A person with curly hair is smiling and holding a microphone. The image is dark, and the text is overlaid in white.

**Success is nothing
more than a few simple
disciplines, practiced
every day.**

Important Issues of the Day

- **Election Commission of India – Page No. 1, GS 2**
- **Aditya-L1 – Page No. 6, GS 3**
- **The right to disconnect – Page No.8 , GS 2**
- **Iran must initiate reforms – Page No. 8, GS 2**
- **America's Venezuelan actions – Page No. 8, GS 2**
- **Classical Indian languages – Page No. 14, GS 1**
- **Competition Commission of India – Page No. 15, Prelims**
- **Somnath Temple – Prelims**

EC says it has constitutional duty to bar foreigners from voter rolls

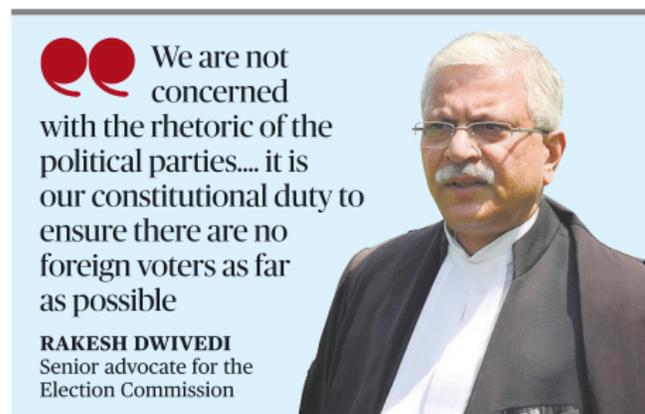
Poll body defends SIR in the Supreme Court, insists it has power to verify citizenship status under the Constitution; it calls claims of the exercise being a 'parallel NRC' rhetoric, says roll revision counts only legal adults unlike citizenship register

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (EC) began its defence of the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls before the Supreme Court on Tuesday by dismissing claims that it is conducting a "parallel" National Register of Citizens (NRC) as sheer "rhetoric".

The poll body maintained that it has the "constitutional power, even a constitutional duty" to ensure that not a single foreigner, as far as possible, occupies space in the nation's electoral rolls.

The SIR kicked off in Bihar last year and expanded to cover 12 more States and Union Territories in the ongoing second phase.



"We have a constitutional duty, and not just a constitutional power, to ensure no foreigners are there on the electoral rolls. It is not important how many foreigners are found... It was repeatedly asked of us to show how many foreigners were found in Bihar, but that is not important. Even if there was one foreigner, he had to be ex-

cluded. We are not concerned with the rhetoric of the political parties. They may be right or wrong. As the Election Commission, it is our constitutional duty to ensure there are no foreign voters as far as possible," senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the EC, clarified before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.

2.89 crore voters deleted in U.P. draft electoral rolls

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
Mayank Kumar
NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

The Election Commission on Tuesday published the draft voter rolls under the

special intensive revision in Uttar Pradesh with 2.89 crore names deleted, the highest in any State so far.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 13

Mr. Dwivedi said the comparison of the SIR with the NRC was devoid of truth.

Faulty comparison

In the NRC, "all citizens", even those of unsound mind, were tallied, the EC said. In the SIR, only those 18 years and above were counted. The EC differentiated between the NRC

conducted in Assam and the "special revision" of electoral rolls underway in the State.

The petitioners, who included Opposition parties and States, had argued that the SIR was merely a "citizenship drive" and a parallel NRC.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12



- **The Election Commission of India (EC) began its defence of the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls before the Supreme Court on Tuesday by dismissing claims that it is conducting a “parallel” National Register of Citizens (NRC) as sheer “rhetoric”.**
- **The poll body maintained that it has the “constitutional power, even a constitutional duty” to ensure that not a single foreigner, as far as possible, occupies space in the nation’s electoral rolls.**
- **The SIR kicked off in Bihar last year and expanded to cover 12 more States and Union Territories in the ongoing second phase.**

- **The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.**
- **It was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950 (celebrated as National Voters' Day). The secretariat of the commission is in New Delhi.**
- **The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.**
- **It is not concerned with the elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states. For this, the Constitution of India provides for a separate State Election Commission.**

- **Part XV (Article 324-329):** It deals with elections and establishes a commission for these matters.
- **Article 324:** Superintendence, direction and control of elections to be vested in an Election Commission.
- **Article 325:** No person to be ineligible for inclusion in, or to claim to be included in a special, electoral roll on grounds of religion, race, caste or sex.
- **Article 326:** Elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assemblies of States to be based on adult suffrage.
- **Article 327:** Power of Parliament to make provision with respect to elections to Legislatures.
- **Article 328:** Power of Legislature of a State to make provision with respect to elections to such Legislature.
- **Article 329:** Bar to interference by courts in electoral matters.

- Originally the commission had only one election commissioner but after the Election Commissioner Amendment Act 1989, it was made a multi-member body.
- The Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and such number of other election commissioners, if any, as the President may from time-to-time fix.
- Presently, it consists of the CEC and two Election Commissioners (ECs).
- At the state level, the election commission is helped by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Appointment & Tenure of Commissioners:

- The President appoints CEC and Election Commissioners as per the CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.
 - They have a fixed tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
 - The salary and conditions of service of the CEC and ECs will be equivalent to that of the Supreme Court Judge.
-
- **Removal:**
 - They can resign anytime or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.
 - The CEC can be removed from office only through a process of removal similar to that of a SC judge by Parliament, while ECs can only be removed on the recommendation of the CEC.

Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India Case, 2023

- **A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court (SC) unanimously ruled that the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners shall be made by the President on the advice of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition of the Lok Sabha and Chief Justice of India (CJI).**
- **The Parliament passed the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, in response to the directive of the Supreme Court in the Anoop Baranwal v Union of India case, 2023.**

Q. Consider the following statements: (2017)

- 1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.**
- 2. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.**
- 3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Which of the following special powers have been conferred on the Rajya Sabha by the Constitution of India?

