



GALLANT IAS ACADEMY

QUARTERLY

DECODED

Polity & Governance

Current Affairs Magazine
May to July 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

- 01 Faith and the Court**
How the essential practices test is applied
- 02 A Bigger Supreme Court**
Sanctioned strength to rise to 38 judges
- 03 The Ordinance Question**
An extraordinary power in ordinary use
- 04 Right to Vote**
Statutory right or fundamental right?



IN THIS ISSUE

Topics

1 CONSTITUTION & FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Doctrine of Essential Religious Practices
Reproductive Choice of a Minor
Right to Peaceful Protest
Legality of Hunger Strikes
Preventive Detention
Complete Justice under Article 142
Right to Vote: Statutory or Fundamental?
Gor Boli and the Eighth Schedule

2 ELECTIONS & POLITICAL PARTIES

Governor's Role in a Hung Assembly
Model Code of Conduct
Anti-Defection Law and Party Mergers

3 LEGISLATURE, FEDERALISM & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Legislative Productivity of State Assemblies
Misuse of Ordinance-Making Power
Low Participation in Gram Sabhas

4 JUDICIARY & LEGAL SYSTEM

'One Case One Data' and 'Su-Sahayak'
AI in the Indian Judiciary
Increase in Supreme Court Judge Strength
Revisiting PIL Jurisdiction
Women in the Indian Judiciary
Digitising the Criminal Justice System
Fast-Track Courts
Prison Statistics India 2024
DISHA Scheme

5 GOVERNANCE & INSTITUTIONS

Reforms 3.0: AI and the 'Bharat Rate of Growth'
Regulatory Impact Assessments
CPGRAMS
e-Jagriti
Amendments to the FCRA Rules, 2026
Foreign Philanthropy and an Atmanirbhar Ecosystem
Corruption in India

6 WELFARE & INCLUSION

Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan 2.0 App
SHE-LEAPS
Indiahandmade

SECTION 1

Constitution & Fundamental Rights

01 Doctrine of Essential Religious Practices

How judicial intervention shapes the doctrine of essential religious practices [The Indian Express](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

The **Essential Religious Practices (ERP)** doctrine is a judicial test to decide which religious beliefs and practices are protected under **Articles 25 and 26**. The Constitution neither uses nor defines the phrase; it evolved through Supreme Court judgments. A practice is "essential" if it is so integral to a religion that removing it would **fundamentally alter the character** of that religion.

Constitutional framework

- **Article 25:** Freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion, subject to **public order, morality, health** and the other provisions of Part III.
- **Article 25(2):** Allows the State to regulate **secular activities** associated with religion and to undertake social welfare and reform.
- **Article 26:** Religious denominations may manage their own affairs in matters of religion, subject to public order, morality and health.

Evolution of the doctrine

Case	Principle
Shirur Mutt (1954)	Laid the foundation; distinguished matters of religion from secular activities associated with religion.
Sri Venkataramana Devaru (1958)	Harmonised a denomination's rights under Article 26(b) with temple-entry reform under Article 25(2)(b).
Durgah Committee (1961)	Practices that are merely superstitious or extraneous accretions to religion are not protected.
Sardar Syedna Taher Saifuddin (1962)	The majority held excommunication protected under Article 26(b) and struck down the Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act; the dissent stressed the scope for social reform.
Acharya Jagadishwarananda Avadhuta (2004)	Asked whether removing a practice would fundamentally alter the religion; the Tandava dance was not essential to Ananda Margis.
Shayara Bano (2017)	Instant triple talaq set aside 3:2: Justice Kurian Joseph held it not part of Islam; Justices Nariman and Lalit held it manifestly arbitrary under Article 14; the minority saw it as protected personal law.
Sabarimala review (2019)	Broader questions on the ERP doctrine were referred to a nine-judge bench.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Balances religious freedom and constitutional values**, protecting genuine belief while allowing regulation and reform.
- 2 **No blanket immunity** for everything done in a religious setting.
- 3 **Constitutional morality:** Practices affecting equality and dignity face scrutiny.
- 4 **Enables social reform** under Article 25(2).

- 5 **Defines judicial review** of the line between religion and regulation.
- 6 **Protects pluralism** within freedom of conscience.

Concerns with judicial intervention

- 1 **Courts as theologians:** Judges must decide what is "essential" to a faith.
- 2 **Subjectivity** in reading texts, history and practice.
- 3 **Majoritarian concerns** about effects on minority practices.
- 4 **Tension** between individual equality and denominational autonomy.
- 5 **Changing practices** across sects, regions and periods.
- 6 **Institutional competence:** Should courts decide theology or only constitutional consequences?

02 Reproductive Choice of a Minor

Supreme Court allows a minor to end a seven-month pregnancy, upholding her choice [The Indian Express](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

The **Supreme Court** allowed a **15-year-old** to terminate a **30-week** pregnancy, beyond the ordinary statutory limit, holding that **reproductive autonomy** is part of personal liberty and privacy under **Article 21**.

MTP Act, 1971 (as amended in 2021)

- **Up to 20 weeks:** On the opinion of **one** registered medical practitioner.
- **20-24 weeks:** For specified categories, including **rape survivors and minors**, on the opinion of **two** practitioners.
- **Beyond 24 weeks:** Permitted only for **substantial foetal abnormalities** diagnosed by a **Medical Board**; other late cases need a court order.
- **Section 5:** Termination is allowed at any stage when immediately necessary to **save the woman's life**.
- **Confidentiality:** The woman's identity is protected by law.
- **Earlier ruling:** In **X v. Principal Secretary (2022)**, the Court extended the 20-24 week category to unmarried women, recognising reproductive autonomy.

