

# Headlines

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**Exercise Suryakiran – Prelims fact**

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Self-discipline begins  
with the *mastery* of  
your *thoughts*. If you  
don't *control* what  
you think, you can't  
control what you *do*.



# Assam proposes jail term, heavy fines for polygamy

Page No. 1, GS I

Bill, tabled in Assembly, seeks to 'protect women, streamline society'; it covers residents entering such marriages outside State, but doesn't apply to Scheduled Tribes and Sixth Schedule areas

**Rahul Karmakar**  
GUWAHATI

An anti-polygamy Bill tabled by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in the State Assembly on Tuesday prescribes imprisonment and heavy fines for people entering into, or hiding, a second marriage while the first continues to be valid.

The Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025, makes polygamy a criminal offence, punishable with up to seven years in jail and a fine, and up to 10 years in jail if a person enters into a marriage while concealing an existing one. The punishment will be doubled for repeat offenders, it says. Barring the Sixth Schedule areas, the draft law will be applicable

## Banning polygamy

Assam Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma** on Tuesday tabled the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025 in the State Assembly. It prescribes imprisonment and heavy fines for people entering into or hiding a second marriage while the first continues to be valid

### Here is a timeline of the new Bill:

- **August 21:** Assam government seeks public opinion by August 30, through email or by post, on a law to end polygamy in the State
- **November 9:** The Assam Cabinet approves a new legislation to outlaw polygamy
- **November 25:** The Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025, is tabled in the 126-member Assembly



across the State and will not cover members of the Scheduled Tribes under Article 342 of the Constitution. Customary laws of some tribes in Assam allow multiple marriages.

According to the Statement of Objects and Reasons, the Bill seeks to "pro-

hibit and eliminate practices of polygamy", protect women from hardship and "streamline the society".

### Other offenders

It brings village heads, qazis (Muslim clerics who solemnise marriages), pa-

rents, and legal guardians of people indulging in polygamy under its scope. Anyone who "wilfully hides, neglects or unreasonably delays" information to the police about such marriages may be punished as the main offenders and jailed for up to two years and fined up to ₹1 lakh.

The fine may extend to ₹1.5 lakh for any priest or qazi who solemnises a marriage contrary to the provisions of the law knowingly and willingly. Penalties have been prescribed for other abettors, too.

A provision of the anti-polygamy Bill expands the scope of its jurisdiction beyond residents of the State.

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  - **residents of the State.**



## **Content.**

- **Polygamy comes from two words: “poly,” which means “many,” and “gamos,” which means “marriage.” As a result, polygamy relates to marriages that are several.**
- **Thus, polygamy is marriage in which a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate at the same time.**
- **Traditionally, polygamy — mainly the situation of a man having more than one wife — was practiced widely in India. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 outlawed the practice.**
- **The Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954 allows individuals to perform inter-religious marriages, but it forbids polygamy. The Act has been used by many Muslim women to help them stop practicing polygamy.**

### **Polyandry:**

- It is a type of marriage in which a female has several husbands.
- Nevertheless, this can be an extremely uncommon occurrence.
- The National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-20) showed the prevalence of polygamy was 2.1% among Christians, 1.9% among Muslims, 1.3% among Hindus, and 1.6% among other religious groups.

The data showed that the highest prevalence of polygynous marriages was in the Northeastern states with tribal populations.
- The Hindu Marriage Act, which came into effect in 1955, made it clear that Hindu polygamy would be abolished and criminalized.
- Under Section 11 Act, which states that polygamous marriages are void, the Act cautiously mandates monogamous relationships.
- When someone performs it, they are punished under Section 17 of the very same Act, as well as Sections 494 and 495 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.
- Because Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs are all considered Hindus and do not have their own laws, the provisions in the Hindu Marriage Act apply to these three religious denominations as well.



### **Parsi:**

- **The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936, had already outlawed bigamy.**
- **Any Parsi, who has been married during his or her life, is subject to the penalties**

**provided for by the India Penal Code for an offence to return to marriage during the lifetime of a Parsi or not, without being legally divorced by a wife or husband or having his or her previous marriage declared invalid or dissolved.**

### **Muslims:**

- **The clauses under the 'Muslim Personal Law Application Act (Shariat) of 1937, as construed by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, apply to Muslims in India.**
- **Polygamy is not prohibited in Muslim legislation because it is recognised as a religious practice, hence they tend to preserve and practice it. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution, is provided**
- **for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.**



## **Mains Question**

- **Q. The debate on a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India oscillates between ensuring equality before law preserving the country's cultural and religious diversity. In this context, critically examine the constitutional, social, and political challenges in implementing a UCC, and evaluate whether recent legal and policy developments indicate a gradual movement towards uniformity in personal laws.**
- भारत में यूनिफ़ॉम सिविल कोड (UCC) को लागू करना और न्याय सुनिश्चित करने का अधिकार प्राप्त होता है, लेकिन यह धार्मिक समता-संस्कृतिक विविधता और व्यक्तगत सत्तांतरांतरा को लेकर गंभीर चिंताएँ भी उत्पन्न करता है। इस संदर्भ में UCC को लागू करने से जुड़ी वैधानिक, सामाजिक और राजनितिक चुनौतियों का वैशालीत्मक परीक्षण कीजिए तथा यह भी मूल्यांकन कीजिए कि हाल के न्यायिक और राजनितगत कदम व्यक्तगत क्षेत्रों में लागू करने की दृश्यामें क्रमिक पररितिम का प्रवेक्षण देते हैं।



# Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of India: MEA

Page No. 10, GS 2

India dismisses China's response to detention of an Indian citizen at the Shanghai airport, says Chinese authorities have still not been able to explain their actions, which are in violation of several conventions governing international air travel

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

A day after an Indian citizen from Arunachal Pradesh was detained at the Shanghai international airport as Chinese officials refused to recognise her Indian passport, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India had taken up the case with Chinese authorities “strongly” and reiterated that Arunachal Pradesh is an “inalienable” part of India.

“Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of India, and this is a self-evident fact. No amount of denial by the Chinese side is going to change this indisputable reality,” said Mr. Jaiswal after the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said

the individual concerned – Prema Wangjom Thongdok – was treated as per Chinese laws.

Ms. Thongdok, a principal regulatory consultant working in financial services and based in London, had said on social media that she was detained at the airport.

“I was held at Shanghai airport for over 18 hrs on 21st Nov, 2025 on claims by China immigration & @chinaeasternair. They called my Indian passport invalid as my birthplace is Arunachal Pradesh which, they claimed, is Chinese territory,” she wrote.

Significantly, China Eastern Airlines started its Shanghai-Delhi service on November 9 reviving air connectivity after a gap of five years. Officials got into action as Ms. Thongdok's



Prema Thongdok

ordeal came to light and on Monday they told *The Hindu* that a “strong demarche” had been issued by the Government of India to the Chinese side. She was transiting through the airport to Japan when the reported incident took place.

“The detention issue has been taken up strongly with the Chinese side. Chinese authorities have still not been able to explain

their actions, which are in violation of several conventions governing international air travel. The actions by the Chinese authorities also violate their own regulations that allow visa-free transit up to 24 hours for nationals of all countries,” Mr. Jaiswal said.

## Arunachal CM's plea

Earlier, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu called for urgent intervention by the Centre over the incident. Mr. Khandu said the woman was subjected to appalling “humiliation and racial mockery”, despite holding a valid Indian passport.

China has refuted the allegations that the Indian woman was harassed at Shanghai airport, saying that the actions taken by

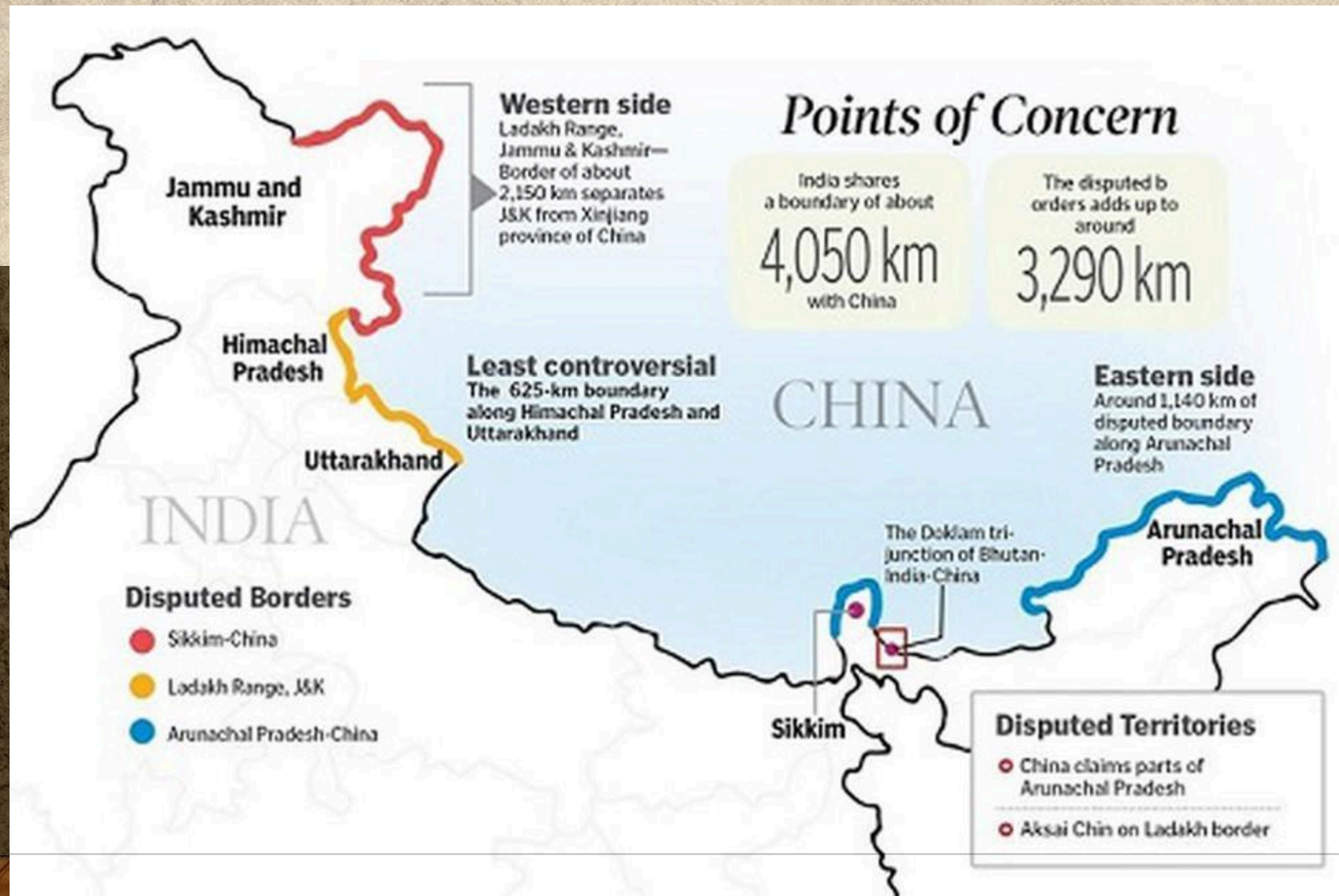
the Chinese immigration officials were as per laws and regulations.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning claimed that the woman was not subjected to any compulsory measures, detainment or harassment as alleged by her. The airline also provided food, drink, and a place to rest for the person concerned, Ms. Mao said.

