

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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Page 05 :GS II : Governance/ Preliminary Examination

Recently, the Registrar General of India (RGI) has issued strict directives to states in view of rising fraud and security loopholes in digital birth and death certificates. Currently, due to the 'Special Intensive Revision' (SIR) of the electoral roll, there has been a massive surge in the demand for digital certificates. To ensure transparency and security in e-governance systems, the government has ordered a halt to the misuse of credentials (User ID/Password) and strict monitoring of registration units.

Related Static Dimensions

A. Civil Registration System (CRS)

- **Introduction:** It is a continuous, permanent, and mandatory system for recording births, deaths, and stillbirths in India.
- **Importance:** It forms the basis of the country's demographic data, which is utilized in planning health schemes, social security policies, and developmental works.

B. Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, 1969 and 2023 Amendment

- **Original Act:** The 1969 law provides for the mandatory registration of births and deaths across the country.
- **2023 Amendment:** This amendment made online registration on the Central Civil Registration System (CCRS) portal completely mandatory.
- **Single Document:** For children born on or after October 1, 2023, the digital birth certificate alone has been recognized as the single legal proof of date of birth for various purposes, such as government jobs, admission to educational institutions, and marriage registration.

Govt. orders strict scrutiny of digitised birth, death records

Registrar General of India flags issuance of fake certificates, tells registration units in States to take measures to prevent misuse of the system; surge witnessed in request for digital copies amid SIR

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Amid a surge in demand for digitised birth certificates, the office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) is implementing stringent checks to prevent fraudulent digitisation of old records. The RGI informed the States in June that in certain instances, the credentials of registrars have been compromised due to user IDs, passwords, or one-time passwords (OTPs) being shared with unauthorised persons. On July 6, the RGI asked States to identify "Registration Units showing unexplained spikes in registrations".

"As a result, complaints have been received regarding issuance of fake or unauthorised digitised certificates in some instances. Such incidents not only undermine the integrity of the civil registration system but also threaten the reliability of vital records," the June 12 letter by A.K Pandey, Deputy Registrar General (CRS), said.

On July 6, the RGI urged registration units in States to take measures to "enhance the security, transparency, traceability, and authenticity of the digitisation process and to prevent misuse of the system".



The RGI has asked States to review the status of digitisation and preservation of legacy birth and death records. EMMAANUAL YOGINI

The measures include mandatory verification of online applications for digitisation of old birth and death certificates by the registrar against the original birth and death registers; uploading of supporting documents, including the applicant's certificate and the relevant register page; forwarding of all applications to the district registrar for approval; submission of additional documents such as the application form when the registrar enters a request on behalf of an applicant;

mandatory scrutiny and approval by the district registrar before any digitised certificate is issued; compulsory use of e-signatures by district registrars to ensure authenticity, accountability and an audit trail; and the return of approved applications to the registrar for final issuance of the digital certificate.

The RGI has asked State committees to review the status of digitisation and preservation of legacy birth and death records, emphasising the need to maintain original registers and related documents securely and to ensure that all manual certificates are duly verified against the

corresponding registers before digitisation.

Uptick in digital copies
Due to the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls where birth certificates are among the accepted identity documents, several birth and death registration units are seeing an upsurge in requests for digital copies.

The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969, which was amended in 2023 makes online registration of births and deaths compulsory on the Central Civil Registration System (CCRS) portal.

For children born on or after October 1, 2023, the digital birth certificate is the single document to prove the date of birth for various services such as admission to educational institutions, government jobs, marriage registration among others. Hospitals are required to report each birth within 21 days.

The Union Home Ministry is set to introduce a Bill in the Monsoon session of Parliament to amend the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 2023, to make provisions of delayed registration more stringent.

C. Cyber Security and Data Integrity in E-Governance

When an administrative system is completely digitized, authentication and access control become the most critical points. Password sharing or unauthorized entry directly threatens national data security.

Challenges and Concerns Raised

According to the letter issued by the RGI, the following major loopholes have emerged in the digital system:

- **Compromise of Credentials:** Instances have been observed where Registrars shared their User ID, password, or OTP with unauthorized individuals.
- **Flood of Fake Certificates:** Due to this security lapse, fake or unauthorized digital certificates are being issued in the name of digitizing legacy records.
- **Sudden Unusual Spikes in Registration:** A sudden and heavy increase in the number of registrations has been observed in certain registration units without any logical reason, pointing towards suspicious activities.

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- **Erosion of Trust:** This type of forgery seriously impacts the credibility of the Civil Registration System (CRS) and the authenticity of government records.

