A group of graduates silhouetted against a sunset sky, celebrating with their arms raised and caps tossed.

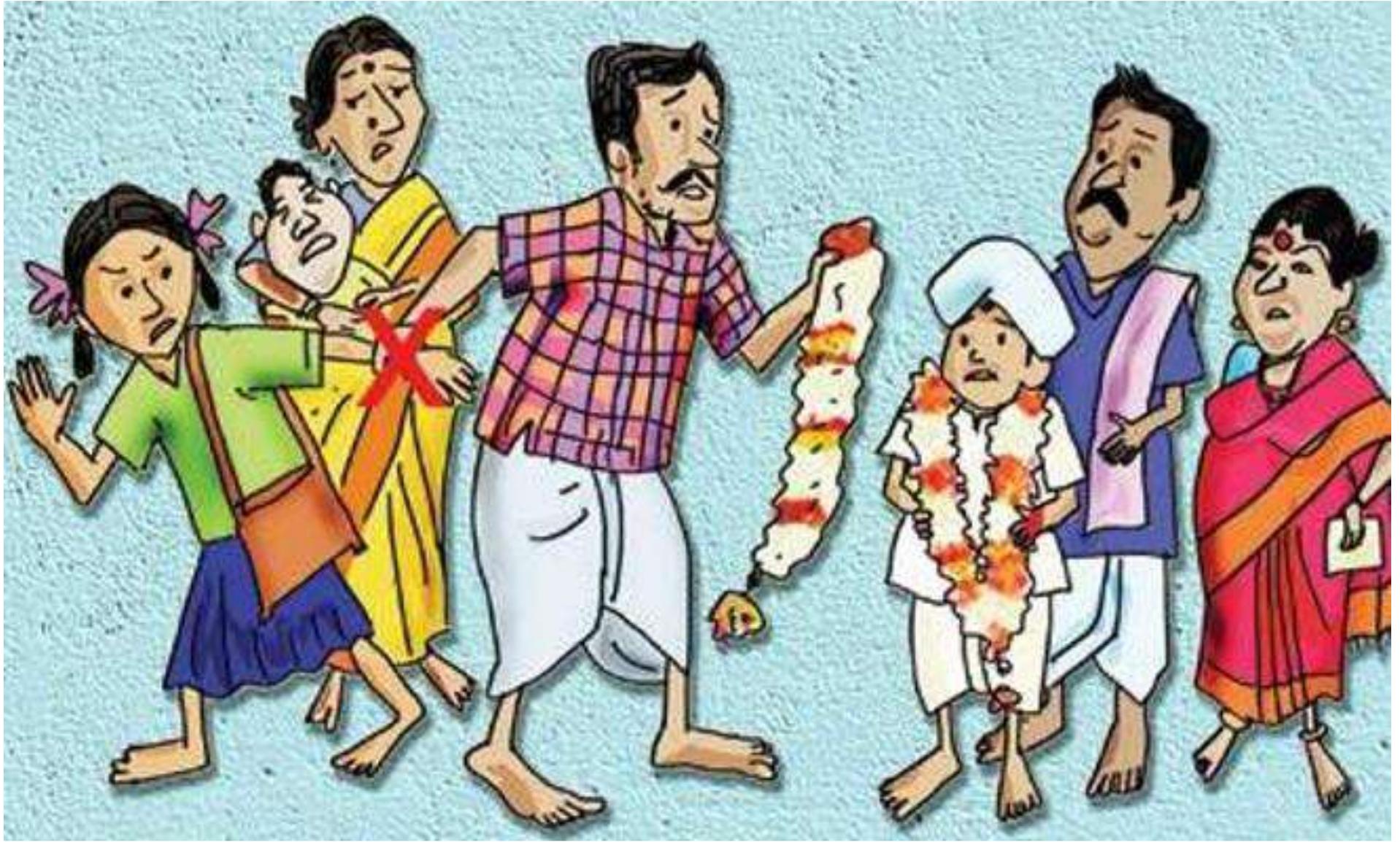
**“Just believe in
yourself. Even if you
don’t, pretend that you
do and, at some point,
you will.”**

– Amanda Gorman

Important Issues of the Day

- **Victim's dignity – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **Enforcement Directorate – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **De-dollarisation – Page No. 6, GS 2,3**
- **Somaliland – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **DPDP Act – Page No. 10, GS 2**
- **PANKHUDI portal – Prelims**
- **Child marriage – Value Addition**