“We learnt that China's border inspection authorities have gone through the whole process according to the laws and regulations and fully protected the lawful rights and interests of the person concerned,” Ms. Mao said.

She also reiterated China's claims over Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls Zangnan or South Tibet. (With inputs from PTI)







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- **The India-China border dispute refers to the long-standing and complex territorial disputes along their shared border of 3,488 kilometres.**
- **The main areas of dispute are Aksai Chin, located in the western sector, and Arunachal Pradesh, in the eastern sector.**  
**Aksai Chin:** China administers Aksai Chin as part of its Xinjiang region, while India considers it part of its UT of Ladakh. The region holds strategic significance due to its proximity to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its potential as a military route.
- **Arunachal Pradesh:** China claims the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh, referring to it as "South Tibet". India administers this region as a northeastern state and considers it an integral part of its territory.
- **No Clear Demarcation:** The border between India and China is not clearly demarcated throughout and there is no mutually agreed Line of Actual Control (LAC) along certain stretches. LAC came into existence after the 1962 Indo-China war.
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## **Mains Question**

- **Q. China's recent escalation along the Line of Actual Control—particularly through the political assertion of sovereignty by renaming locations in Arunachal Pradesh—has renewed tensions in the India-China border dispute. In this context, examine the strategic, diplomatic, and military responses adopted by India and analyse how these measures aim to safeguard territorial integrity and maintain stability in the region.**
- हाल ही में चीनी द्वारा अरुणाचल प्रदेश के विभिन्न स्थानों के नाम बदलकर अपनी प्रांभुता का दावा मज़बूत करके प्रयत्नों से भारत-चीनी विवाद को ए सिरे से उभार दिया है। इस दिग्भ्रम में भारत द्वारा अपनाए गए विचार, कूटनीतिक एवं अन्य कदमों की परीक्षा की जाए तथा विश्लेषण की जाए कि ये उपाय भारत की क्षेत्रीय अखंडता और चीनी क्षेत्र में स्थिरता को सुनिश्चित करने में किस प्रकार सहायक हैं।



# Custodial torture: SC raps govt. over CCTV compliance

The court is re-examining level of compliance shown by States and Centre to a 2020 judgment, making CCTV cameras mandatory at police stations and offices of law enforcement agencies

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Centre's lack of response to a judicial direction to install CCTV cameras in the offices of agencies like the CBI, ED, and the NIA to prevent custodial torture prompted the Supreme Court on Tuesday to ask if it was taking the top court "very lightly".

It has been five years since a Supreme Court judgment made it mandatory for the police and Central probe agencies to fix and maintain CCTV cameras at police stations and offices of Central law enforcement agencies with powers of "interrogation".

The court was shocked to discover that custodial cruelty had far from faded, with reports of 11 custodial deaths in eight months in Rajasthan.

A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta chose to *suo motu* re-examine the level of compliance shown by States, Union Territories, and the Centre to the 2020 judgment of the court.

However, the Bench on



Tuesday found that the response to its concern from the States and Union Territories was at best lukewarm, with only 11 of them condescending to even file compliance reports. The Centre did not file one.

"The Union of India is taking the court very lightly. Why?" Justice Nath asked.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Centre, vehemently denied, saying "not at all... The Union is not taking the court lightly, 'very' or any other way. We will file an affidavit".

Justice Mehta corrected him, saying "not an affidavit, but compliance". Justice Mehta referred to the custodial death statistics from Rajasthan, saying "no-

body will tolerate that now".

