



Start where you are.
Use what you have.
Do what you can.

- *Arthur Ashe*

Important Issues of the Day

- **FAO Food Price Index - Prelims**
- **Stagflation - Prelims**
- **National Green Tribunal (NGT) – Page No. 1, GS 2**
- **Dignity and mental health – Page No.8 , GS 2**
- **Climate change – Page No. 8, GS 2,3**
- **Arrest the grief – Page No.8 , GS 3**
- **Illogical acts – Page No. 8, GS 2**
- **CEC's removal – Page No.12 , GS 2**

RS Chairman, LS Speaker reject Opposition notice seeking CEC's removal

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman C. P. Radhakrishnan and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla have rejected a notice submitted by 193 Opposition MPs across both Houses seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar. No specific reasons were cited for the rejection.

The notice, submitted on March 12, was signed by 63 Rajya Sabha members and 130 Lok Sabha members. The 10-page document accused the CEC of being "subservient" to the executive and alleged the "deliberate abuse of power

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and position of a constitutional office", among other charges.

While there was no mention of the notice from the Chair of either House during the ongoing Budget Session, the Secretaries-General of both Houses issued bulletins on Monday stating that after a "careful and objective assessment of all relevant aspects and issues involved", the notice had not been admitted. The Chairs cited Section 3

of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. Section 3 empowers the Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chair, after "due consultation" and "consideration of available material," to either admit or refuse such a motion.

Reacting to the bulletins, Trinamool's floor leader in the Rajya Sabha, Derek O'Brien, pointed to the absence of any definitive reason for rejecting the notices. "BJP keeps mocking our great Parliament. SHAME," he wrote on X.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh told *The Hindu*, "We know what happened to the last Chairman of the Rajya Sabha who accepted a petition moved by Opposition MPs."

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- **The notice, submitted on March 12, was signed by 63 Rajya Sabha members and 130 Lok Sabha members. The 10-page document accused the CEC of being “subservient” to the executive and alleged the “deliberate abuse of power and position of a constitutional office”, among other charges.**
- **The Chairs cited Section 3 of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968. Section 3 empowers the Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chair, after “due consultation” and “consideration of available material,” to either admit or refuse such a motion.**

- **The CEC can be removed only in the same manner and on the same grounds as a Supreme Court judge, and service conditions cannot be altered to his disadvantage after appointment.**
- **Other Election Commissioners or Regional Commissioners can be removed only on the recommendation of the CEC.**
- **Grounds for Removal: The Constitution limits the grounds for the removal of a Supreme Court Judge (and by extension, the CEC) to only two specific charges: "proved misbehaviour or incapacity."**
- **The removal of the CEC follows a quasi-judicial procedure similar to that for removing a Supreme Court judge, governed by the Judges Inquiry Act, 1968.**

- **Initiation of the Removal Motion:** A removal motion stating the grounds for removal can be introduced in either House of Parliament.
- **It must be signed by 100 members in the Lok Sabha or 50 members in the Rajya Sabha.**
- **The signed motion is then submitted to the Presiding Officer of the respective House (the Speaker in the Lok Sabha or the Chairman in the Rajya Sabha).**
- **Admission & Investigation:** The Speaker/Chairman may admit or refuse the motion.
- **If admitted, a three-member committee (SC judge, HC Chief Justice, distinguished jurist) is formed to investigate charges.**

- **Report Submission:** The committee investigates, and the CEC has the right to defend themselves.
- **Voting in Parliament:** To pass, the motion must be supported by a Special Majority in both Houses of Parliament during the same session.
- **A Special Majority** means a majority of the total membership of that House, and a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting.

Consider the following statements regarding the removal of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs):

1. The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from office in a manner similar to that of a judge of the Supreme Court.
2. An Election Commissioner can be removed from office only on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.
3. The Constitution explicitly lays down the procedure for removal of Election Commissioners.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Road stretch built by NHAI encroached upon wetland: NGT

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday ruled that the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) violated environmental rules in the construction of a section of the Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II), as it encroached upon a wetland in Goyla Khurd village in south-west Delhi.

On August 17 last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the UER-II, aimed at reducing travel time, easing traffic congestion, and improving connectivity across the National Capital Region, along with the Delhi stretch of the Dwarka Expressway, vowing to transform the national capital into a “world-class city”.

