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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

# THE HINDU ANALYSIS

*Current Affairs & Editorial Decoded*

25 JULY 2026

GS 2 · GS 3 · 8 TOPICS · MAINS · PRELIMS MCQs

COMPILED BY

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READ · ANALYSE · REVISE

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Each section opens with the original clipping and a **WHY IN NEWS** box, followed by background, key highlights and analytical value-additions, a ★ **FACT BOX** of static/Prelims points, and closes with **MAINS** questions and a 10-question **PRELIMS** practice set with an answer key and explanations.

1

# U.S. Announces Permanent Tariffs; India Remains at 10%

GS 2 - IR

GS 3 - ECONOMY

PRELIMS

MAINS

## WHY IN NEWS

As its temporary 10% tariff lapsed, the U.S. announced **PERMANENT TARIFFS** on 60 trading partners, arising from a **SECTION 301** investigation into **FORCED LABOUR** in supply chains. India retained the lower **10%** slab (instead of 12.5%) after it banned the import of forced-labour goods.

## BACKGROUND

- In **February 2026**, the U.S. imposed a temporary **150-day, 10%** tariff on all trade partners, which expired on Friday.
- In **March**, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) launched **two Section 301 investigations** under the Trade Act, 1974.
- The **draft report (June)** proposed a **12.5% tariff on 54 countries** that had “failed to impose and effectively enforce” prohibitions on forced-labour goods.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The new tariffs flow from the **first** investigation — whether partners do enough to prevent import of forced-labour goods. The **second** — on excess manufacturing capacity hurting the U.S. economy — is **still pending** and may bring further tariffs.
- After final findings, a **10% tariff** applies to countries that impose a forced-labour import ban, commit to enforce it via a trade agreement with the U.S., or run a partial regime blocking certain forced-labour goods.
- The 10% list includes **India**, Argentina, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Trinidad & Tobago and the U.K. All **other** probed countries face **12.5%**.
- India's counter-move: the **DGFT** (Ministry of Commerce & Industry) amended the **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023** to prohibit import of goods produced using forced labour — securing the lower slab.



The Hindu, Page 13 — “U.S. announces permanent tariffs; India remains at 10%”.

## INDIA'S ENFORCEMENT & ILO ALIGNMENT

- Enquiry mechanism:** the Central Government can identify and ban specific goods after a DGFT enquiry; the procedure sits in the **Handbook of Procedures, 2023**.
- India adopts the definition in the **ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)** — “all work or service exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which he has not offered himself voluntarily.”

## ★ CONSTITUTIONAL & LEGAL ANCHORS — FORCED LABOUR

- Article 23:** prohibits traffic in human beings, *begar* and other forms of forced labour.
- Article 21:** right to life and personal liberty, read to include the right to live with basic human dignity.
- PUCL v. Union of India (1982):** paying less than the prescribed minimum wage is a form of “forced labour” under Article 23.
- Section 301, Trade Act 1974:** lets the USTR investigate and retaliate against unfair foreign trade practices.
- Mirrors the U.S. trend of **trade-linked labour conditionality** (e.g., the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act).

## ANALYSIS & WAY FORWARD

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- Tariffs are increasingly used as instruments of **human-rights conditionality** and function as a **non-tariff measure** on exporters.
- For India the relief is modest but shifts a **compliance burden** onto labour-intensive exporters (textiles, leather, agriculture) to prove forced-labour-free supply chains.
- **Way forward:** strengthen supply-chain due diligence and third-party labour audits, ratify pending ILO core conventions, and leverage compliance toward a bilateral trade agreement while preparing for the pending excess-capacity probe.

2

## CCI: Zomato's Platform Fee, Delivery Levy No Abuse of Dominance

GS 2 - BODIES

GS 3 - ECONOMY

PRELIMS

### WHY IN NEWS

The **COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA (CCI)** held that the platform fee, delivery charges and restaurant commissions collected by **ZOMATO (ETERNAL)** do **NOT** amount to abuse of dominance or anti-competitive conduct — they are charges for **LEGITIMATE, DIFFERENTIATED SERVICES**.