Mr. Mehta agreed, but submitted that CCTVs outside police stations could also prove counter-productive. He seemed to be presenting the security point of view. Justice Mehta said police stations were live-streamed in the United States. The Solicitor-General replied that there were also "private resort-type jails in America".

## Sarcastic comment

"Mr. Mehta is being sarcastic," Justice Nath noted. The court pointed to more open correction centres or jails to shrink over-crowding and reduce the financial burden of running prisons. The top law officer said he

would consult the American system. Justice Mehta responded that the ideas already enumerated in India were quite sufficient. The Solicitor-General was given further time to file a response. The court ordered that the Directors of the three Central agencies and Principal Home Secretaries of the remaining States and Union Territories would have to personally respond if compliance is not filed before the next hearing on December 19.

In 2020, a three-judge Bench headed by Justice Rohinton F. Nariman (now retired), in *Paramvir Singh Saini versus Baljit Singh*, had directed the Centre to compulsorily install CCTV cameras and recording equipment in police stations as a deterrent against custodial torture.

The court had ordered similar surveillance in the offices of central agencies which conducts any kind of interrogations.

The CCTVs and recording equipment, the court had reasoned in 2020, would be used as a safeguard to protect the fundamental right to dignity and life.



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## **Mains Question**

- **Q. Despite constitutional safeguards and judicial interventions, allegations of custodial continue to surface in India, raising concerns about accountability, transparency, and reforms. In this context, examine the structural, legal, and institutional gaps that enable custodial torture, and discuss measures needed to ensure humane policing and protect human rights.**
- □□□□□ धानिक प्राधियों और न्यायपासलका के हस्तक्षेपों के बिजुदू भारत में पुसलि दहरित में याति (custodial torture) की घटाएँ लगातार िामि आती रहतीहैं, िजिे जिबदेही, पारदसशतमा और पुसलि िुधुरों पर गभीर प्रचि उठते हैं। डि ििदांभ ममें दहरित में याति को िभांिबिो िाली िरांिित्मिक, कििी और िसांथागत कसमयों की परीक्षा कीशजए तथा मिाचधकारों की रक्षा और मिीय पुसलसिगां िुनिश्चित करि हेतु ओचयक उपायों पर ििा मकीशजए।



## Losing the plot

Air quality issue requires engagement with citizens, not intimidation

**I**n November 24, the Delhi government confronted a small and peaceful crowd near India Gate, that had gathered to express its concern about the city's air quality index hovering near 400, with a heavy police presence. The question practically wrote itself: was the threat being managed here public safety or political embarrassment? Air quality in North India in winter is often discussed as a Delhi issue, yet monitoring stations have revealed a continuous zone of foul air from around Islamabad to Bihar. Emissions from industry, power generation, transport and agriculture circulate in this shared airshed. This is why the India Gate protests are politically significant. Delhi's middle class has usually responded with air purifiers, closed windows, vacations and private dissatisfaction – but apparently not anymore. And the state has responded by policing rather than engagement. Deploying Rapid Action Force units shows that the government treats these gatherings as a law-and-order rather than a governance problem. North India's winter smog is the most visible part of a wider national crisis. Long-term analyses of particulate pollution, such as the Air Quality Life Index, have shown that unsafe air is now the norm for most of India – and that present regulation, monitoring, and enforcement arrangements are insufficient across States and sectors. Treating the problem as a seasonal emergency, in the face of evidence pointing to a permanent condition demanding permanent institutions, has encouraged only bursts of action. The airshed is the primary unit of governance.

Today, authority is split among central ministries, State departments, municipal bodies and specialised regulators, each with partial jurisdiction and mixed incentives. The Commission for Air Quality Management was created to address this fragmentation and is empowered to direct emissions control, coordinate among States and agencies, and impose sanctions. Yet, its interventions have not matched the scale or persistence of the problem. Its task now is to use its mandate to require time-bound sectoral plans from governments and major emitters, track compliance through continuous monitoring, and ensure data is in public. Governments should also abandon technical quick fixes. These measures consume public funds and administrative bandwidth while leaving the main sources of emissions intact. The focus should be on interventions in power, industry, transport, construction and agriculture, with tighter norms and real enforcement, time-bound retirement or retrofitting of polluting plants, support for cleaner fuels and technologies and credible alternatives for farmers burning crop residue. These solutions will take time to manifest but only they will lead to lasting changes. And they need to be backed by a courageous political vision rather than heavy-handedness.

**Page No. 6, GS 3**



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# Decoding personality rights in the age of AI

Recently, actors Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan filed a lawsuit against Google and YouTube in the Delhi High Court. They alleged that AI-generated videos portraying them in fictitious and often explicit scenarios infringe upon their personality rights, resulting in reputational and financial damage. They sought compensation, but also safeguards to prevent such content from being used to train future AI models.