(a) To change the existing territory of a State and to change the name of a State

(b) To pass a resolution empowering the Parliament to make laws in the State List and to create one or more All India Services

(c) To amend the election procedure of the President and to determine the pension of the President after his/her retirement

(d) To determine the functions of the Election Commission and to determine the number of Election Commissioners

Mains Question

Election Commission of India plays a pivotal role in ensuring free, fair, and credible elections in the world's largest democracy.

Critically examine the constitutional mandate, powers, and functions of the Election Commission of India. In light of recent debates, discuss the challenges related to its autonomy, neutrality, and accountability, and suggest measures to strengthen its institutional independence.

(250 words / 15 marks)

‘भारत का निर्वाचन आयोग भारत के लोकतांत्रिक ढांचे में स्वतंत्र, निष्पक्ष एवं पारदर्शी चुनाव सुनिश्चित करने में केंद्रीय भूमिका निभाता है।

इसके संवैधानिक प्रावधानों, शक्तियों एवं कार्यों की समालोचनात्मक विवेचना कीजिए। साथ ही, हाल के वर्षों में इसके स्वायत्तता, निष्पक्षता एवं जवाबदेही से जुड़े मुद्दों पर चर्चा करते हुए इसकी संस्थागत स्वतंत्रता को सुदृढ़ करने हेतु उपाय सुझाइए।

(250 शब्द / 15 अंक)

ISRO calls for proposals from Indian scientists to analyse data from Aditya-L1

Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU

On the second anniversary of India's maiden solar mission Aditya-L1 reaching the Lagrangian point (L1), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Tuesday made the Announcement of Opportunity (AO) soliciting proposals for the first AO cycle observations.

The Aditya-L1 spacecraft reached the L1 point on January 6, 2024, 127 days after it was launched on September 2, 2023, and since then has been making continuous and comprehensive observations of the Sun from the Sun-Earth L1 point.

According to ISRO, scientific data from the mission are regularly re-



The Aditya-L1 spacecraft reached the L1 point on January 6, 2024, 127 days after it was launched. FILE PHOTO

leased in public domain for global scientific utilisation.

To maximise return

“At present there are more than 23 TB data in public domain and several important scientific results have been published in International peer reviewed jour-

nals. To further maximise the scientific return from this unique mission, the ISRO has released the first AO inviting proposals from the Indian solar physics community for Aditya-L1 observation time,” ISRO said.

It added that this L1

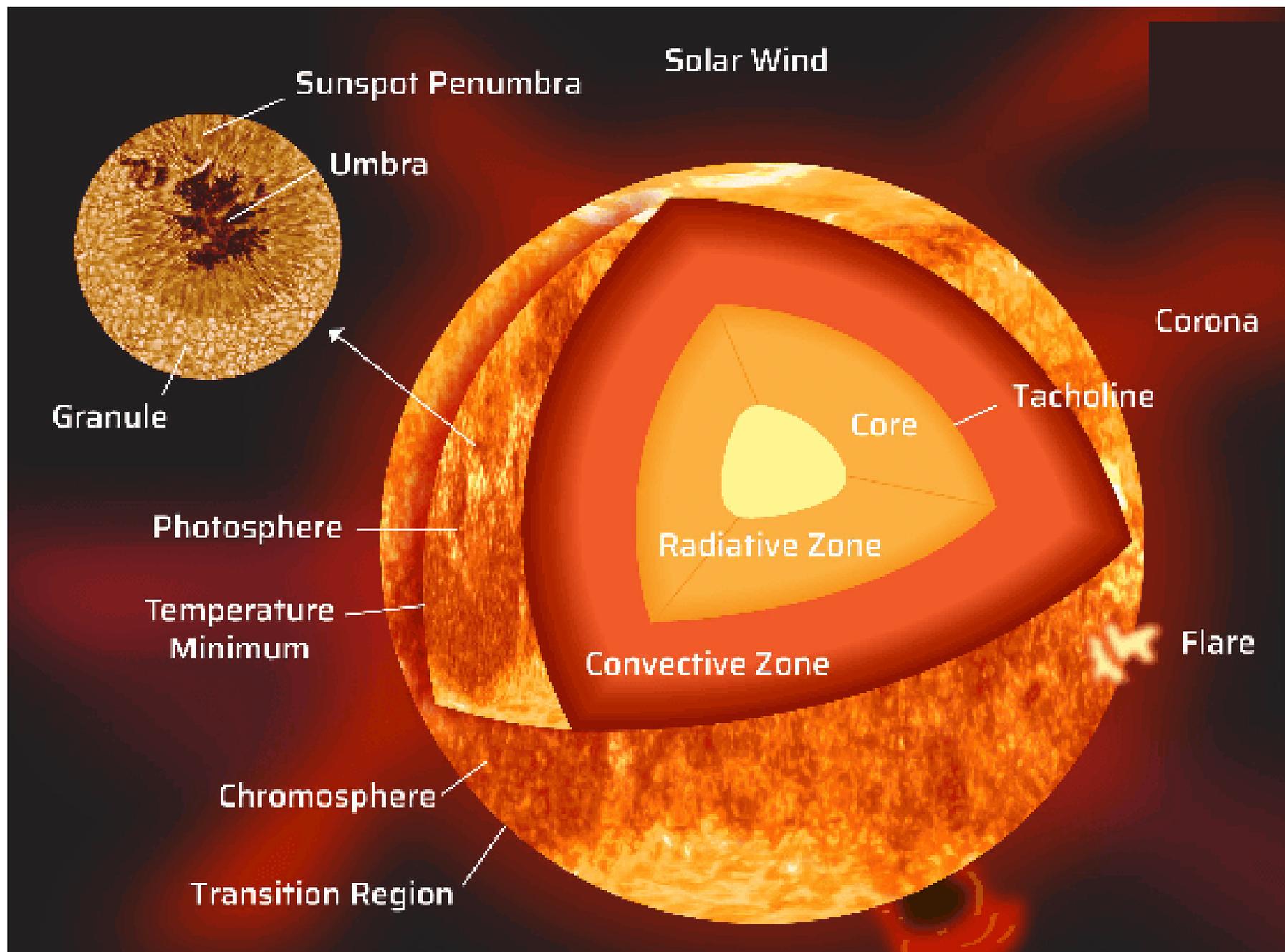
point, located approximately 1.5 million kilometers away from Earth, offers the unique advantage of continuous, uninterrupted observation of the Sun, free from eclipses or occultation.

