

## Today's Prelims Topics

### Pardoning Powers of Indian & US President

#### Context

U.S. President Joe Biden has granted an unconditional pardon to his son Hunter Biden who faced sentencing for federal tax and gun convictions.

#### Difference between pardoning powers of Indian & US President

Feature	President of India	President of USA
<b>Constitutional Provision</b>	<b>Article 72</b> of the Indian Constitution	<b>Article II, Section 2</b> of the U.S. Constitution.
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	Applies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laws enacted by the Indian Parliament.</li> <li>Death sentences under State Laws.</li> <li>Punishments by courts-martial (military courts)</li> </ul>	Limited to federal laws; cannot pardon state offenses or intervene in state criminal matters.
<b>Binding Advice</b>	Must act on the advice of the Council of Ministers ( <b>not discretionary</b> ).	Fully discretionary; the President decides <b>unilaterally</b> .
<b>Exceptions</b>	None explicitly mentioned; subject to judicial review for arbitrariness (as per Supreme Court rulings).	Cannot pardon in cases of <b>impeachment</b> .
<b>Judicial Review</b>	Pardoning power is subject to judicial review for arbitrariness or mala fides. ( <b>Epuru Sudhakar case, 2006</b> ).	Generally not subject to judicial review; <b>very limited exceptions apply (e.g., if used to obstruct justice)</b> .
<b>Effect of Pardon</b>	Completely absolves the individual from conviction, punishment, and all disqualifications.	Relieves punishment and associated disqualifications <b>but does not erase the conviction record</b> .

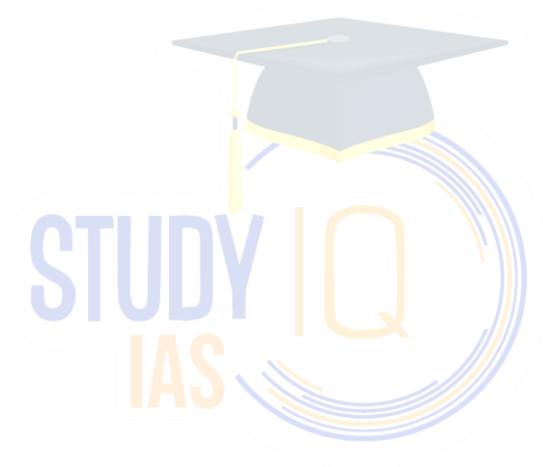
#### Types of Pardoning Powers in India

- Pardoning powers of the President are provided under **Article-72** & for governor under **Article-161**.
- Pardon:** When the President grants a pardon, the sentences & punishments given to the offender are nullified.
- Respite:** A lesser sentence is granted in place of the original one. **E.g.** if a convict has a physical disability or if a female offender is pregnant.
- Reprieve:** Temporarily suspends the execution of a sentence (particularly the death penalty).
- Remit:** It is used to reduce the time period of the sentence, but punishment retains its original character. **E.g.** A sentence of two years of strict imprisonment may be reduced to one year of strict imprisonment.
- Commute:** Original form of punishment is substituted for a lighter form of punishment

E.g. Death penalty being commuted to life imprisonment.

Source:

- [The Hindu - What are the controversies around pardoning power?](#)



## New phase in Syrian War

### Context

The Syrian civil war has resurged again, a renewed offensive was launched by rebel forces recently targeting President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

### Key Rebel Groups & Players in the Current Offensive

#### Syrian War

- The conflict began in **2011 during the Arab Spring**, with protests against **President Bashar al-Assad's rule**.
- Over time, the war evolved into a multi-faceted conflict involving domestic opposition groups, foreign powers and extremist organizations.

- **Hayat Tahrir al-Shaam (HTS):**
  - **Origin:** Began as Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, later renamed Jabhat Fateh al-Shaam in 2016, and evolved into HTS in 2017.
  - **Leadership:** Led by Abu Mohammad al-Jolani.
  - HTS is designated a terrorist group by the US, Russia, and Turkey.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF):**
  - **Composition:** Kurdish militias.
  - **Area under control:** Administers northeastern Syria autonomously.
  - **Former US Support:** Heavily supported during the Trump administration before the abrupt withdrawal of US forces.
- **Syrian National Army (SNA):**
  - **Origin:** Emerged from the Free Syrian Army in 2011.
  - Supported by Turkey and opposes both Assad and the SDF.
  - **Role:** Jointly conducting operations with HTS under the "Military Operations Command" established in 2019.
- **Assad's regime:** Controls most of Syria, with support from **Russia, Iran and Hezbollah**.
- **Turkey:** Historically backs Syrian rebels and controls trade and access in Idlib. It has controlled northern Syria since 2016.