MAINS POINTERS

Constitutional basis

- 1 **Article 21:** Decisions about one's body form part of personal liberty.
- 2 **Bodily autonomy** over pregnancy and childbirth.
- 3 **Privacy:** Reproductive choices are intimate decisions protected under the right to privacy.
- 4 **Dignity:** Forcing an unwanted pregnancy has physical, psychological and social costs.

Issues highlighted

- 1 **The 24-week threshold** is hard for minors and rape survivors who detect pregnancy late.
- 2 **Trauma and delayed detection** among child survivors.
- 3 **Medical risks** rise with gestational age.
- 4 **Dependence on courts** for exceptional cases.
- 5 **Unsafe abortion** when access is too restrictive.
- 6 **Need for child-sensitive care** combining medical, psychological, legal and social support.

Way forward

- 1 **Confidential adolescent reproductive healthcare** and early detection.
- 2 **Child-sensitive protocols**, especially for survivors of sexual violence.
- 3 **Faster, accessible Medical Boards.**
- 4 **Balance autonomy with informed consent** and medical oversight.

03 Right to Peaceful Protest

Protest is a right as long as it does not break the peace: Supreme Court [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

In **July 2026**, the **Supreme Court** reiterated that peaceful, lawful protest is constitutionally protected and that the existence of an agitation alone does not justify **excessive police force**.

Constitutional basis

- **Article 19(1)(a)**: Freedom of speech and expression, including dissent.
- **Article 19(1)(b)**: The right to assemble **peaceably and without arms**, the core basis of protest.
- **Article 19(1)(c)**: Freedom to form associations and unions.
- **Article 19(1)(d)**: Freedom of movement, covering peaceful marches.
- **Reasonable restrictions**: Under **Articles 19(2), 19(3) and 19(5)**, including public order and the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Key judgments

- **Ramlila Maidan (2012)**: Use of force on sleeping protesters violated their rights.
- **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (2018)**: Protest sites may be regulated but not banned outright.
- **Amit Sahni (2020, Shaheen Bagh)**: Public spaces cannot be occupied **indefinitely**.

MAINS POINTERS

Limits on the right

- 1 **Must be peaceful** and non-violent.
- 2 **Public order**: Proportionate restrictions are permitted.
- 3 **Designated spaces and routes** may be prescribed.
- 4 **No arms**.
- 5 **Rights of others**, such as access to essential services, must be respected.
- 6 **Proportionate policing**: Force must be lawful and proportionate.

Significance

- 1 **Democratic dissent** against government decisions.
- 2 **Participatory democracy**.
- 3 **Checks State power**.
- 4 **Constitutional morality** of tolerating disagreement.
- 5 **Accountable governance**.
- 6 **Balance** between protesters' and non-protesters' rights.

04 Legality of Hunger Strikes

Supreme Court judgments on indefinite fasts: the State's duty to preserve life [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **In the news:** Climate activist **Sonam Wangchuk**'s indefinite fast revived debate on the legality of hunger strikes.
- **BNS Section 226:** Makes it an offence to **attempt suicide with intent to compel or restrain** a public servant from discharging official duty, punishable with up to **one year**; this applies directly to fasts unto death aimed at officials.
- **Gian Kaur (1996):** The right to life under Article 21 does **not** include a right to die.
- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 (Section 115):** Presumes severe stress in attempted suicide, so ordinary suicide attempts are not punished.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Non-violent dissent** that gives a voice to marginalised groups.
- 2 **Participatory democracy** beyond elections.
- 3 **Raises rights questions** linking expression, autonomy, dignity and life.
- 4 **Tests State responsibility** to protect life without suppressing dissent.

Constitutional dilemmas

- 1 **Right to protest vs right to life.**
- 2 **Bodily autonomy** of a competent adult.
- 3 **Fast unto death vs attempt to die:** A political fast differs from suicide, but foreseeable death raises hard questions.
- 4 **Force-feeding** protects life but raises issues of consent and dignity.
- 5 **State overreach** in the name of public order.
- 6 **No uniform framework**, so cases are decided individually.

Way forward

- 1 **Balance Articles 19 and 21** rather than treat either as absolute.
- 2 **Do not treat a peaceful fast as unlawful** by itself.
- 3 **Respect informed consent** of competent adults.
- 4 **Independent medical assessment** before any intervention.

05 Preventive Detention

Peace with peace on preventive detentions [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

Preventive detention means detaining a person not as punishment for a past offence but to **prevent** future harm to national security, public order or other specified interests. The Supreme Court treats it as an **extraordinary power** to be used sparingly.

Constitutional framework

- **Article 22(3)(b):** The arrest safeguards in Articles 22(1) and 22(2) do not apply to preventive detention.

- **Article 22(4):** Detention beyond **three months** needs an **Advisory Board** report of sufficient cause.
- **Article 22(5):** Grounds must be communicated as soon as possible, with the earliest opportunity to make a representation.
- **Article 22(6):** Facts against the public interest may be withheld.
- **Article 22(7):** Parliament may prescribe the maximum period and the procedure.
- **Legislative competence:** Parliament under **Entry 9, List I** (defence, foreign affairs, security of India); Parliament and States under **Entry 3, List III** (security of a State, public order, essential supplies).

Major laws

- **National Security Act, 1980.**
- **COFEPOSA Act, 1974** (smuggling and foreign exchange).
- **PITNDPS Act, 1988** (drug trafficking).
- **State laws** on threats to public order.
- **Preventive provisions of the BNSS**, which must not replace investigation and prosecution.

MAINS POINTERS

Why it is controversial

- 1 **Detention without trial** based on anticipated conduct.
- 2 **Executive satisfaction** risks arbitrary use.
- 3 **Vague grounds** weaken the right to representation.
- 4 **Misuse** as a substitute for prosecution.
- 5 **Serious impact** on Article 21 liberty.
- 6 **Democratic accountability** suffers if used routinely.