This case highlights how AI blurs the lines between authenticity and deception, prompting us to reassess the legal and ethical frameworks governing personality rights. Personality rights, which include the right to control one's name, image, likeness, voice, and other identifiers of identity, have long been a bulwark against unauthorised exploitation. Rooted in concepts of privacy, dignity, and economic autonomy, these rights evolved from common law principles to address commercial exploitation. However, the emergence of AI, particularly in the form of generative technologies such as deepfakes, has amplified these vulnerabilities. Deepfakes, AI-generated content that swap faces or voices, propagate misinformation, enable extortion, and erode trust. While AI fosters innovation, its unchecked use risks commodifying human identity, demanding legal safeguards.

## The legal mosaic

Globally, personality rights differ: Europe adopts a dignity-based model, the U.S. a property-based one, and India a hybrid approach. In India, these rights lack codification and stem from Article 21 of the Constitution, affirmed in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017). Courts have since classified AI infringements as privacy or intellectual property breaches. Landmark cases include *Amitabh Bachchan v. Rajat Nagi*



**Madhavi Ravikumar**

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India needs legislation that explicitly defines personality rights and enforces AI watermarking, platform liability, and global collaboration

(2022), which recognised personality rights; *Anil Kapoor v. Simply Life India* (2023), where AI reproductions of Mr. Kapoor's identity and his catchphrase "Jhakaas" were banned for diluting brand value; and *Arijit Singh v. Codible Ventures LLP* (2024), where the Bombay High Court protected Mr. Singh's voice from AI replication. These indicate a judicial shift towards a privacy-property hybrid. Yet, India's framework remains reactive. While the Information Technology Act, 2000, and the 2024 Intermediary Guidelines address impersonation and deepfakes, enforcement is hindered by anonymity and cross-border data sharing.

In the U.S., personality rights are often referred to as the 'right of publicity', a transferable property interest that varies by state. *Haelan Laboratories v. Topps Chewing Gum* (1953) recognised this right as distinct from privacy, allowing celebrities to monetise their identity. AI-related reforms include Tennessee's ELVIS Act, 2024, banning unauthorised AI use of voices or likenesses in response to deepfakes. Lawsuits against Character.AI alleged that its chat bots encouraged self-harm, leading to teen suicides. A 2024 Florida case claims the bot posed as a therapist, fostering detachment from reality. A federal judge dismissed Character.AI's First Amendment defence.

In the EU, personality rights follow a dignity-based model under the General Data Protection Regulation, 2016, which requires consent for processing personal and biometric data. The EU AI Act, 2024, designates deepfake technologies as high-risk, mandating transparency and labelling.

In China, a 2024 Beijing Internet Court ruling held that synthetic voices must not deceive consumers, indicating stricter regulation. In a related case, a voice actor won damages after an AI replica was sold without consent, affirming voice as part of

personality rights.

This fragmented global framework exposes how AI's transnational nature surpasses national laws. In 'AI Ethics and Creators' Feelings: Extended Personality Rights as (Property) Rights to Object', published in the *Social Science Research Network* (2025), Guido Westkamp et al advocate expanding rights to encompass style and persona appropriations to protect creators from AI's exploitative data use.

## The human-AI nexus

Scholarly discussions on personality rights in AI centre on ethics, dignity, and autonomy. UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, 2021, provides a rights-based framework. Its principles stress that AI must not exploit individuals. In 'Safeguarding identity: A comprehensive survey of anonymization strategies for behavioural data,' Aldrich, S.T., and Smith, K.R. (2024) critique India's fragmented laws, calling for statutory AI definitions and high-risk classifications for deepfakes used in disinformation. They raise ethical issues such as AI recreations of deceased artists, noting that Indian courts deem personality rights non-heritable. Broader scholarship, including 'The Ethics and Challenges of Legal Personhood for AI' by Forrest, K. B. (2023), in *The Yale Law Journal*, warns that granting AI legal status may erode human rights. AI's duality is clear: technologies like ChatGPT expand creativity but also enable harm. However, excessive regulation could stifle innovation.

These controversies expose systemic gaps. India needs legislation that explicitly defines personality rights and enforces AI watermarking, platform liability, and global collaboration. The government's 2024 deepfake advisory is a preliminary step, but stronger measures are essential. International harmonisation through UNESCO principles could avert ethical deterioration.



## **Content.**

- Recently, actors Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan filed a lawsuit against Google and YouTube in the Delhi High Court.
- They alleged that AI-generated videos portraying them in fictitious and often explicit scenarios infringe upon their personality rights, resulting in reputational and financial damage. They sought compensation, but also safeguards to prevent such content from being used to train future AI models.