### Important locations of Syria



**UPSC PYQ**

**Q.** Consider the following pairs: **(2018)**

Towns sometimes mentioned in news Country

1. Aleppo - Syria
2. Kirkuk - Yemen
3. Mosul - Palestine
4. Mazar-i-sharif - Afghanistan

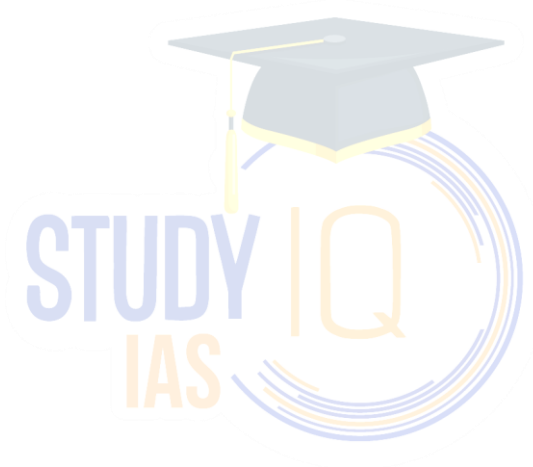
Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

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

**Answer: B**

**Source:**

- [Indian Express - The new phase of war in Syria](#)



## Banking Laws Amendment Bill (2024)

### Context

The Lok Sabha has passed the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

### Key Provisions

**The Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 aims to amend multiple banking-related laws:**

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934
  - Banking Regulation Act, 1949
  - State Bank of India Act, 1955
  - Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts, 1970 and 1980.
- 
- **Definition of Fortnight for Cash Reserves:** Changes the definition of fortnight for calculating average daily balance for cash reserves.
    - **Current Definition:** A fortnight is defined as Saturday to the second following Friday (14 days).
    - **New Definition:**
      - From the 1st to the 15th of each month, or
      - From the 16th to the last day of the month.
  - **Tenure of Directors of Co-operative Banks:** Increases the maximum consecutive tenure of a director (except chairman or whole-time director) of a co-operative bank from 8 to 10 years.
  - **Prohibition on Common Directors in Co-operative Banks:** A director of one bank cannot serve on the board of another bank, except for RBI-appointed directors.
    - **Amendment:** Allows directors of central co-operative banks to also serve on the board of a state co-operative bank where they are a member
  - **Nomination:** Currently a single or joint deposit holder can appoint one nominee.
    - **Amendment:**
      - Allows up to **4 nominees**.
      - **For Deposits:** Nominees can be named simultaneously or successively. In simultaneous nominations, the share is divided proportionally.
      - **For Lockers and Articles in Custody:** Successive nominations can be made, with priority based on the order of nomination.
  - **Settlement of Unclaimed Amounts: Presently** unpaid or unclaimed dividends are transferred to the **Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)** after **7 years**.
    - **Amendment:** Expanded the scope including
      - Shares with unclaimed dividends for 7 consecutive years.
      - Unpaid interest or redemption amounts for bonds for 7 years.
      - **Allows claimants to retrieve shares or funds transferred to the IEPF.**

### Source:

- [The Hindu - Bank Bill passes LS, allows one account, 4 nominees](#)

## MH-60R multi role Helicopters

### Context

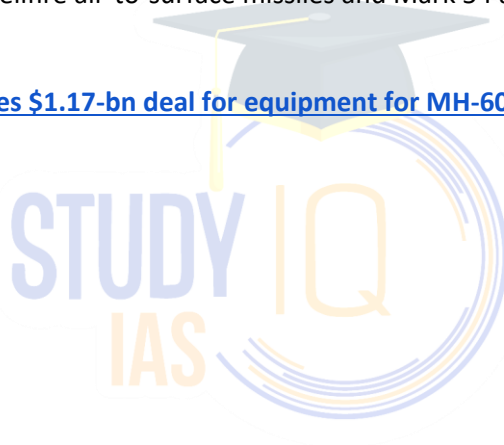
The United States has approved a possible \$1.17-billion deal to sell India support equipment for MH-60R multi-role helicopters under its Foreign Military Sales programme.

### About MH-60 R - Sea Hawk Helicopter

- It is the world's most advanced maritime helicopter manufactured by **Lockheed Martin (USA)**.
- It is an all-weather helicopter designed with state-of-the-art avionics and sensors.
- **Features:**
  - It is equipped with sensors such as a multi-mode radar, electronic support measures system, electro-optical or infrared camera, datalinks, aircraft survivability systems, dipping sonar and sonobuoys.
  - It is designed for various missions such as;
    - Anti-submarine warfare (ASW)
    - anti-surface warfare (ASuW)
    - search and rescue (SAR)
    - Medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and vertical replenishment (VERTREP).
  - **Weapons:** It is armed with torpedoes, air-to-ground missiles, rockets and crew-served guns including Hellfire air-to-surface missiles and Mark 54 anti-submarine torpedoes.

