

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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Edition : International ; Table of Contents

Page 04 Syllabus : Prelims Exams	INS Trishul in France for the 24th edition of Varuna
Page 07 Syllabus : GS II : Social Justice/ Preliminary Examination	When cancer treatment is no longer working
Page 09 Syllabus : GS II: IR/ Preliminary Examination	Should permanent membership, veto powers of the UNSC be abolished
Page 10 Syllabus : GS III : Economy/ Preliminary Examination	What are the alternatives to the SWIFT payment system
Page 08: Editorial Analysis Syllabus : GS II : Indian Polity	Policing the line between publicity and justice

The arrival of the Indian Navy's guided-missile frigate **INS Trishul** at Toulon, France, for the **24th edition of Exercise Varuna** marks another milestone in bilateral defense diplomacy. Initiated in 1993 and formally named Varuna in 2001, this bilateral maritime exercise anchors the strategic partnership between India and France, focusing on high-end tactical coordination and interoperability in the maritime domain.

INS Trishul in France for the 24th edition of Varuna

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Indian Navy warship *INS Trishul* arrived in Toulon in France on Tuesday to participate in the 24th edition of Varuna, the bilateral maritime exercise with the French Navy, officials said on Thursday.

According to Indian Navy, the exercise will comprise professional engagements both ashore and at sea, including cross-deck visits and operational interactions aimed at enhancing interoperability and enabling the Navies to exchange best practices.



INS Trishul arrives at the port of Toulon, France, to participate in the 24th edition of the bilateral maritime exercise Varuna. PTI

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Deep Analysis for UPSC

- **Evolution of Complexity:** Exercise Varuna has evolved from basic maneuvering drills into a complex combat-exercise format. It now features advanced anti-submarine warfare, air defense operations, and cross-deck helicopter operations.
- **Interoperability and Jointness:** Harbor and sea phases allow both navies to align standard operating procedures, secure communication protocols, and tactical responses, vital for joint operations in shared geopolitical spaces.
- **Geostrategic Convergence:** France is a resident power in the Indo-Pacific with territories like La Réunion. Partnering with France provides India critical logistical access, intelligence-sharing capabilities, and a reliable voice advocating for a rules-based maritime order.
- **Defense Industrial Synergy:** Beyond joint exercises, naval engagements tie into broader defense procurement and co-development goals under India-France roadmap agreements, supporting technological self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat).

Related Static Dimension (International Relations & Security)

- **Indo-Pacific Roadmap:** The India-France Indo-Pacific Roadmap emphasizes joint military exercises, collaborative surveillance, and maritime domain awareness (MDA) to counter unilateral dominance in critical sea lanes.
- **Logistics Exchange Agreements:** The bilateral logistics support agreement signed in 2018 allows Indian and French warships to access each other's naval facilities (such as French bases in Djibouti or La Réunion and Indian ports), exponentially extending operational reach.
- **Institutionalized Defense Dialogue:** Regular bilateral staff talks and naval cooperation sub-committees ensure continuous policy-level alignment outside of active deployments.

Conclusion

Exercise Varuna is much more than a routine naval drill; it is an instrument of strategic trust and joint deterrence. By deepening professional linkages between the Indian and French navies, such exercises secure vital maritime commons, reinforce stability in the Indo-Pacific, and institutionalize strategic autonomy for both nations.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: With reference to Exercise Varuna, consider the following statements:

1. It is a bilateral maritime exercise between India and France.
2. It focuses exclusively on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.
3. Its scope has expanded to include advanced naval warfare and interoperability drills.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "Bilateral naval exercises have evolved from tactical cooperation into instruments of strategic partnership." Examine the significance of Exercise Varuna in strengthening India-France relations in the Indo-Pacific. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

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The medical discourse surrounding advanced cancer care often focuses heavily on curative therapies, creating a critical gap in managing the emotional and communicative realities of terminal illness. As highlighted by healthcare perspectives in *The Hindu*, the shift from curative treatment to end-of-life care requires addressing the complex psychological needs of patients and their families, ensuring that medical care transitions seamlessly into compassionate palliative support.

When cancer treatment is no longer working

Modern oncology has transformed countless lives. Yet an important gap remains. We do not prepare patients and their families for uncertainty. What happens if the treatment stops helping? How much should the patient know? When should children be told? How do we decide what matters most now?