This case highlights how AI blurs the lines between authenticity and deception, prompting us to

- reassess the legal and ethical frameworks governing personality rights.  
Personality rights, which include the right to control one's name, image, likeness, voice, and other identifiers of identity, have long been a bulwark against unauthorised exploitation.
-



- **Rooted in concepts of privacy, dignity, and economic autonomy, these rights evolved from common law principles to address commercial exploitation.**
- **However, the emergence of AI, particularly in the form of generative technologies such as deepfakes, has amplified these vulnerabilities.**
- **Deepfakes, AI-generated content that swap faces or voices, propagate misinformation, enable extortion, and erode trust. While AI fosters innovation, its unchecked use risks commodifying human identity, demanding legal safeguards.**
- **In India, these rights lack codification and stem from Article 21 of the Constitution, affirmed in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017).**



- **Courts have since classified AI infringements as privacy or intellectual property breaches.**  
Landmark cases include *Amitabh Bachchan v. Rajat Nagi* (2022), which recognised
- **personality rights; *Anil Kapoor v. Simply Life India* (2023), where AI reproductions of Mr. Kapoor's identity and his catchphrase "Jhakaas" were banned for diluting brand value; and *Arijit Singh v. Codible Ventures LLP* (2024), where the Bombay High Court protected Mr. Singh's voice from AI replication.**
- **These indicate a judicial shift towards a privacy-property hybrid. Yet, India's framework remains reactive.**
- **While the Information Technology Act, 2000, and the 2024 Intermediary Guidelines address impersonation and deepfakes, enforcement is hindered by anonymity and cross-border data sharing.**



# A landmark law in 2013, it needs a spine in 2025

A case in Chandigarh, where a college professor was sacked after a probe by the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (or the POSH Act) marks a rare but important precedent. The students' complaint, filed on September 12, 2024, was investigated, and the allegations of sexual harassment were proven.

While this outcome is being hailed as "justice served", it also exposes the low conviction rate under the POSH Act and the gaps that prevent it from delivering justice with consistency and empathy, especially in educational institutions where young women and men face unequal power dynamics. This writer has seen the recurring gaps and on-ground challenges that dilute the purpose of the law after having witnessed several cases of sexual harassment in universities and colleges.

## The flawed idea of consent

The Act, though well-intentioned, suffers from conceptual and procedural flaws. It talks about "consent" but not "informed consent". That distinction is crucial. Consent loses its meaning when obtained through manipulation or incomplete knowledge. Within workplace and academic settings, relationships may initially appear consensual, but when emotional manipulation or power imbalance surfaces later, the earlier consent becomes invalid. What a woman experiences then is not only harassment but also betrayal.

Yet, the law does not account for such informed consent, ignoring how educated perpetrators exploit trust, authority and information asymmetry.

Emotional harassment that stems from deceitful or manipulative relationships also remains outside the Act's ambit. When consent is obtained through fraud or emotional coercion, it should be treated as harassment. Many educated accused understand what leaves evidence and



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The POSH Act needs to have clearer language, longer timelines, recognition of emotional and digital abuse, and stronger investigative tools

what does not, shaping their behaviour to remain in the grey zone of legality. The law, still bound to visible or explicit acts, fails to address this subtle, psychological form of exploitation.

One of the most pressing flaws is the limitation period of three months for filing complaints. For a woman who has survived manipulation or coercion, recognising what happened and gathering courage to report it often takes much longer. In universities, where students spend several years under the same institutional roof, realisation and evidence may emerge much later. Justice should not come with an expiry date. The three-month rule only strengthens the confidence of perpetrators that their acts will fade with time.

Equally troubling is the terminology. The accused is called a "respondent", and not an "accused." This small linguistic change dilutes the seriousness of the offence. Outside the workplace, the same conduct would constitute a crime. Why should the context of a college or office make it seem less grave? Language matters. By softening the label, the law normalises a violation that causes deep psychological trauma.

Vague definitions within the Act further shift the burden of proof onto the woman. She must prove harassment within an institutional structure that is often hesitant, ill-equipped, and risk-averse. In most genuine cases, harassment is not a single act but a behavioural pattern. Yet, committees tend to dismiss complaints for lack of direct evidence. There should be ways to assess behavioural conduct through anonymous feedback or corroborative testimony. Since the accused already enjoys protection through a multi-member committee to ensure impartiality, the same faith must extend to the committee's ability to recognise circumstantial evidence. Reading between the lines and acknowledging informal networks should be part of the process.

## No clarity on inter-institutional complaints

The Act is also silent on inter-institutional complaints. In academia, visiting faculty, research collaborations and conferences create

multiple spaces for interaction across institutions. When an accused person's misconduct spans different campuses, there is no mechanism to connect or pursue those cases jointly. This absence allows repeat offenders to go unchecked.

For a woman, lodging a complaint is itself a battle fought after an intense internal struggle. What follows, however, often turns into another ordeal. Instead of relief, she faces procedural delays, institutional hesitation, and emotional fatigue.

The law also permits disciplinary action against complainants found to have filed "malicious" complaints, which, though meant as a safeguard, ends up intimidating genuine victims. The process, meant to deliver justice, often retraumatises them.

## The digital evidence dilemma

With technology reshaping communication, harassment too has evolved. Messages can vanish, photographs appear only once, and chats are encrypted. Expecting Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) members – often without legal or technical training – to interpret such evidence is unrealistic. The law has not adapted to this digital reality. It must include updated definitions, clear protocols for handling digital evidence, and mandatory training for committee members to ensure that technology does not become a shield for offenders.

