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The Hindu *Analysis*

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"Knowledge is the eye of desire and can become the pilot of the soul."

— Will Durant

Compiled by **Sapna Chauhan**

NEWS · ANALYSIS · VALUE ADDITION · PRACTICE

Supreme Court: Authorities Lax in Ensuring Women's Safety in Delhi

WHY IN NEWS Taking **suo motu cognisance** of a spate of sexual assaults on minors and women in Delhi-NCR, the Supreme Court on Monday directed the Delhi Police to identify vulnerable pockets, step up patrolling and complete an **audit of lighting and CCTV coverage** in public spaces within four weeks.

- ♦ **Bench and core finding:** A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran held that parks, buses and Metro stations cannot be allowed to become “zones of high risk” because of “grossly inadequate illumination” and “lax patrolling”.

Authorities lax in ensuring women's safety in Delhi: SC

Court takes *suo motu* cognisance of recent sexual violence cases in the National Capital Region; administrative deficiencies should not make people unsafe in parks, transport networks, it says

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

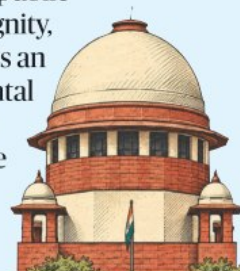
Taking *suo motu* cognisance of a spate of sexual assault incidents against minors and women in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR), the Supreme Court on Monday directed the Delhi Police to immediately identify vulnerable pockets, step up patrolling, and undertake an audit of lighting and CCTV coverage in public spaces within four weeks.

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran observed that public spaces, including parks, buses, and Metro stations, cannot be allowed to become “zones of high risk” because of deficiencies such as “grossly inadequate illumination”



These incidents, considered alongside recent reports of sexual offences across Delhi-NCR, starkly underline the failure of law enforcement and public administration authorities to guarantee basic public safety. The right to live with dignity, free from the fear of violence, is an intrinsic facet of the fundamental guarantee of life and personal liberty enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution

SUPREME COURT BENCH



and “lax patrolling”. Where basic measures of public safety remain compromised, no individual, irrespective of age, gender or sexual identity, can navigate public spaces with a sense of security, it said.

It took note of several recent cases of sexual violence reported in the na-

tional capital, including the rape of a 17-year-old at Astha Kunj park near Lady Shri Ram College, the gang-rape of a minor at Swaroop Nagar, and the sexual assault of another minor inside a bus travelling from Greater Noida to Delhi. “These incidents, considered alongside re-

cent reports of sexual offences across Delhi-NCR, starkly underline the failure of law enforcement and public administration authorities to guarantee basic public safety. The right to live with dignity, free from the fear of violence, is an intrinsic facet of the fundamental guarantee of life and personal liberty enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution,” the Bench said.

The Delhi Police and other authorities have also been asked to file a detailed response outlining the measures currently in place to ensure safety at parks, educational institutions, and other areas frequented by women and children.

CONTINUED ON
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THE HINDU · PAGE 1 Authorities lax in ensuring women's safety in Delhi: SC

- ♦ **Universal insecurity:** Where basic public-safety measures are compromised, the court said, no individual — irrespective of age, gender or sexual identity — can move through public spaces with a sense of security.

- ◆ **Trigger:** Several recent incidents in the capital — including assaults on minors in a park, in a residential locality and inside an inter-city bus from Greater Noida — were read together as evidence of a systemic failure of law enforcement and public administration.
- ◆ **Article 21 anchor:** “The right to live with dignity, free from the fear of violence, is an intrinsic facet of the fundamental guarantee of life and personal liberty enshrined under Article 21,” the Bench said.
- ◆ **Interim directions:** The Police Commissioner must form dedicated teams in every police district to survey isolated stretches, parks, transport hubs, markets and areas around educational institutions.
- ◆ **Breaking data silos:** District-wise **vulnerability maps** are to be shared among adjoining police stations, so that crime patterns and information on habitual offenders do not stay confined to one station’s jurisdiction.
- ◆ **Accountability:** Delhi Police and other authorities must file a detailed response on measures in place at parks, educational institutions and other places frequented by women and children.
- ◆ **Significance:** The order shifts the focus from punishment after the crime to **prevention by design** — lighting, patrolling and shared intelligence — and treats administrative neglect itself as a rights violation.

VALUE ADDITION · LEGAL & INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ **Article 21:** Expanded in Maneka Gandhi (1978); the right to live with human dignity was articulated in Francis Coralie Mullin (1981).
- ▶ **Article 15(3):** Permits special provisions for women and children; **Article 51A(e)** — duty to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- ▶ **Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997):** Guidelines on workplace sexual harassment → PoSH Act, 2013.
- ▶ **Justice J.S. Verma Committee (2013)** → Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013; **POCSO Act, 2012** for children; offences now under the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023**.
- ▶ **Nirbhaya Fund (2013):** Non-lapsable corpus; finances Safe City Projects in eight cities including Delhi, One Stop Centres and ERSS-112.
- ▶ **Who controls Delhi Police?** Under **Article 239AA**, police, public order and land lie outside the Delhi Assembly’s domain; Delhi Police functions under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

PRELIMS POINTERS

Suo motu = on the court’s own motion

Art. 21 — dignity, freedom from fear

Art. 239AA — 69th Amendment, 1991

Vulnerability maps · lighting & CCTV audit

SYLLABUS LINK GS-II: Fundamental Rights; role of the judiciary; mechanisms for protection of vulnerable sections · GS-I: Women and associated issues



TOPIC 02 · GS-I · GEOGRAPHY · FEDERALISM

THE HINDU · PAGE 5

Shah to Chair Meeting to Resolve Mahanadi Water-Sharing Dispute

WHY IN NEWS Union Home Minister Amit Shah will preside over a meeting on **October 1** to resolve the Mahanadi water-sharing dispute between **Odisha and Chhattisgarh**; Chief Ministers of both States will present their positions.

Shah to chair meeting to resolve Mahanadi water-sharing dispute

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

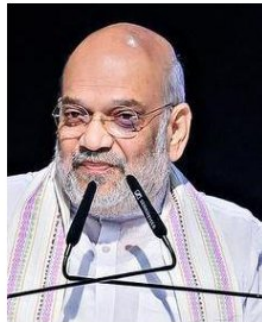
Union Home Minister Amit Shah will preside over a meeting on October 1 to discuss the resolution of the Mahanadi river water-sharing dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh, with the Chief Ministers of both States expected to present their positions.

Mr. Shah's meeting is expected to build confidence and trust between the two States so that a final resolution can be achieved and accepted, Odisha's Advocate General Pitambar Acharya said on Monday. "Apart from the Chief Ministers, Chief Secretaries and Chief Engineers of Water Resources Department of both States will be present at the meeting," Mr. Acharya added.

On July 30, Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil had chaired a high-level meeting to resolve the issue. For a decade, both States have been asserting their rights over Mahanadi.

"Engineers from both States have met multiple times to discuss technical issues. They have submitted their reports to the Central Water Commission (CWC), which is the apex body in technical and administrative matters pertaining to river water management in the country. The CWC will submit its report to Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal, headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice Bela M. Trivedi," said Mr. Acharya.

Mr. Acharya pointed out



Amit Shah

that there were examples of court battles that never provided a long-standing resolution to river water disputes. "After Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in Odisha, we informed the tribunal that both States should be given opportunity to sit together and talk directly on the contentious issues. The tribunal agreed," he said.

Regulatory body

Mr. Acharya said the resolution that would emerge from both political and technical negotiations could be the best result. There could be a regulatory body for Mahanadi that will decide river water-sharing. "The tribunal will take the final decision," he added.

According to the Odisha government, Chhattisgarh built more than 500 anicuts and 30 barrages on the Mahanadi river after 2010. The previous Naveen Patnaik-led government demanded that upstream construction be halted and sought a definitive water-sharing formula, arguing that Odisha was critically dependent on the river.

RIVER PROFILE · MAHANADI

Name: "Great River" — a major east-flowing peninsular river of east-central India, known for heavy silt load and an extensive delta.

Origin: Sihawa hill range, Dhamtari district, Chhattisgarh.

Course: ~900 km; flows north across the eastern Chhattisgarh plain, turns east into Odisha, cuts through the Eastern Ghats in a forested gorge (Satkosia) and meets the Bay of Bengal at **False Point near Paradip**.

Basin: Mainly Chhattisgarh and Odisha; small parts of MP, Jharkhand and Maharashtra.

Left bank	Seonath (Shivnath), Hasdeo, Mand, Ib
Right bank	Jonk, Ong, Tel

Hirakud Dam (Sambalpur): One of the world's longest earthen dams; its ~55 km reservoir moderates floods and generates hydropower.