V. Divya Sai

The hardest conversation in cancer care rarely begins with the words, "There is nothing more we can do." It usually begins much earlier. "Should we tell him?" "Can we try one more treatment?" "Will she lose hope if she knows?"

These questions are asked quietly: in hospital corridors, outside intensive care units, or after doctors have left the room. They are spoken in whispers because families are not simply making medical decisions; they are trying to protect someone they love.

As a palliative medicine physician working alongside oncology teams, I have learned that when treatment is no longer working as expected, families often find themselves facing conversations they never imagined having. The challenge is not only accepting that the disease has changed; it is learning how to talk about what comes next.

Conversations we prepare least for
Modern oncology has transformed countless lives. New drugs, targeted therapies, immunotherapy and better supportive care have helped many people live longer than ever before. Yet an important gap remains.

We prepare families remarkably well for chemotherapy schedules, blood tests and scan reports. We prepare them far less for conversations about uncertainty. What happens if the treatment stops helping? How much should the patient know? When should children be told? How do we decide what matters most now?

These questions do not signal that hope has disappeared. They signal that hope is changing.

A young man I recently cared for had advanced blood cancer and was admitted to the ICU with severe pain. Over the next few days, his greatest distress was not only physical. Watching critically ill patients around him, he became convinced that he would be next. When he finally asked, "Am I going to die?" he was asking for a statistical answer. He was asking whether someone would help him understand what was happening.

Another family kept asking whether there was "one last option." As our conversation unfolded, it became clear that they were not asking for another medicine. They wanted enough time to gather siblings from different cities, celebrate one more birthday together, and prepare for conversations they had



Care that continues: Patients frequently sense when their condition is changing, even when nobody says it directly. Silence can sometimes create greater fear than truth because people begin imagining conversations they are not allowed to have. GETTY IMAGES

been postponing. Often, the real question is different from the one being asked aloud.

Weaving honesty and hope
Many families worry that honest conversations will extinguish hope. In reality, compassionate communication does not require choosing between honesty and kindness. Patients frequently sense when their condition is changing, even when nobody says it directly. Silence can sometimes create greater fear than truth because people begin imagining conversations they are not allowed to have.

Good communication means understanding how much information a patient wishes to receive, respecting cultural and family dynamics, and revisiting discussions as situations evolve. It is rarely a single conversation. More often, it is a series of conversations built on trust. Hope also evolves. Early in illness, hope may mean cure. Later, it may mean attending a daughter's wedding, spending time at home instead of the hospital, sleeping through the night without pain, or simply being able to share one meaningful conversation with a loved one.

One of the biggest misconceptions is

Good communication means understanding how much information a patient wishes to receive, respecting cultural and family dynamics, and revisiting discussions as situations evolve

that palliative care begins only after treatment ends.

In reality, it works alongside cancer treatment by helping patients manage pain, breathlessness, nausea, anxiety, fatigue and caregiver distress while supporting difficult decision-making. Some of the most meaningful palliative care conversations happen while patients are still receiving active treatment. Instead of asking only, "What is the next treatment?", we also ask: "What matters most to you?"; "What are you hoping for?" and "What are you worried about?"

These questions often reveal priorities that laboratory values never can.

Here are some conversations families should not delay having with loved ones who have cancer. When facing advanced cancer, especially, these discussions are easier before a crisis occurs: Ask what the patient wants to know about their illness. Discuss goals that matter to them beyond

treatment. Talk about symptom control early rather than waiting for unbearable pain. Identify who should make decisions if the patient cannot. Ask for a palliative care consultation early—alongside oncology—not only during the final days.

These conversations are not about giving up. They are about giving families the chance to make decisions with clarity instead of panic.

There is one moment I return to often. A family once told me, after losing someone they loved, "We don't remember every medicine that was given. We remember that she wasn't in pain, that we were able to sit together, and that we got to say goodbye."

Years later, families rarely remember every chemotherapy cycle. They remember whether someone explained what was happening; whether suffering was relieved; whether they felt alone. Perhaps that is the real purpose of these conversations. Not to predict the future; not to remove grief; but to ensure that even when treatment changes, care never does.