This announcement soliciting proposals for Aditya-L1 observation is open to Indian scientists and researchers residing and working at institutes, universities and colleges in India who are involved in research in the area of solar science. Eligible applicants must be equipped to submit proposals as Principal Investigators (PIs) for solar observations with necessary scientific and technical justification and analyse the data, if observation is made based on approvals.



- **On the second anniversary of India's maiden solar mission Aditya-L1 reaching the Lagrangian point (L1), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Tuesday made the Announcement of Opportunity (AO) soliciting proposals for the first AO cycle observations.**
- **The Aditya-L1 spacecraft reached the L1 point on January 6, 2024, 127 days after it was launched on September 2, 2023, and since then has been making continuous and comprehensive observations of the Sun from the Sun–Earth L1 point.**
- **According to ISRO, scientific data from the mission are regularly released in public domain for global scientific utilisation.**
- **It added that this L1 point, located approximately 1.5 million kilometers away from Earth, offers the unique advantage of continuous, uninterrupted observation of the Sun, free from eclipses or occultation.**

- **Aditya-L1 was launched by ISRO using Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) XL.**
- **It will collect data for five years by continuously observing the Sun.**
- **ISRO will become the third space agency after NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA) to place an observatory at the L1 point between the Earth and the Sun.**
- **To study the solar atmosphere, which includes corona, chromosphere, and photosphere.**
- **To examine solar emissions, including solar winds, flares, and Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs), and see how they drive space weather.**



Solar Atmosphere

- **Corona:** It is the outermost layer of the Sun's atmosphere. It is a distinctive atmosphere of plasma that surrounds the Sun.
- **Chromosphere:** It is just below the corona. It is a relatively thin layer of burning gases.
- **Photosphere:** It is the lowest layer of the solar atmosphere and the Sun's visible surface. The bright outer layer of the Sun emits most of the radiation.

Solar Emissions

- **Solar winds:** They are streams of plasma particles ejected from the Sun's outermost atmosphere.
- The Sun's magnetic field causes them.
- They can cause auroras and geomagnetic storms.
- **Coronal mass ejections (CMEs):** They are large expulsion of plasma and magnetic fields from the Sun's outermost atmosphere.
- They can cause geomagnetic storms and damage the Earth's magnetic field.
- **Solar flares:** They are intense eruptions of electromagnetic radiation in the Sun's atmosphere caused by the release of magnetic energy from sunspots.
- They can be damaging to satellites and electronics on Earth.

- **A Lagrange point is a point in space where the gravitational forces of two large bodies (such as the Sun and the Earth) balance the centrifugal force experienced by a smaller object (such as a satellite), allowing it to remain 'fixed' in relation to the larger bodies.**
- **For any two celestial bodies, there are five Lagrange points (L1 to L5).**
- **Of the five Lagrangian points between the Earth and the Sun, there are:**
- **Three unstable points (L1, L2, & L3): If disturbed, objects placed at these points will drift away and require constant adjustments to stay in position.**
- **Two stable points (L4 & L5): Objects at these points orbit around these points; do not drift away.**

The term 'Goldilocks Zone' is often seen news in the context of

(a) the limits of habitable zone above the surface of the Earth

(b) regions inside the Earth where shale gas is available

(c) search for the Earth-like planets in outer space

(d) search for meteorites containing precious metals

The right to disconnect in an 'always-on' economy

Page No. 8, GS 2

In the digital age, our greatest tools of productivity – the smartphone, the laptop, the instantaneous email – have become our silent, 24x7 taskmasters. They have eroded the vital boundary between professional life and personal well-being, turning evenings, weekends, and even holidays, into extensions of the workday. This culture of constant availability is not a badge of dedication; it is a creeping sickness, and its diagnosis is writ large across the face of the Indian workforce. The time has come for India to officially legislate a fundamental right for its citizens: the right to disconnect.

As the proposer of a Private Member's Bill advocating this very measure, I believe that this is not merely a piece of progressive labour reform. It is a national imperative for public health, long-term economic productivity, and social stability. We cannot achieve our aspirations as a global power if our most valuable resource – our people – are quietly burning out.

An unsustainable pace of work in India

The data paint a grim picture. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), a staggering 51% of India's workforce works more than 49 hours per week, placing the country second globally for extended working hours. This is an unsustainable pace. The human cost of this relentless cycle is even more alarming: 78% of employees in India report experiencing job burnout, leading inevitably to physical and emotional exhaustion.

This crisis of perpetual availability is not a matter of feeling fatigued; it translates directly into severe health conditions. The lack of a proper work-life balance contributes significantly to lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, anxiety and depression. These are not just individual tragedies; they are a societal burden that drains our health-care system and severely impairs organisational productivity. A fatigued worker is less creative, more prone to error, and, ultimately, less productive. The current emphasis on measuring work by sheer duration over quality is archaic and self-defeating. The tragic death of Anna Sebastian Perayil (the healthy young E&Y employee who literally died of overwork in 2024) was a warning for the entire workforce. Furthermore, work-related stress, often fuelled by the expectation of 24x7 digital availability, is a significant contributor to the burgeoning national mental health crisis, accounting for 10%-12% of cases, as per the National Mental Health Survey. To ignore this silent epidemic is to willfully neglect the well-being of the nation.