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- ◆ **Confidence-building:** Odisha's Advocate General Pitambar Acharya said the meeting aims to build trust so that a final resolution can be achieved and accepted; Chief Secretaries and Water Resources engineers of both States will attend.
- ◆ **Earlier round:** On July 30, Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil chaired a high-level meeting; both States have been asserting their rights over the river for a decade.

- ◆ **Technical track:** Engineers of both States have submitted reports to the **Central Water Commission (CWC)**, the apex technical body on water resources, which will report to the **Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal**, headed by former SC judge Justice Bela M. Trivedi.
- ◆ **Negotiated settlement:** The tribunal agreed to let the States talk directly on contentious issues; a **regulatory body for the Mahanadi** to decide water-sharing is being discussed, though “the tribunal will take the final decision”.
- ◆ **Odisha’s grievance:** Chhattisgarh has built more than 500 anicuts and 30 barrages upstream since 2010; Odisha, the lower riparian and delta State, sought a halt to construction and a definitive sharing formula.
- ◆ **Lesson:** As Mr. Acharya noted, court battles have rarely produced lasting solutions to river-water disputes — political plus technical negotiation is the more durable route.

VALUE ADDITION · RESOLVING INTER-STATE RIVER DISPUTES

- ▶ **Article 262:** Parliament may provide for adjudication of inter-State river disputes and may bar the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and other courts over them.
- ▶ **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** Centre constitutes tribunals; after the 2002 amendment, an award published in the Gazette has the force of a Supreme Court decree.
- ▶ **River Boards Act, 1956** provides for advisory boards; **Entry 17, State List** (water) is subject to **Entry 56, Union List** (regulation of inter-State rivers).
- ▶ **Mahanadi Tribunal:** Constituted in 2018 on the Supreme Court’s direction after Odisha’s complaint.
- ▶ **Other tribunals:** Krishna, Cauvery (Cauvery Water Management Authority, 2018), Mahadayi/Mhadei, Vansadhara (Odisha–Andhra Pradesh), Ravi–Beas.

PRELIMS POINTERS

Origin: Sihawa, Dhamtari (not Amarkantak)

Mouth: False Point, near Paradip

Hirakud — Sambalpur, Odisha

Tribunals under Art. 262 + ISRWD Act

SYLLABUS LINK GS-I: Drainage systems of India · GS-II: Federalism, inter-State relations, dispute-redressal mechanisms



TOPIC 03 · GS-III · INDIAN ECONOMY

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Industrial Growth Quickens to 8% in August

WHY IN NEWS The **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**, released by MoSPI on Monday, grew **8% in August 2026** (from 7.35% in July) — the second-highest since April 2024, the earliest period in the new IIP series.

- ◆ **Drivers:** Strong performance in manufacturing, electricity, capital goods and consumer goods; growth was last faster in June 2026 (8.8%).
- ◆ **Manufacturing:** Grew 8.95% — second-highest in the new series after June’s 9.5% — led by motor vehicles, electrical and non-electrical machinery, electronics, textiles, beverages, rubber and non-metallic products.
- ◆ **Electricity:** A 27-month high of 12.3%, supported by both conventional and renewable generation.
- ◆ **Capital goods:** Up 16.9%, though a three-month low — still a signal of continuing investment demand.

- ◆ **Outlook:** Madan Sabnavis (Bank of Baroda) put five-month growth at 6.7% and said 7–8% for the year is possible on festival-season demand, making the **third quarter critical** for industry.

Industrial growth quickens to 8% in Aug.

The growth in August is the second-highest for the period going back to April 2024, for which the new series of the IIP has data

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Industrial growth in India quickened to 8% in August 2026 from 7.35% a month earlier, driven by a strong performance in the manufacturing, electricity, capital goods, and consumer goods sectors.

Growth in the Index of Industrial Production, data on which was released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Monday, was last quicker in June 2026 when it touched 8.8%.

The growth in August is the second-highest for the period going back to April 2024 for which the new series of the IIP has data.

"This [August growth] was aided by sharp growth in capital goods, intermediate, infrastructure, and consumer durable goods," Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at the Bank of Baroda said. "For the five

Growth uptick

India's industrial growth in August 2026 is the second-highest since April 2024, the earliest period for which there is data



months period, growth

was at 6.7%," Mr. Sabnavis added. "If this is maintained, India can register growth of 7-8% for the year

on the back of higher growth during the festival season with demand building up. This makes the third quarter very critical for industry."

The manufacturing sector grew at 8.95% in August 2026, the second-highest in the history of the new series of the IIP after the 9.5% seen in June 2026. A deeper look showed that the

growth in the sector was driven by motor vehicles, electric and non-electric machinery, electronics, textiles, beverages, rubber, and non-metallic products.

The electricity sector saw growth quicken to a 27-month-high of 12.3% in August 2026, which, according to Mr. Sabnavis, was supported by growth in both conventional and renewable electricity.

The capital goods sector grew by 16.9%, which was however a three-month low.

AUGUST 2026 · AT A GLANCE

Overall IIP	8% (July: 7.35%)
Peak	8.8% in June 2026
Manufacturing	8.95% — 2nd highest in new series (June: 9.5%)
Electricity	12.3% — 27-month high
Capital goods	16.9% — a three-month low
5-month growth	6.7% (Bank of Baroda)

READING THE SIGNALS

Capital goods → proxy for investment demand.

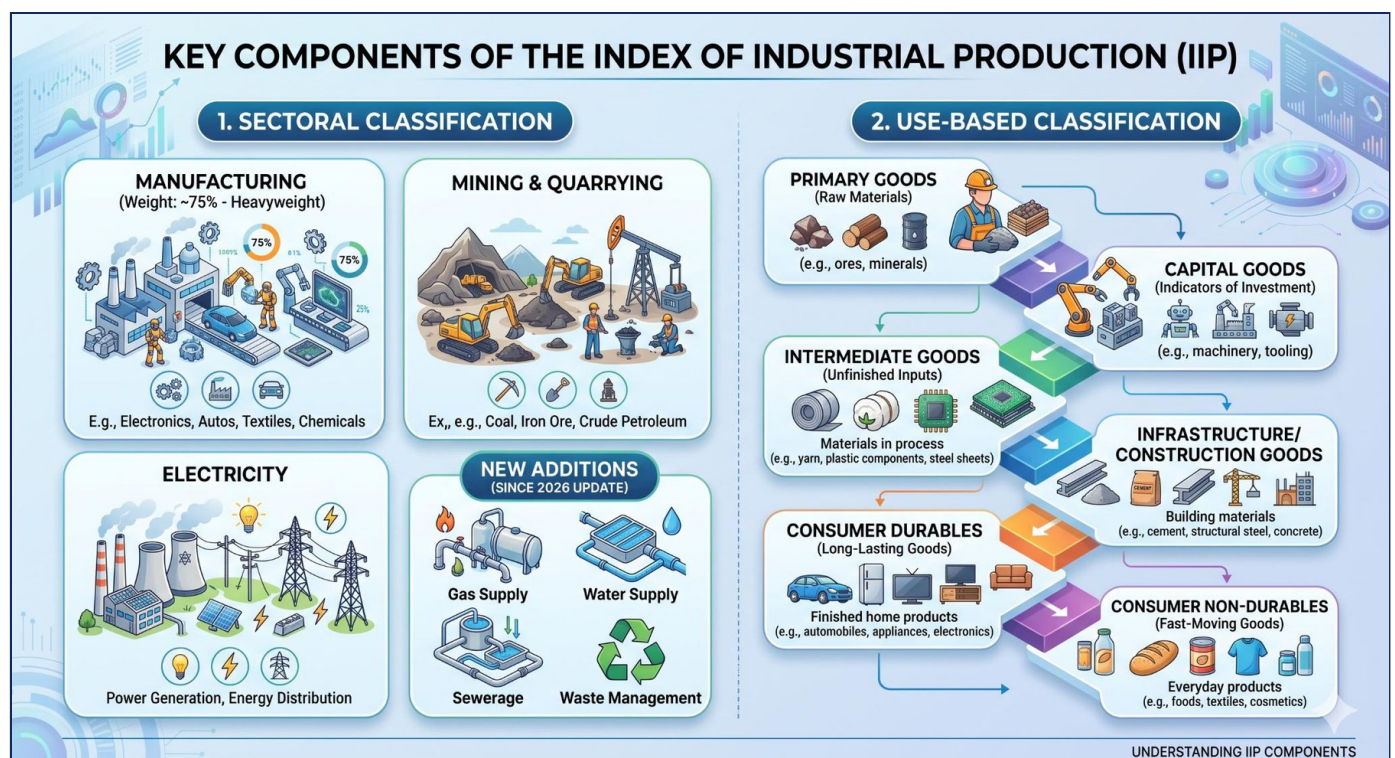
Consumer durables → discretionary urban demand.