(Dr. V. Divya Sai is a palliative medicine specialist at MNJ Institute of Oncology & Regional Cancer Centre, Hyderabad. vdivyasai22@gmail.com)

THE GIST

Modern oncology has transformed countless lives. New drugs, targeted therapies, immunotherapy and better supportive care have helped many people live longer than ever before. Yet an important gap remains

Many families worry that honest conversations will extinguish hope. In reality, compassionate communication does not require choosing between honesty and kindness

These conversations are not about giving up. They are about giving families the chance to make decisions with clarity instead of panic

Deep Analysis for UPSC

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Daily News Analysis

- **The Paradigm Shift in Hope:** True compassionate care acknowledges that "hope" evolves over the course of a chronic illness. While it initially centers on a cure, it later transforms into goals of pain-free living, spending quality time with family, and achieving closure.
- **The Pitfall of Medical Silence:** Suppressing honest conversations under the guise of "protecting" patients often backfires. Silence breeds anxiety and isolation, whereas transparent, empathetic dialogue helps patients process uncertainty and align their medical care with their personal values.
- **Redefining Palliative Care:** Palliative care is frequently misunderstood as a measure applied only at the very end of life. In practice, it should run concurrently with active oncology treatments to alleviate physical symptoms like pain and fatigue while offering vital psychological support to caregivers.
- **Decisional Autonomy:** Early conversations about advance care planning, symptom control, and surrogate decision-making empower families to navigate crises with clarity and dignity rather than panic.

Related Static Dimension (Social Justice & Health Infrastructure)

- **Right to Health and Dignity:** Under Article 21 of the Constitution, the right to life encompasses the right to live with dignity, which extends to receiving compassionate end-of-life care and dignified palliative management.
- **Public Health Gaps:** India's healthcare infrastructure heavily tilts toward curative tertiary care, with palliative care remaining largely inadequate, urban-centric, and missing from primary healthcare frameworks.
- **Policy Frameworks:** The National Programme for Palliative Care (NPPC) seeks to integrate palliative care into public health services, emphasizing pain relief and home-based care, though implementation challenges remain significant across states.

Conclusion

Medical science measures success through survival rates and symptom remission, but the human experience of illness is defined by dignity and peace. Bridging the gap in cancer care requires institutionalizing early palliative support and normalizing difficult conversations, ensuring that when active treatment ceases, comprehensive care and human empathy continue.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: With reference to palliative care, consider the following statements:

1. Palliative care is primarily concerned with improving the quality of life of patients with serious illnesses.
2. It can be provided alongside curative or disease-directed treatment.
3. It is necessarily restricted to the final days of a patient's life.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: Palliative care should not be viewed merely as an end-stage intervention but as an integral component of comprehensive healthcare. Discuss its significance in India. **Marks, 150 Words)**

Aim, Think & Achieve

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The ongoing sessions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) have reignited debates on global governance following fresh proposals—such as France's push to regulate the use of the veto during humanitarian crises. While formal abolition of permanent membership and veto powers remains legally and politically improbable, these diplomatic maneuvers highlight deep structural challenges within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the urgent need for reform.

Should permanent membership, veto powers of the UNSC be abolished?



Amitabh Mattoo

Dean of School of International Studies, JNU



Swaran Singh

Former Professor of the School of International Studies, JNU

PARLEY

In the ongoing session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), France has made a proposal to enhance the functioning of the UN, especially in dealing with collective security and the use of veto. France has been advocating that the use of veto in the UN Security Council (UNSC) be "regulated" when it comes to dealing with humanitarian crises such as in Sudan, Lebanon or in cases of genocide. France believes that the use of veto is not a matter of "privilege" but of "responsibility". So, should permanent membership and veto powers of the UN Security Council be abolished? Amitabh Mattoo and Swaran Singh discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Kalol Bhattacharjee. Edited excerpts:

Is it realistically possible to imagine an UNSC where veto would be "regulated" as the French proposal suggested?

Amitabh Mattoo: What Emmanuel Macron (President of France) articulated in the UNGA on September 22 is not entirely new. What we are seeing is really a renewed push behind what used to be called the French-Mexican initiative, first launched in 2015, under which permanent members of the SC would voluntarily refrain from using the veto in situations involving genocide, crimes against humanity, and large-scale war crimes. It's not an attempt to abolish the veto or amend the UN Charter. It's essentially an exercise in self-restraint by the P5 (permanent members of the UNSC: U.S., U.K., France, China and Russia). What gives the initiative fresh significance is not just Mr. Macron's speech, but the political momentum behind it. France and Mexico both announced this week that 128 states now support the declaration, with 21 joining in the last four months. And the significant part is that the U.K., another P5 country, has now joined France in accepting the principle.

