 40 days before and after the session; collective privileges include the right to regulate its own procedures, power to punish for breach of privilege or contempt, authority to exclude strangers, and right to demand attendance and documents.
- A breach of privilege constitutes contempt of Parliament; punishments the House may impose include censure, reprimand, suspension, or imprisonment for the duration of the session.

Judicial Interpretations and Key Precedents

- Keshav Singh Case (1964): The Supreme Court, under Article 143, established that powers and privileges of State Legislatures under Article 194(3) and Parliament under Article 105(3) are subject to Fundamental Rights, and that conflicts between privileges and rights must be resolved through harmonious construction.
- Sharma Case (1959): The Supreme Court clarified that Article 19(1)(a) (Freedom of Speech and Expression) does not automatically override parliamentary privileges, but Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty) still applies even within the privilege framework.
- Swaraj Paul Case (1984): Established that Parliament can exercise privilege jurisdiction over a foreign national, but only if the contempt or breach of privilege is committed within India.
- P.V. Narasimha Rao Case (1998): Extended immunity for voting in Parliament, though later revisited; recent Supreme Court judgments have held that parliamentary privileges do not provide blanket immunity from criminal law or corruption offences.
- By established parliamentary convention, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha or Speaker of the Lok Sabha does not appear before the Supreme Court or any High Court upon receiving a notice; instead, relevant papers are forwarded to the Minister of Law and Justice, as demonstrated during the Keshav Singh reference (1964) and the Presidential Election reference (1974).

VOICES VICTORIES



AIR 4, AILET 2026

SIDDHANT ROHIT

“I joined Nishant Prakash Law Classes in Class 11, and from that day, every stage of my preparation was guided by Nishant sir. I didn’t just learn how to study—I learned how to stay disciplined, how to believe, and how to keep pushing even when it got overwhelming. I followed exactly what sir told us, gave 150+ mocks, trusted the process, and that belief took me to AIR 4 in AILET. I genuinely don’t think I could have reached here without Nishant sir and NPLC.”



(AIR 4, CLAT 2026

ARSHNOOR SINGH

I started my CLAT journey without any law background in my family, and everything I know about this exam, I learned under the guidance of Nishant Sir at NPLC. What made the biggest difference for me was the personal attention—Sir knew every student, our strengths, our weaknesses, and our exact mistakes after each mock.

After every test, he would look at my OMR and guide me on how to change my strategy instead of following a one-size-fits-all approach. When the CLAT paper surprised everyone, Sir’s constant advice of staying calm and confident helped me push through without panicking. That mindset, combined with consistent practice and guidance, is what helped me secure AIR 4 in CLAT 2026.



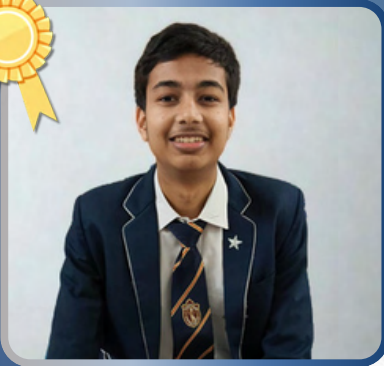
AIR 2, CLAT 2025

DAIWIK AGARWALA

I don’t think I’ve ever given so many tests in my life as I did at NPLC in just one year. They made me take so many mocks that I became almost mechanical before the actual exam. The course structure here is such that hard work is non-negotiable. And last, but not least, Nishant Sir would connect with your parents and keep them informed about your every day scores, which added a bit of pressure and made all of us work harder. There were times when my scores didn’t meet my expectations, and I felt low, but Sir was always there to motivate me.

“NPLC doesn’t shout excellence; it proves it every result season.”

VOICES VICTORIES



AIR 2, AILET 2025

CHAITANYA GHOSH

This place is not your regular coaching institute that you see around. They don't just make you work hard—they make you smart. NPLC has been my best choice for both CLAT and AILET preparation. These exams cover general topics that seemed easy to me initially, but it wasn't until I started attending classes at NPLC that I realized the major challenges I would have faced if I solely depended on self-study. The competitive environment and Sir's dedicated guidance have been key in helping me clear every law entrance exam I took. I cleared every law entrance exam I wrote.