India's current legal framework, despite recent attempts, remains insufficient to protect the average worker in the hyper-connected, modern economy. The Occupational Safety, Health, and



Shashi Tharoor

is the fourth-term Member of Parliament (Congress) for Thiruvananthapuram (Lok Sabha), an award-winning author, a former Minister of State for Human Resources Development and a former Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology

India's legal framework is still weak and insufficient in protecting the average worker in the hyper-connected and modern economy

Working Conditions Code, 2020, sets a maximum limit on working hours for traditional "workers", but critically, it often fails to extend the same protection to all "employees", particularly contractual, freelance, and gig workers. This gap leaves a large portion of India's young, digitally-native, and highly vulnerable workforce exposed to exploitative working hours, without adequate safeguards. In a system where employees fear disciplinary action or termination simply for failing to answer a late night email, the power dynamic is inherently skewed towards the employer.

A global issue

My proposed Bill aims to correct this foundational flaw. It is crucial that the Code is amended to clearly define and limit working hours for all employees. It seeks to enshrine the "right to disconnect" in law, ensuring two core protections: first, employees cannot be penalised, disciplined, or discriminated against for refusing to respond to work-related communication beyond their specified working hours. Second, a mechanism must be established to address and resolve grievances when the rights of workers are infringed upon. Both are fundamentally about restoring dignity and ensuring that the right to recharge is respected, allowing individuals to maintain their physical and mental well-being without fear of professional repercussions.

India is not alone in grappling with the challenges of the 'always-on' economy. This is a global issue demanding a legislative response. Countries across the world have already recognised this necessity, setting a clear precedent that we must now follow. France, a pioneer in this area, introduced the "right to disconnect" as far back as 2017. Since then, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, and Australia have followed suit, embedding similar protections into their labour codes.

These laws mandate that companies negotiate specific protocols to limit after-hours digital communication. This is a clear signal that the most developed economies understand that respecting downtime is not an impediment to economic growth, but a precondition for sustainable growth. We must shed the myth that the world will stop turning if an email is answered the next morning.

The law, however, is merely a framework. The "right to disconnect" is defined as the employee being no longer compelled to remain available beyond their regular working hours, thereby blurring the lines between their personal and professional lives and exacerbating stress and burnout. The legislation provides the shield, but we must also wield the sword of cultural change.

The legislative momentum behind the right to

disconnect confirms its urgency, with pioneering States such as Kerala already introducing their own legislation for the local private sector. While these State-level initiatives are commendable steps, the complexity and national scale of the 'always-on' crisis demand a uniform, central amendment to secure this protection for every Indian worker. My proposed Bill, by amending the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (2020), ensures that this right is foundational across all States and, critically, extends protection to the vulnerable contractual and gig workforce often left out by current definitions. This national approach embeds the right to disconnect as an essential pillar of occupational safety, including mandated mental health support, transforming it from a simple prohibition on employer action into a holistic mandate for employee well-being.

Other interconnected steps to take

Still, laws alone are insufficient to facilitate meaningful transformation. For any legislation to be effective, it must be supported by comprehensive awareness programmes, advocacy and sensitisation workshops for both employees and management. It is especially important to address the organisational norms that perpetuate toxic work cultures – those where "presenteeism" is valued over actual output, and where the late night email is seen as a proxy for commitment. The provisions for proactive mental health support services, including counselling and psychological support for workers, must, therefore, become integral to the new workplace ethos.

The right to disconnect is an investment. It is an acknowledgment that well-rested minds are sharper, more innovative and more committed in the long run. By allowing employees to genuinely recharge and recover, we are not simply reducing working hours. We are dramatically enhancing the quality of those hours spent on the job.

Incorporating legal protections for a work-life balance – the right to disconnect and limiting working hours – will forge a holistic and vigorous approach toward improving the workplace environment in India. By focusing on the well-being of our employees, both their physical and mental health will improve, creating a more sustainable and, ultimately, more productive workforce for the future of India.

The choice before us is clear: to continue down the path of burnout, risking the health and potential of our young demographic dividend, or to embrace this reform, liberating our workforce and proving that India's economy is built not just on speed, but on the strength and sustainability of its people. I urge the government to implement this necessary step towards a healthier, happier, and more productive nation.



CONTRACT

SIGNATURE

- **In the digital age, our greatest tools of productivity — the smartphone, the laptop, the instantaneous email — have become our silent, 24X7 taskmasters.**
- **They have eroded the vital boundary between professional life and personal well-being, turning evenings, weekends, and even holidays, into extensions of the workday.**
- **This culture of constant availability is not a badge of dedication; it is a creeping sickness, and its diagnosis is writ large across the face of the Indian workforce.**
- **The time has come for India to officially legislate a fundamental right for its citizens: the right to disconnect.**
- **As the proposer of a Private Member's Bill advocating this very measure, I believe that this is not merely a piece of progressive labour reform.**

- **The names of 10.56 lakh voters have been deleted on the draft electoral rolls of Assam which were published on Saturday after a house-to-house verification of the voter lists during the special revision exercise conducted by the Election Commission in the State from November 22 to December 20.**
- **According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), a staggering 51% of India's workforce works more than 49 hours per week, placing the country second globally for extended working hours.**
- **This is an unsustainable pace. The human cost of this relentless cycle is even more alarming: 78% of employees in India report experiencing job burnout, leading inevitably to physical and emotional exhaustion.**

- **This crisis of perpetual availability is not a matter of feeling fatigued; it translates directly into severe health conditions. The lack of a proper work-life balance contributes significantly to lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, anxiety and depression.**
- **These are not just individual tragedies; they are a societal burden that drains our health-care system and severely impairs organisational productivity. A fatigued worker is less creative, more prone to error, and, ultimately, less productive.**
- **The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020, sets a maximum limit on working hours for traditional “workers”, but critically, it often fails to extend the same protection to all “employees”, particularly contractual, freelance, and gig workers.**