### THE CASE

- The order answered an application by **R. Suresh**, who alleged Eternal (previously Zomato) charged an **inflated price** for food on its platform.
- He paid **₹198** for a plate of ghee pongal on Zomato (Sree Ariya Bhavan) versus **₹105** at the restaurant in person.
- The gap was due to a **₹43** delivery-partner fee, **₹14.90** platform fee and **₹16.6** GST; the base price was also higher online (**₹123.5** vs ₹100).
- The restaurant said Zomato deducts roughly **33% commission**, compelling it to inflate platform prices.

### Zomato's platform fee, delivery levy no abuse of dominance: CCI

Harad Raghavan  
Hindustan Times

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has held that the platform fees, delivery charges and restaurant commissions collected by Zomato do not amount to an abuse of dominance and are not anti-competitive practices. The order said the charges for legitimate and differentiated services being provided, and the higher price on the delivery platform was due to the delivery partner fee, ₹14.90 platform fee and ₹16.6 Goods and Services

tax added to the dish's base price was also higher on the platform at ₹123.5, than ₹100 the restaurant charged him in person.

**'Abuse of dominance'** Mr. Suresh said he paid ₹198 for a plate of ghee pongal ordered on Zomato from Sree Ariya Bhavan. However, when he went to the restaurant himself, he was charged only ₹105 for the same dish.

He further said the higher price on the delivery platform was due to the delivery partner fee, ₹14.90 platform fee and ₹16.6 Goods and Services

Tax and added the dish's base price was also higher on the platform at ₹123.5, than ₹100 the restaurant charged him in person.

"Upon enquiry, the restaurant management informed approximately 33% commission is deducted by Zomato from restaurants, compelling restaurants to artificially inflate prices on the platform," the CCI order read.

"The business model of selling food items through a restaurant and online food delivery services are different," it added. "So, the price of a food product varies in both the models."

*The Hindu, Page 13 — CCI order on Zomato/Eternal platform fees.*

### CCI'S REASONING

- Selling through a **dine-in restaurant** and via **online delivery** are **different business models**; so the price of the same food item can legitimately vary across models.
- The fees reflect **legitimate and differentiated services** — not an abuse of dominant position under the Competition Act.
- Reflects evolving jurisprudence on **platform/gig-economy pricing**, distinguishing dynamic pricing from anti-competitive conduct; fee **transparency** for consumers remains a live concern.

### ★ ABOUT THE COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA (CCI)

- A **statutory body** enforcing the **Competition Act, 2002**; duly constituted in **March 2009**.
- It replaced the **MRTP Act, 1969**, on the recommendation of the **Raghavan Committee**.
- Composition:** one **Chairperson + six Members**, appointed by the Central Government; whole-time; a **quasi-judicial** body.
- Members must be qualified to be a **High Court judge** or have **15+ years** in trade, economics, law, finance, etc.
- Mandate:** curb practices with **appreciable adverse effect on competition (AAEC)**, protect consumers and ensure freedom of trade; also does competition advocacy.

3

# A Growth Story that Needs Women at Work

GS 3 - ECONOMY

GS 1 - SOCIETY

PRELIMS

MAINS

## WHY IN NEWS

An op-ed argues that **VIKSIT BHARAT @2047** will stay incomplete without raising women's **WORK PARTICIPATION RATE (WPR)**. A new estimate finds a **10-PERCENTAGE-POINT** rise in female WPR could add nearly **2 PERCENTAGE POINTS** to GDP growth.

## THE PROBLEM

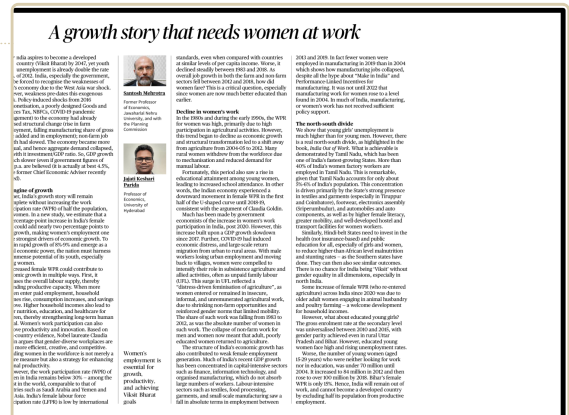
- Youth unemployment is already **double** the 2012 rate; the West Asia war shock adds fresh risk.
- Female WPR in India is **below 30%** — among the lowest in the world, comparable to Saudi Arabia and Yemen; the female **LFPR** is low even against countries at similar per-capita income.
- High WPR in the **1980s-early 1990s** (farm work) declined from **2004-05 to 2012** as mechanisation and structural shifts cut demand for rural manual labour.