So for the first time, two of the five permanent members have committed themselves to this form of voluntary restraint.

But I think we should also distinguish between three different questions which are often conflated – the use of the veto, accountability for the use of the veto, and the much larger question of reform of the Security Council. Mr. Macron's initiative addresses only the first. It says in effect, even if the veto remains, surely there must be circumstances of exceptional human suffering in which a permanent member agrees not to exercise it. It is, as I said, a modest incremental proposition institutionally, but potentially significant



A general view of the UNGA in New York City, U.S., on September 22. REUTERS

normatively in terms of what we want the world to be like. It seeks to change the political behaviour of the five permanent countries without undertaking what seems to be the almost impossible task of rewriting the charter. So, it's a modest proposal and it has got some momentum, but whether it translates into reality, we'll have to wait and see.

Does the current situation in UNGA indicate that the P5 is now divided between the France-U.K. and Russia-U.S.-China factions on the use of veto?

Swaran Singh: Clearly, the U.K. and France are not the heavyweights among the P5. Therefore, I think it is easier for France and the U.K. to make that principled position saying that the P5, which wield veto power, should be able to better regulate or manage how fundamentally the power is utilised; to make sure that the UNSC is able to take action and that it does not get paralysed. In fact, the contradiction of 2013 itself was driven by the fact that in the civil war in Syria, Chinese and Russian vetoes were making it impossible for the UNSC to pass any resolution condemning Syria. After the August 2013 chemical weapons attack in Ghouta in September, the then French President Francois Hollande had in his speech proposed a 'code of good conduct' for the UNSC. This is where, for the first time, a kind of proposition was made that the P5 could voluntarily restrain the use of veto in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity or larger war crimes. I think the attempt was to skirt amending the UN Charter and still make it much more contemporaneous. None of the P5 are talking of eliminating veto power that they have. There are multiple versions among the five as to how they wish to reform the UN Security Council.

As an ideal, we believe that we live in a world



As an ideal, we believe that we live in a world of sovereign equality, but in reality, because of the way power is distributed, it is impossible for any international organisation to survive – not just become effective – but even survive if they happen to take a decision against any of the major powers

SWARAN SINGH

of sovereign equality, but in reality, because of the way power is distributed, it is impossible for any international organisation to survive – not just become effective – but even survive if they happen to take a decision against any of the major powers. Incidentally, veto is not a word mentioned in the UN Charter and it was created through a separate mechanism. But the premise is that any international organisation must not take a decision against the fundamental interests of any major power if they wish to survive.

While doubts persist about the veto, the question is will veto continue to be extended to new members of the UNSC whenever they are inducted?

AM: Apart from Mr. Macron's or the France-Mexican initiative, there have been incremental reforms which fall short of trying to amend the UN Charter. There was an earlier Liechtenstein initiative, which was adopted by the UNGA in 2022, which took a different route. It did not prevent a permanent member from exercising the veto. Instead, whenever a veto was cast, the General Assembly would be convened within 10 working days to debate the issue. In other words, a veto will no longer be allowed to simply terminate the conversation. The permanent member concerned would have to explain and defend its action on the floor of the UNGA. That was one initiative which was passed by the UNGA. A third initiative, also similar to the French-Mexican initiative, is the 'ACT code of conduct' or the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Initiative. This goes beyond the P5 and asks members of the Security Council, including the non-permanent members, not to vote against credible action designed to prevent or halt genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Again, its strength is moral and political rather than legally coercive.

So I would resist the debate as being simply 'retain or abolish the veto'. We now have several overlapping approaches – abolition, extension of the veto to new permanent members in the name of equality, voluntary restraint in case of

mass atrocities, political accountability after a veto is exercised, and the final question of broader structural reform of the Security Council itself. So my own analytical conclusion would be that Mr. Macron's proposal matters precisely because it is pragmatic; reformist rather than revolutionary. Formal abolition of the veto would ultimately require charter amendment and the consent of the very permanent members whose privilege is being removed.

Can you please explain the issue of accountability in the debate on veto?

AM: Short of an amendment of the UN Security Council; an amendment of the veto provisions; or the larger restructuring of the UN Security Council, I think there is great merit in the 'Liechtenstein initiative', whereby the debate would continue within the UNGA. It would not prevent or terminate the conversation from happening in the floor of the UNGA, where the permanent member which has exercised the veto would have to clearly demonstrate to the members of the UN what the reasons were behind the exercise of the veto, especially when it has vetoed an action designed to prevent or halt genocide or crimes against humanity.