- **France, a pioneer in this area, introduced the “right to disconnect” as far back as 2017. Since then, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, and Australia have followed suit, embedding similar protections into their labour codes.**
- **The right to disconnect is an investment.**
- **It is an acknowledgment that well-rested minds are sharper, more innovative and more committed in the long run.**
- **By allowing employees to genuinely recharge and recover, we are not simply reducing working hours. We are dramatically enhancing the quality of those hours spent on the job.**

With reference to the Parliament of India, consider the following statements:

- 1. A private member's bill is a bill presented by a Member of Parliament who is not elected but only nominated by the President of India.**
- 2. Recently, a private member's bill has been passed in the Parliament of India for the first time in its history**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only**
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2**

Mains Question

In the era of digitalisation and remote working, the boundaries between professional and personal life are increasingly getting blurred.

In this context, discuss the concept of the **Right to Disconnect**. Examine its significance for workers' mental health, work-life balance, and labour rights in India. Should India consider a statutory framework to recognise this right? Give reasons in support of your answer.

(250 words / 15 marks)

डिजिटलीकरण, वर्क-फ्रॉम-होम और गिग अर्थव्यवस्था के दौर में कार्यस्थल और व्यक्तिगत जीवन के बीच की सीमाएँ लगातार धुंधली होती जा रही हैं।

इस संदर्भ में 'डिस्कनेक्ट होने के अधिकार (Right to Disconnect)' की अवधारणा को स्पष्ट कीजिए। भारत में श्रमिकों के मानसिक स्वास्थ्य, कार्य-जीवन संतुलन तथा श्रम अधिकारों की सुरक्षा के लिए इसकी प्रासंगिकता का परीक्षण कीजिए। क्या भारत में इसे कानूनी मान्यता दी जानी चाहिए? तर्क सहित उत्तर दीजिए।

(250 शब्द / 15 अंक)

At a crossroads

Iran must initiate reforms and re-engage with the world

What began as a strike by shopkeepers in Tehran on December 28 against the sharp fall in the value of the Iranian rial, has snowballed into the largest nationwide protest Iran has witnessed since the 2022-2023 unrest triggered by the custodial death of Mahsa Amini. While the government has promised to address the economic grievances of the traders, it has also warned of a harsh response to “rioters”. At least 12 people have been killed in the past week with the protests spreading. This renewed cycle of unrest comes amid the deepening economic vulnerabilities and political risks confronting Iran’s theocratic state, just six months after it survived a fierce 12-day war with Israel. What makes the protests challenging for Iran’s rulers is the perceived involvement of foreign powers. Mossad, Israel’s spy agency, claimed, on December 29, that its operatives were present “in the field” with the protesters. On January 2, U.S. President Donald Trump, who had ordered strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities during the June 2025 war between Iran and Israel, threatened Iran that the U.S. was “locked and loaded” to use force if protesters were killed.

The Islamic Republic is facing immense economic strain. In October, food inflation hit 64%, the second highest after South Sudan. The rial has lost 60% of its value since the June war, while oil exports in 2025 fell by about 7% from its 2024 average. Power outages have become a daily reality. The severity of the crisis was underscored in December when President Masoud Pezeshkian said his government was “stuck” and could not perform “miracles” to fix the problems. As the economy deteriorates and external threats mount, the regime’s greater repression is creating a cycle of crisis. Mr. Pezeshkian has relaxed the grip of the morality police on public life. But when it comes to the economy or national security, his hands are tied. Washington’s policy of economic squeeze and threats is deepening the suffering of ordinary Iranians while turning the regime more paranoid. If the U.S. genuinely seeks to resolve the Iran problem, it should engage with and empower Mr. Pezeshkian, rather than threatening Tehran on Israel’s behalf. Iran’s rulers should also be open for reforms. The regime’s default response to any crisis has been to blame external forces, but it ignores a more fundamental reality. Years of shrinking economic opportunity and the erosion of political and personal freedoms have created a reservoir of public anger that could erupt. Religion and nationalism may no longer suffice in the face of an economic crisis. Iran’s leadership must initiate reforms, tackle corruption and re-engage with the world.



Syria

Iraq

Iran

Afghanistan

Pakistan

Mt. Shkhara (5200)

Mt. Damavand (5610)

Mt. Elbrus (5642)

Tbilisi

Baku

Ashgabat

Tashkent

Dushanbe

Mazar-e Sharif

Tehran

Baghdad

Herat

Kabul

Ghazni

Jalalabad

Rawalpindi

Kandahar

Kuwait

Kuwait

Bandar Abbas

Bahrain

Manama

Doha

Sharjah

Dubai

Abu Dhabi

Muscat

Chabahar Port

Gwadar Port

Karachi

Rajkot

Medina

Tropic of Cancer

Riyadh

Qatar

Saudi Arabia

United Arab Emirates

Lake Assad

Damascus

Sea of Galilee

Jordan

Red Sea

Gulf of Aqaba

Strait of Tiran

Jeddah

Garabogaz Bay

Lake Van

Armenia

Yerevan

Persian Gulf

G. of Oman

G. of Kutch

Amu Darya

Caspian Sea

Uzbekistan

Turkmenistan

Azerbaijan

Georgia

Afghanistan

Pakistan

Iran

Syria

Iraq

- **Iran must initiate reforms and re-engage with the world**
- **While the government has promised to address the economic grievances of the traders, it has also warned of a harsh response to “rioters”. At least 12 people have been killed in the past week with the protests spreading.**
- **This renewed cycle of unrest comes amid the deepening economic vulnerabilities and political risks confronting Iran’s theocratic state, just six months after it survived a fierce 12-day war with Israel.**
- **What makes the protests challenging for Iran’s rulers is the perceived involvement of foreign powers.**
- **On January 2, U.S. President Donald Trump, who had ordered strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities during the June 2025 war between Iran and Israel, threatened Iran that the U.S. was “locked and loaded” to use force if protesters were killed.**