## WHY THE STRUCTURE HURTS WOMEN

- Recent GDP growth is concentrated in **capital-intensive** sectors (finance, IT, organised manufacturing) that absorb few workers.
- Labour-intensive** sectors — textiles, food processing, garments, small manufacturing — saw employment **fall in absolute terms** between 2013 and 2019.
- North-south divide:** Tamil Nadu employs ~**40%** of India's women factory workers (Tiruppur-Coimbatore garments, Sriperumbudur electronics, autos), aided by female literacy, mobility and hostel/transport facilities; the Hindi belt lags and must invest in health, public education and cutting malnutrition/stunting.

## WHY IT MATTERS (CLAUDIA GOLDIN)

- More women in paid work **expands labour supply** and productive capacity; higher household incomes lift nutrition, education and healthcare — strengthening long-term **human capital**.
- Nobel laureate **Claudia Goldin**: gender-diverse workplaces are often more **efficient, creative and competitive** — so including women is a growth strategy, not merely a welfare measure.



The Hindu, Page 6 — “A growth story that needs women at work”.

## ★ PRELIMS READY-RECKONER — LABOUR STATISTICS

- LFPR** = (Employed + Unemployed) ÷ Population × 100 — those working or seeking work.
- WPR** = Employed persons ÷ Population × 100.
- Unemployment Rate** = Unemployed ÷ (Employed + Unemployed) × 100 — a share of the **labour force**, not the whole population.
- Measured by the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**, conducted by the **NSO under MoSPI**.
- Way forward:** revive labour-intensive manufacturing, skilling, safe transport, hostels and crèches, recognise unpaid care work, cut stunting.

4

# India's Foreign Policy Must Look Seaward: Protecting Seafarers

GS 2 - IR/GOVERNANCE

PRELIMS

MAINS

## WHY IN NEWS

Of **14 INDIANS** killed in attacks linked to the West Asia conflict since Feb 28, at least **EIGHT WERE SEAFARERS** on commercial ships. Amid rising maritime risk, the government has announced a **"SEAFARER FIRST"** response.

## SCALE & THE JURISDICTION PUZZLE

- India's seafarer workforce is **~3.2 lakh** (June 2025), nearly **3x its 2014 size**; the **2026 Seafarer Workforce Report** ranks India **2nd** (after the Philippines, ahead of China), with **~12%** of global supply.
- Responsibility is diffuse: a seafarer may be recruited in Mumbai, employed by a Singapore firm, on a **Panama-flagged** ship carrying Kuwaiti oil, detained in a fifth country — with **no single authority** in charge.
- ITF data show **1,125 Indian seafarers were abandoned in 2025** — the highest of any country.

*India's foreign policy must look seaward*

India's maritime agreements usually recognise Indian vessels and extend across to jobs. However, they say little about legal assistance, consular access, or repatriation. Seafarers choose the flag state which operates, but they still need visas. The Philippines and Indonesia face similar challenges. Together, the three countries could push for common standards on repatriation, detention, and deployment in conflict areas through the International Maritime Organization and the International Labour Organization. Otherwise, an uneven patchwork of one-country's rules can emerge.

A clock in the ship galley does not become a confidant when the cargo is damaged or the owner has acquired enemies. India should support attacks on commercial shipping, wherever carriers them out. Open sea lanes seem little of conflict zones cannot sail through them safely.

**There is a lifeline, there are gaps**

Technology adds a special twist here. A family in India can watch a ship's crew, but to do so, access a tracking app and still have no idea whether the vessel is hijacked, detained or being sent into danger. A moving dot is a poor substitute for a phone call.

The dashboard can locate a ship, it cannot compel a crew or flag state to act, or secure access to a detained seafarer. Continuous tracking is unreliable. When the system is robust, recruitment agencies should supply current crew and crew data from owners and managers. India can build a dashboard that provides the specific who takes charge from the moment a distress signal is received.

In major shipping centres, India missions need a designated officer who knows the port authority, hospitals, insurers and local lawyers. Such relationships cannot be expected after a ship is hit. Some flag states are quick to register a ship and slow to restore the Maritime Labour Convention's wage cap, even if abandoned or repatriation is slow. India must press them to honour these obligations.