“The Wetland Authority of Delhi in its reply has clarified that the water body of Village Goyla Khurd is a listed wetland and is required to be protected... Thus, it is clear that the NHAI by constructing 8 pillars has encroached upon an area of 2.36 sqm. of the pond, which comes to around 0.23% area of the pond,” read the order.

The Principal Bench of the NGT, comprising chairperson Prakash Shrivastava and expert member A. Senthil Vel, issued the or-

PM Modi had opened the Urban Extension Road-II last August with the promise of ‘transforming Delhi into a world-class city’

der in a case in which the green court took *suo motu* cognisance of a media report that the road is being constructed illegally over the waterbody and 80% of the pond had vanished.

The NGT also noted that while obtaining environmental clearance for the project, the NHAI did not disclose that it would be constructing pillars within the pond, and no environmental impact assessment was done by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) in this regard.

“Rule-4 of the Wetlands Rules does not permit any kind of encroachment on the wetland. It also does not permit construction of permanent nature in the wetland. Thus, the Respondent No. 3 - NHAI has violated the above rules,” read the order.

The green court directed the MoEF&CC to review the violation of the environmental clearance norms and take an appropriate decision within six months.

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- **On August 17 last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the UER-II, aimed at reducing travel time, easing traffic congestion, and improving connectivity across the National Capital Region, along with the Delhi stretch of the Dwarka Expressway, vowing to transform the national capital into a “world-class city”.**
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- **The National Green Tribunal is a specialised judicial body established for the effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection, forest conservation and enforcement of environmental rights in India. It functions as a dedicated environmental court to ensure sustainable development and ecological justice.**

Establishment and Legal Basis

- **The tribunal was established under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.**
- **It was created to provide a faster and more specialised mechanism than conventional courts for resolving environmental disputes.**

Objectives

- **Provide speedy environmental justice**
- **Reduce the burden of environmental cases on higher judiciary**
- **Ensure implementation of environmental laws**
- **Uphold the principle of sustainable development**

The tribunal consists of:

- **A Chairperson**
- **Judicial Members**
- **Expert Members**
- **The inclusion of expert members ensures scientific and technical expertise in environmental decision-making.**

Jurisdiction

- **The NGT has jurisdiction over civil cases relating to substantial environmental questions under key environmental legislations, including:**
- **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**
- **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**
- **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980**
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**
- **It can provide relief, compensation and restitution for environmental damage.**

- **The Principal Bench is located in New Delhi.**
- **Regional benches are located in Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai to ensure wider accessibility.**

Powers

- **Can issue directions for environmental restoration**
- **Can impose penalties and compensation**
- **Can order closure or regulation of polluting industries**
- **Appeals against NGT decisions lie directly with the Supreme Court**

Categories of FAO Food Price Index (FFPI)

1. Cereal Price Index



2. Vegetable Oil Price Index



3. Meat Price Index



4. Dairy Price Index



5. Sugar Price Index



- **The FAO Food Price Index increased in March 2026, mainly due to rising energy costs linked to the West Asia conflict, which pushed up global food prices.**
- **Measures monthly change in global food prices**
- **Tracks international food commodity prices**
- **Published by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**

The index includes five commodity groups:

- **Cereals**
- **Vegetable oils**
- **Dairy**
- **Meat**
- **Sugar**

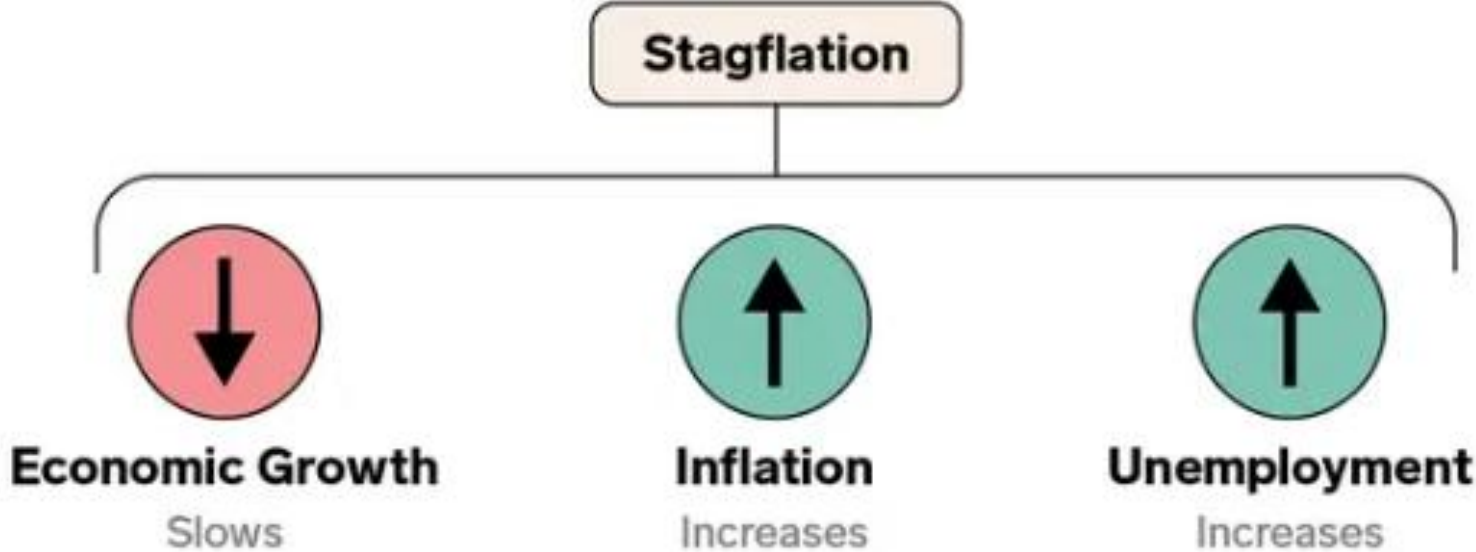
- **Base period: 2014–2016 = 100**

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- **Specialized agency of United Nations**
- **Established: 1945**
- **Headquarters: Rome, Italy**
- **Members: 195**
- **194 countries**
- **European Union**

Stagflation

What causes stagflation?



- **Stagflation is a rare and challenging economic condition characterized by the simultaneous occurrence of stagnant economic growth (or recession), high unemployment, and high inflation.**
- **The term, coined by British politician Iain Macleod, describes the worst of both worlds, where prices rise rapidly even as the economy shrinks or stalls.**

Factors Impacting Stagflation:

- **Energy Supply Disruptions: Sudden stoppages in oil or gas (e.g., closure of the Strait of Hormuz) create sudden stops in industrial activity.**
- **Input Cost Surges: Rapid increases in the price of raw materials, petrochemical feedstocks, and fertilizers (crucial for modern Indian agriculture).**

Climate change as a public health emergency

Page No. 8, GS 2

When we talk about climate change, the conversation almost always veers toward rising sea levels or extreme weather events. Some may even talk about the economic disruption that these natural disasters can and do cause. However, few, if any, touch upon another dimension of climate change: the broad-spectrum medical crisis that changing planetary patterns can trigger, as climate change intensifies every disease we already know and opens the door to those we have yet to face.

Nowhere is this more visible than in India. Increasingly frequent and severe waterlogging due to excess rain in cities such as Mumbai is creating ideal conditions for waterborne infections including cholera, typhoid, hepatitis A and leptospirosis. Recurrent waterlogging overwhelms sanitation infrastructure, contaminates clean water supplies, and leaves urban populations exposed to serious illnesses.

Conversely, drought-prone regions are facing worsening water scarcity, forcing communities to rely on unsafe water sources, thereby increasing the burden of diarrhoeal diseases as well as chronic dehydration.

Expanding disease risk

Meanwhile, shifting seasonal patterns are driving a rise in infections, allergies and vector-borne diseases, as changing temperatures and rainfall cycles disrupt established trends and prolong pollen seasons. Disease windows are expanding, and their geographic reach is steadily widening, quietly accelerating climate-driven spread. Communities with no prior exposure lack immunity, while health-care systems in these regions remain underprepared to respond at scale. One major example of this is the exponential growth of mosquito-borne diseases, as rising temperatures have made previously inhospitable regions suitable for this insect. The impact on dengue patterns is already measurable in Delhi-NCR. The number of cases traditionally peaked in September but now peaks in



Dr. Naresh Trehan

Chairman and Managing Director, Medanta

India faces growing health crises from climate change impacts

November, as warmer and rainier conditions sustain mosquito populations for longer periods.

Malaria, once largely confined to endemic pockets of the Gangetic Plains and the warm, humid regions of central India, is now being reported in cooler areas such as Himachal Pradesh, where it historically had minimal presence.