06 Complete Justice under Article 142

The judiciary's role in complete justice [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

Article 142(1) empowers the **Supreme Court** to pass any decree or order necessary for doing "**complete justice**" in any cause or matter pending before it, **enforceable throughout India**.

Key features and limits

- **Exclusive to the Supreme Court;** High Courts have no identical power.
- **Supplementary, case-specific** power to craft remedies where strict rules would cause injustice.
- **Limits:** **Prem Chand Garg (1962)** and **Supreme Court Bar Association (1998)** held that it cannot override substantive law.
- **Uses:** Divorce on irretrievable breakdown of marriage (**Shilpa Sailesh, 2023**) and the Ayodhya judgment (2019).
- **2025 Presidential Reference:** The Court's opinion rejected "deemed assent" to State Bills through Article 142.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Fills legal gaps** where law is silent.

- 2 Prevents miscarriage of justice.
- 3 Advances constitutional values of dignity and fairness.
- 4 Effective remedies, not just declarations.
- 5 Responds to new situations ahead of legislation.
- 6 A constitutional safety valve.

Concerns

- **Separation of powers:** Broad use can look like judicial legislation, so the Court itself urges great care and caution.

07 Right to Vote: Statutory or Fundamental?

In India, voting cannot remain merely a statutory right [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The right to vote is **not a Fundamental Right**. It rests on **adult suffrage under Article 326** and is operationalised through electoral law.
- In **April 2026**, the Supreme Court reiterated that the rights to **vote and to contest** are statutory entitlements.
- **N.P. Ponnuswami (1952)** and **Jyoti Basu v. Debi Ghosal (1982)** held electoral rights to be creatures of statute.
- **PUCL (2003)**: The right to vote is statutory, but the **freedom of choice in voting** is part of expression under **Article 19(1)(a)**; this reasoning later supported **NOTA (2013)**.

MAINS POINTERS

Why demand Fundamental Right status

- 1 Stronger democratic participation.
- 2 Protection against arbitrary exclusion from rolls.
- 3 Political equality.
- 4 Constitutionalising participation beyond statute.
- 5 Protects political expression.
- 6 Deepens popular sovereignty and accountable government.

Why it is statutory today

- 1 **Constitutional design:** The framers placed adult suffrage in Article 326, outside Part III.
- 2 **Legislative regulation** of qualifications and disqualifications.
- 3 **Institutional conditions:** Rolls, constituencies and polling procedures.
- 4 **Settled judicial position**, reaffirmed in 2026.
- 5 **Existing safeguards** through electoral law and the ECI; a person can vote only if enrolled.

Arguments against change

- 1 **Need for reasonable regulation.**
- 2 **Institutional flexibility** for Parliament.
- 3 **Article 326 already guarantees adult suffrage.**
- 4 **Risk of excessive constitutional litigation.**

5 Detailed procedures cannot sit in the Constitution itself.

08 Gor Boli and the Eighth Schedule

Demands for inclusion of Gor Boli in the Eighth Schedule [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Gor Boli** (Banjara or Lambadi) is the language of the **Banjara** community, spoken across several States; the Government says demands for its inclusion have been received from time to time.
- **Eighth Schedule:** Lists **22 languages**; the last additions (**Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Santhali**) came through the **92nd Amendment (2003)**.
- **No fixed criteria:** Committees such as **Pahwa (1996)** and **Sitakant Mohapatra (2003)** could not settle objective criteria, so demands for many languages remain pending.
- **Why it matters:** Recognition supports linguistic identity and the preservation of tribal and oral traditions.

SECTION 2

Elections & Political Parties

01 Governor's Role in a Hung Assembly

Tamil Nadu: Vijay's swearing-in delayed, and the Governor's role in a hung Assembly [The Indian Express](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

A **hung Assembly** arises when no party or pre-poll alliance wins a majority. The Governor, who appoints the Chief Minister under **Article 164(1)**, must judge who is most likely to command the House's confidence.

Sarkaria Commission order of preference

- 1 A **pre-poll alliance** with a majority.
- 2 The **single largest party** that claims to form government with the support of others.
- 3 A **post-poll coalition** whose partners all join the government.
- 4 A **post-poll alliance** with some partners supporting from outside.

Key judgments

- **S.R. Bommai (1994)**: The **floor of the House** is the proper place to test majority.
- **Rameshwar Prasad (2006)**: Governor's discretion is subject to judicial review.
- **Shamsher Singh (1974)** and **Nabam Rebia (2016)**: The Governor has **no general discretion** to act against ministerial advice; discretion under Article 163 is limited.

MAINS POINTERS

Why the floor test matters

- 1 **Democratic legitimacy** through elected members.
- 2 **Avoids subjective judgment** by the Governor.
- 3 **Curbs horse-trading** and delay.
- 4 **Collective responsibility** under **Article 164(2)**.
- 5 **Transparency** of majority.
- 6 **Judicial preference** for the floor of the House.

Issues with gubernatorial discretion

- 1 **Ambiguous boundaries** of discretion under Article 163.
- 2 **Perceived partisanship**, as the Governor is appointed by the Union.
- 3 **Contested invitations** when several parties claim majority.
- 4 **Delays on Bills** under **Article 200**.
- 5 **Centre-State friction**.

02 Model Code of Conduct

Did the Prime Minister's broadcast violate the MCC? Explained [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** is a set of norms evolved by **consensus of political parties** to regulate parties, candidates and the party in power during elections.

- It applies from the **announcement of the election schedule** by the **ECI** until the election process is complete.
- **Origin:** First used in the **1960 Kerala** Assembly election.
- **Legal status:** Largely **non-statutory**; a parliamentary Standing Committee (2013) recommended giving it statutory backing, which the ECI opposed as likely to slow enforcement.