**India seafarers need protection beyond borders**

Flags, and jurisdictions

## DANGER ZONES & THE 'SEAFARER FIRST' RESPONSE

- Beyond West Asia, crews face **missiles, drones and mines** in the Black Sea and Red Sea, and **piracy/hostage-taking** around the Gulf of Aden and off West Africa.
- A **dashboard** will track ships, threats and crew welfare; each affected family gets a **liaison officer**. On July 15 the government advised against deploying Indian crews on vessels transiting the **Strait of Hormuz**.
- On May 14, the **DGS** barred recruitment agencies from placing seafarers on **366 vessels** linked to abandonment unless compliance conditions were met.

*The Hindu, Page 6 — "India's foreign policy must look seaward".*

## ★ MARITIME LEGAL & INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

- **UNCLOS, 1982**: guarantees freedom of navigation and transit passage through international straits.
- **MLC, 2006 (ILO)**: the "Seafarers' Bill of Rights" — decent conditions, welfare, repatriation. *Ratified by India.*
- **STCW, 1978**: global training, certification and watchkeeping standards. *Ratified.*
- **SOLAS, 1974 (IMO)**: minimum ship safety standards. **SAR, 1979**: search & rescue of persons in distress at sea. *Both ratified.*
- **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958**: primary domestic law; **DGS** (Min. of Ports, Shipping & Waterways) is the apex regulator.
- **IFC-IOR, Gurugram**: nerve-centre for Maritime Domain Awareness and multinational information sharing.

## WAY FORWARD

- A **standing maritime consular protocol** fixing who takes charge from the moment of a distress signal; a seafarer's **right to know** the vessel's true owner, flag and insurance, and to **refuse** designated high-risk regions without penalty.
- Port-based officers at major shipping centres and a push — with the Philippines and Indonesia — for common IMO/ILO standards on **abandonment and conflict-zone deployment**.

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## On Guard: Qdenga, India's First Dengue Vaccine

GS 2 - HEALTH

GS 3 - S&amp;T

PRELIMS

### WHY IN NEWS

The **CDSO** has approved the **QDENG** dengue vaccine (Takeda) — a first in India's history. An editorial urges an **AFFORDABLE, WELL-TARGETED** rollout to those at greatest risk.

### CONTEXT & THE SCIENCE

- The approval follows licensing in **40+ countries** and a **WHO prequalification**, and comes after some of India's worst dengue years (also a sign of better surveillance). **Aedes** mosquitoes are spreading into semi-urban and rural districts where vector control is harder.
- Dengue has **four serotypes (DENV 1-4)**; a **second infection** by a different serotype can be more severe via **antibody-dependent enhancement (ADE)** — so an effective vaccine must protect against all four at once.
- This nearly derailed the first vaccine, **Dengvaxia**; the 2017 Philippines controversy prompted caution. **Qdenga** (Takeda, Japan) differs and can be given **without pre-screening** for a prior infection.

#### On guard

dengue vaccine must be made available to those at greatest risk. The CDSO's approval of the Qdenga dengue vaccine — the first in India's history — allows the vaccine's licensing in over 40 countries and a WHO prequalification, and some of India's worst dengue years sit at the heart of the burden, although that is evidence of surveillance as well. The Aedes mosquito spread the disease are expanding into urban and rural districts, where conventional control is harder to sustain. The vaccine itself is understood to be an antigenically distinct dengue serotype, and the possibility of a 'second infection' through antibody-dependent enhancement that an effective shot has to induce immunity against all four at once. This nearly derailed the first licensed dengue vaccine, Dengvaxia, and the controversy in 2017 prompted greater regulation. The design of Qdenga, by Takeda, differs from that of Dengvaxia in that it can be administered without screening for a prior dengue infection. Protection against the serotypes varies against DENV-2, followed by DENV-1, then DENV-3 and DENV-4 in people without prior exposure to dengue. This is concerning because while DENV-2 is more common in India, DENV-3 prevalence is increasing. If the DENV-3 serotype dominates the 2026 monsoon season, Qdenga's impact could be substantially lower than anticipated, especially if many recipients are dengue-naïve. Qdenga also requires two doses across three months apart. Clinical data suggest that the first dose protects unevenly, with stronger evidence against DENV-1 and DENV-2 than DENV-3 and DENV-4. If a seronegative person takes the first shot on July 1, when the monsoon begins, and encounters DENV-3 in August, the shot may not suffice to prevent severe illness. Ensuring the highly mobile migrant workforce receives its second dose will be significantly difficult, too; those falling through the cracks may also be exposed to concerns raised in the TIDES trial of a 'negative efficacy' against hospitalisation related to DENV-3 among seronegative children. Finally, following Takeda's tiered pricing strategy worldwide, Qdenga may be too expensive for people living in dense urban slums with poor drainage. To ensure sufficient uptake among the populations at greatest risk, the government must negotiate a lower price. In the end, administering a dengue vaccine properly in a population is no less tricky than developing a vaccine against dengue, and the Qdenga rollout should give no cause for complacency.