### Source:

- [The Hindu - U.S. approves \\$1.17-bn deal for equipment for MH-60R helicopters](#)



## Global One-Stop Centres

### Context

The Union government has approved the establishment of nine One-Stop Centres to assist women facing distress in foreign countries.

### About Global One-Stop Centres (OSCs)

- These centres aim to provide comprehensive assistance to women in vulnerable situations.
- **Proposed Locations:**
  - **Gulf Countries (7 Centres with Shelter Facilities):** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia (with centres in Jeddah and Riyadh).
  - **Non-Shelter Centres (2):** Toronto (Canada) and Singapore.
- **Services Provided:**
  - **Shelter Facilities:** Immediate safe accommodation for women in distress.
  - **Legal Aid:** Assistance for accessing justice, particularly for women abandoned by overseas spouses.
  - **Counselling:** Psychological support to help women navigate distressing situations.
  - **Emergency Assistance:** Provision of medical care and crisis intervention.
- **The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF)** will play a vital role in extending welfare measures to distressed Indian nationals

### Source:

- [DD News - Government approves global one-stop centres for Indian women in distress](#)



## Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users' Conference

### Context

The 14th Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users' Conference has commenced in New Delhi.

### About Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users' Conference (AOMSUC)

- It is a premier event for meteorologists, earth scientists, satellite operators and students from across the globe.
- This year's conference is hosted by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD), Ministry of Earth Sciences.**
- The **1st AOMSUC was held in Beijing (China) in 2010.** Since then, it has been hosted annually in various locations across Asia-Oceania.
- **Aim of the conference:**
  - Promote the importance of satellite observations.
  - Advance satellite remote sensing science & Engage young scientists in the field.
  - Provide a platform for dialogue and collaboration between satellite operators and users.
  - Encourage the development of new technologies for weather satellite sensing

### Source:

- [PIB- Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users' Conference \(AOMSUC-14\)](#)





## PM-ABHIM

### Context

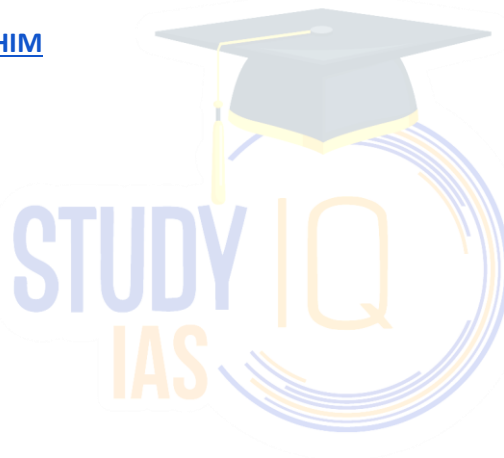
The **Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)** aims to revolutionize India's healthcare system with an outlay of ₹64,180 crore (2021-26).

### About PM-ABHIM

- It was launched in **October 2021 by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.**
- It focuses on constructing health infrastructure, **including sub-centres, wellness centres, labs and critical care units.**
- **Objectives:**
  - To strengthen grass root public health institutions.
  - To expand and build an IT enabled disease surveillance system.
  - To expand research on COVID-19 and other infectious diseases and to develop the core capacity to deliver the One Health Approach.
- **Components:**
  - It consists of Centrally Sponsored Scheme Components [like Ayushman Bharat - Health & Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) in rural and urban areas].
  - Some Central Sector Components (like Critical Care Hospital Blocks).

### Source:

- [PIB - Update on PM-ABHIM](#)



## Tropical plant Subabul shows potential in managing insulin resistance

### Context

Researchers at the **Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati**, have identified the potential of **Subabul (Leucaena leucocephala)**, in managing insulin resistance associated with type II diabetes.

### About Subabul

- It is a fast-growing leguminous tree, is native to **Central America and Mexico** but has become widespread in **tropical and subtropical regions** worldwide due to its adaptability and diverse uses.
- **Distribution in India:** It is mainly found in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha and Tamil Nadu
- **Uses of Subabul**
  - **Food and Nutrition:** Immature seeds and leaves are consumed in soups or salads. It is rich in protein and fibre.
  - **Medicinal Applications:**
    - It is used in traditional medicine for treating diabetes, intestinal parasites and inflammation.
    - Recent research at **IASST, Guwahati** indicated its potential for managing type II diabetes through compounds like **quercetin-3-glucoside**.
  - **Wood and Fuel:**
    - Subabul provides high-quality firewood and is a source of charcoal.
    - Used for crafting furniture, paper pulp, and lightweight construction materials.
  - **Agroforestry:** Intercropped with food crops like maize or millets due to its ability to enhance soil quality.
  - **Environmental Benefits:**
    - Effective in **phytoremediation** (removal of heavy metals from contaminated soil).
    - Absorbs large amounts of carbon dioxide, making it a potential climate-change mitigation species.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Invasiveness:** It is considered an invasive species in some regions, as it competes with native plants and spreads aggressively.
  - **Water Use:** It is a high-water-consuming tree, raising concerns in water-scarce areas.