Proposed Measures for Scrutiny

To make the system more secure, transparent, and accountable, the RGI has directed the states to implement the following step-by-step workflow:

- **Verification from the Original Register:** Before digitizing, it will be mandatory for the Registrar to manually verify online applications with the original birth-death register.
- **Uploading Documents:** Supporting documents, such as the applicant's proof and a copy of the corresponding page of the original register, must be uploaded along with the application.
- **Mandatory Approval from the District Registrar:** Certificates will not be issued merely at the local level; all requests entered by the Registrar will be sent to the District Registrar for final approval.
- **Mandatory Use of e-Signatures:** To fix accountability and maintain an audit trail (a digital record of verification), the use of e-signatures by the District Registrar has been made mandatory.
- **Strict Law on Delayed Registration:** In the upcoming parliament session, the government is going to bring a new amendment bill to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act to make the rules for delayed registration more stringent, preventing backdoor fraud.

Impact on E-Governance

- **Positive Impact:** These measures will enhance the legal acceptability and security of digital documents. The role of corruption and middlemen will be eliminated.
- **Negative/Administrative Challenges:** Due to mandatory dual verification and approval at the district level, issuing certificates may take more time, which might cause citizens to face administrative delays (Red Taping) for some time.

Conclusion

Digitization is a powerful medium to make governance smooth and transparent, but without strict security protocols, it can also become a major security risk. A birth certificate serves as the baseline for citizenship, passports, and other vital services; hence, there can be no compromise on its authenticity. The steps taken by the RGI are commendable moves toward 'Secure E-Governance'. In the future, modern technologies like Blockchain Technology can be used to further strengthen these security measures, making any kind of tampering with data completely impossible. This balance between administrative alertness and technical security will make India's digital transformation safe and successful.

UPSC Preliminary Examination Previous Years' Questions: 2024

Question:How is the Total Fertility Rate defined in an economy?

- (a) The number of children born per 1,000 people in the population in a year
- (b) The number of children born to a couple during their lifetime within a given population
- (c) Birth rate - Death rate
- (d) The average number of live children born to a woman by the end of her child-bearing age

Ans: (d)

UPSC Mains Examination Previous Years' Questions: 2015

Question:Critically examine whether rising population is the primary cause of poverty or if poverty is the primary cause of population growth.(10Marks, 150Words)

Page 06:GS III : Indian Economy & Science and Technology/ Preliminary Examination

Amidst global geopolitical instability and supply chain disruptions, India has intensified its efforts to establish itself as a global hub in the field of electronics and chipmaking. A large corpus of ₹1.27 lakh crore has been announced by the Government of India for the second phase of the 'India Semiconductor Mission' (ISM). This step indicates that semiconductor manufacturing is no longer just a temporary priority, but has become an indispensable part of India's long-term strategic and economic security.

Key Points: Second Phase of India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)

- **Increased Budgetary Allocation:** The financial outlay of the second phase is significantly higher (₹1.27 lakh crore) compared to the first phase, focusing comprehensively on strengthening the electronics manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Shift in Subsidy Structure:** The government will continue to provide capital subsidies on selected projects as in the first phase, although the government's share this time is likely to be slightly lower than the 50% of the previous phase.
- **Production-Linked Incentives (PLI):** Manufacturing units will be given 'manufacturing-linked incentives' at a per-unit level after the sale of the product begins.
- **Boosting Domestic Capabilities:** Additional incentives (Incremental Boosters) will be given for those products that will utilize India's domestic capabilities and locally made components.
- **Long-term Vision:** The government recognizes that building a semiconductor ecosystem is a project that takes a decade or more, and through this large budgetary allocation, the government has demonstrated its continuity (Follow-through).

Strategic and Economic Importance for India (Static Linkage)

- **Geopolitical Leverage:** In the current global order, the semiconductor supply chain is monopolized by only a few countries (such as Taiwan, South Korea, USA). By having its own chip manufacturing capacity, India will be able to avoid any future 'supply chain shock' (such as war or pandemic).
- **High-Tech Employment and Retaining Human Capital:** Although the semiconductor sector may not employ unskilled labor on a large scale, it will create excellent opportunities in India itself for high-tech engineers and designers. This will stop India's 'Brain Drain', which has been providing technical manpower to Western countries for decades.

Promise of chips

Chipmaking is more than a seasonal obsession in India now

The second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission's outlay far outpaces the first, with a ₹1.27 lakh crore corpus directing the government's purse on a wide range of the electronics manufacturing ecosystem. As with the first phase, the outlay is likely to be spent lavishly on select individual projects in the form of a capital subsidy (with the government shelling out a smaller share than last time's 50%), and manufacturing-linked incentives disbursed at a per-unit level once sales are done. Incremental incentive boosters have been promised for products that leverage domestic capabilities and components. The second phase promises to take forward the government's goals to make India a strategic destination for the electronics value chain, and to grow such capabilities at home in human capital and intellectual property where select countries dominate different parts. The government has long held that this will be a decades-long project, and its follow-through with a larger corpus is welcome. This industry may not become a massive employer, but in a geopolitically fraught environment, the wisdom of spending public money in these capabilities is clearer. Much of the returns on the initial chipmaking bet remains unknowable as most facilities and projects approved in the first phase are yet to begin commercial production.