Women have long relied on informal networks to warn each other about unsafe individuals. These whisper systems exist precisely because the formal mechanisms often failed them. The POSH Act was a milestone when enacted in 2013, but a decade later, needs strengthening. It must incorporate clearer language, longer timelines, recognition of emotional and digital abuse, and stronger investigative tools. Justice should not depend on the victim's endurance or on the committee's discretion. It must be built into the structure of the law itself. Until that happens, the protection promised by the POSH Act will remain more symbolic than real.



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## Applicability

- It covers both **public** and **private** sectors, including **non traditional** work place.
- A woman must file a **written complaint** to the committee within **3 to 6** months of a sexual harassment incident.

## Internal Complaint Committees (ICC)

Every employer must constitute an ICC at each office or branch with **10 or more employees**.

- Must be **led by a woman**, include at least two female employees, and a **third party**.
- Has powers **similar to civil court**, and the inquiry process complies with the “**principles of natural justice**”.

**Employers should hold regular workshops and awareness programs to educate employees about the Act.**



## The Act defines sexual harassment to include:



Unwanted behaviors like physical contact and sexual advances.

A demand or request for sexual favours

Making sexually coloured remarks

Showing pornography



## Local committees

Receiving complaints from small firms (**under 10 employees**) and the informal sector at the **district level**.



## Annual Audit Report

Discussion with the **district officer** regarding **annual** sexual harassment

## Resolution by 2 ways

### Conciliation

Between the complainant and the respondent.



### Inquiry

By Committees and acting on the findings.





- **A woman can file a written complaint to the internal or local complaints committee within three to six months of the sexual harassment incident.**  
**The PoSH Act mandates States to appoint an officer in every district who would play**
- **a “pivotal” role in implementing the Act.**  
**Sections 5 and 6 of the POSH Act detail that the District Officers would constitute**
- **Local Complaints Committees (LCCs).**  
**Vishaka Guidelines were stipulated by the Supreme Court in the Vishaka and others v State of Rajasthan case in 1997, regarding sexual harassment at the workplace.**
- **The Court drew its strength from several provisions of the Constitution, including Article 15 and General Recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which India ratified in 1993.**
-



# Trump-MbS summit — \$1 trillion among friends

As adrenaline-high at the Saudi-American Summit last week demonstrated, the 80-year-old bilateral alliance remains perhaps the oldest transactional deal still going strong. It predates the establishment of post-Second World War global architectures such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Bretton Woods Institutions. It was conceived as a secret “oil-for-security” strategic partnership signed on Valentine’s Day 1945 between U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rehman al-Saud on the *USS Quincy* in the Suez Canal Area. Originally intended to last 60 years, it was renewed in 2005.

Thanks to the exceptional amity between U.S. President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), this arrangement is currently being reset to the new domains of strategic cooperation, with the potential to anchor bilateral, regional and global developments in a more consequential manner.

### The trajectory of ties

During the past 80 years, U.S.-Saudi ties have not always had smooth sailing. First, thanks to shale technology, the U.S. has become the world’s largest producer of crude and a significant exporter. While this has reduced the commercial content of the relationship, the U.S.’s exports have remained steady, leading to a decline in the bilateral merchandise trade and a balance swinging in America’s favour. As Saudi Arabia’s trading partner, the U.S. now ranks below China and India.

Historically, the ties came under strain during the Ramadan War of 1973, when Saudi Arabia joined an Arab oil embargo. In the mid-1980s, the Saudis surprised the Americans by buying intermediate-range ballistic missiles from China, a country they did not even recognise then. There have been tensions as the American military supplies were staunch during the Yemen war, affecting Saudi offensive and defensive capabilities against the Houthis.

The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi commentator working with *The Washington Post*, in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018 jolted ties, and the Biden presidency initially decided to keep MbS at arm’s-length. The friction pushed the Saudis into diversifying their ties with China and Russia.

In December 2022, China’s President Xi Jinping visited Riyadh and held three separate summits with the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Arab and Muslim countries, respectively. Later, Beijing also facilitated the resumption of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Since late 2023, the U.S. support for Israel’s brutal military campaign in Gaza has also made it difficult for Riyadh to turn a new page in bilateral ties.

The Saudis have resisted U.S. pressure to formally recognise Israel, pre-conditioning it on the creation of a pathway to Palestinian



**Mahesh Sachdev**

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The exceptional amity heralds new domains of strategic cooperation, with the potential to anchor bilateral, regional and global developments in a more consequential manner

statehood, which Israel has ruled out.

### New contours under the Trump presidency

There has been a positive sea change in bilateral ties since Mr. Trump took over the U.S. presidency this year. His first visit of his second term abroad was to Saudi Arabia in May 2025, where an agreement to supply \$142 billion worth of military equipment was secured. The new contours of this new relationship were in evidence at the no-holds-barred state visit. It included a moving guard of honour, a fly-past, a private lunch and a 300-guest banquet, both hosted by Mr. Trump, who also attended the investment forum at which deals worth \$270 billion were signed.