### Source:

- [PIB - Tropical plant Subabul shows potential in managing insulin resistance related to type II diabetes](#)

## Centre proposes 95% govt. job reservation for locals in Ladakh

### Context

In the recent meeting of the High-Powered Committee (HPC) related to Ladakh, various key decisions and proposals were endorsed by the Union government.

### Key Proposals for Ladakh

- **Job Reservations:**
  - 95% of government jobs reserved for locals.
  - One-third reservation for women, including positions in hill councils.
- **Cultural and Land Protection:**
  - Constitutional safeguards to protect Ladakh's **land, language, and cultural heritage**.
  - Recognition of **Urdu** and **Bhoti** as official languages of the region.
  - Review of **22 pending laws** related to local empowerment, wildlife conservation and other issues.
- **Addressing Recruitment Concerns:**
  - Immediate recruitment for **gazetted posts** like doctors and engineers.
  - Recruitment will be conducted through the **Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC)** rather than DANICS.

### Issues in Ladakh

- **Employment Challenges:**
  - No gazetted posts filled since Ladakh became a Union Territory.
  - Most appointments have been on a **contractual basis**, leaving many educated youth unemployed.
- **Administrative Limitations:**
  - A separate Public Service Commission for Ladakh is deemed infeasible due to the lack of a local legislature.

### Inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule

- People of Ladakh are demanding UT's inclusion in the Sixth Schedule.
- 6th Schedule provides for Administration of Tribal Areas.
- According to a 2019 report from the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), 97% of Ladakh's population is tribal.
- **Special Provisions under 6th Schedule:**
  - Creation of Autonomous district Councils which have Legislative, Judicial and Executive powers.
  - District Councils are empowered to prepare a budget for their respective Council.
  - The councils derive all their powers and functions directly from the Constitution.
  - Acts passed by Parliament or state legislatures do not apply to autonomous districts and regions, or they apply with certain changes and exceptions.
- Presently 4 states have Sixth Schedule Areas: **Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura**

### Source:

- [The Hindu - Centre proposes 95% govt. job reservation for locals in Ladakh](#)

## Extrachromosomal DNA

### Context

Scientists have discovered a weakness in cancer cells with ecDNA. By targeting a specific protein (**CHK1**) involved in DNA repair, they can selectively kill these cancer cells. This could lead to new, more effective treatments for certain types of cancer.

### About Extrachromosomal DNA (ecDNA)

- ecDNA are small circular DNA fragments that float freely in the nucleus, separate from chromosomes.
- **Genesis:** Formed due to DNA damage (e.g., chromothripsis) or errors during DNA replication.
- **Role of ecDNA in Cancer:**
  - Found in up to 90% of certain tumour types, including brain tumours, liposarcomas, and breast cancers.
  - ecDNA often contains multiple oncogenes, promoting tumour growth and drug resistance.
    - **Oncogenes** are mutated genes capable of causing cancer that are required to activate tumour growth.

### Why is ecDNA a problem?

- **Cancer Growth:** ecDNA can carry multiple copies of cancer-causing genes, making tumors grow faster and become more aggressive.
- **Drug Resistance:** Cancer cells with ecDNA can evolve more quickly, making them resistant to treatments.

### Source:

- [The Hindu - ecDNA challenges law of genetics, groundbreaking new studies find](#)

## Editorial Summary

### U.K. Assisted Dying Bill

#### Context

The House of Commons voted in favour of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill.

#### Current UK Position on Assisted Dying

- **Legal Status:** Assisted dying and euthanasia are currently illegal in the UK. Assisting suicide is an offense punishable by up to 14 years in prison under the **Suicide Act 1961**.
- **Previous Attempts:** Since 2013, at least three bills addressing assisted dying have been introduced in Parliament but failed to pass.
- **Public Debate:**
  - **Proponents** argue that the law would allow terminally ill patients to end their suffering humanely and reduce the risk of individuals resorting to unregulated methods.
  - **Detractors** express concerns about potential misuse, especially among vulnerable groups, and emphasize the need to improve palliative care instead.

#### Provisions of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill

- **Eligibility:**
  - Terminally ill adults over 18 years with a prognosis of less than six months to live.
  - Applicants must have the mental capacity to make the decision.
  - Excludes individuals with disabilities or mental disorders.
- **Residency:**
  - Applicants must have been registered residents in England or Wales for at least 12 months before making the request.
- **Procedure:**
  - **First Declaration:** Signed by the patient in the presence of a coordinating doctor and a witness.
  - **Assessments:**
    - A coordinating doctor confirms the patient's eligibility and voluntary decision.
    - An independent doctor conducts a second assessment after a seven-day reflection period.
    - Disagreements between doctors are referred to a third independent doctor (only once).
  - **Judicial Review:**
    - The High Court ensures compliance with all legal requirements, and decisions can be appealed.
- **Final Steps:**
  - A 14-day "second reflection period" follows approval.
  - The patient signs a "second declaration" witnessed by two doctors and a third person.
  - The patient self-administers an approved substance provided by the coordinating doctor.