AIR 4, CLAT 2025

ADITYA GAUTAM ANKHAD

It's all about AILET and CLAT here. Students eat, drink, and sleep law entrance preparation! I used to go to another institute in XIth, but somehow, I was just an enrollment number there. Initially, when I joined, the competition and pressure from Sir felt overwhelming, but thanks to him, everything became much easier. Here, no one calls you by batch number or enrollment ID. All of us studying together were very good friends, but we competed intensely. Since they have a limited intake, we received a lot of personalized attention. I recall most of my batchmates at NPLC making it to the top NLUs. This place is even better than you can imagine!



AIR 6, AILET 2025

DHRUV KAMATH

I had never experienced such intense competition in any classroom before I did my first class at NPLC. It was a bit horrifying initially however it got better with time. If you can't work hard, I do not feel this is the place for you. Nishant sir is simply amazing. I never liked him till I was at the center as there was too much pressure from his side unlike my school, However, I can tell you, that I could make it to NLU Delhi, and only because of him. I recall almost everyone with me in the class who got through either of the top 5 NLUs.

"At NPLC, branding isn't on T-shirts — it's in the AIRs."

VOICES VICTORIES



AIR 10, AILET 2025

VIDISHA SINGH

Nishant Sir's classes are the complete package. While there's a great deal of hard work expected, he creates an environment where you can ease your way into cracking the exam. Unlike the rigid and monotonous teaching methods of many other coaching institutions, his classes are a perfect blend of learning and fun. His approach is practical, reliable, and tailored to real exam scenarios, which is reflected in his incredible track record of sending most of his students to the top 5 NLUs. Even after completing his classes, you'll find yourself wanting to go back for more (I still do).



**AIR 24 AILET 2025
& OXFORD**

SAMYUKTHA KOVILAKATH

People often ask me how I managed to prepare for Indian law entrances and the Oxford Law entrance at the same time. My answer is simple: NPLC gave me the discipline, perspective, and clarity to handle both. Nishant Sir's classroom isn't just a place where laws are taught - it's where ambition is refined and sharpened. What stood out to me most was how the training here doesn't chase trends - it builds fundamentals. I never felt like I was preparing for just one exam - I was preparing to think like a lawyer.

This journey hasn't just taken me to AILET AIR 24—it's also taken me across continents. And for that, I credit the environment, the mentorship, and the unwavering standards at NPLC.

"Mentorship isn't a model here — it's a method."

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- Established in 2004 under PMLA, FIU-IND is India's central agency for receiving, analysing, and disseminating financial intelligence under the Ministry of Finance.
- PM Modi inaugurated the Rs. 12,000 crore Delhi-Dehradun Expressway, featuring a 12-km wildlife corridor and improved access to Uttarakhand's key destinations.
- The government notified a Rs. 91,000 crore SEZ for Tata Semiconductor at Dholera, Gujarat, to establish India's first chip fabrication unit.
- Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi inaugurated the Indian Navy Commanders' Conference 01/2026 at Nausena Bhawan, focusing on emerging technologies and modern warfare preparedness.
- The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill reserving 33% seats for women was defeated in Lok Sabha, falling 54 votes short of the required two-thirds majority.
- LG Vinai Kumar Saxena launched Project Him Sarovar, a snow-harvesting and water conservation initiative in Ladakh, with 50 water bodies being excavated across Leh and Kargil.
- The Supreme Court invoked Article 142 to protect voting rights of deleted Bengal voters ahead of the West Bengal Assembly Elections scheduled for April 23 and April 29, 2026.
- The Meghalaya cabinet granted official language status to Khasi and Garo alongside English through the Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance 2026.
- Ahmedabad's Kankaria Coaching Depot became India's first water neutral railway depot, saving approximately 1.60 lakh litres of water daily through phytoremediation technology.
- The Centre proposed continuation of the River Basin Management Scheme with a Rs. 2,183 crore outlay for the 16th Finance Commission period from 2026-27 to 2030-31.
- The Supreme Court warned Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh over illegal sand mining in the National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary, threatening deployment of paramilitary forces.
- Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin warned against the Centre's delimitation exercise, invoking the spirit of
- DMK's resistance during the anti-Hindi agitation of the 1950s and 1960s.
- LG Vinai Kumar Saxena laid the foundation stone for India's first Petroglyph Conservation Park at Sindhu Ghat on the banks of the Indus River in Ladakh.
- The Delhi High Court criticised the Sentencing Review Board for rejecting, for the second time, the premature release plea of Priyadarshini Mattoo case convict Santosh Kumar Singh.
- The Ministry of Defence issued an Expression of Interest for the indigenous development of 1,000-kg aerial bombs equivalent to the US military's MK-84, under the Make-II category.
- Dr. Ch. Srinivasa Rao, Director of IARI, was conferred the 9th Prof. M.S. Swaminathan Award in Hyderabad for his contributions to climate-resilient agriculture.
- An IISER Kolkata study revealed that microplastics are severely disrupting the food web and carbon cycle in the Sundarbans, with levels surging 40% during the monsoon season.
- UN Resolution 47 on Jammu and Kashmir, calling for a plebiscite that was never held, completed 78 years since its adoption on April 21, 1948.
- Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, was designated as India's 99th Ramsar site, taking Uttar Pradesh's tally to 12, the highest among all Indian states.
- Dhar, Madhya Pradesh was selected under the Safe Cities Project 2026 with Rs. 10 crore allocated for women's safety infrastructure over five years.
- The Government of India notified the Online Gaming Rules 2026 under MeitY, establishing the Online Gaming Authority of India as the dedicated sectoral regulator effective May 1.
- The Supreme Court permitted a 15-year-old girl to undergo medical termination of pregnancy at AIIMS Delhi, upholding reproductive autonomy as a fundamental right under Article 21.
- A satellite-based global study revealed that landfill sites in Secunderabad and Mumbai rank among the world's top 25 methane-emitting waste sites for 2025.
- The Central Government included six border