Calling upon the permanent member to explain and defend its actions would not necessarily prevent anything when there is real national self-interest at stake, but at least it will make the permanent members, one of the P5 countries which has exercised the veto, become a little more cautious in the use of its power because it would know that it would need to justify and become accountable for its action.

Is the French proposal transparent or honest about the framing of certain conflicts that are going on such as the Israeli campaign in the Gaza Strip?

SS: I think words such as honesty and justice are most misused in international relations. There is no doubt that all the UN members, whether they are in the Security Council or in the General Assembly, come to the world's largest platform with their own interpretations, with their own understanding of each of these conflicts that you just listed. So in that sense, there is this important difficulty of word versus the spirit of various international law regimes or the Charter of the United Nations.



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Deep Analysis for UPSC

- **The Reality of Charter Amendment:** Formally abolishing or restructuring permanent membership and the veto requires amending the UN Charter. This demands a two-thirds majority in the UNGA and the concurrent ratification of all five permanent members (the P5)—making absolute abolition structurally nearly impossible since beneficiaries rarely vote to surrender privilege.
- **Pragmatic Regulation over Revolution:** Rather than radical abolition, incremental frameworks like the French-Mexican initiative propose voluntary self-restraint by the P5, urging them to withhold vetoes during mass atrocities, war crimes, or genocide. With growing backing (including recent endorsement by the U.K.), such moral-political pressures aim to deter paralysis.
- **Alternative Accountability Mechanisms:** Initiatives like the Liechtenstein-sponsored UNGA resolution mandate that whenever a veto is cast, the General Assembly must convene within ten working days. This shifts focus toward political accountability, requiring veto-wielding states to publicly defend their actions.
- **The P5 Divide:** The P5 is sharply fragmented. While mid-tier powers like France and the U.K. advocate for restraint, other major global players guard their strategic vetoes tightly to protect core national interests, reflecting underlying power asymmetries in global politics.

Related Static Dimension (International Relations & Multilateralism)

- **The Architecture of 1945:** The UNSC architecture reflects post-World War II power dynamics. The veto was originally conceived as a pragmatic mechanism to ensure that major powers would stay inside the institution rather than precipitating a global conflict by opposing vital interests.
- **India's Stance and G-4 Push:** India, alongside G-4 nations (Brazil, Germany, Japan), demands comprehensive UNSC expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities, arguing that modern global governance cannot remain representative with an archaic power monopoly.
- **The Crisis of Multilateralism:** Frequent deadlocks over major geopolitical conflicts erode the credibility of the UN, transforming it into a bystander during humanitarian catastrophes and highlighting the perils of unyielding executive privileges.

Conclusion

Abolishing the veto power outright is a legal non-starter under current geopolitical frameworks. However, the future of the UN relies on incremental normative shifts—such as voluntary restraint, transparent accountability in the General Assembly, and structural expansion—to bridge the gap between sovereign equality and realpolitik.

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UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: With reference to the reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), consider the following statements:

1. Amendment of the UN Charter is required for fundamental changes in the composition and voting structure of the UNSC.
2. Ratification by all five permanent members is required for a Charter amendment to enter into force.
3. A resolution of the UN General Assembly by itself can abolish the veto power of the permanent members.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: The UNSC's institutional structure reflects the geopolitical realities of 1945 more than those of the contemporary international system. Examine the need for reform of the Security Council. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

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The weaponisation of financial sanctions and the dominance of the U.S. dollar have driven nations in the Global South—particularly within groupings like BRICS—to explore alternatives to the Belgium-based **SWIFT** (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) network. As highlighted in recent geopolitical discourse, countries are increasingly looking to insulate their trade flows through regional clearing platforms, local currency settlements, and Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs).

What are the alternatives to the SWIFT payment system?

Why are countries looking beyond SWIFT? How are CIPS, SPFS and mBridge faring?

G R Rajeev

The story so far:

The New Delhi Declaration that came out of the recent BRICS Summit in the National Capital resolved to increase trade between member-countries and payments in national currencies. Days before the summit, a report by the news agency *Reuters* quoted sources as saying that at the event, India would push to link central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) for cross-border payments across BRICS nations, despite political and technical hurdles that could limit progress. The proposal to link CBDCs would be part of the agenda for the leaders' meeting, the sources said, though the limited adoption of digital currencies globally could complicate implementation, the report added. The proposal was, however, not part of the Declaration.