Some technologies remain out of the grasp of even the most advanced economies: Dutch extreme ultraviolet lithography machines are complex, and only Japan is close to cracking the code. The prospect of India deploying investments towards such frontier technology is hard to imagine, but tantalising. Capabilities such as these create hard strategic leverage – which will in turn lead to resistance to India quickly attracting talent and developing these capabilities. The corpus is not insignificant, but advanced economies are prepared to beg, borrow and steal, with deeper pockets, to retain their spot in the pecking order. The same applies for AI, which sits on a foundation of memory and processing infrastructure whose manufacture India hopes to undertake some day. There are bright spots in India's talent ecosystem, with semiconductor engineers and designers sought worldwide amid a looming global talent shortage. Leveraging these talents and giving them worthwhile work and academic pursuits in highly technical fields is key in ecosystem-building. Else, India risks repeating its decades-old mistake of developing the West's premier technical human capital. The coming decades demand that India find its rightful spot in global chipmaking value chains. The bad news is that the capacity to inflict pain is the best deterrent against supply chain shocks. The good news is that the hard work of avoiding supply chain shocks through global competition in key areas could deliver the kind of economic boom that made the Asian Tigers who they are today.

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- **Economic Growth like Asian Tigers:** Just as South Korea and Taiwan achieved massive economic progress on the strength of global competitiveness in electronics and chips, India too can achieve a major economic boom by succeeding in this sector.

Challenges and Global Competition

- **Highly Complex and Frontier Technology:** Some semiconductor manufacturing technologies, such as the Dutch (ASML) 'Extreme Ultraviolet Lithography' (EUV) machines, are so complex that even developed countries are struggling with them. Acquiring or developing such cutting-edge technologies is a huge challenge for India.
- **Competition from Leading Economies:** Developed countries like the US, European Union, and China are making massive investments (Deeper Pockets) to protect their share. They would not want to easily let a new competitor like India move ahead, which could create obstacles in attracting talent and technology.
- **Uncertain Returns on Initial Investment:** Commercial production has not yet started in most of the projects and facilities approved in the first phase, making the actual return on the initial investment of public money still unknown.

Related Static Dimensions for UPSC

- **Industrial Policy:** The role of electronics manufacturing under the 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' campaigns in India.
- **Science and Technology:** What are semiconductors? Understanding the process of silicon wafers, fabrication labs (Fabs), and Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP).
- **International Relations and Geopolitics:** The impact of the Taiwan Strait crisis on the global chip supply and the importance of forums like 'QUAD' or 'Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence' (GPAI) for India.
- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** Patents in chip designing and the importance of IP (Intellectual Property) creation within India.

Conclusion

Entering the field of chipmaking is certainly a big and risky bet for India, but given the current global scenario, it is an extremely wise investment of public money. Global competition is tough and developed countries are not ready to give up their control over this market, but the excellent engineering and designing talent present in India is its biggest strength. If India ensures the correct policy implementation of this second phase corpus, it will not only protect the country from supply chain shocks but will also pave the way to establish India at the top of the 21st century's digital and AI economy.

UPSC Preliminary Examination Previous Years' Questions: 2018

Question: Consider the following statements with reference to solar energy production in India: (Year 2018)

1. India is the third largest country in the world in manufacturing of silicon wafers used in photovoltaic units.
2. Solar energy tariffs are determined by the Solar Energy Corporation of India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Ans: d)

UPSC Mains Examination Previous Years' Questions: 2020

Question: How is science deeply interwoven into our lives? What are the significant changes brought about in agriculture by science-based technologies? (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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Page 06 : GS III: Indian Economy / Preliminary Examination

Recently, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between India and the United Kingdom (UK) has come into effect. According to India's Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran, this agreement not only opens up export opportunities for India but also tests the competitive confidence of Indian domestic industries. The true success of any trade agreement depends not just on how much it can increase exports, but also on how it manages imports and adapts the domestic market to global standards.

A trade deal that tests India's competitive confidence

A trade agreement is usually sold on its potential for export facilitation. Its deeper worth often lies in what it obliges the country to import. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between India and the United Kingdom, which came into force earlier this month, is a good agreement on the first count. It may prove an even better one on the second.

The first fruits lie here

Start with exports, because that is where the immediate gains lie and where they matter most. Effective July 15, nearly all of India's exports – about 99% by value – will enter the U.K. free of duty. The tariffs that fall to zero are not on the goods that fill headlines but on the goods that matter to India's workers: textiles and garments, leather and footwear, marine products, processed food, engineering items, and auto components. These are labour-intensive sectors. They employ precisely the workers India most needs to draw into productive, formal jobs. A garment unit in Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu, or a footwear cluster in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, competes on thin margins; a duty of 12% or 16% at the British border is often the difference between winning an order and losing it.

Hitherto, India has carried a handicap in this aspect. Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia already shipped their garments into Britain duty-free while India's exports paid the tax. That gap is now closed. This is the part of the agreement that deserves to be recognised, because it bears directly on employment. Trade policy is, in the end, about jobs.