Child marriage



- **The Government of India has intensified efforts to eliminate child marriage through the Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat (BVMB) campaign, aiming to reduce prevalence by 10% by 2026 and make India child marriage-free by 2030.**
- **Child marriage refers to any marital union where the female is below 18 years or the male below 21 years of age.**
- **India's fight against child marriage dates back to 19th-century social reform movements led by Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule.**
- **Age of Consent Act, 1891: First legal attempt to address early marriage.**
- **Child Marriage Restraint Act (Sarda Act), 1929: Set minimum marriage age at 14 for girls and 18 for boys.**

- **Amendments (1948 & 1978):** Raised age to 18 for girls and 21 for boys.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006:** Shifted focus from restraint to prohibition, protection, and punishment.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:** Declares child marriages voidable (and void in cases of force, trafficking, or deceit); provides for Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs).
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:** Sexual relations with a wife below 18 years constitute rape.
- **POCSO Act, 2012:** Treats sexual assault within child marriage as aggravated penetrative sexual assault.

- **Reduce prevalence by 10% by 2026.**
- **Eliminate child marriage by 2030, in line with SDG 5.3.**
- **Achieve district- and panchayat-level “child marriage-free” status through community-driven enforcement and awareness.**

Current trends in India:

- **Prevalence: NFHS-5 (2019–21) shows 23% of women aged 20–24 were married before 18, a decline from previous decades but still significant.**
- **Regional concentration: Higher prevalence in states like West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and parts of central and eastern India.**

Mains Question

Q. *“Child marriage is not merely a violation of individual rights but a structural challenge to India’s human capital development.”*

Examine the statement by linking child marriage with outcomes in health, education, gender equality, and demographic transition in India.

(250 words | 15 marks)

प्रश्न. *“बाल विवाह केवल व्यक्तिगत अधिकारों का उल्लंघन नहीं है, बल्कि भारत के मानव पूंजी विकास के लिए एक संरचनात्मक चुनौती है।”*

इस कथन की भारत के संदर्भ में स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, लैंगिक समानता तथा जनसांख्यिकीय संक्रमण से जोड़ते हुए समीक्षा कीजिए।

(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

DPDP Act does not 'dilute' RTI Act, A-G says in opinion

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Attorney-General R. Venkataramani has said in a written opinion that the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 did not "dilute" the Right to Information Act, 2005, a government source said.

Civil society groups and transparency advocates have argued that the Act's amendment of Section 8(1)(j), turning a partial exemption for government bodies to turn over "personal" information into a total exemption, undermined transparency.

However, Mr. Venkataramani said that a different part of the RTI Act, which had not been amended, would allow government bodies to disclose such personal information in response to RTI requests. "Section 8(2) of the RTI Act, 2005 mandates disclosure of exempted information whenever public interest outweighs harm," the opinion said. Mr. Venkataramani declined to confirm authorship of the opinion when contacted by *The Hindu*.

"There is no dilution of accountability and transparency due to [the] DPDP Act. It only provides

a legal framework to ensure balance between privacy and transparency, as mandated by the Supreme Court in the *Puttaswamy* case judgment."

The Centre, which notified the RTI amendment in November 2025, even as other parts of the DPDP Act were given a 12-18 month implementation timeline, has made a similar argument. Section 8(1) of the RTI Act lists out exemptions where "there shall be no obligation to give any citizen" information in response to a request.

The earlier language of Section 8(1)(j) exempted from providing "information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual unless the Central Public Information Officer or the State Public Information Officer or the appellate authority, as the case may be, is satisfied that the larger public interest justifies the disclosure of such information," with a proviso that information that cannot be denied to Parliament cannot be denied to citizens.

- **Attorney-General R. Venkataramani has said in a written opinion that the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 did not “dilute” the Right to Information Act, 2005, a government source said.**
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- **“There is no dilution of accountability and transparency due to [the] DPDP Act. It only provides a legal framework to ensure balance between privacy and transparency, as mandated by the Supreme Court in the **Puttaswamy case** judgment.”**

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- **Section 8(1) of the RTI Act lists out exemptions where “there shall be no obligation to give any citizen” information in response to a request.**

Under which of the following Articles of the Constitution of India, has the Supreme Court of India placed the Right to Privacy?