Electricity → both industrial activity and weather; now split into renewable and non-renewable.

Infrastructure/construction goods → public capex and housing.

Q3 (Oct–Dec) is critical as festival demand builds up.

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Key components of the IIP — sectoral and use-based classification (source slide)

VALUE ADDITION · UNDERSTANDING THE NEW IIP

- **Compiled by:** National Statistical Office (NSO), MoSPI; released monthly — a barometer of the short-term health of industry.

- ▶ **Base revision:** Base year moved from 2011-12 to **2022-23** in 2026, alongside the GDP revision.
- ▶ **Wider basket:** 1,042 products in 463 item groups (earlier 839 items, 407 groups).
- ▶ **Wider scope:** Adds gas supply, water supply, sewerage and waste management to mining & quarrying, manufacturing and electricity; manufacturing remains the heavyweight (roughly three-fourths).
- ▶ **Green lens:** Electricity is now split into renewable and non-renewable generation.
- ▶ **Use-based classes:** Primary, capital, intermediate, infrastructure/construction goods, consumer durables and consumer non-durables.
- ▶ **Don't confuse:** The Index of Eight Core Industries is released by the Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT — not by the NSO.

PRELIMS POINTERS

IIP — NSO, MoSPI

New base year 2022-23

Aug 2026: 8% · Mfg 8.95% · Power 12.3%

Core-8 — OEA, DPIIT

SYLLABUS LINK GS-III: Indian economy — growth, development and industrial policy; issues relating to mobilisation of resources

**TOPIC 04 · GS-II · POLITY · JUDICIARY**

THE HINDU · PAGE 12

Collegium Proposes Three HC Chief Justices for Elevation to the Supreme Court

WHY IN NEWS The Supreme Court Collegium headed by **CJI Surya Kant** on September 28 recommended Gujarat HC Chief Justice **Sunita Agarwal**, Delhi HC Chief Justice **Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya** and Telangana HC Chief Justice **Aparesh Kumar Singh** for appointment as Supreme Court judges.

- ◆ **Gender angle:** This is the second time in 2026 that a woman has been proposed for the apex court; the last year with multiple women appointees was 2021 (Justices Hima Kohli, B.V. Nagarathna and Bela M. Trivedi).
- ◆ **Direct from the Bar:** In May 2026 the Collegium recommended senior advocate V. Mohana's direct elevation; she was appointed along with four other judges.
- ◆ **Strength:** The sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court has been increased to **38 judges including the CJI**, as per the report.
- ◆ **First woman CJI:** Justice B.V. Nagarathna, a member of the five-judge Collegium, is in line to become India's first woman Chief Justice in 2027.
- ◆ **Regional balance:** Justices Agarwal and Upadhyaya have Allahabad as their parent High Court; Justice Singh's is Jharkhand.
- ◆ **Context:** Justice Upadhyaya had conducted the preliminary in-house enquiry into allegations against former Delhi HC judge Yashwant Varma after sacks of half-burnt currency were allegedly found at his residence.

MAINS ANGLE · ISSUES & WAY FORWARD

- ▶ **Transparency:** Collegium deliberations and reasons for selection or rejection are largely undisclosed; publishing resolutions online was a step forward, but criteria remain opaque.

- **Delays:** Friction between the Collegium and the executive over finalising the Memorandum of Procedure and clearing names delays appointments and adds to pendency.
- **Diversity:** Representation of women, backward classes and regions remains limited; this year's recommendations improve gender and regional balance.
- **Reform options:** A finalised MoP, a permanent secretariat, fixed timelines for both sides, and objective criteria — while preserving judicial independence, a part of the basic structure.

Collegium proposes 3 HC Chief Justices for elevation to SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium, headed by the Chief Justice of India, Surya Kant, on Monday recommended Gujarat High Court Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal for appointment as a Supreme Court judge.

The September 28 recommendation makes it the second time in 2026 that a woman has been proposed to serve on the Supreme Court Bench. The last time the court saw multiple appointments of women in the same year was in 2021, when Justices Hima Kohli, B.V. Nagarathna, and Bela M. Trivedi were recommended and appointed together.

In May 2026, Chief Justice Kant's Collegium had successfully recommended then senior advocate V. Mohana's direct elevation from the Bar to an apex court judgeship. Justice Mohana was appointed along with four other judges to the Supreme Court, the sanctioned strength of which has been increased to 38 judges, including the Chief Justice of India.

Chief Justice Kant's Collegium also has Justice B.V. Nagarathna among its five



Justice Sunita Agarwal

members. Justice Nagarathna is in the line of seniority to be the first woman Chief Justice of India in 2027. Justice Agarwal has been recommended first among the batch of three recommended by the Collegium on Monday. The other two are Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya, the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, and Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh, the Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court.

Justice Upadhyaya had conducted the preliminary enquiry into allegations against former Delhi HC judge, Justice Yashwant Varma, after sacks of half-burnt currency were allegedly found at his official residence. Justice Singh's parent High Court is Jharkhand while that of both Justices Agarwal and Upadhyaya is the Allahabad High Court.

EVOLUTION OF THE COLLEGIUM

First Judges Case (1981) — S.P. Gupta: “consultation” in Articles 124(2) and 217 does not mean “concurrence”; primacy to the executive.

Second Judges Case (1993) — overruled the first; “consultation” means concurrence. The CJI's advice, formed after consulting two senior-most judges, binds the President — birth of the **Collegium system**.

Third Judges Case (1998) — Presidential Reference under Article 143; Collegium expanded to the **CJI + four senior-most judges**.

Fourth Judges Case (2015) — struck down the 99th Amendment and the **NJAC**, restoring the Collegium.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Art. 124(2): SC judges appointed by the President. **Art.**

124(3): HC judge for 5 years, HC advocate for 10 years, or a distinguished jurist.

Art. 217 — HC judges; **Art. 222** — transfer; **Art. 124(4)** — removal by Parliament (Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968).

Memorandum of Procedure guides appointments; Justice M. Fathima Beevi (1989) was the first woman SC judge.

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PRELIMS POINTERS

CJI Surya Kant — 53rd CJI

SC strength: 38 incl. CJI (per report)

Collegium: CJI + 4 senior-most

NJAC struck down — 2015

SYLLABUS LINK GS-II: Structure, organisation and functioning of the Judiciary; appointments to constitutional posts



Gender Disparities in Contraceptive Use and Sterilisation

WHY IN NEWS The **WHO** has issued new guidelines on expanding contraceptive options and, for the first time, set benchmarks (a “Target Product Profile”) for a new generation of **reversible male contraceptives** — timely for India, where NFHS-6 (2023-24) shows contraception remains overwhelmingly a woman’s burden.

- ◆ **Demographic milestone:** India reached the NPP 2000 goal of a TFR of 2.0 in 2021, and the TFR fell to 1.9 in 2025 — below replacement level.
- ◆ **Unmet need:** The share of married women with unmet need for family planning fell by one percentage point between NFHS-5 (2019-21) and NFHS-6.
- ◆ **Overall use up, modern use down:** Contraceptive use among currently married women (15-49) rose from 66.7% to 69.1%, but modern methods fell from 56.4% to 52.7%.
- ◆ **Traditional methods surge:** Rhythm/withdrawal rose by about 6 points (10.3% → 16.4%) — the largest rise for any method; possible reasons include concerns over side-effects, privacy, partner preferences, access and a wish to avoid hormonal or invasive methods.
- ◆ **Sterilisation gap:** Female sterilisation eased from 37.9% to **36.5%**; male sterilisation rose only from 0.3% to **0.5%**. Over three decades, male sterilisation fell from 3.4% (NFHS-1) to 0.5%.
- ◆ **States:** The share of men choosing sterilisation rose in 22 States, but only Telangana recorded an increase of more than one percentage point (2% → 3.6%).
- ◆ **The irony:** Vasectomy is less invasive than tubectomy and can be done under local anaesthesia. “Choice is a gender equality issue,” said WHO’s Pascale Allotey; WHO research challenges the assumption that men will not use new methods.

VALUE ADDITION · FAMILY PLANNING IN INDIA

- ▶ **NFHS:** Conducted under MoHFW with the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai** as nodal agency; NFHS-1 was in 1992-93.
- ▶ **Pioneer:** India launched the world’s first national family-planning programme in 1952.
- ▶ **National Population Policy 2000:** Immediate objective — meet unmet need; medium-term — replacement-level TFR; long-term — a stable population.
- ▶ **Mission Parivar Vikas (2016):** Expanded access in high-fertility districts; basket of choice includes **Antara** (injectable), **Chhaya** (non-hormonal weekly pill), IUCDs and no-scalpel vasectomy (NSV).
- ▶ **RISUG:** An ICMR-developed injectable, reversible male contraceptive that has undergone clinical trials.
- ▶ **Days:** World Contraception Day — 26 September; World Population Day — 11 July.