A gain of a different character deserves mention. India is the world's largest supplier of generic medicines, and Britain buys close to \$30 billion of pharmaceuticals a year. Removing the duty lets Indian generics compete on price. This



V. Anantha Nageswaran

The 18th Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India

is not a labour story but a scale one – a mature Indian industry meeting one of its largest markets on equal terms.

Another aspect of the agreement too deserves special mention. It settles an old unfairness. An Indian professional posted to Britain for a few years has had to pay into the British social security system money he would almost never see again, while still contributing at home. The Double Contribution Convention that takes effect alongside the trade pact now exempts such workers, and their employers, from that double payment for up to five years. More than 75,000 workers and some 900 companies stand to save on the order of \$600 million a year. It is money returned to Indians who go abroad to work, and the removal of a real grievance that had long irritated an otherwise warm relationship.

Opening markets, raising standards

Now to the imports – and to the part of the agreement that will make some people uncomfortable. India has agreed to bring its duty on cars built in Britain down from about 110% towards 10%, and to lower the tax on Scotch whisky from 150% towards 40% over a decade. The cuts are phased across years, capped by quotas, and drafted so that India's own passenger vehicle industry has the time to enhance its competitiveness. They are, in short, cautious. But they point in the right direction, and the direction is the point.

This is a good place to record what protection does when it is never-ending. It does not build strong industries; it preserves weak ones. An industry that is never made to face a better product never has to make one. India's own record proves this in both directions. Where its carmakers have had to compete – in small and mid-sized vehicles, at home and abroad – they have become genuinely good. Where they have

sheltered behind very high walls, they have had little reason to improve. Letting a limited number of British cars in at a lower duty will not overwhelm anyone. It will do something more useful. It will remind India's producers that the customer, not the tariff schedule, is the person they must satisfy. Exposure to competition is not a concession to a trading partner. It is a favour we Indians do ourselves. A domestic industry pushed to raise its game confers significant economic benefits over time.

Use the open door

In the end, trade agreements are living arrangements, not monuments. Signing an agreement and making it work are two different tasks, and the second is the harder and longer one. The gains promised today will become real only if India's exporters are ready, its procedures are clean, and its enterprises are informed and educated of the opportunities that trade agreements create. There is considerable scope for improvement in the utilisation rate of free trade agreements in India. The government and premier industry bodies must actively and continuously engage with small industry and enterprise associations.

India and Britain now intend to double their trade, from about \$56 billion, by the end of the decade. Whether they get there will depend less on the text signed last year than on the confidence with which India uses it. That, in the end, is what an agreement like this asks of a nation: to compete. Thiruvalluvar said it more economically than any government could. Those who strive without slackening, he wrote, will see even destiny retreat before them. An open door puts that conviction to the test. India should be glad of the test.

The views expressed are personal

Key Points: Immediate & Long-term Gains of the Agreement

According to the article, India is expected to benefit directly in the following sectors from this agreement:

- **Employment-Driven Exports:**
 - From July 15, nearly 99% of India's exports (by value) will be able to enter the UK duty-free.
 - The biggest beneficiaries will be labor-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, marine products, processed foods, and auto components.

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- This is a major support for MSME sectors, such as the apparel cluster in Tirupur (Tamil Nadu) and the footwear industry in Agra (Uttar Pradesh), to remain competitive globally.
- **End of Regional Disparity and Competition:**
 - Until now, countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Cambodia enjoyed 'tariff-free' access to the UK market, which disadvantaged Indian exporters. This agreement has removed this handicap for India.
- **Scale Advantages in the Pharmaceutical Sector:**
 - India is the world's largest supplier of generic medicines. The UK purchases around \$30 billion worth of medicines annually. The removal of tariffs will give Indian generic medicines a significant edge in terms of pricing.
- **Social Security Relief for Indian Professionals:**
 - Under the 'Double Contribution Convention', Indian professionals working in the UK will be exempt from contributing to social security in both countries for up to 5 years.
 - This will save approximately 75,000 workers and 900 companies around \$600 million annually.

Import Liberalization and Domestic Competition (The Test of Competitive Confidence)

The second aspect of the agreement relates to imports, which serves as a test for Indian industries:

- **Phased Reduction in Tariffs:** India has agreed to reduce tariffs on British cars from 110% toward 10%, and on Scotch whisky from 150% toward 40% (over the next decade).
- **Protectionism vs Competition:**
 - The author argues that perpetual protectionism does not create strong industries, but rather weak ones.
 - Citing the example of India's automobile industry, they point out that in sectors where Indian cars faced competition (such as small and mid-sized cars), they grew stronger globally.
 - Opening the market for British cars will remind domestic manufacturers that they need to satisfy the 'consumer', not the government's tariff protection.