Multiple wars and U.S. weaponisation of the dollar through financial sanctions are making countries in the Global South

think of bypassing the so-far universally accepted Belgium-based SWIFT system for inter-country payments. The attempts to do so have been patchy, but there is an increasingly felt need to have other options.

What are some of the alternatives to the SWIFT payment system?

Project mBridge is a group comprising the Bank of Thailand, the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates, the Digital Currency Institute of the People's Bank of China, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, and the Saudi Central Bank.

The Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), a *Reuters* report said, is backed by the People's Bank of China. China launched the CIPS clearing and settlement services system in 2015 to internationalise yuan use. It allows global banks to clear cross-border yuan transactions directly onshore, instead of through clearing banks in offshore yuan hubs, the report said.

The System for Transfer of Financial

Messages, or SPFS, was developed by Russia in 2014 to bypass Western sanctions. In 2022, Russian banks were cut off from SWIFT, and the SPFS was of help.

SEPAMA, Iran's local interbank telecom system, has as many as 52 branches of Iranian banks and four unnamed foreign banks connecting with 106 banks using the SPFS, the Central Bank of Iran said in 2023.

How are these systems faring?

The Bank for International Settlements (BIS), an international financial institution owned by central banks to foster international monetary and financial cooperation, exited Project mBridge on October 31, 2024, after hand-holding it since 2019, when the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and the Bank of Thailand launched the system. The mBridge, a cross-bloc multi-CBDC platform with no Western bank, attained minimum viability status in 2024. It was envisaged for direct peer-to-peer CBDC

settlement without going through correspondent banks. The project team developed a new blockchain – the mBridge Ledger – custom-built by central banks to serve as a specialised and flexible platform for implementation of multi-currency cross-border payments in CBDCs, the BIS website says.

The BIS's exit came under a cloud, with media reports saying it was because mBridge could provide the basis for a BRICS initiative to circumvent sanctions on Russia. A May 2016 *Forbes* report said that by late 2025, mBridge was in practice "a renminbi-denominated wholesale settlement rail for trade between China and the Gulf, running outside the dollar correspondent system".

The renminbi's inclusion in the basket of currencies making up the Special Drawing Right, an international reserve asset created by the International Monetary Fund, has increased the acceptance of CIPS, said a November 2025 opinion piece in *The Hindu* by Biswajit Dhar, a trade economist and former professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University. The CIPS now has participants in more than 120 countries, including all BRICS members except India.

A *South China Morning Post* report says CIPS processed 679.8 billion yuan of transactions on average per day in 2025. "While the CIPS has gained ground, it remains far smaller in scale than established global systems, such as the U.S.-based Clearing House Interbank Payments System," it said. Beijing now

appears to be moving towards building CIPS into a global platform compliant with multi-currency settlements and other foreign payment channels, the report quoted a study led by Ju Jiandong, a chair professor at Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance.

The SPFS, formed as Russian entities were banned from SWIFT, has grown at a record pace in 2023 as Moscow ramped up efforts to resolve financial shortcomings wrought by sanctions over the Ukraine war. Alla Bakina, director of the Russian central bank's national payment system department, said 50 new entities joined Russia's alternative system in 2023, taking the total to 440, of which more than 100 are non-residents.

How do India-Russia trade settlements happen now?

Russia and India, the second-largest importer of Russian oil, have built a functioning payments infrastructure using roubles and rupees, which now account for 96% of bilateral trade, Ivan Nosov, head of Sberbank in India, said. "I am ready to say that this is one of the best-established mechanisms for Russia's payments with other countries," he said.

According to official data, 22 Russian banks, including Sberbank, Russia's largest lender, which was tasked with developing the payments infrastructure, and 17 Indian banks are currently servicing bilateral trade, a *Reuters* report said.