(a) Article 15

(b) Article 16

(c) Article 19

(d) Article 21

‘Right to Privacy’ is protected under which Article of the Constitution of India?

(a) Article 15

(b) Article 19

(c) Article 21

(d) Article 29

‘Right to Privacy’ is protected under which Article of the Constitution of India?

(a) Article 15

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(d) Article 29

Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement?

- (a) Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.**
- (b) Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV.**
- (c) Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III.**
- (d) Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution.**

Enforcement directives

The BJP is weaponising central agencies against political rivals

The Enforcement Directorate (ED)'s searches on January 8, in Kolkata, at locations linked to the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), are a development set to be repeated in the run-up to the West Bengal Assembly election. I-PAC is a political consultancy firm that spearheaded the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC)'s election campaign in 2021. The ED said the searches were part of an ongoing money laundering investigation, unrelated to the election, and aimed at tracing the proceeds of the crime. The TMC held protests across the State on Friday. Even as the raids were on, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee went to the I-PAC office and accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led central government of using central agencies for political vendetta. She called the raids an "attack on democracy", and accused the ED of attempting to seize the TMC's internal political strategy, data and digital material ahead of the election. The ED claims its officials were obstructed and that documents were removed from the premises, and has approached the Calcutta High Court. This is not the first time that central agencies – the ED, the Central Bureau of Investigation and the IT Department – have confronted State governments run by Opposition parties. A pattern is visible across time and space that makes Ms. Banerjee's claims notable, and the ED's assertion that its actions are unlinked to politics, feeble.

Regardless of the merits of the case, the ED's action and its timing bring into the spotlight several issues related to the fairness and integrity of the electoral process, Centre-State relations, and election funding. Incumbents at the Centre and in the States enjoy certain advantages in any election, but the vigilance and fairness of the Election Commission of India, the judiciary, the media and the IT Department could level the playing field to some extent. Partisan behaviour, institutional shortcomings and the weaponisation of state power by incumbents are factors that can render such checks and balances ineffective or impossible. ED raids that tangentially target the TMC follow a pattern of the incumbent at the Centre using state power to corner a party that runs the State government. It is worth recalling that the IT department froze all bank accounts of the principal Opposition party, the Congress, during the 2024 general election. The very fact that agencies and institutions tend to be hyperactive against Opposition governments and parties, and never against the BJP or its associates, is itself revealing. The BJP appears willing to stretch all rules of the game to win in West Bengal, but it should also consider what India might be losing in that pursuit: the confidence of the people in the integrity of state institutions.

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- **The Enforcement Directorate is a multi-disciplinary organisation mandated to investigate offences of money laundering and violations of foreign exchange laws.**
- **It was established in the year 1956 as an ‘Enforcement Unit’ under the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.**
- **Later, in 1957, this Unit was renamed as ‘Enforcement Directorate’ & administrative control transferred to the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.**
- **Headquarters: New Delhi | Five regional offices located in Mumbai, Chennai, Chandigarh, Kolkata, and Delhi.**
- **Headed by: Director of Enforcement.**

1. With reference to the Government of India, consider the following information:

Organisation	Some of its functions	It works under
Directorate of Enforcement	Enforcement of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018	Internal Security Division-1, Ministry of Home Affairs
Directorate of Revenue Intelligence	Enforces the Provisions of the Customs Act, 1962	Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance
Directorate General of Systems and Data Management	Carrying out big data analytics to assist tax officers for better policy and nabbing tax evaders	Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance

In how many of the above rows is the information correctly matched?

- a. Only one
- b. Only two**
- c. All the three
- d. None

De-dollarisation fear

U.S.'s moves on oil reflect its uneasiness
over global trade and finance

President Donald Trump's urgency to push the Russia Sanctions Bill through Congress, granting him the power to impose tariffs of up to 500% on nations buying oil from Moscow, is officially framed as a punitive measure to weaken Russia's war economy. Yet, this legislative push comes just after the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on January 3. Throughout his press briefings thereafter, Mr. Trump emphasised Venezuela's vast oil reserves as America's underlying strategic interest. This twin focus on Russian sanctions and Venezuelan oil assets suggests that both measures are less about geopolitical 'penalisation' and more about protecting the petrodollar's dominance at a time when its hegemony is eroding. For decades, oil has been priced and largely settled in U.S. dollars. That system underpinned the dollar's centrality in global finance for much of the late 20th century. But since the sanctions on Russia following its 2014 annexation of Crimea, and, more vigorously, after the Ukraine invasion in 2022, major consumers such as China and India have deepened trading arrangements that circumvent the dollar. India, for instance, imported substantial volumes of Russian crude since 2022, accounting for more than 20% of Russia's war-period crude exports. China's purchases were even larger, reflecting its strategy to secure energy at a discount and experiment with non-dollar settlement mechanisms.