Related Static Dimensions for UPSC

To broaden this topic for the UPSC Main Examination, it is essential to connect the following static dimensions:

- **Low Utilization Rate of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):** India's past experience (such as FTAs with ASEAN, Japan, and South Korea) shows that Indian exporters fail to take full advantage of these agreements (with a utilization rate of only 25-30%) due to complex rules and a lack of awareness.
- **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):** The UK and European countries maintain strict Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) standards and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). Despite lower tariffs, Indian agricultural and food products will have to clear these stringent standards.

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- **Balancing with Make in India and Self-Reliant India (Atmanirbhar Bharat):** While India is running PLI schemes to boost domestic manufacturing on one hand, reducing import duties on the other hand creates the need to strike a proper balance between domestic manufacturing and global trade.

Way Forward

- **Institutional Awareness and Outreach:** The government and major industry bodies (such as FICCI, CII) must consistently engage with small industries and enterprise associations to provide precise information about the opportunities available under the FTA.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** Procedures related to exports and customs must be made more transparent, digital, and clean to reduce logistics time and costs.
- **Upgrading Domestic Standards:** Indian industries, especially MSMEs, must improve their product quality in line with global standards (such as carbon border taxes or environmental standards).
- **Diversification and Value Addition:** Instead of being limited to exporting raw or semi-processed goods, India should focus on exporting high value-added goods.

Conclusion

India and the UK have set a target to double their bilateral trade from \$56 billion by the end of this decade. This trade agreement is not just a legal document or a monument, but a living mechanism. Its success will depend on the competitive spirit and confidence with which India utilizes this open door. In the words of the great Tamil saint Thiruvalluvar, "Those who strive hard without slackening will see even fate (destiny) retreating." This agreement is a true test of India's economic potential and spirit of self-reliance, which India should welcome.

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UPSC Preliminary Examination Previous Years' Questions: 2018

Question: Consider the following countries:

1. Australia
2. Canada
3. China
4. India
5. Japan
6. USA

Which of the above are among the 'Free Trade Partners' of ASEAN?

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (b) 3, 4, 5 and 6
- (c) 1, 3, 4 and 5
- (d) 2, 3, 4 and 6

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Examination Previous Years' Questions: 2018

Question:How will recent phenomena of protectionism and currency manipulation in global trade affect India's macroeconomic stability?(10 Marks, 150 Words)

Page 06 : GSIII :Internal Security

In recent years, the consumption of synthetic drugs and narcotics among youth in Kerala has emerged as a serious social and security challenge. The number of NDPS cases registered in the year 2021 has increased from 5,695 to reach 36,314 in the year 2025, which reflects the magnitude of this problem. To deal with these global/inter-state drug cartels operating through modern digital technologies, social media, and the dark web, the Government of Kerala has launched 'Operation Toofan'. This operation is a multi-dimensional approach based on integrated law enforcement (Integrated Enforcement), inter-state coordination, and public participation.

News Analysis: Key Points

- **Changing Nature of the Challenge:** In the last decade, traditional narcotics (such as alcohol or ganja) have been replaced by highly dangerous and addictive synthetic drugs (such as MDMA, methamphetamine).
- **Misuse of Technology:** Drug cartels are using social media, encrypted messaging apps, and digital payments to stay one step ahead of law enforcement agencies, making them difficult to track.
- **Only 'Small Fish' Being Caught:** The biggest limitation of the current investigation systems is that only local drug deliverers (peddlers or carriers) are caught in it, while large syndicates and main kingpins remain out of the reach of the law.
- **Forensic and Legal Loopholes:** Drug cases often become weak in courts due to questionable forensic reliability and lack of digital evidence, resulting in a low conviction rate for offenders.
- **Operation Toofan:** Launched in June, this campaign has brought together the Police, Excise, Education, and Health departments. Under this, more than 7,600 smugglers have been arrested within just a few weeks.
- **Inter-State and Central Coordination:** Through this campaign, the national-level NCORD (Narco Coordination Centre) framework and NIDAAN (Database of Arrested Narco-Offenders) are being utilized. Along with this, a shared platform and nodal officers are being appointed for sharing intelligence with neighboring southern states.

Battling drug abuse

Kerala has shown initiative in coordinated action against cartels

For a few years now, a growing section of Kerala's youth has been consumed by a festering addiction to narcotic drugs and contraband/psychotropic substances. The signs of the State teetering towards substance abuse were apparent in the wake of the liquor ban a decade ago. But it grew to gargantuan proportions with synthetic drug cartels using digital technologies and social media to outpace law enforcement. While the COVID-19-stricken years of 2020-21 saw a drop in NDPS cases registered in the State, cases surged to 26,619 in 2022 from 5,695 in 2021. The number rose to 36,314 in 2025, alongside large-scale seizures of commercial quantities of contraband. Commercial capital Ernakulam city accounted for a substantial number. Despite efforts by multiple agencies, success has been limited. The UDF government sought to streamline the anti-drug enforcement drive by launching Operation Toofan in June, with the State police joining hands with the police forces in the southern States, central agencies, and State education, health and excise departments.