MAINS POINTERS

Why the MCC matters

- 1 Prevents misuse of incumbency.
- 2 Level playing field.
- 3 Protects voter choice from use of public resources.
- 4 Controls government publicity at public cost.
- 5 Strengthens electoral credibility.
- 6 Promotes fair competition on programmes, not State resources.

Issues

- 1 Non-statutory character limits enforcement.
- 2 Grey areas between campaigning and official communication.
- 3 Ministers' continuing duties during elections.
- 4 Digital media complicates monitoring.
- 5 Unequal media access for the government.
- 6 Consistency of enforcement affects trust in the ECI.

03 Anti-Defection Law and Party Mergers

What does the Tenth Schedule provide on party mergers? [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- The **52nd Amendment (1985)** added the **Tenth Schedule** to curb defections; it applies to Parliament and State Legislatures.
- **Paragraph 4 (merger):** No disqualification if the **original political party merges** with another and at least **two-thirds** of its legislature party agree.
- **91st Amendment (2003):** Deleted the one-third "split" exception (Paragraph 3).
- **Kihoto Hollohan (1992):** The presiding officer's decision is subject to **judicial review**.
- **Keisham Meghachandra (2020):** Disqualification petitions should ordinarily be decided within **three months**.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 Political stability.
- 2 Allows genuine realignment through the two-thirds merger rule.
- 3 Respects collective decisions of a legislature party.
- 4 Protects dissenters who refuse a merger.

- 5 **Party discipline.**
- 6 **Democratic accountability** to the electoral mandate.

Issues

- 1 **Engineered mergers** disguising mass defection.
- 2 **Ambiguity over the "original political party".**
- 3 **Partisan presiding officers** and delays.
- 4 **Curbs on legislators' independence.**
- 5 **Manipulation** of the merger-defection line.
- 6 **Prolonged litigation.**

Way forward

- 1 **Independent adjudication**, for example by the Election Commission.
- 2 **Time-bound decisions** on petitions.
- 3 **Clarify merger conditions** in law.
- 4 **Natural justice and transparency** in deciding disqualification.

SECTION 3

Legislature, Federalism & Local Government

01 Legislative Productivity of State Assemblies

State Assemblies sat less, passed more Bills in 2025: Report [The New Indian Express](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

Key findings (2025)

- **Sittings:** An average of **24 days**, up from 21 in 2024; **Odisha** sat 43 days and **Nagaland** only 7.
- **Bills:** Over **600** passed (about 500 in 2024), an average of **22** per State.
- **Little scrutiny:** About **30%** passed on the day of introduction; only **5%** referred to committees where data was available.
- **Hours:** An average of **133 hours** of sittings.
- **Budgets:** Discussed for an average of only **8 days**.
- **Ordinances:** **127** issued, up from 100 in 2024.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Representative democracy.**
- 2 **Executive accountability** through questions, motions and committees.
- 3 **Better laws** through scrutiny.
- 4 **Fiscal accountability.**
- 5 **Cooperative federalism**, since States deliver most public services.
- 6 **Deliberation over numbers.**

Issues

- 1 **Low sitting days.**
- 2 **Speed over scrutiny.**
- 3 **Weak committee system.**
- 4 **Inadequate budget oversight.**
- 5 **Rising ordinance use** under **Article 213.**
- 6 **Uneven capacity** and inconsistent publication of legislative data.

Way forward

- 1 **Minimum annual sittings.**
- 2 **Refer more Bills to committees.**
- 3 **Pre-legislative scrutiny** with impact assessment and consultation.
- 4 **More time for budgets** and Demands for Grants.

02 Misuse of Ordinance-Making Power

The ordinance question before the Supreme Court [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

The **President (Article 123)** and **Governor (Article 213)** may promulgate ordinances when the legislature is not in session and immediate action is needed. An ordinance has the force of law but must be laid before the legislature and **lapses six weeks after it reassembles**, unless approved earlier.

Important judgments and amendments

Case or amendment	Principle
R.C. Cooper (1970)	Indicated that the President's satisfaction could be questioned on grounds of mala fides.
38th Amendment (1975)	Made the President's satisfaction final and non-justiciable.
44th Amendment (1978)	Removed that finality, restoring judicial review.
D.C. Wadhwa (1987)	Routine re-promulgation to avoid the legislature is unconstitutional.
Krishna Kumar Singh (2017)	Re-promulgation is a "fraud on the Constitution"; laying before the legislature is mandatory.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Urgent action** during recess.
- 2 **Constitutional flexibility**.
- 3 **Continuity of governance**.
- 4 **Temporary by design**, preserving legislative supremacy.
- 5 **Legislative accountability** through laying.
- 6 **A safety valve** when properly used.

Misuse

- 1 **Bypasses scrutiny** by debate and committees.
- 2 **Repeated re-promulgation**.
- 3 **Erodes separation of powers**.
- 4 **Reduced transparency**.
- 5 **Weakened legislative control** when not laid.
- 6 **Political misuse** when support is uncertain.

Way forward

- 1 **Use only in genuine urgency**.
- 2 **Lay promptly** and replace with legislation.
- 3 **No routine re-promulgation**.
- 4 **Predictable legislative calendars**.

03 Low Participation in Gram Sabhas

National study on low participation in Gram Sabhas released [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

The **NIRD&PR** study for the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** (June 2026) surveyed about **7,790 respondents** in nearly **400 Gram Panchayats** across **26 States/UTs**, including PESA and women-led panchayats. Gram Sabhas are recognised under **Article 243A** (73rd Amendment).

Government measures

- **People's Plan Campaign** for Gram Panchayat Development Plans.
- **eGramSwaraj** for digital planning and monitoring.
- **Panchayat NIRNAY** for scheduling and recording Gram Sabha meetings.
- **Mahila Sabhas and Ward Sabhas** as preparatory forums.
- **Model Youth Gram Sabha** in schools.
- **SabhaSaar**: AI-based voice-to-text summaries of proceedings.