#### Passive Euthanasia in India

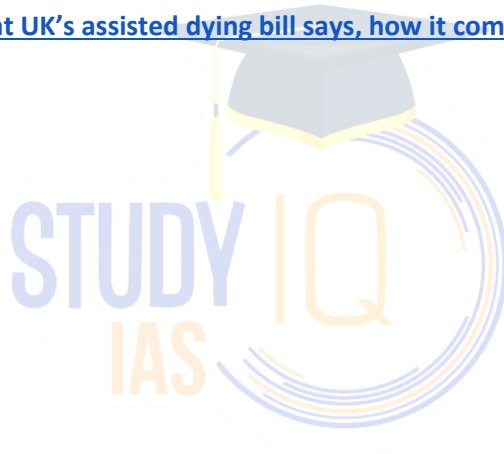
- **Legal Framework:** Recognized by the Supreme Court of India in 2018 as part of the **right to die with dignity** under Article 21 of the Constitution.
  - **Passive euthanasia** involves withdrawing life-support measures from terminally ill patients to allow a natural death.

- **Living Will/Advance Directives:** Terminally ill patients can outline their wishes to withdraw life support in a “living will” or “advance medical directive.”
  - The directive must be signed in the presence of two witnesses and a Judicial Magistrate.
- **Approval Process:** Requires consent from the treating physician, a qualified medical board, and an external medical board with administrative representation.
- **Challenges:**
  - Implementation has been limited due to cumbersome guidelines.
  - Modifications in 2023 introduced stricter timelines and reduced Judicial Magistrate involvement.
  - The Indian government proposed draft guidelines in 2024, inviting public feedback to streamline the process further.

### Comparison

- **UK Bill:** Actively allows patients to end their life through self-administered substances under strict safeguards.
  - **India:** Recognizes only passive euthanasia, enabling patients to decline life support but not actively end their life.
- Both approaches aim to respect patient autonomy while balancing ethical concerns, but the UK Bill introduces a more active role for patients in end-of-life decisions.

Source: [Indian Express: What UK's assisted dying bill says, how it compares to Indian law](#)



## Detailed Coverage

### COP 29

#### Context

- The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) was held in Baku, Azerbaijan.
- This year's conference is branded as the "Finance COP," emphasizing the crucial role of financing in climate action, particularly for developing countries.

#### Need for Finance in Climate Action

- **Transition to Cleaner Technologies:** High **upfront costs** for renewable and green technologies require substantial financial support to ensure affordability for consumers.
  - Evolving technologies, such as advanced green solutions, carry risks of failure, necessitating financial backing to incentivize early adopters.
- **Support for Developing Countries:** Developing nations need **additional financing** to integrate modern energy and infrastructure improvements while prioritizing development goals.
  - Governments in these regions often face resource constraints, underscoring the importance of external financial assistance.
- **Affordable Lending:** Developing countries often face **high costs of capital** compared to developed nations, limiting their ability to fund climate initiatives.
  - Addressing these disparities is essential for unlocking domestic private investments and accelerating climate action.
- **Debt-Free Instruments:** Public grants from developed countries are preferred over loans to prevent adding to the debt burden of developing nations.
  - Strengthening fiscal capacities through affordable financing mechanisms is vital for long-term sustainability.
- **Meeting Global Climate Goals:** The Second Needs Determination Report by the Standing Committee on Finance under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) estimated that **between \$5 trillion to \$7 trillion would be needed by 2030 to meet half the needs of 98 countries.**

#### Concerns Over Financing Structures

- High debt burdens in developing nations limit their ability to leverage domestic private capital for climate action.
- Lending rates for developing countries are significantly higher compared to developed nations.
- Growing emphasis on public grants instead of loans from developed nations to address fiscal stress and ensure affordable financial flows.

#### Role of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)

- **At Cancun (2010):** Developed countries pledged **\$100 billion annually** until 2020.
- **At COP21 (Paris):** Nations agreed to establish the NCQG before 2025.
- The NCQG aims to create specific targets that nations can strive towards while ensuring transparency and accountability.
- **Progress and Outcomes at COP29:** Developed countries pledged \$300 billion annually till 2035, a significant increase from the \$100 billion target but falling short of the \$1.3 trillion annual request from developing nations.
  - Triple the flow of public resources through adaptation funds and climate mechanisms by 2035 was promised, though progress may remain slow.