Focusing on integrated enforcement, public engagement, rehabilitation of victims and a speedy and effective prosecution, the operation has, until July 15, netted over 7,600 drug peddlers in some 7,100 cases, with synthetic drugs accounting for a significant share of the haul. Given that narcotics cases are often weakened by questionable forensic reliability, the issue has gained sharp focus during the ongoing campaign. The network of drug cartels is often too intricately webbed, with investigations often netting only the small fish. Besides bringing the community on board as Toofan warriors, the campaign aims to strengthen national intelligence-sharing and coordination systems under the NCORD framework, including the NIDAAN database of arrested narco-offenders. Kerala Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala is meeting Chief Ministers to solicit jointness in the operations. The States are in the process of assigning nodal officers for close coordination, with a platform in the pipeline. Since the rackets employ innovative means to recruit carriers, coordinate among themselves and carry out delivery, Kerala needs to upskill the District Anti-Narcotics Special Action Force (DANSAF) personnel at the cutting edge to bust these networks. Equally important is to strengthen cyber forensic capabilities so that neither investigation nor prosecution is found wanting in taking these cases to their logical conclusion. The crippling effects of narcotics on society are manifold, and it is never too late to build a defence against them.

Related Static Dimensions

For the UPSC Main Examination, this contemporary issue should be viewed by connecting it with the following traditional (Static) subjects:

1. Constitutional & Legal Framework

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- **Article 47 of the Constitution:** Under the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), it is the duty of the Government to prohibit the consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health.
- **NDPS Act, 1985:** Under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the trade and consumption of narcotics is considered a crime in India, which provides for stringent punishment.

2. Institutional Mechanism

- **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB):** This is India's nodal drug law enforcement and intelligence agency.
- **NCORD (Narco Coordination Centre):** A four-tier mechanism constituted in 2016 for effective coordination between central and state agencies in action against drugs.
- **DANSAF (Kerala):** District Anti-Narcotics Special Action Force, which works at the ground level and needs to be upgraded cyber-forensically.

3. Internal Security Core Dimensions

- **Narco-Terrorism:** The earnings from drug trafficking are used by anti-India elements and terrorist organizations to create instability in the country.
- **Organized Crime and Money Laundering:** The illegal drug trade is linked to money laundering through hawala and cryptocurrency, which damages the country's economy.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Cyber Forensic Capabilities:** Investigating officers should be given modern training to gather digital evidence, monitor the dark web, and decode encrypted chats.
- **Modernization of Forensic Laboratories:** To strengthen cases in courts, speed and accuracy in forensic reports must be ensured so that smugglers cannot take advantage of legal loopholes.
- **Demand Reduction:** Merely breaking the supply chain is not enough. Awareness must be increased by involving schools, colleges, and local communities as 'Toofan Warriors', and rehabilitation centres must be strengthened.
- **Upskilling of Frontline Forces:** Ground forces like DANSAF should be regularly upgraded regarding international borders/coastal security and advanced investigation techniques.

Conclusion

The growing net of narcotics is not only a law and order problem, but it is a serious social crisis that is hollowing out the country's demographic dividend, i.e., youth power, from within. Kerala's 'Operation Toofan' is a commendable step towards integrated enforcement and mutual cooperation between states. However, long-term success in this fight is possible only

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when a strong defense mechanism of strict legal action, cutting-edge cyber forensic capability, national-international intelligence sharing, and awareness in society is prepared.

UPSC Mains Examination Previous Years' Questions: 2018

Ques: India's proximity to the world's two largest illicit opium-producing regions has heightened its internal security concerns. Explain the linkages between drug trafficking and other illicit activities such as arms smuggling, money laundering, and human trafficking. What measures should be taken to curb these activities? **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

India's Parliament must not stage its Cadaver Synod

In January 897 CE, Rome witnessed the strangest trial in the history of the Church. Pope Stephen VI ordered the corpse of his predecessor, Pope Formosus, dug up from its grave. Formosus had been dead for about nine months. His body was dressed in papal vestments and propped upon a throne in the Lateran basilica. A trembling deacon stood beside the corpse and answered questions on its behalf. The dead pope was charged with perjury and with violating canon law. He was, unsurprisingly, found guilty. His election was declared void. His acts were annulled. The three fingers of his right hand, the fingers of consecration, were hacked off. The body was then flung into the Tiber.

History remembers this spectacle as the Cadaver Synod. It settled nothing. It disgusted Rome, provoked an insurrection, and Stephen VI himself was imprisoned and strangled within months. Successor popes reburied Formosus with honour and burned the record of the trial. The lesson has endured for centuries. A tribunal that sits in judgment over someone who no longer holds the office it can take away does not do justice. It performs theatre, and the theatre degrades the tribunal more than the accused.