- **In October, food inflation hit 64%, the second highest after South Sudan. The rial has lost 60% of its value since the June war, while oil exports in 2025 fell by about 7% from its 2024 average. Power outages have become a daily reality.**
- **Washington's policy of economic squeeze and threats is deepening the suffering of ordinary Iranians while turning the regime more paranoid.**
- **If the U.S. genuinely seeks to resolve the Iran problem, it should engage with and empower Mr. Pezeshkian, rather than threatening Tehran on Israel's behalf.**
- **Iran's rulers should also be open for reforms. The regime's default response to any crisis has been to blame external forces, but it ignores a more fundamental reality.**

Mains Question

Iran has emerged as a key geopolitical actor in West Asia, influencing regional stability, energy security, and global power dynamics.

Critically analyse Iran's regional and global role in the context of its nuclear programme, international sanctions, and evolving geopolitics of West Asia. Examine the implications of these developments for India's strategic, economic, and energy interests.

(250 words / 15 marks)

ईरान पश्चिम एशिया की भू-राजनीति में एक महत्वपूर्ण शक्ति के रूप में उभरा है, जिसकी भूमिका ऊर्जा सुरक्षा, क्षेत्रीय संघर्षों और वैश्विक शक्ति संतुलन को प्रभावित करती है।

इस संदर्भ में, ईरान की क्षेत्रीय एवं वैश्विक भूमिका का समालोचनात्मक विश्लेषण कीजिए। साथ ही, ईरान पर लगे अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रतिबंधों, परमाणु कार्यक्रम तथा पश्चिम एशिया में बदलते भू-राजनीतिक परिदृश्य के भारत के हितों पर पड़ने वाले प्रभावों की चर्चा कीजिए।

(250 शब्द / 15 अंक)

America's Venezuelan actions are most unlawful

Page No. 8, GS 2

The attack by the United States on Venezuela and the capture of the Venezuelan President, Nicolás Maduro, is yet another gigantic affront to international law, notwithstanding the authoritarian practices of the Maduro administration. This adventure comes on the heels of a series of illegal American strikes in the last few months on alleged Venezuelan drug boats in the Caribbean Sea.

The subject of the use of force

It is axiomatic that Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter proscribes the use of force in international relations. The UN Charter, as Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro argue, outlawed war and fundamentally reshaped international law, making war an illegitimate instrument for settling disputes. Article 2(4) permits only two narrow exceptions: force may be used in self-defence or with the authorisation of the UN Security Council. None is present in the extant case.

Legal scholar Nico Krisch has argued that the prohibition on the use of force is the most constraining aspect of international law. Hegemonic states such as the U.S. have consistently sought to overcome this constraint by adopting innovative solutions, including the broadening of the concept of self-defence. Arguably, self-defence is not limited to repelling an ongoing armed attack but also encompasses pre-emptive and anticipatory self-defence to combat cross-border terrorism. Moreover, the use of force has also been invoked to justify humanitarian interventions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.

In the Venezuelan case, the U.S. appears to have surpassed even these contested categories and identified new grounds for the use of force. Senior U.S. officials are on record as stating that this cross-border operation was done as part of a law enforcement measure, bringing accused



Prabhash Ranjan

is a Professor and Vice Dean (Research) at the Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University

The U.S.'s actions create a precarious precedent, surpassing even contested categories under international law

criminals such as Mr. Maduro and his wife to face trial in the U.S. Other reasons offered are that the President was waging a ceaseless campaign of violence and subversion against the U.S. and posed a threat to the entire region. However, none of these reasons, even if true, passes muster to legally justify the U.S. using force against a sovereign state. The talk of this operation resurrecting the antiquated Monroe Doctrine of American foreign policy is not just an affront to the sovereignty of the countries of the Western Hemisphere but also a pie in the face of the anti-imperial struggles of the Third World people.

Leaders and immunity

The other legal issue this case has thrown up is the treatment of President Maduro. As the International Court of Justice held in the Arrest Warrant Case (Democratic Republic of the Congo vs Belgium), heads of state enjoy inviolability and *immunity racione personae* (personal immunity) from the criminal jurisdiction of a foreign court. Accordingly, the U.S. courts lack jurisdiction to try President Maduro for the alleged criminal activities. The argument that Mr. Maduro is not the legitimate President of Venezuela because he came to office through rigged elections in 2024, or that the U.S. does not recognise Mr. Maduro as a legitimate President, cuts no ice under international law. Irrespective of how someone came to office, under international law, what matters is the test of effective control. The Maduro administration exercised effective control over Venezuelan territory. Thus, President Maduro, as the head, is entitled to personal immunity and inviolability under international law.

Holding otherwise would give states a licence to stop recognising regimes or heads of state they do not consider lawful, using their subjective criteria, thereby denying them immunity, which would wreak havoc in the international legal system. Moreover, forcibly taking the custody of a

foreigner, let alone a head of state, on foreign land without that state's consent or without a legal procedure, and physically bringing the person to face trial before a domestic court, is an internationally wrongful act. The U.S. endeavouring to 'run' Venezuela – reminiscent of naked imperialism – is also unlawful, as it amounts to undue interference in Venezuela's internal affairs.

Strengthening international law

The U.S.'s actions create a precarious precedent. It is part of a series of flagrant violations of cardinal rules of international law, including the use of force, that have been observed in recent years. Thus, the larger question is whether the content of international law must change to address its abuse. As public international law scholar Marko Milonevic argues, the problem is not so much with the content of the law as with the complete lack of commitment to comply with it. The meteoric rise of authoritarian regimes, including in countries that were once regarded as the vanguards of liberal democracy, has meant that governments do not want to be constrained by any law, whether domestic or international. The weakening of the domestic rule of law has negatively impacted the efficacy of international law in constraining power. Thus, to strengthen the international rule of law, one must bolster the domestic rule of law and democracy.