### Other Negotiations related to Climate Change

- **Montreal Protocol (1989):** Protected the ozone layer by eliminating chlorofluorocarbons.
- **Kyoto Protocol (2005):** First global accord on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Paris Agreement (2015):** Consensus to limit global warming below 2°C with revised targets every five years.
- **Glasgow Climate Pact (2021):** Introduced the loss and damage fund and declared net-zero targets by nations.

### Drawbacks of COP29

- **Insufficient Climate Finance Commitment:** Despite the central theme of catalyzing finance to address climate change, the deal reached at COP29 falls short of expectations.
  - The agreement of \$300 billion per year by 2035 is far less than the \$1.3 trillion per year needed by developing countries to adapt to climate change and reduce emissions.
  - The commitment is **not entirely from public finance**, but includes funds from private finance, Multilateral Development Banks, and carbon markets, which raises concerns about the reliability and sustainability of these sources.
  - Private finance **tends to flow to economically attractive markets**, which may limit its impact on emerging economies like India, where climate adaptation needs are pressing.
- **Uncertainty Around Carbon Markets:** While progress was made on carbon markets, with agreements on carbon credit procedures and the global carbon market under Article 6.4, there are still concerns about their effectiveness.
  - There is uncertainty about how well these markets will function and whether emerging economies will truly benefit from them.
  - The lack of clarity on how carbon credits will be allocated and how environmental integrity will be maintained leaves open questions on the long-term reliability of these mechanisms.
- **Limited Progress on Fossil Fuel Phase-Out:** One of the major disappointments was the lack of progress on the “phase-out” of all fossil fuels.
  - Despite various countries pushing for stronger commitments, both COP29 and the G20 Summit failed to secure agreements for a comprehensive phase-out of fossil fuels, a key issue that remains unresolved.
- **Shift in Global Climate Target Realism:** The goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C is increasingly seen as unrealistic, with studies suggesting the **world was already 1.49°C warmer than pre-industrial levels by the end of 2023**.
  - Although there are still pathways to achieve this target, it would require untested carbon removal technologies, and large-scale investments in such **technologies are not being seriously pursued**.
  - The ongoing pursuit of the 1.5°C goal could be seen as increasingly less achievable, raising the question of whether a more realistic target should be adopted.
    - However, this is also a critical leverage point for developing countries, and abandoning it may undermine their bargaining position for financial support and emission cuts.



### India's Efforts in Climate Action

- **Policies for Clean Energy Transition:**
  - India assumes minimal international climate finance and focuses on domestic actions.
  - **Key Initiatives:**
    - **PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana:** Subsidies for rooftop solar panel installations to address energy poverty and access.
    - **PM E-DRIVE Initiative:** Promotes zero-emission vehicles by offering subsidies and developing charging infrastructure.
    - **Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) Scheme:**
      - Soon to be replaced by the **Indian Carbon Market**.
      - Mobilizes investments for energy efficiency and emissions reduction in industries.
- **Commitments Under the Paris Agreement:** India prioritizes reducing its **emissions intensity (CO<sub>2</sub> per unit of GDP)**.
  - State Action Plans on Climate Change focus on:
    - Tailored adaptation strategies for agriculture, forestry, water resources, and disaster risk reduction.
- India has adopted a **co-benefits approach** to climate action – Linking emissions mitigation with socio-economic development goals.
  - Tangible progress is being made through:
    - **Mission LiFE:** Advocating sustainable consumption.
    - **Heat Action Plans:** Addressing extreme heat through resilient infrastructure and community development.
- India has committed significant resources towards renewable energy and energy efficiency:
  - **MNRE received ₹19,100 crore** in Budget 2024-25, its highest allocation.
  - **₹40 crore** allocated for enhancing energy efficiency.
  - **₹5,790 crore** subsidy under FAME-II for electric vehicle manufacturers.

### COP29: Criticism by Developing Countries

- **Inadequate Financial Commitments:** Developing nations criticised the **\$300 billion base target** as insufficient to address their climate mitigation and adaptation needs.
  - India called the package "**too little and too distant**", stressing that it falls short of the \$1.3 trillion annual funding required.
- **Failure to Meet Past Promises:** Developed countries have not fulfilled the earlier promise of mobilising \$100 billion annually by 2020. This undermines trust in the new commitments.
- **Exclusion:** India alleged that its request to speak before the adoption of the climate finance package was ignored, accusing the process of being "**stage-managed**".
  - Also Nigeria and Bolivia argued that the NCQG was shaped by the geopolitical interests of developed nations.
- **Delayed Action:** The financial mobilisation goal is set for **2035**, which developing countries see as too distant given the urgency of the climate crisis.
- **Limited Progress on Trust and Collaboration:** India and others emphasised that **trust and collaboration**—key to addressing climate change—were lacking in the negotiations.