MAINS POINTERS

Causes of low participation

- 1 **Livelihood constraints.**
- 2 **Low awareness** of dates, agenda and powers.
- 3 **Weak communication.**
- 4 **Unresponsive panchayats.**
- 5 **Social barriers** for women.
- 6 **Absent line-department officials** and poor follow-up.

Issues

- 1 **Attendance without influence.**
- 2 **Elite capture.**
- 3 **Gender gap** in real participation.
- 4 **Information deficit** on budgets and works.
- 5 **Weak panchayat capacity.**
- 6 **Powers depend on State laws.**

Way forward

- 1 **Recorded responses** and follow-up on issues raised.
- 2 **Local-language, advance communication.**
- 3 **Enable women and marginalised groups.**
- 4 **Share budgets and plans** before meetings.

SECTION 4

Judiciary & Legal System

01 'One Case One Data' and 'Su-Sahayak'

Supreme Court launches 'One Case One Data' system for judicial data access across courts [Bar & Bench](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

One Case One Data (May 2026)

- **Integration:** Links case information across the **Supreme Court, High Courts, district and taluka courts**.
- **Automated retrieval and swift verification** of case data from other court databases.
- **Reciprocal access** for High Courts and government departments.
- **Data integrity** and better case management across judicial levels.

Su-Sahayak

- An **AI-powered chatbot** built by the **National Informatics Centre** with the **Supreme Court Registry**, on the Court's website.
- **Functions:** Case status (by case, diary, party or CNR number), cause lists, orders and judgments, e-services (online appearance, RTI, certified copies) and FAQs on procedure, fees and hearings.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Access to justice** for litigants unfamiliar with procedure.
- 2 **Transparency** of case information.
- 3 **Efficiency** by cutting duplication.
- 4 **Data-driven judiciary**.
- 5 **Digital, paper-light courts**.
- 6 **Less information asymmetry** among institutions, lawyers and litigants.

02 AI in the Indian Judiciary

Supreme Court plans guidelines for AI use in drafting judgments and filing petitions [Hindustan Times](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

The Supreme Court's draft **Regulations for Use of Artificial Intelligence in Courts, 2026** set principles for responsible AI use and **reject AI-only judicial decision-making**. AI already helps the Court transcribe Constitution Bench arguments and translate judgments, building on tools such as **SUVAS** (translation, 2019) and **SUPACE** (research assistance, 2021).

MAINS POINTERS

Potential uses

- 1 **Legal research**.
- 2 **Drafting assistance** with human verification.
- 3 **Case management** and defect identification.
- 4 **Translation** into Indian languages.

- 5 **Transcription** of oral arguments.
- 6 **Citizen interface** through chatbots.

Issues

- 1 **Hallucinations:** Fabricated cases and citations; the Supreme Court has stressed zero tolerance for unverified AI-generated precedent.
- 2 **Risk to independent judicial reasoning.**
- 3 **Bias** from historical data.
- 4 **Confidentiality** of pleadings on external platforms.
- 5 **Accountability gap** for AI errors.
- 6 **Digital inequality** among litigants.

Way forward

- 1 **Human-in-the-loop:** Judges remain responsible.
- 2 **Mandatory verification** of every citation and proposition.
- 3 **Secure, approved systems** for sensitive data.
- 4 **Transparency** about AI tools used.

03 Increase in Supreme Court Judge Strength

Cabinet approves Bill to increase the number of Supreme Court judges [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- In **May 2026**, the Union Cabinet approved the **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026**, raising sanctioned strength (excluding the CJI) from **33 to 37**, a total of **38** with the CJI.
- **Article 124(1):** Parliament may increase the number of judges by law.
- **Previous increase:** From **30 to 33** in **2019**.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **More benches** for a heavy workload.
- 2 **Speedier justice.**
- 3 **Access to justice** under Article 21.
- 4 **Constitutional adjudication capacity.**
- 5 **Better case management.**
- 6 **Capacity matched to population and litigation.**

Issues

- 1 **Judges alone cannot cut pendency.**
- 2 **Vacancies** must be filled promptly.
- 3 **Infrastructure** for courtrooms, staff and research.
- 4 **Quality vs speed.**
- 5 **Rising litigation**, including avoidable government cases.
- 6 **Structural reform** needed across courts and ADR.

04 Revisiting PIL Jurisdiction

Should the PIL jurisdiction be reconsidered? [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** lets a public-spirited person approach the courts for those unable to do so themselves.
- **Origins:** **Hussainara Khatoon (1979)** on undertrials and **S.P. Gupta (1981)**, which relaxed **locus standi**.
- **Guidelines:** **State of Uttaranchal v. Balwant Singh Chaufal (2010)** laid down norms against frivolous PILs.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Access to justice** for the disadvantaged.
- 2 **Protection of fundamental rights.**
- 3 **Voice for the marginalised:** prisoners, bonded labourers, children.
- 4 **Accountability** for administrative inaction.
- 5 **Environmental protection.**
- 6 **Rule of law** and constitutional governance.

Issues

- 1 **Frivolous litigation.**
- 2 **Personal or political motives.**
- 3 **Judicial overreach** into policy.
- 4 **Added burden** on courts.
- 5 **Bypassing ordinary remedies.**
- 6 **Micromanagement** through continuing mandamus.