Climate change threats

Climate change also triggers rising air pollution. As summers become increasingly hotter, greater reliance on air conditioning drives higher energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions contain elevated levels of PM_{2.5} – microscopic pollutants that penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream – exerting widespread effects across multiple organs in the body, particularly the lungs, heart and kidneys.

Fine particulate matter penetrates deep into the lungs, causing inflammation, reduced lung function, and exacerbating respiratory conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

These particulates can also damage blood vessels, accelerate atherosclerosis, and increase the risk of hypertension, heart attack and stroke. The kidneys are equally vulnerable, and chronic exposure can impair kidney function, reduce filtration efficiency, and contribute to the progression of chronic kidney disease.

Greenhouse gases also trap more heat in the atmosphere, creating a feedback loop that amplifies the very crisis we are trying to manage through air conditioners and other cooling appliances. This heat stress forces the heart to work harder to regulate the body's temperature, increasing strain on the cardiovascular system. This can trigger complications such as hypertension, heart attack, and stroke. These conditions disproportionately affect people

without adequate shelter, such as manual labourers who spend long hours working outdoors in extreme conditions.

Parts of the country, such as Odisha, Telangana, and Vidarbha, are reporting a rising number of heat-stroke-related deaths. In addition, rising night-time temperatures in urban pockets such as Delhi-NCR and Mumbai are eliminating the critical recovery window that the human body relies on to cool down after prolonged daytime heat exposure.

Infant health outcomes are also increasingly at risk – exposure to extreme heat and air pollution has been linked to preterm births and low birth weight among newborns.

Impact on food security

The health consequences of climate change also extend into food systems and nutrition. Extreme weather events and unseasonal rain disrupt crop cycles and reduce agricultural productivity, contributing to food shortages. The declining nutritional quality of food crops, combined with rising prices, further compounds the crisis, creating a hidden burden of micronutrient deficiencies and chronic malnutrition, especially among children.

Rising temperatures can also cause a decline in milk production, as cattle affected by heat stress compromise infant and child nutrition. These cascading effects on food security translate directly into weakened immunity and greater vulnerability to disease particularly among children and the elderly.

The warnings have existed for decades, but were largely overlooked. Climate change is no longer a distant threat – for public health in India, it is already a present reality. It is a multifaceted challenge. Treating it as purely environmental overlooks its profound human cost. Recognising it as a medical emergency is the first step toward responding with urgency.



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- **The impact on dengue patterns is already measurable in Delhi-NCR. The number of cases traditionally peaked in September but now peaks in November, as warmer and rainier conditions sustain mosquito populations for longer periods.**
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Mains Question

“Climate change is emerging as one of the biggest threats to public health in the 21st century.”

Discuss with reference to India. (250 words)

“जलवायु परिवर्तन 21वीं सदी में सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य के लिए सबसे बड़े खतरों में से एक बनकर उभर रहा है।”

भारत के संदर्भ में चर्चा कीजिए। (250 शब्द)

Arrest the grief

Livelihood issues are at the heart of illegal sand mining in central India

The National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary in central India protects a lotic ecosystem across an area straddling three States. Its existence is crucial for the critically endangered gharial, the red-crowned roofed turtle and the endangered Ganges river dolphin. All three species depend on sand to survive, especially the river's sandbars and sandbanks. Yet, organised crime and state paralysis have been stealing away just that sand, prompting the Supreme Court of India to call the local sand-mining mafia "modern dacoits". The mafia erupted to meet the demand for sand during North India's construction boom, and has been able to exploit gaps in jurisdiction among the three States – Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh – despite the Court and the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banning the activity. State governments have also abetted this ploy by passing the buck on acting against the mafia. Between 2017 and 2024, tractor trolleys laden with illegally mined sand mowed down forest guards and police officers while miners also shot at police during raids. The police reported that miners had also begun using local villagers to track the movement of patrol vehicles using mobile apps and GPS. By 2023, reports indicated that mining syndicates in the Gwalior-Chambal region were using semi-automatic weapons, of-