China's use of the yuan in energy trade has significantly enhanced the internationalisation of the renminbi. India has also reportedly begun paying for some Russian crude in yuan, signalling small but telling shifts in how global energy commerce is conducted. Meanwhile, the oil market is evolving with the global energy transition – electric vehicles sales, led by China, are reshaping demand patterns. Mr. Trump's "return to oil" rhetoric and policy thrust must thus be read in the context of this transition. China's dominance in the EV ecosystem represents a structural challenge not just to oil firms but also to the broader economic and financial architectures that supported U.S. dominance for decades. In this light, it is not far-fetched to argue that America's aggressive moves in Venezuela and its hardline strategy against Moscow on oil (and not much else) are aimed more at curtailing China's expanding influence – both in energy markets and in pushing alternatives to the petrodollar – than at addressing geopolitical grievances. Moreover, the spectre of a parallel currency arrangement contemplated by BRICS as a challenge to the 'mighty dollar' further unsettles traditional dollar-centric financial orders. What is at stake is not merely oil or geopolitics, but the architecture of global trade and finance at a moment of historic transition.

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- **In this light, it is not far-fetched to argue that America’s aggressive moves in Venezuela and its hardline strategy against Moscow on oil (and not much else) are aimed more at curtailing China’s expanding influence — both in energy markets and in pushing alternatives to the petrodollar — than at addressing geopolitical grievances.**
- **Moreover, the spectre of a parallel currency arrangement contemplated by BRICS as a challenge to the ‘mighty dollar’ further unsettles traditional dollar-centric financial orders.**

- **The petrodollar is any U.S. dollar paid to oil-exporting countries in exchange.**
- **The 1944 Bretton Woods conference established the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency. After World War II, the United States held most of the world's supply of gold.**
- **This term emerged in the early 1970s when the US and Saudi Arabia struck a deal to stabilize the oil market after the US went off the gold standard.**
- **While China has made significant strides in expanding its global influence, the U.S. dollar continues to hold sway due to the robust economic and political foundations of the United States.**

Mains Question

Q. The growing discourse on de-dollarisation reflects both economic aspirations and geopolitical contestations in the global order. Critically examine the drivers behind de-dollarisation efforts by various countries. What are the implications of this trend for global financial stability and India's economic and strategic interests?

(250 words | 15 marks)

प्रश्न. डी-डॉलराइजेशन पर बढ़ती वैश्विक चर्चा, वैश्विक व्यवस्था में आर्थिक आकांक्षाओं और भू-राजनीतिक प्रतिस्पर्धाओं दोनों को प्रतिबिंबित करती है। विभिन्न देशों द्वारा डी-डॉलराइजेशन के प्रयासों के पीछे के कारणों का समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए। वैश्विक वित्तीय स्थिरता तथा भारत के आर्थिक एवं रणनीतिक हितों पर इसके प्रभावों की चर्चा कीजिए।
(250 शब्द / 15 अंक)

The Phaltan case is also about a victim's dignity

Page No. 10, GS 2

The new criminal laws are said to be pro-women in their scope, but the suicide of a young lady doctor in Phaltan, in Satara district, Maharashtra, in October 2025, was a wake-up call that much needs to be done still. The doctor had written a note on the palm of her hand that alleged rape and harassment by a police official and another man.

Her passing highlights the first crime, which is the failure of administrative systems that purportedly disregarded her pleas for help. The second crime is derived from this, which is the public character assassination that follows when a victim's family begin their quest for justice.

This secondary victimisation by society was evident in the comments made by the Chairperson of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women, who, in public statements, had details about the victim's private communication and relationships. These comments – often viewed as shifting blame and questioning the victim's behaviour – reveal how strongly the culture of questioning the victim and behaviour persists even among those who are committed to protecting women.