The Hindu, Page 6 editorial — "On guard".

### EFFICACY GAPS & EQUITY CONCERN

- Protection is highest against **DENV-2**, then DENV-1, with **uncertainty for DENV-3 and DENV-4** in people without prior exposure. DENV-2 is common in India but **DENV-3 prevalence is rising** — if it dominates the 2026 monsoon, impact on the dengue-naïve may be lower.
- It is a **two-dose** schedule three months apart; the first dose protects unevenly; the **TIDES trial** flagged concerns of 'negative efficacy' against DENV-3 hospitalisation among seronegative children.
- Under Takeda's **tiered pricing**, Qdenga may be too costly for dense urban slums with poor drainage; the government **must negotiate a lower price** to ensure uptake among high-risk groups.

#### ★ ABOUT THE CDSO

- India's national regulator for **cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and medical devices**.
- Headed by the **Drug Controller General of India (DCGI)**, under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.
- Draws powers from the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**; advised by the **DTAB** and the **DCC**.
- Operates through **zonal offices** that handle pre-/post-licensing inspection, post-market surveillance and drug recalls.
- Way forward:** risk-based district targeting, integration with disease surveillance, price negotiation and continued vector control.

6

## Online Censorship, IT Rules & the Sahyog Portal

GS 2 - POLITY/RIGHTS

PRELIMS

MAINS

### WHY IN NEWS

An editorial warns that the misuse of powers to censor lawful online speech is a growing threat to democracy — through amendments to the **IT RULES, 2021** and the **SAHYOG PORTAL**, weaponising **SECTIONS 69A AND 79(3)(B)** of the IT Act, 2000.

### WHAT IS HAPPENING

- Amended **IT Rules 2021** pressure Meta and X to take down content within **three-hour** timelines — or lose **“safe harbour”** and face court action or personal criminal liability of employees.
- Under the cover of fighting **AI-generated content**, a wide range of lawful speech is being subjected to takedown.
- By opening the **Sahyog portal** to police officials across the country, requests under **Section 79(3)(b)** have become a “censorial rubber stamp” the IT Act does not authorise.
- Wholesale takedowns of content and accounts **distort public conversation** and hurt creators' livelihoods.

### THE LEGAL BATTLE

- The clear **Supreme Court precedent** on what “actual knowledge” of online illegality means for takedown orders has been reduced to a mockery.
- The **Karnataka High Court** has brushed aside the binding precedent in **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India**, even as the government has not dared to **legislate** these powers through Parliament.
- Platforms have largely chosen to **auto-process** takedown notices rather than act as a check.

### ★ FREE-SPEECH FRAMEWORK

- ▶ **Article 19(1)(a)**: freedom of speech and expression; **Article 19(2)**: permits only **reasonable restrictions**.
- ▶ **Section 69A, IT Act**: government power to issue **blocking** orders; **Section 79**: intermediary **safe harbour**.
- ▶ **Shreya Singhal (2015)**: struck down **Section 66A** and read down 79(3)(b) — “actual knowledge” needs a court order or government notification.
- ▶ **Puttaswamy (2017)**: proportionality test for restrictions on fundamental rights.
- ▶ **Way forward**: reasoned, published orders; judicial oversight; legislative clarity; fidelity to Shreya Singhal.

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## Police Action at the Jantar Mantar Protests

GS 2 - POLITY/GOVERNANCE

PRELIMS

### WHY IN NEWS

The **SUPREME COURT** has agreed to hear complaints of **DELHI POLICE EXCESSES** (on Monday, July 27) against student protesters at Jantar Mantar, after videos showed force that appeared to breach crowd-control protocols.