Way forward

- 1 **Strict preliminary scrutiny.**
- 2 **Verify petitioners' credentials.**
- 3 **Exemplary costs** for misuse.
- 4 **Judicial restraint** on policy.
- 5 **Focus on genuine public harm.**

05 Women in the Indian Judiciary

Justice Mohana becomes the 12th woman to be sworn in as a Supreme Court judge [The Times of India](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Justice V. Mohana** was sworn in on **2 June 2026** as the **12th woman** judge of the Supreme Court, and the **second woman advocate elevated directly from the Bar**, after **Justice Indu Malhotra**.
- **Representation:** In February 2026, only **1 of 33** working Supreme Court judges was a woman; women hold about **14%** of High Court judgeships (116 of 813).
- **Since 2014:** 170 women judges appointed to High Courts and six to the Supreme Court.

- **First woman CJI: Justice B.V. Nagarathna** is in line to become Chief Justice in **2027**.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Representative judiciary.**
- 2 **Access to justice** for women litigants.
- 3 **Diverse perspectives.**
- 4 **Public confidence.**
- 5 **Role models.**
- 6 **Equality under Articles 14, 15 and 16.**

Issues

- 1 **Low representation at the top.**
- 2 **Thin pipeline** from High Courts.
- 3 **Bar-to-Bench gap** in briefs and designations.
- 4 **Uneven representation** across High Courts.
- 5 **No reservation** under Articles 124, 217 and 224.
- 6 **Structural barriers** in networks and career breaks.

Way forward

- 1 **Widen the High Court pipeline.**
- 2 **Transparent Collegium criteria.**
- 3 **Equal briefs and opportunities.**
- 4 **Institutional support** such as childcare and safe workplaces.
- 5 **Mentorship** for women lawyers.

06 Digitising the Criminal Justice System

Digitisation and efficiency in the criminal justice system [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **ICJS (Inter-operable Criminal Justice System)** links police, courts, prisons, prosecution and forensics.
- **CCTNS** computerises police work from FIR to charge sheet.
- **e-Courts Phase III (2023)** expands digital courts, e-filing and virtual hearings.
- **e-Forensics** speeds secure transmission of forensic evidence.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Faster justice** with less paperwork.
- 2 **Better investigation.**
- 3 **Evidence management.**
- 4 **Fewer judicial delays.**
- 5 **Digital trails** for transparency.
- 6 **Citizen services** through e-Sewa Kendras and virtual hearings.

Issues

- 1 **Digital divide.**
- 2 **Data privacy and cybersecurity.**
- 3 **Interoperability gaps.**
- 4 **Data errors** spreading across systems.
- 5 **Technology failures.**
- 6 **Privacy vs surveillance.**

Way forward

- 1 **Full ICJS integration** on the principle of "one data, one entry".
- 2 **Strong cybersecurity** with audit trails.
- 3 **Digital inclusion** through assisted services.
- 4 **Data verification** before sharing.
- 5 **Training** for all justice-system personnel.

07 Fast-Track Courts

PM's push for fast-track courts: how they work and what the law allows [The Indian Express](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Fast-Track Courts (FTCs)** are set up by **States/UTs in consultation with High Courts** for speedy trial of specified cases.
- **14th Finance Commission** recommended **1,800 FTCs** for 2015-20; by **31 December 2025, 880** were functioning in 22 States/UTs.
- **Fast-Track Special Courts (FTSCs)**: A Centrally Sponsored Scheme since **2019** for **rape and POCSO** cases.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Speedy justice.**
- 2 **Specialised expertise.**
- 3 **Lower pendency.**
- 4 **Victim-centric** trials in rape and POCSO cases.
- 5 **Deterrence.**
- 6 **Responsive system** for offences such as exam paper leaks.

Issues

- 1 **Infrastructure deficit.**
- 2 **Investigation delays.**
- 3 **Forensic and witness delays.**
- 4 **Staff shortages.**
- 5 **Article 14** requires reasonable classification.
- 6 **Speed must not harm fair trial.**

Way forward

- 1 **Speed up the whole chain**, from investigation to trial.
- 2 **Fill judicial vacancies.**
- 3 **Expand forensic capacity.**
- 4 **Dedicated prosecutors and staff.**

08 Prison Statistics India 2024

Prisons in India continue to be overcrowded by undertrials: Data [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

The NCRB's **Prison Statistics India 2024**: on **31 December 2024**, **1,333 prisons** with capacity of **4,53,769** held **5,11,542** prisoners, an occupancy rate of **112.7%**.

Key findings

- **Undertrials: 3,71,440**, about **72.6%** of all prisoners.
- **Long detention: 9,028** undertrials (2.4%) had spent over **five years** in prison.
- **Trend:** Occupancy fell from **131.4% (2022)** and **120.8% (2023)**, but remains above capacity.
- **Hotspots: Delhi** at about **194.6%**, followed by Meghalaya, Jammu & Kashmir and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Section 479 BNSS** (formerly 436A CrPC) releases undertrials after **half** the maximum sentence, or **one-third** for first-time offenders; only **627** were released under it in 2024.

MAINS POINTERS

Issues

- 1 **Undertrial incarceration.**
- 2 **Judicial delays.**
- 3 **Inability to furnish bail bonds.**
- 4 **Infrastructure strain.**
- 5 **Regional disparities.**
- 6 **Underused alternatives** such as open prisons and probation.

Way forward

- 1 **"Bail, not jail"** for low-risk accused.
- 2 **Systematic use of Section 479 BNSS.**
- 3 **Stronger Undertrial Review Committees.**

09 DISHA Scheme

DISHA: Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **DISHA** is a **Central Sector Scheme** of the **Department of Justice** for affordable, citizen-centric legal services; the first phase ran **2021-26** with **₹250 crore**, advancing **Article 39A** (equal justice and free legal aid).
- **Tele-Law:** Pre-litigation advice from panel lawyers, including the toll-free **14454** line.