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Frustrated with having failed to staunch the bleeding, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan attempted to legalise sand mining in certain districts inside the sanctuary. Madhya Pradesh submitted proposals for limited mining in two districts but resistance from the NGT stalled its plans, and the State subsequently withdrew them. Rajasthan followed with a similar proposal in March this year only for the Court to block it. Traditional agriculture is difficult in the Chambal ravines, leaving many young men to turn to mining sand for a living. The mafia recruits them as foot soldiers, leaving forest officials to face 'public anger' when they militate against the mafia. The Court took *suo motu* cognisance of Rajasthan's measure, with Justice Sandeep Mehta, last week, 'reminding' the State of the National Security Act and the State-specific Goonda Act. The Court's frustration is understandable. But given the recent troubled history of green governance, where it has played regulator, there is merit in the Court disciplining the regulator rather than replacing it. The lesson from Chambal's violent history is that force alone cannot quiet an economy feeding on grievance. Sweeping crackdowns will deepen local resentment and entrench the same social cover that sustains the syndicates. Lasting change will come only from restoring lawful livelihoods and credible, even-handed enforcement.

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- **All three species depend on sand to survive, especially the river's sandbars and sandbanks. Yet, organised crime and state paralysis have been stealing away just that sand, prompting the Supreme Court of India to call the local sand-mining mafia "modern dacoits".**
- **The mafia erupted to meet the demand for sand during North India's construction boom, and has been able to exploit gaps in jurisdiction among the three States — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh — despite the Court and the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banning the activity.**

- **The police reported that miners had also begun using local villagers to track the movement of patrol vehicles using mobile apps and GPS. By 2023, reports indicated that mining syndicates in the Gwalior-Chambal region were using semi-automatic weapons, often outgunning the local forest departments.**
- **The National Chambal Sanctuary, also known as the National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary, is one of India's most ecologically significant riverine protected areas. It is the first and only tri-state protected area (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh) in the country, spanning approximately 5,400 sq km along a 600 km stretch of the Chambal River (960-km).**
- **Biodiversity: It harbors nearly 90% of the world's remaining wild Gharial population and a significant number of endangered Ganges River Dolphins. Other key species are Marsh crocodile (mugger), Red-crowned roof turtle, Smooth-coated otter, striped hyena, and over 330 bird species e.g., Indian skimmer.**
- **It forms part of India's Project Crocodile initiative launched in 1975 to address the severe decline of crocodilian populations.**

- **Conservation Status:** It is recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA). It is a proposed Ramsar Site, a candidate for UNESCO World Heritage Site status, and classified as an IUCN Category IV protected area (habitat/species management area).
- **Ecological Uniqueness:** The Chambal River remains one of India's cleanest and most unpolluted rivers, creating a unique lotic ecosystem of deep channels, sandbanks
- **Threats and Challenges:** Critical threats include illegal sand mining, which, which degrades nesting grounds for sand-nesting species such as the gharial and certain turtles, alongside water extraction and illegal fishing that diminish both water levels and available prey.

Illogical acts

Malda gherao to protest the SIR adjudication vitiates Bengal elections

The gherao of seven judicial officers in Malda on April 1 by a mob marks a disturbing escalation in what has been a fevered election season in West Bengal. The Supreme Court of India condemned it as a “calculated” attempt to disrupt the adjudication process. The ECI has referred the probe to the National Investigation Agency, and the incident has become a flashpoint in the confrontation between the Trinamool Congress (TMC)-led State government and the ECI over the Special Intensive Revision exercise and its aftermath. Election-related violence has largely become a thing of the past in most States, but not in West Bengal, where violence is endemic during any election. This is partly due to the intensity of political contestation. During the era of Left Front dominance, elections were battlegrounds for “area dominance” between the Left and the TMC. The State pioneered panchayati institutions in India, which led to significant politicisation at even the local level. With a largely rural economy and little industrialisation, electoral contests were also about who controlled the power to distribute patronage. Today, the Left Front is a shell of its former self and the polity is dominated by contests between the TMC and the BJP; the TMC using what some academics term a “franchise model of politics,” leveraging the charisma of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to foster a patronage system with local satraps, and the BJP seeking to import a similar model but

and the BJP; the TMC using what some academics term a “franchise model of politics,” leveraging the charisma of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to foster a patronage system with local satraps, and the BJP seeking to import a similar model but with a Hindutva emphasis. This new political contest has brought its own forms of violence.