Unless India addresses this 'second crime' with the same legal and moral seriousness as the original offence, no amount of legislative changes will lead to genuine justice. Although the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, aims to create a more women-centric criminal justice system, the Phaltan case remains a stark reminder of the challenges ahead.

Can a new criminal law truly safeguard a victim's dignity when the very institution she worked for, the State Commission responsible for ensuring her rights and her dignity, and the society that she represents, are all determined to damage her character?

Often, ignorance of the law leads to damage.

The core of the legal mandate to protect a victim's dignity lies in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, often called the "Nirbhaya Act". These amendments were legislative acts of conscience, specifically designed to dismantle the very foundation of character assassination in rape trials, often used in the public sphere.

Prohibition on character evidence

Criminal jurisprudence has developed to the extent of making amendments to prevent the 'character assassination' of victims. The addition of Section 53A of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, now Section 50 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA), 2023, legally implies that a woman's personal life, her friendships, messages or habits cannot be used by the defence to argue that she "deserved it" or that her consent should be presumed.



**Kshiti Jaa
Wadkatkar
Wankhede**

is Advocate, Bombay
High Court, Mumbai

Secondary victimisation, or the culture of questioning a victim and her behaviour, persists in India, even among those who are committed to protecting women's rights

The amendment to Section 146, Indian Evidence Act (Section 48 of BSA) is to prohibit questions being put to a victim during cross-examination regarding her "general immoral character or previous sexual experience". The focus has to remain strictly on the facts of the alleged crime. Thus, the law has evolved and even when it comes to presumption, there have been various amendments to make the laws more women-friendly.

Some of the key directives

The Supreme Court of India has delivered a series of landmark judgments that unequivocally shield the dignity of victims/survivors of sexual violence. First, irrelevance of prior sexual history. In *The State of Punjab vs Gurnit Singh & Ors.* (1996), the Court emphatically stated that the victim's testimony should not be viewed with suspicion simply because she is a woman. It warned against dismissing a victim's evidence based on a perception of "loose morals", stating that every woman, regardless of her character, has the right to refuse sexual intercourse.

Second, insult to injury. The Court has repeatedly observed, under wider scope, that subjecting a victim to intense scrutiny, searching for minor discrepancies, and casting aspersions on her character only add "insult to injury" – a clear condemnation of the very essence of victim-blaming. In the Phaltan case, the victim's family had to face this.

Third, the ban on identity disclosure (Section 228A of the Indian Penal Code, now Section 72 of the BNS). In several judgments, including comprehensive directions issued in 2018 and 2019, the Court has mandated that no person shall print or publish the name or any matter that may make known the identity of a sexual assault victim. This blanket ban extends even to a deceased person unless a competent authority determines otherwise. This legal provision exists specifically to prevent the public shaming and character assassination that disclosure often invites. Subjecting a dying declaration to media scrutiny was a gross violation and interfered with the Commission's investigation. It raises questions about the investigation's progression into abetment to suicide or murder. Prima facie, a dying declaration points to abetment to suicide. Lawyers for the complainant were not allowed to see the investigation report, highlighting the misery of the victim's relatives experiencing the trauma of the victim's personal information being shared in the media.

The Phaltan case exemplifies how institutional commentary may inadvertently result in character assassination, a practice that is strictly prohibited under criminal law within judicial proceedings.

The comments by public functionaries, using

details of the victim's personal communication, are akin to an extra-judicial function of victim shaming. They create a public opinion, a "social verdict", that tries the victim's character, effectively achieving the 'second crime' that the 2013 Amendment was designed to eradicate from judicial procedure.

This act, while not technically a violation of the ban on identity disclosure (as the victim's name was widely known), is a breach of the spirit of the judicial directions: to treat the victim with fairness, respect and dignity. It is an institutional act of de facto character assassination.

The hurdles, the steps to take

Passing laws alone does not guarantee real justice, as there is a large gap between policy and practice that needs to be bridged. The irony is that while the law has moved forward, the societal mindset is still rooted in a patriarchal past. The Phaltan case exposes the profound contradiction between this strong judicial mandate and failed social behaviour.

The solution lies in championing a bold, women-centric approach by focusing on game-changing implementation strategies.

First, training and sensitisation. The police, prosecutors, and judges must be trained and sensitised to understand and respond empathetically to the trauma that victims endure, especially in sensitive cases that concern sexual assault and domestic violence.