- villages in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir under the Vibrant Village Programme-II to boost connectivity and development.
- The Supreme Court recognised safe travel on national highways as a fundamental right under Article 21, issuing directives to NHA on ambulances, blackspots, and unauthorised structures.
- Bihar launched its first structured pulse procurement under the Atmanirbhar Pulses Mission, with NCCF leading MSP-based procurement of masoor across the state.
- Seven AAP Rajya Sabha MPs, including Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak, resigned from the party and declared their merger with the BJP.
- The Andhra Pradesh government announced a Rs. 13,000 crore Mushroom Mission targeting annual production of 67,500 tonnes to surpass Bihar as the top mushroom-producing state.
- LG Vinai Kumar Saxena approved the creation of five new districts in Ladakh, taking the total from two to seven, to strengthen grassroots governance across the Union Territory.
- Asia's first UNESCO Chair on Gender Inclusion and Skill Development was inaugurated at Symbiosis Skills and Professional University, Pune, by Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary.
- Iran's IRGC re-closed the Strait of Hormuz on April 18, 2026, with two Indian-flagged merchant ships fired upon, prompting India to summon the Iranian ambassador and urge resumption of safe passage.
- The Trump administration issued a month-long sanctions waiver through OFAC permitting most countries to purchase Russian oil until May 16, 2026, as an emergency measure amid the Strait of Hormuz crisis.
- The India-Russia Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement came into force in April 2026, granting both countries mutual access to military bases, naval ports, and air bases including Russian Arctic ports.
- The Goldman Environmental Prize 2026 honoured its first-ever all-women cohort of six grassroots environmental activists, one from each of the world's primary regions, during Earth Week in San Francisco.
- US President Donald Trump extended the US-Iran ceasefire indefinitely, crediting Pakistan's Field Marshal Asim Munir and PM Shehbaz Sharif for their mediation efforts.
- Bulgaria's eighth parliamentary election in five years ended with former President Rumen Radev's Progressive Bulgaria winning approximately 44.7% of the vote, the biggest majority for a single party since 1997.
- The European Union approved a 90 billion euro aid package for Ukraine and its 20th sanctions package against Russia after Hungary withdrew its earlier veto.
- A UNESCO People and Nature Report released in April 2026 warned that nearly 90% of UNESCO-designated sites face high environmental stress, with climate impacts recorded at 98% of sites since 2000.
- Congressman Eli Crane introduced the End H-1B Visa Abuse Act of 2026 proposing a three-year pause on new H-1B visas, a cap of 25,000 annually, and a minimum salary threshold of \$200,000.
- The International Criminal Court confirmed charges of crimes against humanity against former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, clearing the way for a full trial related to his war on drugs spanning 2011 to 2019.
- The United Kingdom's Tobacco and Vapes Bill permanently banned anyone born on or after January 1, 2009 from ever legally purchasing cigarettes, as part of its ambition to make England smoke-free by 2030.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

- High-level US-Iran negotiations in Islamabad collapsed after 21 hours, triggering a US maritime blockade of Iranian ports and Iran imposing a security toll of up to \$2 million per vessel on ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz.
- The White House unveiled plans for a 250-foot gold-accented triumphal arch called the "Arc de Trump" near the Memorial Bridge in Washington D.C., partially funded by taxpayers.
- French President Macron and British PM Starmer co-chaired a 51-nation summit at the Elysee Palace to advance a multinational maritime security force for protecting freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.
- The Philippines officially joined the US-led Pax Silica initiative as its 13th member, aimed at building a secure and resilient technology supply chain from mineral extraction to chip manufacturing.