This year, the contest has been complicated by the SIR. The process has dragged on even after the revised roll, with 7.04 crore electors, down from 7.6 crore in 2024, was released. Close to 60 lakh electors are still being parsed for “logical discrepancies” with roughly 40% of adjudicated cases resulting in rejections. Judicial officers, working under the Court’s oversight, have been clearing this backlog – an exercise that would never have reached this stage had the ECI not relied on flawed software to filter enumeration requests. The Court has allowed appellate tribunals for persons whose names have been rejected, but there is uncertainty over whether these will conclude before polling. With tempers running high over what appears to be significant disenfranchisement – electors and political leaders in affected areas allege that the deletions have disproportionately hit the minority Muslim community – the resort to illegal methods of protest such as the Malda gherao has vitiated the election process. A more electorate-friendly approach to the SIR by the ECI, along with effective interventions by the Court, could have avoided much of the public anger. West Bengal’s political leaders must tamp down the rhetoric, not inflame it.

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A disturbing step for rights, dignity and mental health

Page No. 8, GS 2

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 has caused deep confusion, perplexity, and, over the past two weeks since its introduction, apprehension and fear. In trying to make sense of both the intent and the possible implications of the amendment, these days have raised more questions than they have provided satisfactory answers. At the core is the question, "Who owns my gender and therefore my gender identity?"

For the majority of men and women who happen to be cisgender, life hardly ever brings us to a point where we are faced with this as a question. There is no 'evaluation' that we need to undergo. Whether it is a form at a hospital, clinic, bank, or workplace, we claim our gender ourselves by ticking a box. We simply state our gender, not expecting anyone to question the obvious. However, for gender diverse and transgender individuals, this is what is proposed henceforth. This violates the foundational principles of dignity, autonomy and mental well-being.

From progression to regression

In 2014, the Supreme Court of India delivered a historic judgment in *NALSA vs Union of India*, recognising transgender persons as a legitimate gender identity. It was a watershed moment for jurisprudence, public policy and governance because it rested on a simple and powerful principle: gender identity is self-identified. Just as any individual declares themselves a man or a woman without external verification, transgender persons, too, were reaffirmed as the final and only authority on their gender identity. This principle is rooted not only in human dignity and autonomy but also in constitutional morality under Articles 14 (Equality before Law), 15 (non-discrimination), 19 (Freedom of Expression) and 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty).

In 2019, Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act. While parts of it were criticised by the community, it remained aligned with *NALSA* on the cornerstone issue of self-identification. Indeed, it acknowledged the community's long history of discrimination and exclusion, and sought to prohibit discrimination, ensure access to education and health care, extend welfare measures such as housing, skill development and employment support. These welfare schemes, in our minds, as allies and health-care practitioners, represented an attempt to build an enabling framework rather than a restrictive one.

Much of the work being done at both the health-care training and education levels, as a result of the 2019 Act, requires sensitisation drives to ensure that curricula and training for health care and allied professions are sensitive to gender-affirming practices, and to make welfare schemes more widely known and implementable. In these six years, all stakeholders had just about started to align themselves with the global



Dr. Kavita Arora

Senior psychiatrist with over 25 years of clinical practice and lived-experience expertise, Founding Cohort member of India Mental Health Alliance (IMHA), Co-Founder of Children First, and adviser and trainer in gender-affirming mental health practices across several Indian institutions

The Transgender Amendment Bill threatens welfare access and instils fear and humiliation for an already vulnerable population

standards that the 2014 judgement and the 2019 Act both validated.

The amendment to the 2019 Act – which was notified in the Gazette on March 30, 2026 – fundamentally reverses the *NALSA* judgment. It replaces self-identification with medical and bureaucratic gatekeeping, redefining who is 'allowed' to call themselves transgender. Under this amendment, a transgender person must appear before a medical board; undergo an assessment to 'prove' their gender identity; wait while the board forwards its recommendation to the District Magistrate, and obtain a certificate declaring them transgender.

There is no medical or evaluative biomarker for gender identity. No external knowledge or proof of any sort can determine the deeply held and personally felt experience of one's gender identity. There would have been no need for trans individuals to "come out" at all if that had been the case.

This is the accepted truth in medicine and health care across the globe.

Therefore, it is perplexing that the Amendment talks about determining and validating someone's gender through a process in which the answer to the question "what is my gender?" has to be given by complete strangers.

This raises many issues that seem to present challenges at many levels.