MAINS ANGLE · ISSUES & WAY FORWARD

- ▶ **Shared responsibility:** Treat contraception as a joint decision — counselling must reach men, not only women.
- ▶ **Revive vasectomy:** Promote no-scalpel vasectomy with better incentives, trained providers and campaigns that counter myths about loss of strength or masculinity.
- ▶ **Widen the basket:** Fast-track trials and regulatory pathways for reversible male methods such as RISUG, in line with WHO’s new benchmarks.
- ▶ **Quality of care:** Address side-effect concerns behind the shift to traditional methods through follow-up services and informed choice.

- **Engage men early:** Use schools, workplaces, ASHA networks and digital platforms to change norms around family planning.

Gender disparities in contraceptive use and sterilisation

In contrast to 36.5% women reporting sterilisation, only a meagre 0.5% men reported male sterilisation in NFHS-6

DATA POINT

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
Nitika Francis

The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued new guidelines on expanding contraceptive options and, for the first time, set out the benchmarks for a new generation of reversible male contraceptives that could give men more alternatives.

The timing of the announcement is significant for India. After focussing on family-planning policies for decades, fertility has fallen below the replacement level (Chart 1). Figures from the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6) for 2023-24, show a decline in the share of married women who have an unmet need for family planning by one percentage point from NFHS-5 for 2019-21.

Yet, the NFHS-6 also shows that the demographic achievement has not altered the gender imbalance in contraceptive responsibility, with both temporary and permanent contraception measures increasingly used/taken by women.

Chart 2 shows an increase in the proportion of currently married women aged 15-49 using any contraceptive method, from 66.7% as per the NFHS-5 (for 2019-21) to 69.1% in 2023-24. Though majority of these women used modern methods of contraception, their use has fallen from 56.4% to 52.7%, while traditional methods – principally rhythm/fertility-awareness and withdrawal – have risen sharply by 6 percentage points between NFHS-5 and NFHS-6, which is the largest increase in the reported use of any contraceptive method between the two surveys.

While the NFHS data do not establish the reason for this increase, possible factors include concerns about side-effects, convenience, privacy, partner preferences, access and a desire to avoid hormonal or invasive methods, with women being the principal users of

such methods.

The decline in the use of modern methods is reflected in female sterilisation as well. Women who are married and reporting female sterilisation came down marginally from 37.9% in NFHS-5 to 36.5% in NFHS-6. Importantly, sterilisation also remains overwhelmingly female. In contrast to 36.5% reporting female sterilisation, only a meagre 0.5% men reported male sterilisation in NFHS-6 – a minuscule increase from 0.3% in NFHS-5. The disparity becomes more striking when the data is viewed over three decades (Chart 3). Female sterilisation climbed rapidly between NFHS-1 and NFHS-3 and has remained at around 36-38%; male sterilisation fell from 3.4% in NFHS-1 to 0.5% in NFHS-6.

A look at State-wise figures on male sterilisation shows that even the States that achieved low Total Fertility Rate (TFR) early were not exceptions to this trend. The share of men who used sterilisation as their preferred contraceptive method increased between NFHS-5 and NFHS-6 in 22 States. And yet, none of these States, barring Telangana, saw an increase of more than one percentage point, as shown in Chart 4. Numbers indicate that as India moved towards replacement-level fertility, vasectomy or male sterilisation went from a visible component of family planning to a marginal one.

While the sterilisation process for females is not inherently unsafe, the physical intervention required to end fertility is less invasive for men and can be performed under local anaesthesia.

"Choice is a gender equality issue," said Pascale Allotey, Director of WHO's Department of Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing, while releasing the new guidelines. WHO said its own research has challenged a longstanding assumption that men would not use new contraceptives. India should leverage the new WHO guidelines to address the gender imbalance.

Unequal responsibility

The data for the charts were sourced from the National Family Health Survey reports released by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Sample Registration System statistical reports. With inputs from Gandia Sneha, who is interning with The Hindu's Data Team

CHART 1: India achieved the goal set in the National Population Policy 2000 for its Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0 in 2021. It fell to 1.9 in 2025, below replacement level

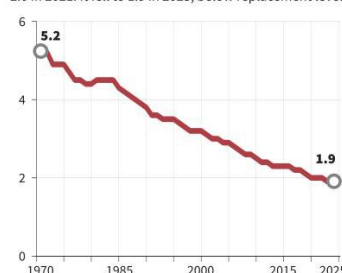
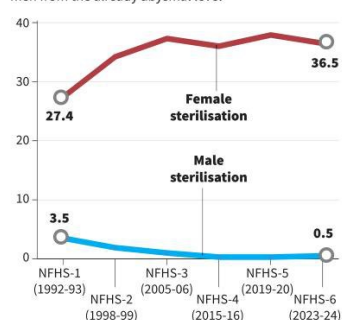


CHART 3: While the share of women undergoing sterilisation has increased, the same has dropped for men from the already abysmal level



WHO has developed its first "Target Product Profile" for male contraceptive methods, setting out the characteristics methods should aim to meet, including safety, effectiveness, acceptability and affordability



CHART 2: A majority of married women used modern methods of contraception, but use of traditional methods have risen sharply. Values outside the bars show the totals

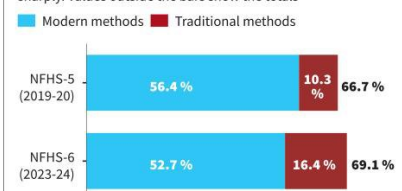
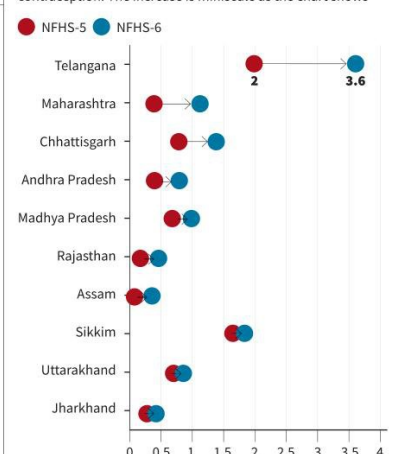


CHART 4: The 10 States that recorded the highest increase in the share (%) of men using sterilisation as their method of contraception. The increase is minuscule as the chart shows



THE HINDU · PAGE 7 Gender disparities in contraceptive use and sterilisation — Data Point

PRELIMS POINTERS

Female sterilisation 36.5% vs male 0.5%

Traditional methods 10.3% → 16.4%

TFR 1.9 (2025) < replacement 2.1

NFHS nodal agency — IIPS Mumbai

SYLLABUS LINK GS-II: Issues relating to health and human resources; welfare schemes for vulnerable sections · GS-I: Population and associated issues

Tackling Food Loss and Waste — India's Opportunity

WHY IN NEWS On the **International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (29 September)**, the FAO's India representative argues that India can turn loss reduction into a **triple win** — food security and nutrition, lower pressure on resources and emissions, and higher incomes.

- ◆ **The paradox:** India produces enough to feed 1.4 billion people, yet a significant share of produce is lost across the value chain.

Tackling food loss and waste — India's opportunity

Food loss and waste remain one of the world's most persistent challenges, with severe consequences for climate, food security, economic costs, and sustainable use of natural resources. India produces enough to feed its population of 1.4 billion, yet a significant share of its produce is lost across the value chain. As the country advances towards more resilient, sustainable and efficient agrifood systems, tackling food loss and waste can deliver a triple win: strengthening food security and nutrition, reducing pressure on natural resources and emissions, and improving incomes and productivity. The International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, observed annually on September 29, highlights this opportunity for India.

India has already taken the first step by generating nationally representative data.

India's evidence base, a global first

India is the only country to have conducted three national post-harvest loss surveys. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries assessed losses across 45, 45 and 54 commodities in 2005-07, 2012-14 and 2020-22, respectively, covering the supply chain from farm to retail. The process for a fourth round is now under way.

This sustained effort supports its reporting of the Food Loss Index under the Sustainable Development Goals. However, these estimates cover mainly losses on the farm and in the supply chain. Data on food waste in retail, in hotels and restaurants, and at household level remains far less developed.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is working with the government, research and financial institutions



Konda Reddy Chavva

Officer-in-Charge, FAO Representation in India

Cutting food losses can strengthen food security, conserve resources and advance climate goals

across India's agrifood systems to translate the triple win from theme to practice. Generating evidence, testing technologies and mobilising investment from farm to market to the city have been the core of these initiatives.