- The 7th edition of the India-Uzbekistan Joint Military Exercise Dustlik 2026 concluded at the Gurumsaray Field Training Area in Namangan, Uzbekistan, with 120 personnel from both sides.
- ISRO began preparations to select a second batch of approximately 10 astronauts for the Gaganyaan programme, marking the first time civilians with STEM backgrounds are eligible for selection.
- The UAE announced its exit from OPEC and the OPEC+ alliance effective May 1, 2026, ending over 50 years of membership, a move expected to weaken the cartel's collective price control.
- Finland became the first country in Europe to host a fully integrated lithium production cycle through the 783-million-euro Keliber project near Kokkola, producing battery-grade lithium hydroxide for the European battery industry.
- India submitted its updated Nationally Determined Contribution for 2031-2035 to the UNFCCC, targeting a 47% reduction in GDP emissions intensity, 60% non-fossil fuel power capacity, and a carbon sink of 3.5 to 4.0 billion tonnes by 2035.
- France unveiled Europe's first fuel-by-fuel fossil fuel phase-out roadmap at the Santa Marta conference, committing to end coal use by 2030, oil by 2045, and fossil gas by 2050.

APPOINTMENTS

- Bollywood actress Sayani Gupta was named the Harvard South Asian Person of the Year 2026 by the Harvard South Asian Association for her contributions to inclusive storytelling and South Asian representation.
- Harivansh Narayan Singh was elected unopposed as Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha for a historic third consecutive term, becoming the first nominated member to hold the position.
- Srikanth Velamakanni, Co-founder and Group CEO of Fractal Analytics, was appointed as the new Chairman of NASSCOM in April 2026, succeeding Sindhu Gangadharan of SAP Labs India.
- Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi was inducted into the International Hall of Fame of the US Army War College, becoming only the third Indian Army officer to receive this distinction.
- The Cabinet Secretariat reconstituted NITI Aayog on April 24, 2026, appointing Ashok Kumar Lahiri as Vice Chairperson along with five new Full-Time Members.

- Justice Lisa Gill was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, becoming the first woman to hold the position, administered by Governor S. Abdul Nazeer at Lok Bhavan, Vijayawada.

SPORTS

- Sunrisers Hyderabad opener Abhishek Sharma smashed an unbeaten 135 off 68 balls against Delhi Capitals in IPL 2026, becoming the first Indian batter to score multiple IPL centuries in under 50 balls.
- The Athletics Integrity Unit upgraded India to Category A, its highest-risk classification for doping violations, following India's consistent ranking among the top countries for Anti-Doping Rule Violations from 2022 to 2025.
- Punjab Kings achieved the highest successful run-chase in T20 cricket history, overhauling Delhi Capitals' total of 264 runs by six wickets with seven balls to spare at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.
- Virat Kohli became the first cricketer in IPL history to score 9,000 runs, achieving the milestone in his 275th IPL match during RCB's game against Delhi Capitals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.
- Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu assumed a full voting position on the BWF Council following her election as Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission, making her formal debut at the BWF Annual General Meeting in Horsens, Denmark.
- R. Rithika Sri, a 31-year-old transwoman from Salem, Tamil Nadu, became India's first transgender cricket umpire, having officiated in over 15 matches across the Salem and Coimbatore circuit since 2021.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- HAL and GE Aerospace concluded a technical agreement for co-production of the GE F-414-INS6 turbofan engine in India, with approximately 80% domestic manufacturing and transfer of intellectual property rights for locally produced components.
- The State of India's Bats report, released by the Nature Conservation Foundation and Bat Conservation International, revealed that India is home to 135 bat species including 16 endemic species, raising significant conservation concerns.