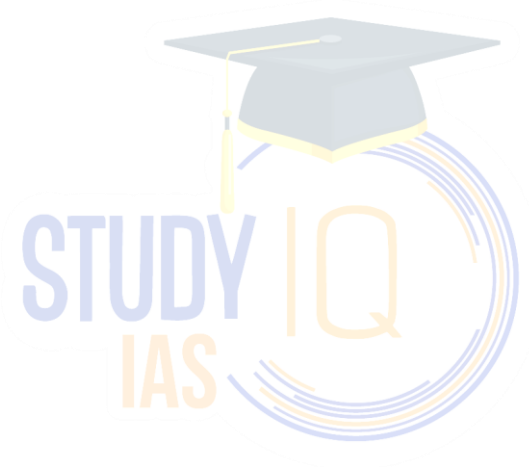
### The Road Ahead

- **Commitment to Dialogue:** The NCQG outcome underscores the need for continued negotiations and international cooperation to address climate challenges effectively.
- **Principles for Action:** Uphold **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)**.
  - Ensure **climate justice** and equitable transitions.
- **Focus on Collective Goals:** Strengthen fiscal capacities of developing nations.

- Enhance affordable climate finance flows while prioritizing public grants over loans.
- **Need for Technology Transfer:** Developing countries require not only financial support but also technology transfer and capacity building.
- **Trust and Accountability:** The success of NCQG negotiations will depend on restoring trust between developed and developing nations while addressing historical responsibilities.

**Sources:**

- [The Hindu: Local action amidst global inertia](#)
- [The Hindu: Takeaways from COP29](#)
- [The Hindu: Reflections on Baku's 'NCQG outcome'](#)
- [The Hindu: Rethinking 'representation' for a meaningful COP30](#)



## Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 (SC/ST Act)

### Context

The Union government said that “growing awareness, wider publicity, and capacity building of police personnel” were among the reasons for the increasing number of cases being registered across the country under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

### About SC/ST Act

- Enacted to prevent caste-based discrimination and violence against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- Rooted in **Articles 15 and 17** of the Indian Constitution, ensuring protection for marginalized communities.
- Aims to address gaps in earlier laws like the **Untouchability (Offenses) Act, 1955**, and the **Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955**.
- The **Central Government** frames rules for implementation.
- Administered by **State Governments** and **Union Territories** with central assistance.

### Key Provisions

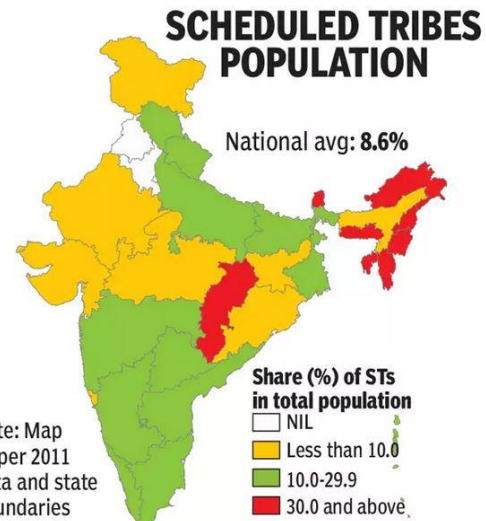
- **Definition of Atrocities:** Includes offenses like physical violence, harassment, social discrimination, and other caste-based violations.
  - Recognizes these acts as "atrocities" and prescribes stringent penalties.
- **Stringent Punishments:** Higher penalties than those under the **Indian Penal Code, 1860** (now **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023**).
- **Anticipatory Bail Exclusion:** **Section 18** excludes anticipatory bail provisions under **Section 438 of CrPC** (now **Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023**).
- **Special Courts and Protection Cells:** Special courts for speedy trials.
  - **SC/ST Protection Cells** at the state level, led by senior police officers, ensure enforcement.
- **Investigation Protocols:** Investigations must be conducted by officers of rank **DSP or higher**.
  - Completed within a stipulated time frame.
- **Victim Support:** Relief and rehabilitation measures include financial compensation, legal aid, and other support services.
- **Exclusions:**
  - The Act does not cover offenses committed between members of SCs and STs.
  - Cannot be invoked against another SC/ST member.

### Recent Amendments

- **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2015:**
  - Expanded the scope of atrocities to include offenses like:
    - Garlanding with footwear.
    - Forcing manual scavenging.
    - Imposing social or economic boycotts.
  - Outlawed specific practices such as:
    - Sexual exploitation and intentional non-consensual touching of SC/ST women.
    - Dedicating SC/ST women as **devadasis**.
  - Public servants neglecting duties related to SCs and STs face imprisonment.
- **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2018:**
  - Removed the requirement for **Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP)** approval for arrests.
  - Allowed **immediate arrests** without prior approval.