Deep Analysis for UPSC

- **Why Countries Look Beyond SWIFT:** SWIFT is primarily a secure messaging network rather than a settlement platform. However, because Western jurisdictions can leverage it to freeze assets or cut off rogue states (as seen with Russia), nations fear systemic vulnerability. This has accelerated the search for independent financial architecture.
- **China's CIPS:** The **Cross-Border Interbank Payment System** provides clearing and settlement services for yuan-denominated transactions. While it has expanded to over 120 countries, its scale remains smaller than Western equivalents, and it frequently still relies on SWIFT for basic messaging.
- **Russia's SPFS and Iran's SEPAM:** Developed after the 2014 Crimea crisis, Russia's **System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS)** acts as a domestic and regional resilience mechanism. It has linked with Iran's **SEPAM** system to maintain basic financial connectivity under heavy Western sanctions.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Project mBridge and CBDCs:** Utilizing multi-Central Bank Digital Currencies on custom blockchain ledgers, mBridge aimed to enable direct peer-to-peer cross-border settlements without Western correspondent banks. Despite the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) stepping back amid geopolitical pressures, it remains a blueprint for future digital trade rails.

Related Static Dimension (International Economy & India's Strategy)

- **India's Bilateral Mechanisms:** Rather than adopting bloc-specific systems like CIPS, India has pursued localized resilience. For instance, India and Russia manage a robust rupee-rouble framework serviced by designated Vostro accounts, settling a vast majority of bilateral trade outside standard Western rails.
- **Rupee Internationalisation & Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** India is pushing forward with cross-border linkages via UPI, domestic messaging platforms (SFMS), and exploratory e-rupee pilots, championing financial sovereignty without fragmenting global compliance.
- **Global Financial Fragmentation Risk:** While alternatives provide sovereign insulation against unilateral sanctions, they risk fracturing the global monetary system into isolated trading blocs, increasing transaction friction and compliance overheads for international businesses.

Conclusion

The pursuit of alternatives to SWIFT marks a structural evolution in global trade, driven by the weaponisation of finance and the rise of multipolarity. While alternative platforms like CIPS and SPFS offer localized resilience, universal replacement remains distant due to network effects. Moving forward, a hybrid financial order built on interoperable local currencies and digital currencies is likely to coexist alongside legacy Western institutions.

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: Financial infrastructure has increasingly become an instrument of geopolitical power. Examine the factors driving countries to develop alternatives to established international payment systems such as SWIFT. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

Policing the line between publicity and justice

Within minutes of an arrest anywhere in India today, a face – handcuffed, flanked by policemen, sometimes garlanded with placards cataloguing the crime – starts circulating on social media, often before the accused is produced before a magistrate. A Supreme Court of India PIL seeking a nationwide media protocol/police media briefings has forced a question that Indian policing has quietly avoided: under what law do we do this, should we do it, and where should it stop?

Photographs of wanted persons and reward notices have solved crimes, helped recover missing children, and brought fugitives to book years after trails went cold – the public, alerted, has done what a thinly stretched police force alone could not.

The justification is strong; the legal architecture is weak. What is needed is a clear legal basis, not a habit inherited from mere precedent.

Current law and practice

No single statute permits or prohibits police from publishing photographs of accused persons. What exists is a patchwork of colonial-era regulations, an identification statute and the general architecture of criminal procedure.

Section 84 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 (Section 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure or CrPC) allows courts to proclaim absconders and publish proclamations in newspapers. It says nothing about photographs, but attaching one has become settled practice because it serves the purpose of securing the person's appearance. This judicial process is triggered only after a warrant fails; it does not, however, provide a basis for publicity at the investigation stage.

Publication at the investigation stage rests instead on the general powers of an investigating



Rupin Sharma

IPS officer who is the Director General of Police, Nagaland

Before releasing the photograph of a person accused, arrested, but not yet tried, police must ask whether the investigation requires it

officer (Io): every person must assist the police in preventing and investigating offences, and an Io may examine anyone with relevant information. Publishing photographs on social media to solicit identification, trace absconders or find witnesses is a digital-age extension of the old "Hue and Cry Notice", in State Police Manuals – provisions that predate Independence and whose language ("description of the subject") is broad enough to plausibly cover photographs and rewards.

Reward announcements stand on firmer, narrower ground, typically governed by State Police Regulations under the Police Act, 1861, which vest sanctioning authority in a hierarchy ranging from the Station House Officer (SHO) to the State government. No prior warrant or proclamation is required; it is an exercise of administrative discretion, not a judicial precondition. The Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022, governs the taking, storage and use of measurements – including photographs – for identification, but is often wrongly cited as enabling their publication. It says nothing, however, about circulating them.