- Blue Origin successfully landed the reused booster of its New Glenn rocket after its third mission launch from Cape Canaveral, Florida, marking the first-ever landing of a reused New Glenn booster.
- China's Manned Space Agency announced the selection of Muhammad Zeeshan Ali and Khurram Daud as candidates for a future crewed mission to the Tiangong space station, potentially making one of them the first Pakistani to enter Earth's orbit.
- Finland became the first country in the world to begin operating a permanent deep geological repository for high-level nuclear waste, known as Onkalo, built approximately 400-500 metres underground at Olkiluoto and designed to store spent nuclear fuel for up to 100,000 years.

IMPORTANT DAYS

- Earth Day 2026 was observed on April 22 under the theme "Our Power, Our Planet," uniting over a billion people across more than 190 countries in a global call for renewable energy transition and environmental action.
- World Book and Copyright Day was observed on April 23 with UNESCO designating Rabat, Morocco, as the World Book Capital 2026 under the theme of multilingualism and inclusive access to literature.
- India observed National Panchayati Raj Day marking 33 years since the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, under the theme "Sashakt Panchayat, Sarvangeen Vikas" at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- On World Malaria Day 2026, the WHO granted prequalification to artemether-lumefantrine, the first antimalarial formulation designed specifically for newborns and young infants weighing between two and five kilograms.

RANKINGS

- TIME magazine released its TIME100 2026 list of the world's most influential people, featuring notable Indian personalities including Sundar Pichai, Ranbir Kapoor, Vikas Khanna, and Neal Mohan, highlighting India's growing global influence.