When food is lost, so are the resources used to produce it. Reducing losses can help India meet its climate and resource-efficiency goals while strengthening food security. The scope for reducing losses is greatest with better storage, drying, cooling, moisture management and processing. Digital tools such as traceability systems can further improve how food is moved and managed through the supply chain.

Food loss and waste need to be integrated more systematically into agricultural planning, food-processing strategies, climate action and investment decisions. This means directing finance towards technologies and infrastructure where they can have the greatest impact, while ensuring that solutions remain affordable and accessible to farmers, producer organisations and small businesses. Circular approaches can add another dimension. Surplus food can be redistributed, while unavoidable organic residues can be converted into compost, biogas or energy, reducing waste and creating additional economic value.

Wholesale markets, overlooked opportunity

Assessments by the FAO and the National Council of Agriculture Marketing Boards (COSAMB) have found that major wholesale markets can generate up to 100 tonnes of organic waste a day; in some cities as much as a fifth of all urban organic waste reaches landfills. Nationally, this adds up to an estimated 3.5 million tonnes a year. It is no waste stream but a resource base, which if treated, can

offset roughly 3.3 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions annually, or close to \$30 million in carbon credits.

A 50-tonne-a-day bio-CNG plant in Surat, Gujarat, has been run through a private-sector partnership for over five years and reportedly cuts methane-related emissions by about 7,500 tonnes a year.

India can adapt such models to local conditions, including the commodity mix and infrastructure of different markets. Municipalities and market committees can also improve organic-waste segregation, collection and treatment, while developing markets for compost, biogas and other recovered materials.

Investment and innovation

India must move from individual interventions to a more connected national approach with financing at its core. The FAO and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) are linking identified food-loss hotspots with climate-resilient technologies such as drying, moisture control, energy-efficient cooling and storage, while SIDBI is arranging finance to help small and medium enterprises adopt them.

The FAO is also working to equip Indian cities with a practical "Package of Practices" for urban food loss and waste management, giving municipalities the tools to measure, prevent, reduce, redistribute and valorise waste across households, wholesale markets, retail and food service.

India now has the data, technology and viable models to reduce food loss and waste. The priority is to close data gaps, direct investment and make loss reduction part of agricultural, food-processing, urban and climate policy.

THE HINDU · PAGE 6 Tackling food loss and waste — India's opportunity (Op-Ed, Konda Reddy Chavva, FAO)

- ◆ **A global first in data:** India is the only country to have run three national post-harvest loss surveys — MoFPI covered 45, 45 and 54 commodities in 2005-07, 2012-14 and 2020-22; a fourth round is under way.
- ◆ **Data gap:** These surveys feed India's reporting on the SDG **Food Loss Index**, but data on food waste in retail, hotels, restaurants and households remain weak.
- ◆ **Where the gains are:** Better storage, drying, cooling, moisture management and processing; digital traceability can improve how food moves through supply chains.
- ◆ **Wholesale markets — an overlooked resource:** Studies by FAO and COSAMB show a major market can generate up to 100 tonnes of organic waste a day — about 3.5 million tonnes a year nationally. Treated, it could offset ~3.3 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent annually (~\$30 million in carbon credits).
- ◆ **Proof of concept:** A 50-tonne-a-day **bio-CNG plant in Surat**, run through a private partnership for over five years, reportedly cuts methane-related emissions by about 7,500 tonnes a year.
- ◆ **Finance & cities:** FAO and **SIDBI** are linking food-loss hotspots with climate-resilient technologies and credit for small enterprises; FAO is preparing a "Package of Practices" for urban food loss and waste management.

- ◆ **Way forward:** Close data gaps, direct investment, and embed loss reduction in agricultural, food-processing, urban and climate policy; promote circularity — redistribute surplus, convert residues into compost, biogas or energy.

VALUE ADDITION · CONCEPTS, TARGETS & SCHEMES

- ▶ **Food loss vs food waste (FAO):** Loss occurs from harvest up to (not including) retail; waste occurs at retail, food service and consumer level.
- ▶ **SDG 12.3:** Halve per-capita global food waste at retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains by 2030.
- ▶ **Indices:** Food Loss Index — FAO; Food Waste Index — UNEP.
- ▶ **The Day:** Designated by the UN General Assembly in 2019; first observed in 2020.
- ▶ **Indian initiatives:** PM Kisan SAMPADA Yojana (cold chains, food parks), Operation Greens, SATAT (compressed biogas, 2018), GOBARdhan, FSSAI's Save Food Share Food, Mission LiFE.

PRELIMS POINTERS

29 Sept — Food Loss & Waste Day

SDG 12.3 — halve food waste by 2030

Food Loss Index (FAO) · Food Waste Index (UNEP)

Surat 50 TPD bio-CNG plant

SYLLABUS LINK GS-III: Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce; food processing; food security; conservation and environmental pollution



TOPIC 07 · GS-II · GOVERNANCE · TRANSPARENCY

THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · EDITORIAL

Light on Truth: Tamil Nadu Withdraws RTI Exemption Order

WHY IN NEWS After protests by political parties and transparency activists, Tamil Nadu withdrew a **Government Order (September 21)** that used **Section 24(4) of the RTI Act, 2005** to notify the Public (Law and Order) Department as an “intelligence and security organisation” outside the Act.

- ◆ **Surreptitious rollout:** The G.O. surfaced publicly only on September 27, yet the department's designated authorities had begun citing it to deny information as early as September 22.
- ◆ **Shifting defence:** State Law Minister C.T.R. Nirmalkumar first said the exemption was meant only for sensitive district-level inquiries into communal clashes, then announced the G.O.'s withdrawal without explanation.
- ◆ **Procedural lapse:** Such a notification must be laid before the State Legislature under **Section 24(5)**.
- ◆ **Needless overreach:** The Act already allows non-disclosure through a long list of exemptions under **Section 8**.
- ◆ **Deeper malaise:** Information officers often delay replies or reject queries on vague grounds; concerns that the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act** dilutes the RTI Act have been widely voiced.
- ◆ **Weak appellate body:** Satark Nagrik Sangathan's 2024-25 report card found a backlog of over **41,000 appeals and complaints** before the Tamil Nadu State Information Commission, which works with half of its eight sanctioned commissioners and no Chief Information Commissioner.

Light on truth

No government intent on working for the people should fear transparency

Protests by political parties and transparency activists have derailed the surreptitious rollout, in Tamil Nadu, of a regressive decision to exempt the Public (Law and Order) Department from the purview of the Right to Information Act, 2005. On September 21, the State government issued a Government Order (G.O.) exercising powers under Section 24 (4) of the RTI Act to notify the department as an “intelligence and security organisation” to which the provisions of the Act shall not apply. While the G.O. surfaced in the public domain only on September 27, strikingly, the Public Department’s designated authorities under the RTI Act had instantly begun citing it to deny information to applicants as early as September 22. This betrayed a system that is shy of investing in transparency. Unsurprisingly, State Law Minister C.T.R. Nirmalkumar was initially defensive about the government’s unilateral decision, which, in any case, required the State to have it placed before the legislature (Section 24 (5), RTI Act). He claimed that the ambit of the exemption was not sweeping enough to shield the entire department, but was intended to prevent the sharing of sensitive information relating to district-level inquiries into incidents of communal clashes and the like. However, shortly thereafter, he announced the G.O.’s withdrawal, without explaining why.

While the State’s afterthought is welcome, the episode has again exposed the political class’s penchant for maintaining secrecy in administrative affairs. Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay, whose promise of change came as a breath of fresh air, should have known better. It is concerning that the establishment desired to insulate itself from transparency by amending an Act which, in any case, emphatically enables non-disclosure of information through a long list of exemptions under Section 8. Even otherwise, designated information officers of central/State institutions have displayed an uncanny skill in being economical with the truth, delaying responses or bouncing off queries from RTI Act applicants, citing vague reasons. Besides, concerns about the Digital Personal Data Protection Act diluting the RTI Act further have been widely articulated. It is worrying that the Satrak Nagrik Sangathan’s 2024-25 report card on Information Commissions found a backlog of over 41,000 appeals and complaints before the Tamil Nadu State Information Commission (TNSIC), as of June last year. Yet, the TNSIC is functioning with only half of its sanctioned eight Information Commissioners and has no Chief Information Commissioner. Instead of seeking to defeat the intent of a piece of legislation enacted to empower citizens with access to information, the Tamil Nadu government would do well to strengthen the TNSIC. After all, only an administration that does not fear transparency can be the true harbinger of change.

THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · EDITORIAL Light on truth — No government intent on working for the people should fear transparency (Editorial)

- ◆ **Editorial view:** Rather than defeating the Act’s intent, the State should strengthen the TNSIC — “only an administration that does not fear transparency can be the true harbinger of change”.

VALUE ADDITION · RTI ACT, 2005 — KEY SECTIONS

- ▶ **Section 24:** Intelligence and security organisations (Second Schedule for the Centre; State notification under 24(4)) are exempt — but information on **corruption and human-rights violations** is not excluded.
- ▶ **Section 8(1):** Exemptions (sovereignty and security, Cabinet papers, personal information, etc.); **Section 8(2):** public-interest override.
- ▶ **DPDP Act, 2023:** Amended **Section 8(1)(j)**, widening the personal-information exemption — the root of the “dilution” debate.
- ▶ **Timelines:** Reply within 30 days; within 48 hours where life or liberty is involved (Section 7).
- ▶ **State Information Commission (Section 15):** State CIC + up to 10 Commissioners, appointed by the Governor on a committee’s recommendation (CM, Leader of Opposition, a Cabinet Minister).
- ▶ **RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019:** Tenure and salaries of Information Commissioners to be prescribed by the Centre.

PRELIMS POINTERS

Sec 24(4) — State notification

Sec 24(5) — laid before Legislature

Sec 8(1)(j) — amended by DPDP Act

TNSIC backlog > 41,000

SYLLABUS LINK GS-II: Transparency and accountability; Right to Information; statutory bodies; e-governance

TOPIC 08 · GS-II · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · OP-ED

Time Runs Short for Iran and America

WHY IN NEWS In an op-ed, former ambassador **Mahesh Sachdev** argues that the jerky resumption of **Iran-U.S. negotiations** after a seven-month war differs from earlier attempts, because both sides now realise that **time is not on their side**.

Time runs short for Iran and America

It may be tempting to see the recent jerky resumption of negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) and the United States as *déjà vu*. Similar attempts resulted in the June 17 Memorandum that unravelled within weeks, and the two belligerents resumed their respective blockades of the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian ports.

A different moment now

So, what is different this time? They have both realised that time is not on their side. Their respective domestic considerations make continuation of the seven-month-old war costly and unsustainable. In the short run, going by the past pattern, September 26 saw United States President Trump's dismissal of Iran's seven-point proposal, which may be an opening gambit seeking better terms and sequencing. While the Iranian initiative may betray their economic desperation, it also showcases their reasonableness to the Trump sceptics in America and the region who regard his "War of Choice" against Iran as ill-begotten.

The November 3 mid-term congressional elections could upend Mr. Trump as a lame duck. Iranian hardliners, too, need to exhaust this option to justify their aggressiveness. In the longer run, Mr. Trump needs to salvage his legacy to match his extravagant promises. Similarly, the Iranian theocrats need to keep Gen Z engaged and avoid regional blowback from the coagulating mistrust. Thus, while retaining their braggadocio about final victory, each needs to move away from its maximalist obduracy and seek a "Hudna" or temporary peace. The impact of the unfolding imbroglio on the two belligerents as well as on Israel and Gulf states must be examined.

Statistically, the U.S. has a quantitative premium and staying power *vis-à-vis* Iran: It has three times the population, 85 times the GDP and 20 times the military budget. Iran is also at a disadvantage in quality and modernity of weaponry, although its asymmetric strategy has blunted that edge. Washington has weaponised 'Operation Economic Outcast' against the already "maximum sanctioned" Iranian economy. Yet, the IRI has not "capitulated", and the U.S. itself faces inflation, ammunition depletion and isolation. Battle asymmetry aside, their respective combat histories are relevant. The Iran war has been an outlier from the usual U.S. military doctrine of battle dominance through "shock-and-awe", tech superiority, and leveraging its global primacy through the global politico-financial architecture. The last battle that the U.S. fought as an underdog was its war of independence nearly 250 years ago, and hubris haunts it now. In contrast, Iranians have often been the underdogs to Greeks, Byzantines, Arabs and Ottomans. More recently, British and American manipulation for oil, and Iraq's 1980 invasion of a fledgling IRI, still frame Iranian

**Mahesh Sachdev**

Retired Indian Ambassador, specialising in West Asian and oil issues

political discourse. Their Shia sect being a minority among the Sunni Muslims reinforces their sense of virtues in suffering and martyrdom. The legacy has made the IRI more determined to face enemies with grit, guile and gumption.

The political ecosystem in Iran is hardened, with dissent stifled and externalised to demonised America and Israel as the two Satans. Mr. Trump has been less successful in getting Americans and the allies abroad behind his trenchant anti-Iran rhetoric. This is partly due to his divisiveness, lack of coherent endgame strategy and inability to protect his allies' security and economy. Triggering a decapitating war that ignored Iranian politico-military resilience and retaliatory capacity was a strategic blunder. It risked the closure of the two vital maritime choke points, rising hydrocarbon prices, and threatened to push American "hyperpower" into a forever conflict against a middle-ranked, but determined, Iran. Similarly, his recent strategy of inflicting economic pain on Iranians may also fail by making them rally around the flag. Occasional tanker attacks and the ongoing Yemen-Saudi scrimmage notwithstanding, seven months on, the two belligerents are currently licking their wounds.

Uncertain path ahead

Two formidable unknowns loom before some educated projections can be made about the U.S.-Iran conundrum. First, although the Iranian seven-point proposal is based on the June 17 Islamabad memorandum, its precise contents are foggy. Second, the failure of the Islamabad memorandum, subsequent tit-for-tat attacks, the U.S. blockade, Operation Economic Outcast and fire-eating rhetoric since June 17 have deepened mutual mistrust, raising the bar for the *modus vivendi* required for a peace deal. These negatives are balanced by awareness that the continued stalemate would lead to a shared perdition of a hostile Congress blockading Mr. Trump and anti-establishment demonstrations pulling the rug under the Mullahs.

Under a positive scenario, both sides can breathe easier and develop greater mutual empathy. Failure of the June 17 Grand Bargain would have presumably made them more realistic and incremental. So, instead of a race to the bottom, each would need to reluctantly adopt a "Live and Let Live" approach. Despite Mr. Trump's rejection, signs, such as the Iranian leaders extending their stay in New York, Tehran's flexibility about controlling the Strait of Hormuz and the use of Qatari mediation instead of alacrity Pakistani generals, seem tentatively positive. To be effective and beneficial to both sides, the deal would have to last at least till November 3, the election date.

Even if this band-aid deal allows the two belligerents to staunch the haemorrhage temporarily, what guarantees its long-term sequel, say, after the Congressional elections? The

IRI and the U.S. are certain to use the interregnum to "recharge their batteries" and get ready for the next round. Their mutual scepticism and contentious issues such as the nuclear and missile programmes, and the proxy non-state actors could impede any progress towards permanent normalisation. A "high noon" can be expected by mid-November.

The sequel would depend on which of the two belligerents is able to hold his flock together. An inherently unpredictable Mr. Trump may only suspend the gamut of anti-Iran measures and keep his forces deployed in the region. Similarly, Iran is unlikely to let go of control of the Strait of Hormuz as future deterrence. To dissuade him from resuming military kinetics, Iran has already unveiled its possible escalatory ladder that includes advanced weaponry, a possible al-Houthi blockade of Bab al-Mandeb, retaliatory attacks on America's Gulf allies and hints of pre-emptive strikes. Simultaneously, Tehran has sought a regional diplomatic reset through an interim supervisory arrangement with Oman on the Strait of Hormuz, to be endorsed by other Gulf littoral states.

Wider regional consequences

The past two years have brought Israel and Iran into two direct no-holds-barred wars. Intense drone and missile attacks have convinced Israeli public opinion that Iran constitutes an existential threat. On its part, Iran is unlikely to forgive the Lesser Satan for the assassination of its last Supreme Leader. Their resultant intense regional geopolitical competition, particularly in the Levant, would outlast any Tehran-Washington peace deal, giving their two-millennia-old civilisational animus a new edge. Although the October 27 Knesset elections may see hawkish anti-Iran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu replaced, any successor is likely to be hostile to an Iran pursuing a nuclear duality. Iran can be expected to rely on its proxies and asymmetric arsenal to create a balance of power with Israel equipped with state-of-the-art U.S. weapons. In the long run, time would favour the one with better innovative skills. While Israel is a "Startup Nation", Iran has also been impressively inventive under pressure.