### WHAT THE VIDEOS SHOW

- Massive force by the Delhi Police and **unidentified people** breached all known protocols of crowd control, with an apparent intent to **harm and terrorise** rather than disperse.
- Clips show a senior official **slapping** a girl; an unidentified person in uniform **poking** a girl from behind; personnel **surrounding and groping** a girl while others leered; men in helmets (not in uniform) beating protesters; sticks with **long nails**; and smashed vehicles.
- Protesters — who included **teenagers, families with toddlers and women** — were largely peaceful; some suffered **pellet injuries** the authorities have yet to explain.

#### Caught on camera

Police brutality was on public display at the Jantar Mantar protests

The massive use of force by the Delhi Police, and unidentified people, on student protesters in the national capital clearly breached all known protocols of crowd control. After its initial reluctance, the Supreme Court of India has now agreed to hear complaints of police excesses on Monday, July 27. Meanwhile, multiple video clips that have surfaced online show personnel, both in uniform and in normal clothes, using violence with an apparent intent to harm and terrorise protesters rather than to disperse them. Some protesters have sustained pellet injuries that the police and the authorities have yet to explain. In one video, an identifiable senior official of the Delhi Police is seen slapping a girl who was standing nearby; in another, an identified person in uniform with three stars is seen poking a girl from behind while she was walking away. In a third video, personnel are seen surrounding a girl, with one of them groping her while others leer and laugh. Some people not in uniform but wearing helmets are seen in videos on social media beating protesters. Some have been caught on camera carrying sticks with long nails, while others are seen smashing vehicles. All this has happened while the protesters, barring a stray incident or two, peaceful, use of non-violence, whether authorised police personnel or vigilantes who infiltrated the student protests, need to be identified, punished, and held accountable.

The police violence against student protesters in Delhi followed a pattern. In 2020, a mob entered the JNU campus and attacked students even as the police looked away. No serious investigation or arrests followed. In 2019, personnel of the Delhi Police entered the library of Jamia Millia Islamia and beat up students during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. The crackdown on protesters demonstrating against recurring paper leaks in various examinations marked a new low in this trend. There is no evidence that the protesters, who included teenagers, families with toddlers, and women, were involved in large-scale violence that warranted the level of police force used. It is heartening that the Chief Justice of India has clarified that his earlier reluctance to hear the complaints was only technical in nature and that the Court is open to those who seek justice. The Court now has before it two petitions documenting the nature and extent of the force used by the police. There must be a thorough investigation to find out exactly who was involved and whether the use of force was authorised and proportionate. There must be special attention paid to complaints of assaults of a sexual nature and to those targeting women and children. Those found guilty must face the full force of the law.

*The Hindu, Page 6 editorial — “Caught on camera”.*

### PATTERN & THE COURT

- The editorial situates this in a pattern — the **JNU 2020** mob attack and the **Jamia 2019** library assault during anti-CAA protests; here the trigger was recurring exam **paper leaks**.
- The **Chief Justice of India** clarified that his earlier reluctance was only **technical**; the Court now has **two petitions** on the nature and extent of the force. A thorough probe must establish who was involved and whether the force was authorised and proportionate — with special attention to assaults of a sexual nature.

### ★ ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

- ▶ **Article 19(1)(b)**: right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
- ▶ **D.K. Basu v. State of W.B. (1997)**: guidelines on arrest and custody to prevent custodial abuse.
- ▶ **Proportionality & necessity** are the tests for lawful use of force; excess invites accountability.
- ▶ Oversight via **NHRC**, judicial inquiry and departmental action; policing SOPs and body-cameras for protests.

8

## Doctors Decide: Abortion, the MTP Act & Reproductive Autonomy

GS 2 - POLITY/SOCIETY

PRELIMS

### WHY IN NEWS

The **SUPREME COURT** asked the Union to amend the abortion law to **REMOVE THE TIME LIMIT** for minor rape victims, but stressed that such decisions must be **GUIDED BY SOUND MEDICAL ADVICE** — while refusing to disturb an order that allowed a 15-year-old rape survivor to terminate at 30 weeks.

### THE CASE

- In the original curative appeal, a Bench (JJ **B.V. Nagarathna** and **Ujjal Bhuyan**) allowed termination, noting the minor's **clear and consistent unwillingness** to continue; the Court cannot compel any woman — much less a minor — to complete a pregnancy she does not intend to.
- It warned that if legal routes are closed, women may turn to **unsafe quacks**, risking life.
- Counsel for **AIIMS** opposed termination at **30 weeks**, arguing it would be inimical to the teenage mother's health.