Constitutional limits

Article 21, jurisprudence has sharpened, not softened. Presumption of innocence remains central to criminal justice, and courts increasingly recognise that broadcasting an arrested person's face as a fait accompli of guilt, before any charge is framed can cause real, irreversible harm. The Rajasthan High Court termed such practices "institutional humiliation" digital circulation is permanent, searchable and indifferent to later acquittal.

The Bureau of Police Research and Development prepared a draft manual on media briefings by police personnel and shared it with the Ministry of Home Affairs in July 2024. In January 2026, the Supreme Court said the *amicus*

had prepared a Police Manual for Media Briefing and directed the States to evolve appropriate policies based on it within three months. Some categories are already absolute red lines: a juvenile in conflict with the law cannot be identified except in the child's best interest and with the Juvenile Justice Board's permission; a sexual assault survivor's identity is protected by law. The intriguing debate concerns the ordinary adult – accused, arrested, but not yet tried.

The distinction that matters

Publication sits on a scale: at one end, legitimate investigative necessity – crime prevention, public order and law-and-order purposes; at the other, the showcasing of police achievements. Photographs released merely to showcase arrests serve police optics at the accused's expense and can prejudice public opinion before trial.

American law treats "wanted" notices as public-record exceptions to privacy law, but agencies are trained to frame them carefully – "alleged," "wanted for questioning" – to preserve the presumption of innocence even while seeking help. British policing, more conservatively, withholds arrested persons' identities altogether.

What is needed is not an outright ban on soliciting public assistance – that would be legally unwarranted and self-defeating – but a codified, uniform national protocol that distinguishes proportionate, need-based disclosure from prejudicial publicity; mandates blackout categories such as juveniles and sexual-offence complainants; requires time-bound review and takedown once the investigative purpose is served or an accused is discharged or acquitted; and applies uniformly across States.

One question before any photograph goes out could be a beginning: is the disclosure necessary to the investigation, or merely convenient to the narrative?

GS Paper II: Indian Polity

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: "India's transition from non-alignment to multi-alignment reflects a transformation in the nature of strategic autonomy rather than its abandonment." **15Marks, 250 Words)**

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Context

The routine public circulation of arrested suspects on social media—often handcuffed or publicly labeled before a magistrate trial—has brought to the forefront a critical governance dilemma. As law enforcement agencies increasingly use media optics to showcase investigative achievements, courts and civil rights frameworks are forced to evaluate the thin line between transparency and the constitutional right to a fair trial.

Deep Analysis for UPSC

- **The Absence of Explicit Statutory Backing:** There is no single overarching law that expressly permits or prohibits the publication of an unconvicted accused person's identity or photograph. Authorities instead rely on a fragmented patchwork of colonial-era police manuals, the Police Act of 1861, and general provisions under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.
- **Misuse of Ancillary Laws:** Statutes such as the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act are frequently misquoted as legal authorisation for media distribution. In reality, such laws strictly regulate biometric and data collection rather than public broadcasting.
- **The Investigative Necessity vs. Optics Divide:** A clear line must be drawn between essential investigative publicity (such as tracing fugitive absconders or requesting public leads for unsolved heinous crimes) and optics-driven broadcasting that serves to project police efficiency at the expense of an individual's dignity.
- **Institutional Humiliation and Digital Permanence:** Unlike traditional print media, digital circulation is permanent and searchable. Publicizing a suspect's face as a *fait accompli* of guilt inflicts irreversible social, psychological, and professional harm, even if the individual is later acquitted.

Related Static Dimension (Polity & Governance)

- **Constitutional Safeguards:** Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, which judicial interpretation has expanded to incorporate the right to a fair trial and the presumption of innocence.
- **Judicial Directives:** Addressing a Public Interest Litigation, the Supreme Court directed states to formulate comprehensive media briefing policies based on a model manual prepared by the amicus curiae. This framework aims to restrict sensationalism while safeguarding investigative confidentiality.
- **Absolute Legal Red Lines:** Existing frameworks already establish strict prohibitions for vulnerable groups—such as juveniles in conflict with the law and survivors of sexual assault—whose identities are legally shielded from public disclosure.

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Conclusion

Safeguarding public safety and maintaining investigative momentum do not require compromising human dignity. Implementing a standardized national protocol that mandates clear tests of necessity, accountability, and post-trial takedowns will ensure that law enforcement objectives are met without subverting the constitutional bedrock of the presumption of innocence.