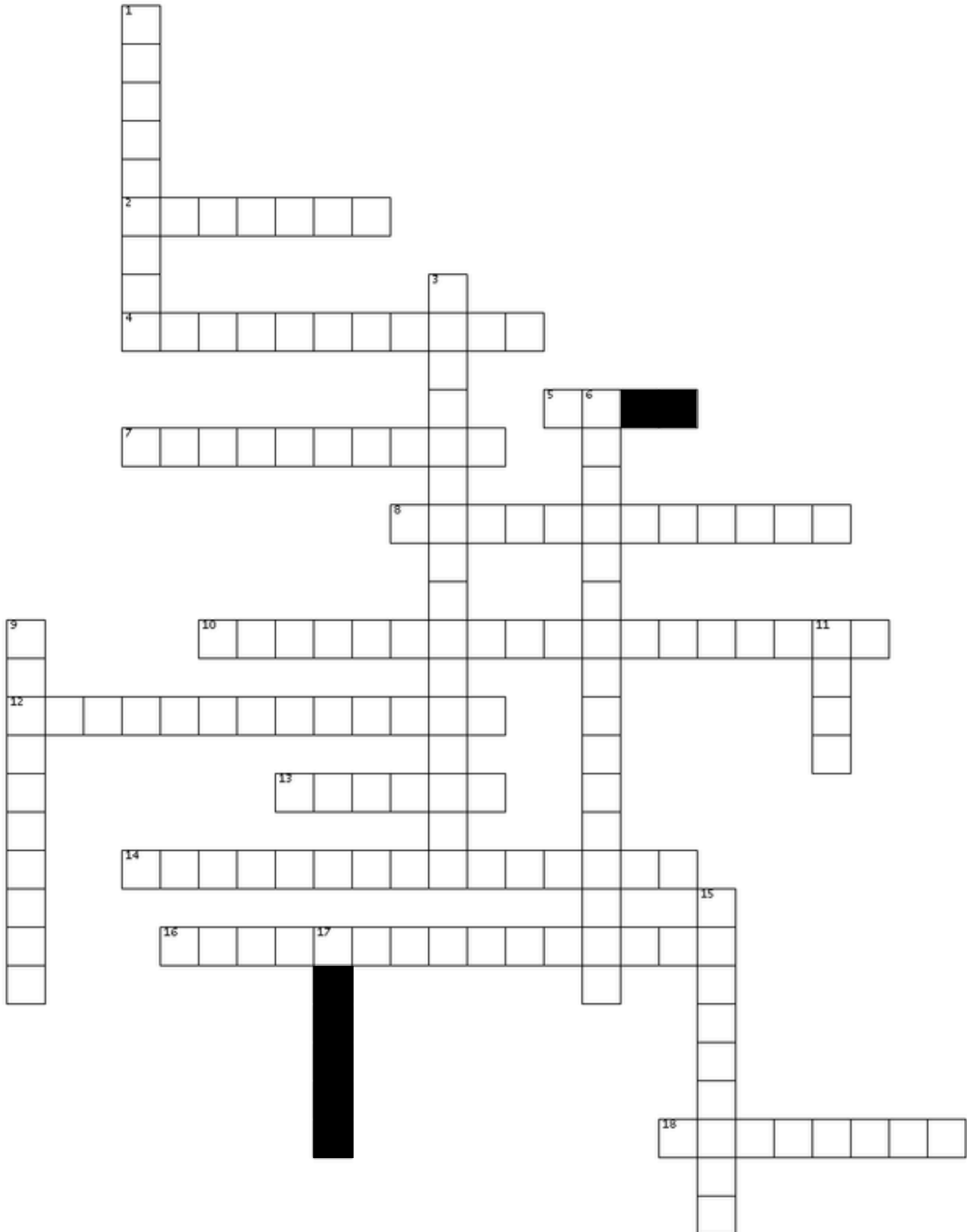
SUMMIT'S AND MOU'S

- COP31 will be hosted by Turkiye in Antalya under the "COP of the Future" vision built on Dialogue, Consensus, and Action, with Australia's Chris Bowen appointed as COP31 President of Negotiations.
- India and Austria launched a bilateral Fast-Track Mechanism during the India-Austria Business Forum in New Delhi, coinciding with the first official visit by an Austrian Chancellor to India in over four decades.
- South Korean President Lee Jae-myung's state visit to New Delhi elevated India-South Korea ties to a "Futuristic Partnership," with both countries targeting bilateral trade of \$50 billion by 2030.
- The 11th India-Egypt Joint Defence Committee meeting was held in Cairo from April 20 to 22, 2026, resulting in a bilateral defence cooperation plan covering joint training, maritime security, and defence production collaboration.
- India and New Zealand signed a Free Trade Agreement in New Delhi on April 27, 2026, with New Zealand committing to remove all tariffs on Indian goods and facilitate \$20 billion in investments into India over 15 years.
- The inaugural India-Japan Artificial Intelligence Strategic Dialogue was held in Mumbai on April 21, 2026, focusing on AI cooperation, policy convergence, talent mobility, and joint research between the two countries.

ECONOMY

- According to the IMF's April 2026 World Economic Outlook, India slipped to 6th position globally with a projected GDP of \$4.15 trillion, though it remains on track to become the world's third largest economy by 2031 with a projected growth rate of 6.5% for 2026.
- The Indian rupee depreciated by 4.7% year-to-date in 2025 and over 5.8% in the preceding year, driven by India's persistent trade deficit, high US tariffs, weak capital inflows, and large-scale RBI forex market interventions.

May 11 2026 Crossword



Fill the crossword grid using the ACROSS and DOWN clues given below. Each clue provides a hint to a word or term. Write the correct answer in CAPITAL letters in the grid. Do not use spaces, hyphens, or punctuation while filling the answers. Each entry should fit exactly into the boxes provided. Some Answers can be in abbreviations.