While it is true that powerful nations use international law as an instrument to perpetuate their dominance, it is equally undeniable that several elements of international law are antithetical to authoritarianism. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter is one of them. Authoritarian regimes will continue to assault these norms and treat international law with utter derision. Therefore, it is incumbent on the democratic forces to come together to resist them with renewed resolve.

The views expressed are personal



- **It is axiomatic that Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter proscribes the use of force in international relations.**
- **Article 2(4) permits only two narrow exceptions: force may be used in self-defence or with the authorisation of the UN Security Council. None is present in the extant case.**
- **The other legal issue this case has thrown up is the treatment of President Maduro.**
- **As the International Court of Justice held in the Arrest Warrant Case (Democratic Republic of the Congo vs Belgium), heads of state enjoy inviolability and immunity *ratione personae* (personal immunity) from the criminal jurisdiction of a foreign court.**

- **Accordingly, the U.S. courts lack jurisdiction to try President Maduro for the alleged criminal activities.**
- **The argument that Mr. Maduro is not the legitimate President of Venezuela because he came to office through rigged elections in 2024, or that the U.S. does not recognise Mr. Maduro as a legitimate President, cuts no ice under international law.**
- **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter is one of them. Authoritarian regimes will continue to assault these norms and treat international law with utter derision.**



Atlantic Ocean

Caracas

VENEZUELA

GUYANA

COLOMBIA

BRAZIL

BBC NEWS



Education Minister releases 55 volumes of literary works

The books are released in classical Indian languages such as Kannada, Odia, Telugu, Malayalam, and Tamil, along with a sign-language series of the *Tirukkural* by Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday officially released 55 volumes of literary works in classical Indian languages such as Kannada, Odia, Telugu, Malayalam, and Tamil, along with a sign-language series of the *Tirukkural* by Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar.

Mr. Pradhan said that this was a “part of our larger national effort to place India’s linguistic heritage at the centre of education, research and cultural pride”.

A government statement said that of these literary works, 41 were brought out by the Centres of Excellence for Classical Languages under the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL). In addition, 13 books and the sign language series of *Tirukkural* have been brought out by the Central Institute of Classical Tamil.

Vision of inclusive India

While releasing the works, Mr. Pradhan said, “The inclusion of the essence of the *Tirukkural* in sign lan-



Higher Education Secretary Vineet Joshi, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Chamu Krishna Shastry, Chairperson of Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, at the book release. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

guage empowers the vision of an inclusive India, where access to knowledge is ensured for all.” Mr. Pradhan emphasised the role of language as a “unifying force”, noting that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had “always” stressed how all Indian languages were national languages.

Mr. Pradhan also posted independent messages on social media hailing the launch of these books in their respective languages.

In one such post in Tamil, the Union Minister said that the released books had six Malayalam translations of Sangam-period works such as *Puranaanooru*, *Pathitrapathu*, and

Pathuppattu, and later period works such as *Nannanikkatigai*, *Nanarpattu*, and *Muthollayiram*. A Telugu translation of *Silappathikaram*, one of the five great epics, is also included in this.

In another post about the works released in Odia, Mr. Pradhan said this was a “proud moment for the world of Odia literature and culture”. He noted how works such as *Charyapada* and *Madalapanji* would create a “new introduction to the rich vocabulary of the Odia language”, also mentioning how the English and Hindi translations would “help bring Odisha’s history closer to non-Odia readers.”

The Education Minister said the Union government had worked “extensively to strengthen and promote all Indian languages”, citing measures such as including more languages on the scheduled list, translation of classical texts into Indian languages, and encouraging education in Indian languages.

He said that the National Education Policy of 2020 advanced this vision of education in Indian languages, and that India continued to be a “vibrant example of unity in diversity”.

He said, “In contrast to the Macaulay (Thomas Barington Macaulay) mindset of the colonial era, Indian civilisation has always regarded languages as bridges for dialogue and cultural harmony.”

“Indian languages have stood the test of time despite the attempts to destroy them. India is a country of immense linguistic diversity, and it is the responsibility of society to ensure that the nation’s historical, cultural, and literary wealth is preserved and that future generations are made aware of it,” Mr. Pradhan said.

- **Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday officially released 55 volumes of literary works in classical Indian languages such as Kannada, Odia, Telugu, Malayalam, and Tamil, along with a sign-language series of the Tirukkural by Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar.**
- **A government statement said that of these literary works, 41 were brought out by the Centres of Excellence for Classical Languages under the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL).**
- **In addition, 13 books and the sign language series of Tirukkural have been brought out by the Central Institute of Classical Tamil.**
- **In one such post in Tamil, the Union Minister said that the released books had six Malayalam translations of Sangam-period works such as Purananooru, Pathitrupathu, and Pathuppattu, and later period works such as Nanmanikkatigai, Nanarpattu, and Muthollayiram. A Telugu translation of Silappathikaram, one of the five great epics, is also included in this.**

- In another post about the works released in Odia, Mr. Pradhan said this was a “proud moment for the world of Odia literature and culture”. He noted how works such as Charyapada and Madalapanji would create a “new introduction to the rich vocabulary of the Odia language”, also mentioning how the English and Hindi translations would “help bring Odisha’s history closer to non-Odia readers.”
- In 2004, the Indian government began designating languages as "Classical Languages" to acknowledge and preserve their ancient legacy.
- The 11 classical languages of India serve as custodians of the nation's rich cultural heritage, representing key historical and cultural milestones for their communities.
- Other than 6 languages, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali have been included in the prestigious category.