- **Nyaya Bandhu:** Pro bono help for those entitled under **Section 12** of the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**.
- **Legal Literacy and Legal Awareness Programme.**
- **DISHA 2.0: VIDHI-Sanjeevani** digital platform, the **Nyaya Setu** voice-first multilingual AI chatbot, and **Nyaya Sahayaks** (community legal facilitators) in Aspirational Blocks.

SECTION 5

Governance & Institutions

01 Reforms 3.0: AI and the 'Bharat Rate of Growth'

Reforms 3.0: Towards the Bharat rate of growth [The Hindu](#)

MAINS POINTERS

Reforms 3.0 proposes treating **AI as foundational economic and public infrastructure**, much as the 1991 reforms changed India's trajectory.

India's reform journey

- 1 **Reforms 1.0 (1991)**: Liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation.
- 2 **Reforms 2.0**: Digital transformation through Aadhaar, UPI, cheap data and digital public infrastructure.
- 3 **Reforms 3.0**: AI and compute as engines of productivity.

Why AI can drive growth

- 1 **Productivity multiplier**.
- 2 **Innovation** by startups and researchers.
- 3 **Human capital** in learning, research and services.
- 4 **Public services** in health, agriculture, education and courts.
- 5 **Global competitiveness**.
- 6 **Inclusive growth** if access is affordable.

Key proposals

- 1 **Free or subsidised AI compute** for universities and schools.
- 2 **Sovereign AI infrastructure**.
- 3 **Open-source, Indic models**.
- 4 **PPPs** with hyperscalers.
- 5 **Multi-vendor chip ecosystem**.
- 6 **Sectoral deployment** across Indian languages.

Challenges

- 1 **High compute costs**.
- 2 **Vendor concentration**.
- 3 **Low R&D spending**.
- 4 **Digital divide**.
- 5 **AI risks**: hallucination, bias, privacy and misinformation.
- 6 **Job disruption** and reskilling needs.

Way forward

- 1 **Treat compute as strategic infrastructure**.
- 2 **Sovereign but open AI**.
- 3 **Democratise access**.

4 Build Indic AI.

02 Regulatory Impact Assessments

Laws, lawmaking and Regulatory Impact Assessments [Mint](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) systematically examines the economic, social and environmental effects of a proposed or existing regulation and compares it with alternatives. It runs from problem identification and objectives, through alternatives, cost-benefit analysis and consultation, to the preferred option, implementation and later review. In India, the **FSLRC (2013)** recommended RIA for financial regulators, and the **Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy (2014)** sought public consultation on draft laws.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Evidence-based policy.**
- 2 **Lower compliance burden.**
- 3 **Prevents unintended effects** on MSMEs, consumers and vulnerable groups.
- 4 **Better laws** through comparing alternatives.
- 5 **Transparency** of reasoning.
- 6 **Ease of doing business.**

Issues

- 1 **No universal framework.**
- 2 **Fragmented practice** across ministries and regulators.
- 3 **Weak cost-benefit analysis:** A 2026 review of six financial regulators found no sampled consultation paper with cost-benefit or alternatives analysis.
- 4 **Capacity constraints.**
- 5 **Regulatory capture** by organised interests.
- 6 **Emergencies** need proportionate, flexible RIA.

Way forward

- 1 **A common national RIA framework.**
- 2 **Independent quality oversight.**
- 3 **Mandatory cost-benefit and alternatives analysis** for major rules.
- 4 **Inclusive consultation** with reasons recorded.

03 CPGRAMS

Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- A **24x7 online grievance platform** of the Government of India, run by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)**.
- **Timeline:** Resolution time cut from **30 to 21 days** under the **2024 Comprehensive Guidelines**.

- **Feedback:** Between January 2025 and February 2026, about **69.8%** of nearly 6 lakh resolved grievances were rated satisfactory.
- **Access:** Integrated with **Common Service Centres**; "**Samadhan Didi**", an AI voice chatbot, launched in **May 2026**.
- **Performance:** Central ministries averaged **13 days** in 2026; States/UTs averaged **64 days** in 2024-25, against 15 days for the Centre.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Citizen-centric governance.**
- 2 **Administrative accountability** through an electronic trail.
- 3 **Responsive administration.**
- 4 **Evidence for reform** from grievance data.
- 5 **Feedback on quality**, not just disposal.
- 6 **Digital inclusion** through CSCs and AI tools.

Issues

- 1 **Disposal is not resolution.**
- 2 **State-level pendency.**
- 3 **Speed incentives** over substance.
- 4 **Digital divide.**
- 5 **Multi-department grievances.**
- 6 **Data not used for structural reform.**

04 e-Jagrati

e-Jagrati: unified platform for consumer dispute redressal [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- A unified, AI-enabled platform of the **Department of Consumer Affairs**, launched on **1 January 2025**, merging **OCMS, e-Daakhil, NCDRC CMS and CONFONET**.
- **Features:** Online filing, real-time tracking with SMS and email alerts, and **virtual hearings** across District, State and National Commissions.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** pecuniary limits: District Commission up to **₹50 lakh**, State **₹50 lakh to ₹2 crore**, National above **₹2 crore**.

05 Amendments to the FCRA Rules, 2026

Proselytisation excluded from faith-based activities as government amends FCRA rules [Hindustan Times](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010**, administered by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, regulates foreign funding so that it does not harm national interest, sovereignty, security or public order. The **2020 amendment** required a designated **SBI, New Delhi** account, capped administrative expenses at **20%** and barred sub-granting.

Key amendments (2026 Rules)

- 1 **Proselytisation excluded** from permissible faith-based activities.
- 2 **Permitted religious activities** listed: places of worship, religious education, moral instruction, meditation and faith traditions.
- 3 **Purpose-specific registration.**
- 4 **Geography-specific registration** by State/UT, with changes needing approval.
- 5 **Foreign nationals** (other than persons of Indian origin) as key functionaries ordinarily bar registration.
- 6 **Compliance:** Renewal needs at least **₹10 lakh** utilised over two years, with project-wise and ultimate-donor reporting.