An impossible impeachment

India's Parliament now stands at the edge of its own Cadaver Synod. The Lok Sabha Speaker has announced that the report of the inquiry committee constituted under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, into allegations against Justice Yashwant Varma will be tabled when Parliament reconvenes on July 20. The report was submitted on May 18, 2026. The difficulty is stark. Justice Varma resigned on April 9, with immediate effect, giving up his official residence, vehicles and amenities. His judicial salary has ceased. He has revived his enrolment with the Bar Council and may resume practice as an advocate. Whatever the Allahabad High Court website may say, the man is no longer a judge in any sense that the Constitution recognises. The question before Parliament is whether it should proceed against a judicial corpse.

Begin with first principles. The Constitution treats the conduct of judges as a subject beyond ordinary parliamentary debate. Article 121 forbids any discussion in Parliament of the conduct of a Supreme Court or High Court judge in the discharge of his duties, except upon a motion for an address praying for his removal. The bar is deliberate. The framers knew that a legislature free to debate judicial conduct at will would soon



Sanjay Hegde

Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India

hold judges hostage to majorities. So they permitted one exception – and one alone. Parliament may discuss a judge's conduct only when it is actually engaged in the solemn business of removing him. The discussion is incidental to removal. It has no independent existence.

Removal, in turn, presupposes an office to be vacated. Article 124(4), applied to High Court judges through Article 217(1)(b), speaks of a judge being "removed from his office." The Judges (Inquiry) Act creates elaborate machinery, a motion, an inquiry committee, a report, an address to the President, all directed to a single constitutional consequence. The Act knows no lesser penalty. It cannot censure, fine or disqualify. It can only remove. Once the judge has already left, the machinery grinds on with nothing to grip.

A judge is a constitutional functionary

Has Justice Varma left? The Supreme Court answered that question nearly half a century ago. In *Union Of India vs Shri Gopal Chandra Misra And Ors.* (1978), a Constitution Bench held that a High Court judge's resignation under the proviso to Article 217 is a unilateral constitutional act. It requires no acceptance by the President or anyone else. A judge who resigns with immediate effect severs the constitutional link at the moment of his own choosing. A judge is not a government servant whose resignation lies on some desk awaiting orders. He is a constitutional functionary who holds office by the Constitution and may relinquish it by the Constitution. Justice Varma's letter said "with immediate effect". The link snapped on April 9. That his name lingers on a website is an administrative carryover, not a statement of law.

Precedent points the same way. Justice P.D. Dinakaran resigned in 2011 while impeachment proceedings were pending; the inquiry committee was dissolved, and no report reached Parliament. When Justice Soumitra Sen resigned (2011) after the Rajya Sabha had actually adopted the removal motion, the proceedings simply ended. Parliament thereafter never took the matter up. In both cases, the institution understood that resignation extinguishes the removal jurisdiction. The Varma committee, unusually, continued its work after his resignation and submitted a sealed report after his resignation. Tabling that report as a formal record may perhaps be defended as closure of the file, but even that is strictly not necessary. The

Speaker can just inform Parliament that such a report has been received, but no further action is deemed necessary. Before Parliament proceeds further, members must demand that it be advised by the Attorney General, who must be summoned to the House. Anything beyond tabling would take Parliament into realms that no legislature has gone before.

Consider what that territory looks like. If Parliament can proceed to debate and vote upon the removal of a man who is no longer a judge, then the resignation of the judge is no barrier. Neither, logically, is retirement. Nor, indeed, is death. Every safeguard in Article 121 rests on the premise that the discussion serves a live removal. Remove that premise, and a future Parliament could constitute committees against judges who retired a decade earlier, or whose judgments displeased a later majority. It could posthumously arraign a Chief Justice for a verdict delivered in another political era. The special majority requirement would remain, but special majorities have been mustered before and will be again. Judicial independence does not depend on judges being brave on the day of judgment alone. It depends on their knowing that no legislature will hold a synod over their record after they have gone.

Close the file

None of this means that Justice Varma escapes accountability. Impeachment is not punishment. It is the removal of an unfit occupant from a constitutional office, and that purpose stands fully achieved. The office is vacant. If the burnt currency notes found at his residence disclose an offence, the criminal law applies to former judges exactly as it applies to the rest of us. Investigation, prosecution and trial remain open, and are indeed the proper forum for questions of guilt. His pension and terminal benefits raise separate statutory questions that the government may lawfully examine. What Parliament cannot do is dress the corpse in robes and conduct a trial that can end only in removing a man from an office he does not hold.

Rome eventually understood this. Pope Theodore II reinstated the ordinations of Formosus and reburied him with honour in St. Peter's Basilica. Pope John IX condemned the synod and burned its acts. The Church survived Formosus. It nearly did not survive the trial of his corpse. Parliament should table the report, note it, and close the file. Let us not dig up old corpses just for the stink.