Second, end victim blaming. As a society, we need to stop being tolerant of societal attitudes that question a victim's character. There is also a need to transform the investigation culture making it truly victim-friendly.

Third, resource boost. The new criminal law lays an emphasis on forensic and digital evidence, but there is a lack of infrastructure. It is time to expand laboratories, invest in advanced forensic facilities, have dedicated women's desks, and ensure accessible legal aid. This will make safeguards such as audio-visual statements and clear victim communication the standard tools of justice.

When a woman in a position of authority, whether constitutional, political, or judicial, chooses to engage in the character assassination of a female victim, it represents ultimate moral failure. It is a lack of responsibility and a catastrophic betrayal of solidarity.

The moment has arrived for women in power to truly grasp the constitutional morality that underpins their roles and responsibilities. Our society yearns for women who champion equity, going beyond mere representation, to inspire meaningful change. Together, we can transform legal reforms into powerful actions that uplift and safeguard victims, ensuring that society cannot afford to fail.

- **The new criminal laws are said to be pro-women in their scope, but the suicide of a young lady doctor in Phaltan, in Satara district, Maharashtra, in October 2025, was a wake-up call that much needs to be done still.**
- **The doctor had written a note on the palm of her hand that alleged rape and harassment by a police official and another man.**
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- **The core of the legal mandate to protect a victim's dignity lies in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, often called the "Nirbhaya Act". These amendments were legislative acts of conscience, specifically designed to dismantle the very foundation of character assassination in rape trials, often used in the public sphere.**
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Consider the following statements regarding 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam':

- 1. Provisions will come into effect from the 18th Lok Sabha.**
- 2. This will be in force for 15 years after becoming an Act.**
- 3. There are provisions for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes Women within the quota reserved for the Scheduled Castes.**

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Mains Question

Q. Character assassination of women, especially in public and digital spaces, reflects deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and weak accountability mechanisms.

Critically examine the social, psychological, and institutional factors that enable character assassination of women in India. Discuss the role of law, media, and civil society in preventing and addressing this phenomenon.

(250 words / 15 marks)

“प्रश्न. विशेषकर सार्वजनिक और डिजिटल मंचों पर महिलाओं का चरित्र हनन गहरी जड़ें जमाए पितृसत्तात्मक सोच और कमजोर जवाबदेही तंत्र को दर्शाता है।

भारत में महिलाओं के चरित्र हनन को बढ़ावा देने वाले सामाजिक, मनोवैज्ञानिक तथा संस्थागत कारकों का समालोचनात्मक विश्लेषण कीजिए। इस समस्या की रोकथाम एवं समाधान में कानून, मीडिया तथा नागरिक समाज की भूमिका की चर्चा कीजिए।

(250 शब्द / 15 अंक)

Somaliland is no longer a diplomatic endnote

Page No. 10, GS 2

Israel's decision, in December 2025, to recognise Somaliland as an independent sovereign state marks a significant diplomatic rupture in the Horn of Africa. Beyond the immediate diplomatic fallout, the move carries wider risks. It may intensify Cold War-style proxy conflicts, provoke economic and political coercion, and further militarise an already volatile maritime corridor of the Red Sea and beyond.

China's dilemma

So far, most of the debates have focused on Israel's maritime calculations and the reactions of regional actors, West Asian nations and Türkiye; the most acute strategic dilemma belongs to China. For Beijing, Somaliland sits at the intersection of three core interests: safeguarding the "One China" principle, securing the Red Sea corridor, and controlling the intensifying great-power competition in Africa.

From that perspective, Beijing's response has been predictable. China has condemned Israel's decision as an endorsement of separatism, reiterating that Somaliland is an "inseparable part" of Somalia. This language is consistent with Beijing's long-standing position, driven primarily by its domestic sensitivities over Taiwan.

Yet, China may find it harder to reject Somaliland's claim to sovereignty compared to many other contested territories. Unlike many separatist territories, Somaliland has maintained relative peace, built functioning institutions, and held competitive elections for over three decades. Its stability contrasts sharply with Somalia's chronic insecurity. Although China continues to reject internal legitimacy as a sufficient parameter for statehood, Somaliland's persistence as a de facto state exposes the limits of Beijing's rigid sovereignty doctrine.