MAINS POINTERS

Significance

- 1 **Regulatory clarity.**
- 2 **Financial accountability.**
- 3 **National interest**, as the government argues.
- 4 **Transparency** of donors and use.
- 5 **Weeds out dormant NGOs.**
- 6 **Retains space** for faith-based welfare.

Issues

- 1 **Freedom of religion:** Article 25 protects the right to propagate, though **Rev. Stainislaus (1977)** held this does not include a right to convert.
- 2 **Rules vs parent Act:** Some requirements may exceed the Act.
- 3 **Administrative discretion** over purposes and geography.
- 4 **Compliance burden** on small NGOs.
- 5 **Effect on civil society** working on rights and advocacy.
- 6 **Security vs liberty** under Article 19(1)(c).

06 Foreign Philanthropy and an Atmanirbhar Ecosystem

Building an Atmanirbhar philanthropy ecosystem [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

An **Atmanirbhar philanthropy ecosystem** seeks to strengthen **domestic** funding of social development by Indian families, businesses, foundations, CSR and citizens, while keeping legitimate international cooperation. About **16,200** FCRA-registered associations received about **₹22,963 crore** in foreign contributions in **2024-25**. Under **Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013**, companies above set thresholds must spend **2%** of average net profit on CSR.

MAINS POINTERS

Why build it

- 1 **Less external dependence.**
- 2 **Domestic ownership** of priorities.
- 3 **Growing Indian wealth.**

- 4 **CSR as a structural channel.**
- 5 **Digital giving** through UPI.
- 6 **Long-term, predictable funding.**

Challenges

- 1 **Uneven distribution** across sectors and regions.
- 2 **Short-term, project-based funding.**
- 3 **Little transparency** in private domestic giving.
- 4 **FCRA compliance burden.**
- 5 **Civil-society concerns** about restrictions.
- 6 **Capacity gaps** in small NGOs.

Way forward

- 1 **Diversify domestic donors.**
- 2 **Outcome-oriented CSR.**
- 3 **Retail philanthropy** through digital infrastructure.
- 4 **Voluntary disclosure standards.**
- 5 **NGO capacity building.**

07 Corruption in India

Is corruption the biggest threat to India's future? [The Hindu](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018:** Made **bribe-giving** an offence and added **Section 17A**, requiring prior approval to investigate decisions taken by public servants in official duties.
- **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013:** The Lokpal inquires into corruption allegations against public functionaries within its jurisdiction.
- **Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014:** Notified but **not yet in force**.
- **CVC approach:** Punitive, preventive and participative vigilance.

MAINS POINTERS

Why tackling corruption matters

- 1 **Good governance** and rule of law.
- 2 **Economic development** and investment.
- 3 **Service delivery** without bribes.
- 4 **Social justice** for the poor.
- 5 **Democratic accountability** through RTI.
- 6 **Institutional trust.**

Issues

- 1 **Petty to grand corruption.**
- 2 **Opaque decision-making.**
- 3 **Weak grievance redress.**

- 4 **Overlapping agencies.**
- 5 **Unprotected whistleblowers.**
- 6 **Digitalisation paradox:** Corruption shifts stages unless digitisation comes with audit trails and accountability.

Way forward

- 1 **Strong RTI** and proactive disclosure.
- 2 **Empower the Lokpal, Lokayuktas and CVC.**
- 3 **Operationalise whistleblower protection.**
- 4 **Time-bound grievance redress** with escalation.
- 5 **Transparent digital governance** with audit trails and social audits.
- 6 **Preventive vigilance:** Simpler procedures, less discretion and citizen participation.

SECTION 6

Welfare & Inclusion

01 Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan 2.0 App

NMBA 2.0 app launched to strengthen the drug-free India campaign [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan** was launched on **15 August 2020** by the **Department of Social Justice & Empowerment** in **272** vulnerable districts and extended to **all districts** from **15 August 2023**, under the **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction**.
- The **NMBA 2.0 App** (launched **24 April 2026**) offers a real-time monitoring dashboard, e-pledges, a de-addiction centre locator, **Nasha Mukti Mitr** volunteer registration and grant monitoring.
- **Helplines:** The de-addiction helpline **14446** and the NCB's **MANAS** helpline **1933**.

02 SHE-LEAPS

SHE-LEAPS platform launched for women-led rural enterprises [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **SHE-LEAPS** (Self-Help Entrepreneur-Livelihoods and Enterprise Application for Prosperity and Sustainability) is a digital platform for women in **Self-Help Groups**, launched on **29 June 2026** at the **Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Sammelan**.
- Developed by **Digital India Corporation** on the **LokOS** platform; implemented in **34 States/UTs** through State Rural Livelihood Missions under **DAY-NRLM**.
- Tracks farm and non-farm enterprises in real time, links producers to value chains and supports the **Lakhpatri Didi** initiative.

03 Indiahandmade

Indiahandmade: digital marketplace for handloom and handicrafts [PIB](#)

PRELIMS POINTERS

- A digital marketplace for **handloom and handicrafts**, developed by **Digital India Corporation** under the **Ministry of Textiles** and launched in **2023**, connecting artisans directly with buyers.
- Showcases **GI-tagged** and **One District One Product (ODOP)** items and plans to onboard **60 lakh+** artisans.
- India has about **64.66 lakh** handloom and handicraft artisans; women are **71%** of handloom weavers and **64%** of all artisans.
- **Inclusive onboarding:** Sellers without GST registration can use an **Enrolment ID**, selling within their own State.



GALLANT IAS ACADEMY

TRIVANDRUM

Quarterly DECODED · Polity & Governance · May to July 2026