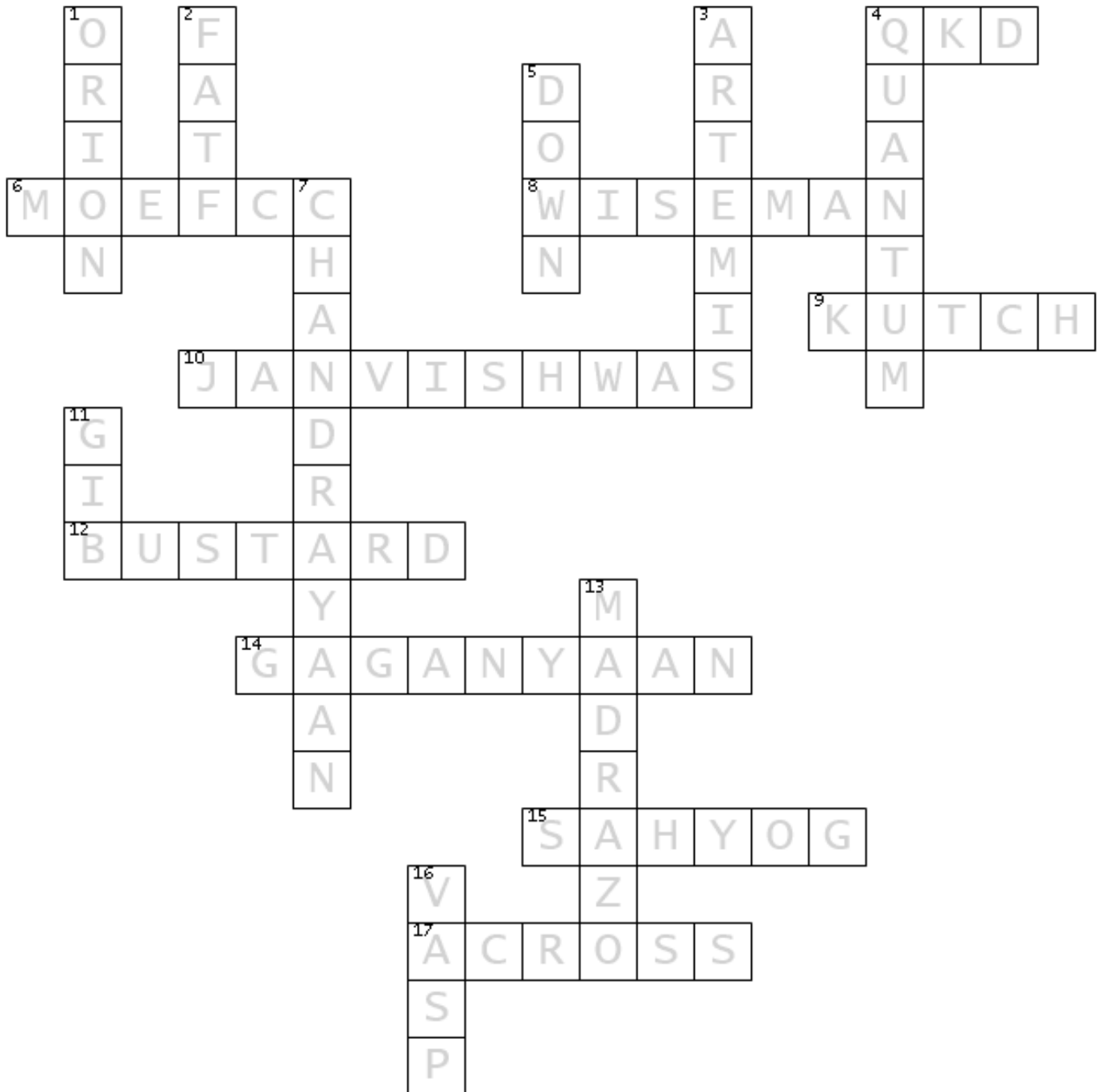
ACROSS

2. 68, Constitutional provision requiring special majority for amendment bills
4. Section 79 protection available to intermediaries for third-party content under the IT Act
- 5.
7. Israeli forward-defence line created inside southern Lebanon during the 2026 ceasefire
8. Process of redrawing territorial boundaries of legislative constituencies
10. Another name used for the Delimitation Commission in India
12. Supreme Court case that struck down Section 66A and limited intermediary takedown duties
13. UN peacekeeping force created through Resolutions 425 and 426 after Operation Litani
14. Israel's 1978 military action in southern Lebanon that led to the creation of UNIFIL
16. Legal trigger for intermediary takedown duties based on court order or government notice
18. UN-identified withdrawal line used to verify Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000

DOWN

1. Synthetic media concern targeted by the February 2026 IT Rules amendment
3. One-third reservation framework introduced by the 106th Constitutional Amendment
6. Category completely prohibited under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025
9. 701, UN Security Council framework adopted after the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war
11. Unified digital-first regulator created under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026
15. Lebanese armed group central to the Israel-Lebanon border conflict and Resolution 1701 framework
- 17.

The completed crossword for the **CLAT TATHYA May 2026 PART 1** is provided below. All answers are written in CAPITAL letters exactly as they should appear in the grid. No spaces, hyphens, or punctuation have been used. The answers are listed separately for ACROSS and DOWN according to their clue numbers.



The Completed Crossword for the CLAT Tathya May 2026 Issue 2 will provided in the next Edition i.e., MAY 2026 PART III.



Faces That Inspire

Our Torchbearers: ALUMNIS IN NLS BANGALORE & NLU DELHI



Ananya Prakash



Masirah Ahmad



Arush Sarma



Nikhil Dabbas



Samporno Mukherjee



Vaishnavi K. Prasad



Ananya Kapani



Ananya Tripathi



Tejaswini Singh



Nandil B. Sarma



Anushree Prasad



Eshan Nakra



Varun Pathak



Romit Kohli



Hardik Choubey



Karina Chawla

...a few among the many achievers.



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