#### Doctors decide

ions to go for abortion must be led by sound medical advice

With freedom comes great responsibility; decisions made as a consequence of any freedom must be informed by the awareness of the fall out. In seeming to enshrine reproductive autonomy with the words of the Supreme Court might have edged out the role of a clinical review of the situation. The Court asked the Union government to amend the abortion law to remove the time limit for termination of unwanted pregnancies in the case of minor rape victims. The Bench led by Justice of India, Surya Kant, and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan made the observation while entertaining a petition against an earlier decision allowing a 15-year-old survivor to terminate the pregnancy during the 30th week of the original judgment on the case, as on curative appeal, the judges re-evaluated the right of the minor child to continue a pregnancy that is illegitimate must be consistent with a woman's right to reproductive autonomy. The Bench of Justices Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan had noted that the minor had shown a clear and consistent unwillingness to continue the pregnancy. The Court urged any woman, much less a minor, to complete her pregnancy if she otherwise did not intend to do so, they said. They also indicated that if the legal routes were closed, women might take the dangerous path to quacks, risking life. However, counsel for the All India Institute of Medical Sciences stoutly opposed the termination, and the curative petition; leveraging the same safety consideration. Terminating the pregnancy at an advanced stage — 30 weeks — would be inimical to the health of the teenage mother. Currently, Indian law allows for the termination of pregnancy up to 24 weeks of gestation. The entire argument hinges on gestational age, which, as an indicator of how far along the pregnancy is, is crucial to deciding whether an abortion would be safe. Most countries that have legalised abortion restrict the period of safe abortion to 24 weeks of gestation, primarily because of the negative implications for the life and health of the mother, after that. But, central to legal abortion is a medical assessment of risks. Will a child or her parents alone, with lay knowledge, be able to make a studied assessment of such risk? While the minor expresses her desire to be rid of a forced pregnancy, it is the role of her parents and the system to provide her with safe options, within the permissible period. Making an uninformed decision at this stage could be counterproductive, if it compromises on her health or life, while allowing the right to bodily autonomy.

not intend to do so, they said. They also indicated that if the legal routes were closed, women might take the dangerous path to quacks, risking life. However, counsel for the All India Institute of Medical Sciences stoutly opposed the termination, and the curative petition; leveraging the same safety consideration. Terminating the pregnancy at an advanced stage — 30 weeks — would be inimical to the health of the teenage mother. Currently, Indian law allows for the termination of pregnancy up to 24 weeks of gestation. The entire argument hinges on gestational age, which, as an indicator of how far along the pregnancy is, is crucial to deciding whether an abortion would be safe. Most countries that have legalised abortion restrict the period of safe abortion to 24 weeks of gestation, primarily because of the negative implications for the life and health of the mother, after that. But, central to legal abortion is a medical assessment of risks. Will a child or her parents alone, with lay knowledge, be able to make a studied assessment of such risk? While the minor expresses her desire to be rid of a forced pregnancy, it is the role of her parents and the system to provide her with safe options, within the permissible period. Making an uninformed decision at this stage could be counterproductive, if it compromises on her health or life, while allowing the right to bodily autonomy.

### THE CORE TENSION

- The argument hinges on **gestational age** — most countries cap safe abortion at **~24 weeks** because of health risks thereafter; current Indian law allows termination up to **24 weeks** for special categories.
- Central to legal abortion is a **medical assessment of risk**: can a child or her parents, with lay knowledge, judge this alone? The Court balances the minor's **bodily autonomy** against an informed decision on safety, and the role of parents and the system to provide safe options within the permissible period.

The Hindu, Page 6 editorial — “Doctors decide”.

### ★ THE MTP FRAMEWORK

- MTP Act, 1971 (amended 2021)**: up to **20 weeks** on one doctor's opinion; **20-24 weeks** for special categories (rape, minors, disability) on two doctors' opinion.
- Beyond **24 weeks**, termination needs a **State Medical Board**, chiefly for substantial foetal abnormality.
- Article 21** covers reproductive autonomy — *Suchita Srivastava (2009)*, *X v. NCT of Delhi (2022)*, and privacy under *Puttaswamy*.
- POCSO** mandatory-reporting duties complicate minors' cases.
- Way forward**: standing medical boards, faster judicial timelines, and gestational-age nuance for survivors that balances autonomy with safety.