On his part, MbS readily agreed to raise the promised Saudi investments in the U.S. economy from \$600 billion to \$1 trillion without a fixed time frame. The amount is nearly as big as the country’s GDP and the entire corpus of the Kingdom’s Public Investment Fund (PIF), which already has 40% of its foreign investments in the U.S. economy. The groundbreaking Strategic Defence Agreement was signed, formally designating Saudi Arabia as a “major non-NATO ally” and committing the U.S. to actively assist Saudi Arabia if it came under an attack.

The two sides also made tangible progress towards collaboration in civil nuclear energy and the supply of state-of-the-art Artificial Intelligence (AI) chips. Given the Trumpian propensity for “truthful hyperbole” and Saudi economic stringency, observers are sceptical about all key promises made during the visit being fully realised.

Moreover, the bilateral differences on basic issues such as the global oil glut, Riyadh-Tel Aviv reconciliation, Iran, and the Kingdom’s drive towards strategic autonomy were papered over during the Summit, which was conspicuous by the absence of any final communiqué. The visit can, nevertheless, be considered as a qualified bilateral success, particularly as it managed to bury the past ghost issues.

The robust revival of the U.S.-Saudi ties in Trump 2.0 is bound to have a regional impact. Under MbS, Saudi Arabia, the Arab world’s largest economy, has abandoned its low-key diplomatic profile, adopting a more assertive and visible pursuit of national interests. This process has accelerated after the two-year-long Israeli military campaign that has subdued Iran, the Kingdom’s long-standing rival in the region and the Islamic world.

MbS has already persuaded Mr. Trump to drop sanctions against Syria’s new regime and has asked for stronger American intervention to end the Sudanese civil war. Even the Iranian President has sought the MbS facilitation of the resumption of nuclear talks with Washington. The robust endorsement by the White House during the recent visit would further empower MbS, who at 40 years could be around for decades, making

him an indispensable, long-term U.S. interlocutor as the region’s geopolitical architecture gets reconfigured.

While the visit was silent on global issues, there are signs of subterranean bilateral coordination. Although oil has largely disappeared as the driver for bilateral economic synergy, the Saudi economy continues to be highly dependent on oil export revenues. Moreover, as recent U.S. sanctions against the two Russian oil majors demonstrated, Washington intends to continue its dominance of the global oil market. Both Saudis and Americans want the oil price to be at a moderate, sustainable level. The concerted American actions on sanctions against Iran, Venezuela and two Russian oil majors can only help stem the emerging supply-side oil glut, shore up the price and create market space for higher exports by both Saudi Arabia and the U.S. For the U.S., reinforced ties with Saudi Arabia would also stave off the recent encroachments by China and Russia on its turf, and complement its regional Pax Americana.

### Impact on India

The Washington Summit does have several implications for India. First, it may provide advanced U.S. military equipment access to Pakistan, with which Riyadh concluded a strategic mutual defence agreement in September 2025, apparently with the U.S. nod-and-wink.

Second, although India, as the world’s third-largest oil importer, would prefer oil prices to be low, moderation and stability in the oil market may still be preferable as it navigates for alternative sources to Russian supplies.

Third, soaring Saudi ambitions for its post-oil Vision-2030, such as AI data centres, may create economic opportunities for India.

Fourth, curbing China’s foray into Saudi Arabia may open the door wider for India. India also needs to prioritise entering into a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Saudi Arabia.

Lastly, the emerging *modus vivendi* with Israel may also facilitate the work on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, which transits through Saudi Arabia. At a different level, White House’s differential treatment of MbS shows that its single-minded pursuit of economic transactions continues to trump all previous qualms, such as human rights and proliferation concerns, may light India’s pathway to an economic peace with the Americans.

The evident MbS-Trump bonhomie during the White House Summit signals the U.S. reclaiming primacy in Riyadh. The locus of the relationship has, nevertheless, shifted from the past “oil-for-security” paradigm. As the new, more nebulous drivers congeal and Saudi Arabia asserts its sovereign autonomy, the alliance enters an uncharted territory. While much may remain unaltered, it would, nevertheless, be fascinating to watch its progression.



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## **Fact**

- **MbS readily agreed to raise the promised Saudi investments in the U.S. economy from \$600 billion to \$1 trillion without a fixed time frame.**
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- **Third, soaring Saudi ambitions for its post-oil Vision-2030, such as AI data centres, may create economic opportunities for India.**
- **Fourth, curbing China's foray into Saudi Arabia may open the door wider for India. India also needs to prioritise entering into a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Saudi Arabia.**



# Exercise Suryakiran





## **Content.**

- **India and Nepal will launch the 19th edition of Exercise Suryakiran from November 25 to December 8 in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.**
- **Exercise Suryakiran is a bilateral, annual, battalion-level military exercise conducted alternately by India and Nepal to enhance defence cooperation, coordination, and military preparedness.**
- **Nations Involved: Indian Army and Nepal Army.**
- **Aim: To improve operational synergy in jungle warfare, counter-terrorism operations, mountain warfare, and integrate modern technologies for improved interoperability and tactical coordination.**









**Thank You!**