### Scheduled Tribes (STs)

- Defined under **Article 366(25)** as “tribes or tribal communities, or parts thereof, deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution.”
- **Criteria for specification** (not explicitly in the Constitution):
  - Primitive traits.
  - Distinctive culture.
  - Geographical isolation.
  - Social shyness in interactions with larger communities.
  - Economic and social backwardness.
- **Article 342:**
  - **Presidential Notification:** The President may specify tribes or tribal communities, or parts thereof, as **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** for each State or Union Territory through a public notification.
  - **Parliamentary Approval for Changes:** Once a list is issued, any addition, deletion, or modification to it can only be made by **Parliament through a law**, not unilaterally by the President.
  - **State-Specific Lists:** Tribes classified as STs in one state or Union Territory may not necessarily be recognized as STs in another.



### Scheduled Castes (SCs)

- Defined under **Article 366(24)** as “castes, races, or tribes, or parts thereof, deemed under Article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purposes of this Constitution.”
- **Criteria for specification:**
  - Historical association with practices of untouchability.
  - Social, educational, and economic backwardness.
  - Specific castes are notified by the President through public notifications under **Article 341**.
- **Article 341:**
  - **Presidential Notification:** The President may specify castes, races, or tribes, or parts thereof, as **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** for each State or Union Territory through a public notification.
  - **Parliamentary Approval for Changes:** Once a list is issued, any addition, deletion, or modification to it can only be made by **Parliament through a law**, not unilaterally by the President.
  - **State-Specific Lists:** Castes classified as SCs in one state or Union Territory may not necessarily be recognized as SCs in another.

### Rise in Registered Cases under SC/ST Act (2022)

- **67,000 cases** registered under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.
- This is the **highest since 2013**, as per National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data.
- Breakdown: **57,582 cases** against SCs and **10,064 cases** against STs.

### Drawbacks of the SC and ST Act, 1989

- **The Legal System:**
  - Special Courts under the Act are inadequately resourced.

- Many Special Courts are designated only for specific purposes and not fully functional.
- As a result, there is a backlog of atrocity-related cases, leading to delays in resolving crimes under this Act.
- **Provisions Regarding Rehabilitation:**
  - The Act provides minimal provisions for rehabilitation (only under Section 21(2)(iii)).
  - It focuses on social and economic rehabilitation of victims of atrocities.
  - No specific provisions address the broader physical, psychological, or social challenges faced by victims.
  - Victims often deal with:
    - Feelings of insecurity.
    - Social avoidance.
    - Financial struggles.
  - Special arrangements are needed for rehabilitation to ensure victims receive adequate financial, legal, and other forms of assistance.
- **Lack of Awareness:**
  - Many beneficiaries of the Act are unaware of their rights under it.
  - Some police officers, prosecutors, and judicial officials are also unaware or misapply the provisions of the Act.
  - This worsens the situation for victims.
- **Few Crimes Not Covered**
  - Certain offenses, like blackmailing, are not classified as atrocities under the Act.
  - Perpetrators exploit these gaps to commit crimes without legal repercussions under this Act.
- **Issues with FIR Registration**
  - In *Subhash Kashinath Mahajan vs. The State of Maharashtra (2018)*:
    - A two-judge bench ruled that preliminary inquiry was required before registering an FIR under the Act.
    - Approval from a superior officer was needed before arresting public servants.
    - This ruling diluted the provisions of the Act.
  - However, in *Union of India vs. State of Maharashtra (2019)*:
    - A three-judge bench overruled the earlier judgment, reaffirming the strict enforcement of the Act.
    - It highlighted ongoing struggles for equality and civil rights for SCs and STs.

### Way Forward

- **Strengthen Special Courts:**
  - Increase funding and resources for special courts to ensure they focus solely on SC/ST Act cases.
  - Enhance the recruitment and training of judicial officers to expedite case resolution.
- **Expand Rehabilitation Measures:**
  - Introduce comprehensive rehabilitation programs addressing physical, psychological, and economic needs.
  - Provide skill development and employment opportunities to victims for long-term support.
- **Awareness Campaigns:**
  - Launch nationwide campaigns to educate SC/ST communities and law enforcement officials about the Act's provisions.
  - Incorporate training on the SC/ST Act into police and judicial curricula.
- **Safeguards Against Misuse:**
  - Introduce checks and balances to minimize false accusations while ensuring genuine cases are not ignored.

- Implement independent review mechanisms for complaints to ensure impartial investigations.
- **Broaden the Definition of Atrocities:**
  - Amend the Act to include crimes like blackmail, psychological harassment, and other forms of abuse not currently covered.
  - Regularly review and update the list of offenses to address emerging forms of discrimination and violence.
- **Strengthen Monitoring Mechanisms:**
  - Empower SC/ST Protection Cells with greater resources and oversight capabilities.
  - Establish independent bodies to periodically evaluate the implementation of the Act and recommend improvements.

Source: [The Hindu: More cases filed under SC/ST Act due to awareness, says Minister](#)