Furthermore, the Taiwan factor sharpens China's dilemma considerably. In 2020, Somaliland decided to establish official ties with Taipei, which directly challenged the "One China" principle. Taiwan's representative office in Hargeisa, alongside growing technical, medical, and economic cooperation, has turned



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Israel's recognition has pushed Hargeisa to the centre of great power competition in the Horn of Africa

Somaliland into an outlier in Africa, the small monarchy of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) being the only other country to be aligned with Taipei.

The importance of the region

China's concerns, however, extend beyond ideology. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, is a critical choke point for Chinese trade and energy flows under the Maritime Silk Road. Beijing has repeatedly described the route as a "jugular vein" for global commerce. Its first overseas military base in the neighbouring Djibouti was established in 2017 precisely to protect these interests and ensure a sustained Chinese security presence near this choke point.

Therefore, Israel's recognition of Somaliland threatens to disrupt the carefully curated regional chessboard. If Somaliland gains wider international legitimacy, it may emerge as an alternative security and logistics hub along the Gulf of Aden, especially if backed by Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and potentially the United States. For China, the prospect of a rival intelligence and security ecosystem taking shape near Djibouti is deeply unsettling. It risks diluting Beijing's leverage in a region where it has invested heavily in ports, bases, and political relationships.

Beijing thus faces an uncomfortable strategic trade-off. It is obliged to oppose Somaliland's recognition by any country and block any diplomatic space for Taiwan. Yet, excessive pressure on Somaliland risks driving Hargeisa further into the arms of China's rivals, particularly Taiwan, Israel, and western powers seeking alternatives to Djibouti. Heavy-handed economic coercion or overt political interference could also tarnish China's carefully cultivated image as a partner that follows the principle of non-interference.

As a result, Beijing may resort to hybrid warfare, which will include economic coercion against Somaliland, lobbying political elites, as well as targeted information campaigns. There are signs that this approach may already be taking shape. For example, Chinese media networks, including StarTimes, which currently

operates in over 30 African countries, provide tools to shape narratives around territorial integrity and external interference.

Diplomatically, China can leverage its position in the UN Security Council to block any momentum toward broader international recognition of Somaliland.

Complexities of other geopolitical factors

At the same time, China's increasingly vocal pro-Palestinian stance adds another layer of complexity. By positioning itself as a champion of Palestinian rights and criticising Israel's actions in Gaza, Beijing reinforces its moral opposition to Israel's Somaliland move. This alignment plays well with Arab and Global South audiences but may also drag China into Middle Eastern political contests, complicating its traditionally pragmatic neutral stance in the region.

The wider geopolitical context makes China's dilemma even sharper. Ethiopia's memorandum of understanding, in 2024, to recognise Somaliland in exchange for port access, growing U.S. congressional interest in Somaliland as a democratic and strategic partner, and tacit support from the UAE, all suggest that Israel's move could trigger a geopolitical recalibration. Each additional recognition would weaken China's ability to isolate Somaliland diplomatically and increase the strategic costs of maintaining the status quo.

Ultimately, China's challenge is not merely to block Somaliland's recognition, but rather to prevent greater Taiwanese visibility, deeper Israeli and western access to the Red Sea, and the emergence of a rival security architecture near Djibouti. Israel's decision has thus forced Beijing into an uncomfortable balancing act between principle and pragmatism.

What is clear is that Somaliland is no longer a diplomatic footnote. Israel's recognition has pushed it to the centre of great-power competition in the Horn of Africa. In doing so, it has exposed the limits of China's approach to sovereignty, security, and influence in a region that is becoming increasingly important to global trade and geopolitics.



- **Israel's decision, in December 2025, to recognise Somaliland as an independent sovereign state marks a significant diplomatic rupture in the Horn of Africa.**
- **For Beijing, Somaliland sits at the intersection of three core interests: safeguarding the "One China" principle, securing the Red Sea corridor, and controlling the intensifying great-power competition in Africa.**
- **From that perspective, Beijing's response has been predictable.**
- **China has condemned Israel's decision as an endorsement of separatism, reiterating that Somaliland is an "inseparable part" of Somalia.**
- **In 2020, Somaliland decided to establish official ties with Taipei, which directly challenged the "One China" principle.**

- **The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, is a critical choke point for Chinese trade and energy flows under the Maritime Silk Road.**
- **Beijing has repeatedly described the route as a “jugular vein” for global commerce.**
- **Its first overseas military base in the neighbouring Djibouti was established in 2017 precisely to protect these interests and ensure a sustained Chinese security presence near this choke point.**
- **Beijing may resort to hybrid warfare, which will include economic coercion against Somaliland, lobbying political elites, as well as targeted information campaigns.**