Parliament must avoid a purposeless exercise over the Justice Yashwant Varma report

GS Paper II: Polity and Constitution

UPSC Mains Previous Years' Questions: 2018: Explain the reasons behind the rise of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in India. Has the Supreme Court of India emerged as the most powerful judiciary in the world as a result? (10Marks, 150 Words)

Context : Recently, the ongoing impeachment process against former Allahabad High Court judge, Justice Yashwant Varma, has emerged as a major constitutional controversy. Justice Varma had resigned from his post in April 2026, but even after his resignation, the committee constituted under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 submitted its report, which is to be tabled in Parliament. Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, citing the historical example of the 'Cadaver Synod' (shwadh dharmasabha), has argued that conducting impeachment proceedings against a judge who has left office is constitutionally improper and goes against both parliamentary decorum and the independence of the judiciary.

Key Points: The Main Argument of the Editorial and What is 'Cadaver Synod'?

- **Historical Context (Cadaver Synod):** In the year 897 AD in Rome, Pope Stephen VI had the corpse of his predecessor, Pope Formosus, exhumed 9 months after his death to stand trial. In history, this is called the 'Cadaver Synod'. This futile trial eventually led to a rebellion in Rome. According to the author, putting a resigned judge on trial is akin to putting a "judicial corpse" on trial.
- **The Case of Justice Yashwant Varma:** Justice Varma had resigned from his post with "immediate effect" on April 9, 2026, after which he surrendered all his government benefits and re-registered as a lawyer in the Bar Council. Despite this, the inquiry committee submitted its report on May 18, 2026.
- **Central Question of the Editorial:** Can Parliament continue impeachment proceedings against a person who is no longer a judge in the constitutional sense?

Static Dimensions & Constitutional Provisions

The following constitutional safeguards and laws are relevant for the UPSC Mains examination:

- **Article 121 (Restriction on discussion in Parliament):** This Article clarifies that no discussion can take place in Parliament regarding the discharge of the duties of any judge of the Supreme Court or a High Court. The only exception to this is when a motion for the removal of the judge is under the consideration of Parliament.
 - **Implication:** If the judge is not in office, the motion to remove him does not remain valid, and in such a situation, discussing his conduct would be a violation of Article 121.
- **Article 124(4) and 217(1)(b) (Removal from office):** The Constitution talks about a "judge being removed from his office". The purpose of impeachment is to remove a person from office, not to punish him. When the office is already vacant, there is no logical basis left for removal proceedings.
- **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968:** This Act provides a detailed mechanism for investigating misconduct against judges. However, this Act can only recommend removal from office; it does not possess the power to impose any kind of fine, censure (ninda), or declare someone disqualified for the future.

Judicial Precedents

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Daily News Analysis

- **Union of India vs. Shri Gopal Chandra Misra (1978):** The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had ruled that the resignation of a High Court judge (under Article 217) is a 'Unilateral Constitutional Act'. It does not require the acceptance of the President or any other authority. The constitutional relationship is severed immediately upon submitting the resignation.
- **Case of Justice P.D. Dinakaran (2011):** He had resigned while the impeachment proceedings were pending. Following this, the inquiry committee was dissolved and no report was sent to Parliament.
- **Case of Justice Soumitra Sen (2011):** He had resigned after the Rajya Sabha passed the motion to remove him. After this, the Lok Sabha did not take the proceedings forward and the matter ended there.
- **Conclusion:** It is clear from both these examples that Parliament has always accepted that resignation terminates the jurisdiction of impeachment.

Implications & Challenges of Continuing Proceedings After Resignation

If Parliament moves forward in this matter, it could have the following serious consequences:

- **Threat to the Independence of the Judiciary:** If Parliament can put retired or resigned judges on trial, any future majority government could target judges who retired years ago and whose decisions were contrary to political leanings.
- **Violation of Separation of Powers:** Unchecked review of the conduct of former members of the judiciary by the legislature will disturb the balance between the two organs.
- **Fear of Posthumous Trials:** Logically, if impeachment can continue even after resignation, then a deceased judge could also be tried posthumously, which would be a dangerous precedent for democracy.

Alternative Path to Accountability

The editorial makes it clear that leaving office does not mean that former judges have escaped the law:

- **Impeachment vs. Criminal Law:** Impeachment is not a criminal punishment, but a constitutional safety mechanism that has now served its purpose (the office being vacant).
- **Availability of Criminal Investigation:** If there are serious complaints like the recovery of burnt currency notes from Justice Varma's residence, then the ordinary criminal law of the country (such as the Prevention of Corruption Act) applies to him. The pathways for investigation, prosecution, and trial in ordinary courts against a former judge remain completely open.

Conclusion

The primary function of Parliament is to make laws and ensure accountability, not to stage political or judicial theatre. Since Justice Yashwant Varma has already resigned and is no longer a judge, Parliament should close the file merely as a formality by

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tabling the report. If any financial or criminal irregularity has occurred, it should be investigated by the competent criminal investigation agencies and courts of the country. The dignity of democratic institutions lies in respecting the boundaries of their constitutional jurisdiction and not allowing historical mistakes like the 'Cadaver Synod' to become a part of Indian democracy.