Other regional countries in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Jordan, were caught in the crossfire and suffered considerable collateral damage under Iranian retaliation. Their hydrocarbon exports and other economic activities have been stifled. In most cases, their extensive forex reserves are likely to help them tide over the turbulence. However, their long-standing security reliance on the U.S. would call for a thorough reappraisal. Among the uncertainties they need to tackle is the future of oil, now more tightly tied to geopolitics than the supply-demand equilibrium.

In this war, "time" has emerged as an element even more slippery and opaque than oil.

Both Tehran and Washington must hear the bells toll as mistrust grows and global economies falter

THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · OP-ED Time runs short for Iran and America (Op-Ed, Mahesh Sachdev, retired Indian Ambassador)

- ◆ **Déjà vu:** The June 17 (Islamabad) Memorandum unravelled within weeks, and the belligerents resumed blockades of the **Strait of Hormuz** and Iranian ports.

- ◆ **Why now:** Domestic costs make the war unsustainable; the U.S. faces mid-term Congressional elections on November 3, while Iran must keep its young population engaged and avoid regional blowback.
- ◆ **Opening gambits:** On September 26, the U.S. dismissed Iran's seven-point proposal — possibly a bargaining move; both sides need a “**Hudna**” (temporary truce).
- ◆ **Asymmetry:** The U.S. has about three times Iran's population, 85 times its GDP and 20 times its military budget, yet Iran's asymmetric strategy and the U.S. squeeze (“Operation Economic Outcast”) have not produced capitulation.
- ◆ **Escalation ladder:** Iran has signalled options including advanced weaponry, a possible Houthi blockade of **Bab al-Mandeb** and attacks on U.S. allies, while seeking an interim supervisory arrangement with **Oman** on Hormuz.
- ◆ **Regional fallout:** Two direct Israel-Iran wars in two years have hardened rivalry, especially in the Levant; Gulf States, Iraq and Jordan suffered collateral damage and may reappraise their security reliance on the U.S.
- ◆ **Oil and time:** Oil is now tied more to geopolitics than to supply-demand; in this war, “time” has become more slippery than oil.

VALUE ADDITION · WHY IT MATTERS FOR INDIA

- ▶ **Energy security:** A large share of India's crude and LNG imports passes through the Strait of Hormuz; disruption raises prices, freight and insurance costs, and inflation.
- ▶ **Diaspora and remittances:** Millions of Indians live and work in the Gulf; evacuation readiness and remittance flows are at stake.
- ▶ **Connectivity:** Chabahar Port and the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) depend on stability in and around Iran.
- ▶ **Maritime role:** The Indian Navy's **Operation Sankalp** (2019) protects Indian-flagged merchant ships in the Gulf region.
- ▶ **Diplomacy:** India balances ties with Iran, Israel, the Gulf and the U.S. through strategic autonomy.

PRELIMS POINTERS

Hormuz: Persian Gulf ↔ Gulf of Oman

Bab al-Mandeb: Red Sea ↔ Gulf of Aden

Hudna — Arabic for truce

Knesset — Israel's parliament

SYLLABUS LINK GS-II: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian diaspora · GS-III: Energy security



VEDANTA

Practice Zone

REVISION · MAINS · PRELIMS

QUICK REVISION RECAP

Women's safety SC suo motu on Delhi-NCR: 4-week lighting & CCTV audit, district vulnerability maps, dedicated survey teams; Art. 21 includes freedom from fear of violence.

Mahanadi Amit Shah meeting on Oct 1; CWC report to tribunal (Justice Bela M. Trivedi); Odisha objects to 500+ anicuts and 30 barrages upstream; Art. 262 + ISRWD Act, 1956.

IIP Aug 2026 growth 8% (July 7.35%); manufacturing 8.95%, electricity 12.3% (27-month high), capital goods 16.9%; new base 2022-23, 1,042 products.

Collegium Sunita Agarwal, D.K. Upadhyaya, A.K. Singh recommended; SC strength 38 incl. CJI; Nagarathna in line to be first woman CJI (2027).

Contraception WHO sets first benchmarks for reversible male contraceptives; NFHS-6: female sterilisation 36.5% vs male 0.5%; traditional methods 16.4%.

Food loss 29 Sept Day; three MoFPI surveys; wholesale markets ~3.5 Mt organic waste a year; Surat bio-CNG; FAO-SIDBI partnership; SDG 12.3.

RTI TN withdrew Sec 24(4) G.O. on Public (Law & Order) Dept.; Sec 24(5) requires laying before Legislature; TNSIC backlog > 41,000.

Iran-US June 17 Memorandum collapsed; Hormuz blockades; U.S. mid-terms on Nov 3; Oman role on Hormuz; risk to Bab al-Mandeb; India's energy and diaspora stakes.

MAINS PRACTICE

Q1

GS-II · 15 marks · 250 words

Safety of women in public spaces is as much an administrative obligation as a criminal-justice one. In the light of the Supreme Court's recent suo motu intervention in Delhi-NCR, discuss the constitutional basis of this obligation and suggest a 'safety-by-design' framework for Indian cities.

सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर महिलाओं की सुरक्षा उतना ही एक प्रशासनिक दायित्व है जितना कि आपराधिक न्याय का विषय। दिल्ली-एनसीआर में सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के हालिया स्वतः संज्ञान हस्तक्षेप के आलोक में इस दायित्व के संवैधानिक आधार की विवेचना कीजिए तथा भारतीय शहरों के लिए 'डिज़ाइन द्वारा सुरक्षा' ढाँचा सुझाइए।

APPROACH

- **Intro:** Cite the SC's directions — lighting/CCTV audit, vulnerability maps, patrolling — and its reading of Article 21 as freedom from fear of violence.
- **Constitutional basis:** Article 21 (dignity), Article 14 and 15(3), Article 51A(e); Vishaka and the State's positive obligation to prevent, not merely punish.
- **Gaps:** Dark stretches, thin patrolling, data silos between police stations, last-mile transport, under-reporting, slow use of the Nirbhaya Fund.
- **Framework:** Periodic safety audits with women's groups; lighting and CCTV standards; shared crime-mapping; safe public transport and last-mile connectivity; ERSS-112 and One Stop Centres; more women in policing; gender budgeting in urban local bodies.
- **Conclusion:** Safe cities are a precondition for women's mobility, education and workforce participation — prevention must be built into urban governance.

Q2

GS-III · 15 marks · 250 words

India is the only country to have conducted three national post-harvest loss surveys, yet food loss and waste remain a persistent challenge. Examine the economic, climate and food-security dimensions of food loss and waste in India, and suggest measures to convert it into a 'triple win'.

भारत तीन राष्ट्रीय फसलोत्तर हानि सर्वेक्षण करने वाला एकमात्र देश है, फिर भी खाद्य हानि और अपव्यय एक गंभीर चुनौती बने हुए हैं। भारत में खाद्य हानि और अपव्यय के आर्थिक, जलवायु तथा खाद्य-सुरक्षा आयामों का परीक्षण कीजिए तथा इसे 'त्रिगुण लाभ' में बदलने के उपाय सुझाइए।

APPROACH

- ▶ **Intro:** Define food loss vs food waste; mention the MoFPI surveys (2005-07, 2012-14, 2020-22) and SDG 12.3.
- ▶ **Economic:** Lost farmer income and value addition; weak storage, cold chain and processing; wasted water, land and inputs.
- ▶ **Climate:** Organic waste in landfills emits methane; wholesale markets alone generate ~3.5 million tonnes a year — also a resource for bio-CNG and compost.
- ▶ **Food security:** Losses reduce availability and nutrition despite surplus production.
- ▶ **Measures:** Storage, drying and cooling infrastructure (PM Kisan SAMPADA, Operation Greens); digital traceability; FAO-SIDBI finance for MSMEs; SATAT/GOBARDhan bio-CNG (Surat model); municipal segregation; food redistribution; household-level waste data.
- ▶ **Conclusion:** Integrate loss reduction into agricultural, urban and climate policy for a triple win.