BAB EL MANDEB



PANKHUDI portal



- **Union Minister has launched PANKHUDI, an integrated digital portal to enhance ease of living for women and children by streamlining CSR partnerships and stakeholder collaboration.**
- **A single-window, integrated digital platform that facilitates CSR and voluntary partnerships for women and child development, enabling transparent contributions, proposal tracking, and outcome monitoring across priority social sectors.**
- **Ministry: Ministry of Women and Child Development**
- **Aim: To strengthen coordination, transparency, and structured participation among government, citizens, NRIs, NGOs, and corporates, thereby improving service delivery and outcomes for women and children nationwide.**

Key features:

- **Unified CSR interface: One platform for individuals, NRIs, NGOs, corporates, and government agencies.**
- **Priority themes: Nutrition, health, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), child welfare & protection, and women's safety & empowerment.**
- **Flagship mission support: Digitally strengthens implementation of Mission Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya, and Mission Shakti through defined workflows.**
- **End-to-end transparency: Online registration, proposal submission, approvals, and real-time tracking; non-cash contributions only to ensure traceability.**
- **Scale of impact: Improves infrastructure and services across 14+ lakh Anganwadi Centres, ~5,000 Child Care Institutions, ~800 One Stop Centres, ~500 Shakhi Niwas, and ~400 Shakti Sadan.**

UPSC Essay

- **Girls are Weighed Down by Restrictions, Boys With Demands — Two Equally Harmful Disciplines**

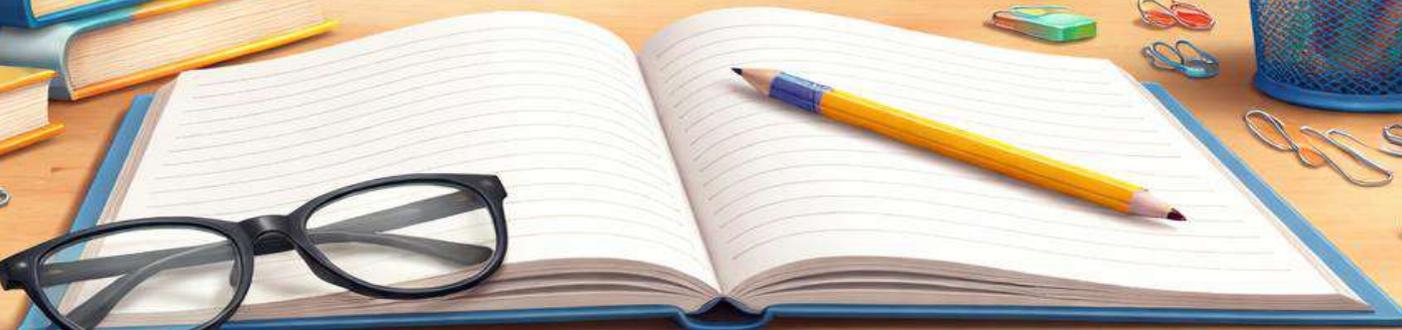
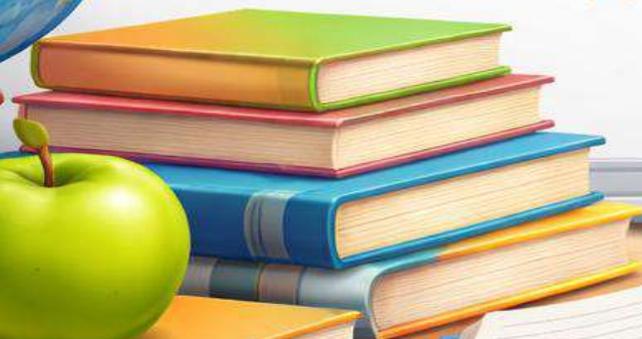
खण्ड B

SECTION B

5. लड़कियाँ बंदिशों के तथा लड़के अपेक्षा के बोझ तले दबे हुए होते हैं — दोनों ही समान रूप से हानिकारक व्यवस्थाएँ हैं ।

Girls are weighed down by restrictions, boys with demands — two equally harmful disciplines.

Thank You!



ABC's