## Mains Practice Questions

**Q1.**

**15 Marks**

“Trade measures are increasingly used as instruments of labour-rights conditionality.” Examine this in the light of the recent U.S. Section 301 tariffs on forced-labour goods and India's amendment of the Foreign Trade Policy, 2023.

**GS 2 & GS 3**

**Q2.**

**15 Marks**

“Raising women's workforce participation is not merely a welfare goal but a growth strategy.” Critically analyse the structural reasons for India's low female Work Participation Rate and suggest a way forward.

**GS 3**

**Q3.**

**15 Marks**

Indian seafarers operate across the overlapping jurisdictions of flag, port and nationality. Discuss the international and domestic framework that protects them and the gaps exposed by recent events in West Asia.

**GS 2**

**Q4.**

**10 Marks**

“Intermediary safe harbour is central to free speech online.” In the light of recent takedown mechanisms, examine the tension between regulating harmful content and protecting Article 19(1)(a).

**GS 2**

“

*Rights are protected not by law, but by the social and moral conscience of society.*

— DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR

## Prelims Practice — MCQs

**Q1.** With reference to **Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act, 1974**, consider the following statements:

1. It empowers the U.S. Trade Representative to investigate and act against unfair foreign trade practices.
2. The recent U.S. tariffs on forced-labour goods followed two Section 301 investigations, both of which are now concluded.

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither

**Q2.** Consider the following about the **ILO Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)**:

1. It was adopted in 1930.
2. India has adopted its definition of forced labour.
3. It defines forced labour as work exacted under the menace of a penalty and not offered voluntarily.

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Q3.** Consider the following statements:

1. Article 23 of the Constitution prohibits *begar* and other forms of forced labour.
2. In *PUCL v. Union of India* (1982), the Court held that paying below the minimum wage amounts to forced labour under Article 23.

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither

**Q4.** With reference to the **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**, consider the following:

1. It is a statutory body under the Competition Act, 2002.
2. It replaced the MRTP Act on the recommendation of the Raghavan Committee.
3. It consists of a Chairperson and ten Members.

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Q5.** Regarding labour-market indicators, consider the following:

1. Worker Population Ratio is employed persons as a percentage of the total population.
2. Labour Force Participation Rate includes both the employed and those seeking work.
3. The Unemployment Rate is measured as a percentage of the total population.

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Q6.** Which international convention is widely known as the “**Seafarers' Bill of Rights**”?

(a) SOLAS, 1974 (b) STCW, 1978 (c) MLC, 2006 (d) SAR, 1979

**Q7.** Consider the following statements:

1. The Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) is located at Gurugram.
2. It serves as a hub for Maritime Domain Awareness and multinational information sharing.

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both (d) Neither

**Q8.** With reference to the **Qdenga** dengue vaccine, consider the following:

1. It is India's first dengue vaccine approved by the CDSCO.
2. It can be administered only after screening for a prior dengue infection.
3. Antibody-dependent enhancement can make a second dengue infection more severe.

(a) 1 and 2 only   (b) 1 and 3 only   (c) 2 and 3 only   (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Q9.** Consider the following about the **CDSCO**:

1. It functions under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
2. It derives its powers from the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
3. It is headed by the Drug Controller General of India.

(a) 1 and 2 only   (b) 2 and 3 only   (c) 1 and 3 only   (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Q10.** With reference to **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India** and the IT Act, consider the following:

1. Section 66A of the IT Act was struck down in this judgment.
2. Section 79(3)(b) was read down to require a court order or government notification for “actual knowledge”.
3. Section 69A empowers the government to issue blocking orders.

(a) 1 and 2 only   (b) 2 and 3 only   (c) 1 and 3 only   (d) 1, 2 and 3

### ★ ANSWER KEY

1 → (a)

2 → (d)

3 → (c)

4 → (a)

5 → (a)

6 → (c)

7 → (c)

8 → (b)

9 → (d)

10 → (d)

**1 (a):** The second (excess-capacity) investigation is still pending, so statement 2 is wrong. **4 (a):** The CCI has a Chairperson and **six** Members, not ten. **5 (a):** The Unemployment Rate is a share of the **labour force**, not the total population. **8 (b):** Unlike Dengvaxia, Qdenga can be given **without** pre-screening for prior infection, so statement 2 is wrong.