PRELIMS PRACTICE · 10 MCQS

1. Under Article 124(3), a person is qualified for appointment as a Supreme Court judge if he/she:

1. has been a judge of a High Court for at least five years
2. has been an advocate of a High Court for at least ten years
3. is, in the opinion of the President, a distinguished jurist
4. has attained the age of 45 years

Select the correct answer:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| (a) 1 and 2 only | (b) 1, 2 and 3 only |
| (c) 1, 3 and 4 only | (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4 |

2. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 262 empowers Parliament to exclude the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court over inter-State river water disputes.
2. Under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, a tribunal's award published in the Official Gazette has the same force as a Supreme Court decree.
3. 'Water' is an entry in the Union List.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

3. With reference to family planning in India, consider the following statements:

1. The NFHS is conducted under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with IIPS, Mumbai as the nodal agency.
2. As per NFHS-6, the use of traditional methods of contraception declined compared to NFHS-5.
3. World Contraception Day is observed on 26 September.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

4. Consider the following pairs (Strait — Water bodies connected):

1. Strait of Hormuz — Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
2. Bab-el-Mandeb — Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
3. Strait of Malacca — Andaman Sea and Arabian Sea

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None |

5. With reference to the National Capital Territory of Delhi, consider the following statements:

1. 'Police' and 'public order' are outside the legislative competence of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.
2. Article 239AA was inserted by the 69th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1991.
3. The Delhi Police functions under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one | (b) Only two |
| (c) All three | (d) None |

6. Consider the following statements:

1. The International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste is observed on 29 September.
2. SDG target 12.3 aims to halve per-capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels by 2030.
3. The Food Waste Index is compiled by FAO, while the Food Loss Index is compiled by UNEP.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

7. Consider the following pairs:

1. First Judges Case — S.P. Gupta v. Union of India
2. Second Judges Case — 'consultation' means 'concurrence'
3. Third Judges Case — Presidential Reference under Article 143
4. Fourth Judges Case — upheld the NJAC

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| (a) Only one | (b) Only two |
| (c) Only three | (d) All four |

8. Which of the following are right-bank tributaries of the Mahanadi?

1. Seonath 2. Tel 3. Ong 4. Hasdeo 5. Jonk

Select the correct answer:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| (a) 1, 2 and 4 only | (b) 2, 3 and 5 only |
| (c) 1, 4 and 5 only | (d) 3, 4 and 5 only |

9. Consider the following statements about the Index of Industrial Production (IIP):

1. It is compiled and released by the National Statistical Office under MoSPI.
2. In the revised series, the base year is 2022-23.
3. The Index of Eight Core Industries is also released by the National Statistical Office.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

10. With reference to the Right to Information Act, 2005, consider the following statements:

1. Organisations exempted under Section 24 must still disclose information relating to allegations of corruption and human-rights violations.
2. A State Government notification under Section 24(4) must be laid before the State Legislature.
3. Section 8(1)(j) of the Act was amended by the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) All three (d) None

ANSWER KEY & RATIONALE

1 · (b)	The Constitution prescribes no minimum age for SC judges; the three qualifications are alternatives.
2 · (a)	Water is Entry 17 of the State List (subject to Entry 56, Union List). The 2002 amendment gave awards the force of an SC decree.
3 · (c)	Traditional methods rose sharply — from 10.3% to 16.4% — the largest increase for any method between NFHS-5 and NFHS-6.
4 · (b)	The Strait of Malacca links the Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean) with the South China Sea, not the Arabian Sea.
5 · (c)	All correct. Article 239AA (69th Amendment, 1991) keeps police, public order and land outside the Delhi Assembly's domain; Delhi Police is under the MHA.
6 · (b)	Reversed in Statement 3: FAO compiles the Food Loss Index; UNEP compiles the Food Waste Index.
7 · (c)	The Fourth Judges Case (2015) struck down the 99th Amendment and the NJAC; the other three pairs are correct.
8 · (b)	Jonk, Ong and Tel join from the right; Seonath, Hasdeo, Mand and Ib are left-bank tributaries.
9 · (b)	The Core-8 index is released by the Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT (Ministry of Commerce & Industry), not the NSO.
10 · (c)	All correct — see the proviso to Section 24(1)/(4), Section 24(5), and Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act, 2023.

PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS

- △ Mahanadi rises at **Sihawa (Dhamtari)** — Amarkantak is the source of the Narmada and Son.
- △ **Hirakud** is on the Mahanadi at Sambalpur — not on the Brahmani.
- △ IIP is released by the **NSO (MoSPI)**; the Eight Core Industries index by the **OEA, DPIIT**.
- △ Second Judges Case: CJI + **two** judges; Third Judges Case: CJI + **four** judges.
- △ No **minimum age** is prescribed for Supreme Court judges.
- △ Section 24 exempts **organisations**, but not information on corruption and human-rights violations.
- △ Food **loss** occurs before retail; food **waste** at retail and consumer level.
- △ Water is a **State List** subject (Entry 17), but inter-State rivers fall under Union List Entry 56.
- △ **Bab-el-Mandeb** lies between Yemen and Djibouti/Eritrea; Hormuz lies between Iran and Oman (Musandam).

CONNECT THE DOTS · STATIC LINKAGE

News	Static linkage	Syllabus
Women's safety in Delhi	Art. 21, 15(3), 51A(e), 239AA; Nirbhaya Fund; POCSO, BNS	GS-II Polity · GS-I Society
Mahanadi dispute	Peninsular drainage; Art. 262; ISRWD Act, 1956; Entry 17 (List II) vs Entry 56 (List I)	GS-I Geography · GS-II Federalism
IIP at 8%	Index numbers; base-year revision; use-based classification; Core-8	GS-III Economy
Collegium	Art. 124, 217, 222; Judges Cases; NJAC; Memorandum of Procedure	GS-II Judiciary
Contraception gap	Demographic transition; TFR; NPP 2000; Mission Parivar Vikas	GS-I Population · GS-II Health
Food loss & waste	SDG 12.3; food processing; cold chain; circular economy; bio-CNG	GS-III Agriculture · Environment
RTI exemption row	RTI Act, 2005 (Secs 8, 15, 24); DPDP Act, 2023; Information Commissions	GS-II Governance
Iran-US standoff	Maritime chokepoints; energy security; diaspora; Chabahar, INSTC	GS-II IR · GS-III Energy

PLACES & PERSONS IN NEWS

PLACES	
Sihawa Hills	Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh — source of the Mahanadi
Hirakud Dam	Sambalpur, Odisha — long earthen dam on the Mahanadi
False Point	Near Paradip, Odisha — Mahanadi meets the Bay of Bengal
Surat	Gujarat — 50 TPD bio-CNG plant from market waste
Strait of Hormuz	Iran-Oman; Persian Gulf to Gulf of Oman
Bab al-Mandeb	Yemen-Djibouti/Eritrea; Red Sea to Gulf of Aden
PERSONS	
Surya Kant	Chief Justice of India; heads the Collegium
J.B. Pardiwala & K. Vinod Chandran	SC Bench on women's safety in Delhi
Sunita Agarwal	Gujarat HC Chief Justice; recommended to SC
B.V. Nagarathna	In line to be first woman CJI (2027)
Bela M. Trivedi	Heads the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal
Pascale Allotey	WHO — Sexual & Reproductive Health director

DATA BANK FOR MAINS ANSWERS

36.5% vs 0.5%	Female vs male sterilisation, NFHS-6 (2023-24)
10.3% → 16.4%	Rise in traditional contraceptive methods, NFHS-5 to NFHS-6
1.9	India's TFR in 2025 — below replacement level of 2.1
8% · 12.3%	IIP growth (Aug 2026) · electricity, a 27-month high
1,042 products	New IIP basket (463 item groups), base year 2022-23
3.5 million tonnes	Organic waste from wholesale markets each year
~3.3 Mt CO_{2e}	Emissions that treating this waste could offset annually
41,000+	Appeals and complaints pending before the TN State Information Commission
500+ anicuts, 30 barrages	Built by Chhattisgarh on the Mahanadi since 2010 (Odisha)
38 judges	Sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court incl. CJI (as reported)

EDITORIAL VOCABULARY

Surreptitious	done secretly or stealthily
Harbinger	a forerunner; a sign of what is to come
Imbroglia	a confused or complicated situation
Braggadocio	boastful or arrogant talk
Obduracy	stubborn refusal to change one's position
Interregnum	an interval between two phases or regimes
Hubris	excessive pride or self-confidence
Gambit	an opening move made to gain an advantage

PRELIMS BYTES

- ◆ **Justice Leila Seth** became India's first woman Chief Justice of a High Court — the **Himachal Pradesh High Court** (1991).
- ◆ **Hirakud Dam** on the Mahanadi was inaugurated in 1957; **Satkosia Gorge**, where the river cuts the Eastern Ghats, lends its name to the Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Odisha.
- ◆ **Paradip**, near the Mahanadi mouth, is a major port on Odisha's coast.
- ◆ The **National Statistical Office** was formed in 2019 by merging the CSO and the NSSO under MoSPI.
- ◆ NFHS-5 (2019-21) recorded India's TFR at **2.0** — below the replacement level of 2.1.
- ◆ **Wajahat Habibullah** was India's first Chief Information Commissioner (2005).
- ◆ The Indian Navy launched **Operation Sankalp** in 2019 to reassure Indian-flagged ships in the Gulf region.
- ◆ The **Knesset**, Israel's unicameral parliament, has 120 members.