Medical boards – many of which do not exist at the district level – are already overburdened even for urgent health-care needs. In the absence of criteria, as well as time and process, it is likely that boards may fall back on arbitrary, invasive or abusive examinations, including the possibility of genital inspection. This stems arguably from the traditional way of "assigning" gender at birth by looking at the genitals of a newborn child by a doctor or another adult. This is far from what we know to be the understanding of gender identity for gender diverse and trans individuals. Extrapolating this method to an adult and making it mandatory is in direct and complete violation of dignity, privacy and bodily autonomy. I cannot imagine any circumstance that would make me wish to approach this premise for myself as an adult cisgender woman. The very thought of such a scrutiny by a board of strangers, would probably create anticipatory mental distress and make me actively avoid approaching such a premise.

Instead of improving welfare access, the amendment will likely shrink it, deter individuals from approaching the state, and reintroduce fear and humiliation into an already vulnerable population.

Mental health fallout, crisis in the making

The transgender community already faces extreme vulnerability. Data show that 99% of transgender persons have faced social rejection; 52% have faced harassment or violence in

educational spaces; 57% of trans women report experiencing physical or sexual violence at least once, and transgender adolescents have suicide attempt rates estimated between 13% and 50%, far above the national average.

Against this backdrop, introducing additional layers of suspicion, verification and scrutiny is not just insensitive. It is unsafe. As a mental-health practitioner and an ally for the trans community, I am deeply concerned.

Not just prospective; what is concerning is the uncertainty for thousands of transgender individuals currently enrolled in health-care services, whose access may now be questioned or invalidated in the face of the ambiguity about supporting the gender exploration and gender journey of an individual. This is not merely a procedural shift; it has the potential of developing rapidly into a public mental-health emergency.

The amendment introduces a clause that criminalises 'undue influence' in helping someone identify as transgender, with penalties

up to 15 years of imprisonment. For mental-health practitioners, psychologists, lawyers and educators, this creates an unprecedented ethical and legal risk. In many families, gender-identity journeys create tension or disagreement. Community-based organisations, trans-affirmative mental health practitioners and services are frequently accused of 'encouraging'

adolescents simply for acknowledging their lived reality. Under this amendment, such allegations could become criminal charges.

This will discourage health-care practitioners from providing essential, evidence-based care; challenge community-based organisations to remain as allies, and push transgender persons away from formal health care and heighten mental distress that will likely remain unsupported.

Additionally, the amendment collapses distinctions between transgender, intersex and hijra identities, erasing cultural, social and biological differences. Trans men remain nearly invisible in the framework, further marginalising them.

An appeal for reflection and action

The current amendment risks undoing a decade of progress across law, governance, health systems and institutional practice. If misuse has occurred – even if limited to the 0.01% that the government suggests – the solution lies in audits, verification protocols and administrative strengthening – not in policing gender identity or forcing medicalisation.

To uphold constitutional values, protect mental health, and ensure administrative feasibility, this amendment must be reconsidered. We owe each individual in India the assurance that governance frameworks do not deepen fear, stigma, or exclusion for any community.



- **The Transgender Amendment Bill threatens welfare access and instils fear and humiliation for an already vulnerable population**
- **In 2014, the Supreme Court of India delivered a historic judgment in NALSA vs Union of India, recognising transgender persons as a legitimate gender identity.**
- **This principle is rooted not only in human dignity and autonomy but also in constitutional morality under Articles 14 (Equality before Law), 15 (non-discrimination), 19 (Freedom of Expression) and 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty).**
- **In 2019, Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act.**

- **The amendment to the 2019 Act — which was notified in the Gazette on March 30, 2026 — fundamentally reverses the NALSA judgment. It replaces self-identification with medical and bureaucratic gatekeeping, redefining who is ‘allowed’ to call themselves transgender.**
- **Under this amendment, a transgender person must appear before a medical board; undergo an assessment to ‘prove’ their gender identity; wait while the board forwards its recommendation to the District Magistrate, and obtain a certificate declaring them transgender.**
- **There is no medical or evaluative biomarker for gender identity.**
- **Mental health fallout, crisis in the making**

Mains Question

Discuss the impact of urbanization, social media, and changing family structures on mental health in India. (150 words)

भारत में शहरीकरण, सोशल मीडिया और बदलते पारिवारिक ढांचे का मानसिक स्वास्थ्य पर प्रभाव की चर्चा कीजिए। (150 शब्द)

Thank You!