Sl. No.	Languages	Year of Declaration
1.	Tamil	2004
2.	Sanskrit	2005
3.	Telugu	2008
4.	Kannada	2008
5.	Malayalam	2013
6.	Odia	2014

- **Criteria:** It was revised in 2005 and 2024 on the recommendations of Linguistic Experts Committees (LEC) under Sahitya Akademi.
- **Revised criteria in 2005 are as follows:**
 - **High Antiquity:** Early texts and recorded history spanning 1,500–2,000 years.
 - **Ancient Literature:** Possession of a body of ancient literature/texts considered valuable heritage by generations.
 - **Knowledge Texts:** Presence of an original literary tradition not borrowed from another speech community.
 - **Distinct Evolution:** The classical language and literature are distinct from modern, there can also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.
- **In 2024, criteria for declaring a language as classical were revised.**
- **Under which “Knowledge Texts: Presence of an original literary tradition not borrowed from another speech community” was replaced by “Knowledge texts, especially prose texts in addition to poetry, epigraphical and inscriptional evidence”.**

Benefits:

- **Languages designated as 'classical' receive various government benefits aimed at promoting their study and preservation.**
- **Two international awards are given annually to scholars who have made notable contributions to the research, teaching, or promotion of classical Indian languages.**
- **These are the Presidential Award of Certificate of Honour and the Maharshi Badrayan Samman Award.**
- **The University Grants Commission (UGC) supports the creation of Professional Chairs in central universities and research institutions to focus on classical Indian languages.**
- **To safeguard and promote these linguistic treasures, government established the Center of Excellence for Studies in Classical Languages at the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in Mysore.**

Q. Consider the following languages: (2014)

- 1. Gujarati**
- 2. Kannada**
- 3. Telugu**

Which of the above has/have been declared as 'Classical Language/Languages' by the Government?

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

CCI probe finds Tata Steel, JSW Steel, SAIL breached antitrust law

Reuters
NEW DELHI

India's competition watchdog has found market leaders Tata Steel, JSW Steel, state-run SAIL and 25 other firms breached antitrust law by colluding on steel selling prices, a confidential document shows, putting the companies and their executives at risk of hefty fines.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has also held 56 top executives, including JSW's billionaire Managing Director Sajjan Jindal, Tata Steel CEO T.V. Narendran and four former SAIL chairpersons, liable for price collusion over varying periods of time between 2015 and 2023, according to a CCI order dated October 6, which has not been made public and is being reported for the first time.

JSW declined to comment, while Tata Steel, SAIL, and the executives did not respond to *Reuters* queries. The CCI also did not respond to requests for comment.

The CCI investigation – the most high-profile case involving the steel industry

– started in 2021 after a group of builders alleged in a criminal case brought to a state court that nine companies were collectively restricting the supply of steel and increasing prices. *Reuters* reported in 2022 the watchdog raided some small steel companies as part of an investigation into the industry.

The probe was later expanded to as many as 31 companies and industry groups, as well as dozens of executives, the CCI's October order, reviewed by *Reuters*, shows.

The CCI investigation has “found the conduct of the parties to be in contravention” of Indian antitrust law and “certain individuals have also been held liable,” the order stated.

The findings are a critical stage of any antitrust case. They will be reviewed by top CCI officials and companies and executives will also have the opportunity to submit any objections or comments in a process that is likely to take several months given the scale of the investigation.

The CCI will then issue its final order, which will be released publicly.

- **Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing the Competition Act, 2002, it was duly constituted in March 2009.**
- **The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act) was repealed and replaced by the Competition Act, 2002, on the recommendations of the Raghavan committee.**

Composition:

- **The Commission consists of one Chairperson and six Members who shall be appointed by the Central Government.**
- **The Chairperson and every other Member shall be a person of ability, integrity and standing and who, has been, or is qualified to be a judge of a High Court, or, has special knowledge of, and professional experience of not less than fifteen years in international trade, economics, business, commerce, law, finance, accountancy, management, industry, public affairs, administration or in any other matter which, in the opinion of the Central Government, may be useful to the Commission.**

Somnath Temple



- **Prime Minister of India highlighted the thousand-year survival of the Somnath Temple, marking 1,000 years since the 1026 attack by Mahmud of Ghazni.**
- **The Somnath Temple is one of the 12 sacred Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva, revered across Hindu tradition. It is often called the “Eternal Shrine” due to its repeated destruction and reconstruction over centuries.**
- **Location:**
- **Prabhas Patan, near Veraval, in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat**
- **Situated on the Arabian Sea coast, at the confluence (Triveni Sangam) of the Kapila, Hiran, and Saraswati rivers**

History of the temple:

- **Ancient origins:** References in the Shiva Purana and inscriptions suggest worship since antiquity, with multiple pre-medieval reconstructions.
- **1026 CE:** Attacked and plundered by Mahmud of Ghazni, marking the most cited historical rupture.
- **Medieval period:** Rebuilt several times by rulers such as Kumarapala (12th century) and Chudasama kings, and destroyed again under Sultanate invasions.
- **Repeated cycle:** Historical records indicate the temple was destroyed six times and rebuilt each time, reinforcing its symbolic resilience.

- **Key architectural features:**
- **Built in the Chaulukya (Solanki) style of temple architecture**
- **Features a lofty shikhara, intricate stone carvings, and a grand garbhagriha housing the Jyotirlinga**
- **A notable inscription states that from the temple's southern arrow, there is no landmass till the South Pole, symbolising cosmic alignment**
- **Modern reconstruction:**
- **Post-Independence revival (1947–51): Initiated by Vallabhbhai Patel, who viewed reconstruction as a civilisational duty.**
- **Executed by architect Prabhashankar Sompura using traditional methods.**
- **Inaugurated on 11 May 1951 by Rajendra Prasad, despite political differences of the time.**
- **Today, the temple is managed by the Somnath Trust, chaired by the Prime Minister of India.**

