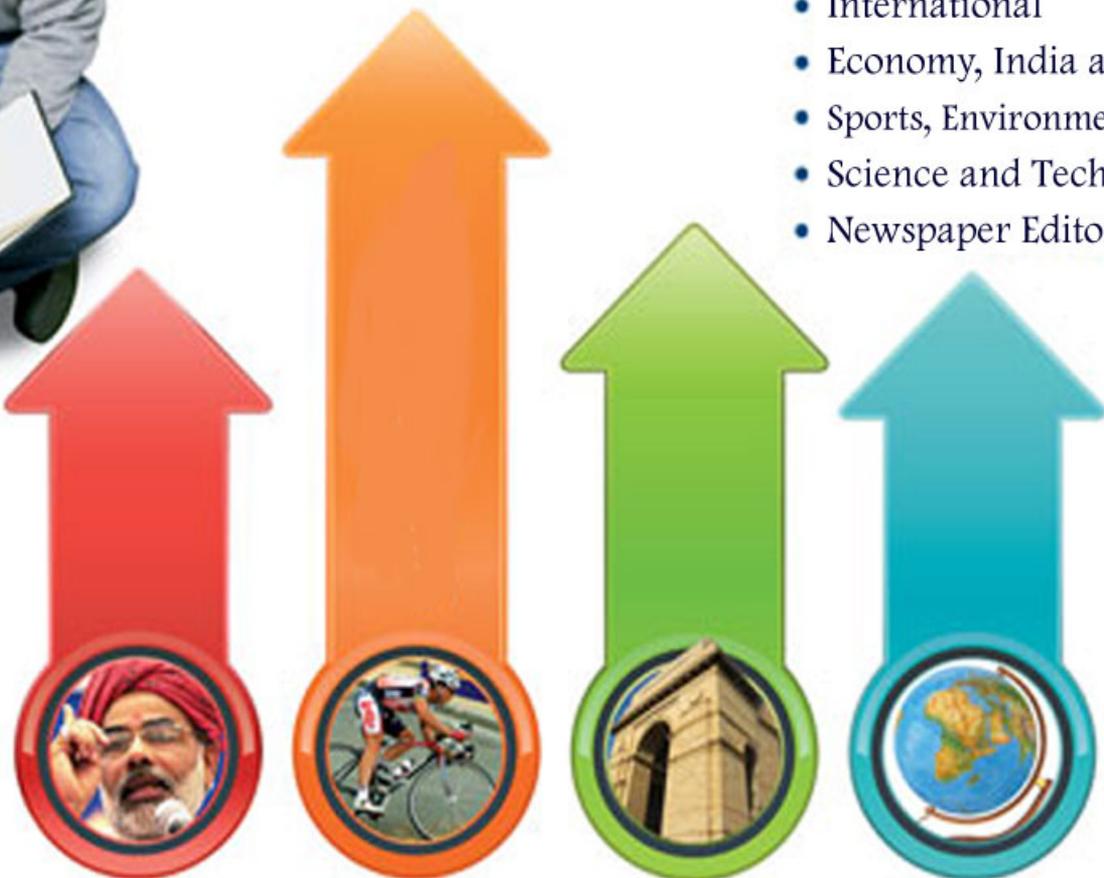


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# Weekly Current Affairs



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# National

## Driving down India's National Highways could be a much safer experience

- Driving down India's National Highways could be a much safer experience by the end of this year, with the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) set to roll out an 'incident management system'.
- Under this, ambulances will be stationed every 50 kilometres to be able to respond to any mishap within 15 minutes of it being reported on a national accident helpline.
- A greener drive is also likely for road users. Trucks running on CNG will be able to hit the highways without worrying about their fuel tank's range.
- CNG fuel stations will come up with wayside amenities on highways as part of a proposal now under discussion between the Ministries of Road Transport and Highways, as well as Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- A larger four-bedded ambulance with medical recovery systems that can save lives within the 'golden hour' will be placed every 100 km in seven States to begin with: Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- National Highways accounted for 35% of total deaths on Indian roads and 29% of the total number of persons injured in road accidents in 2015, as per official statistics.
- The NHAI plans to invite bids for running the ambulance service on highways from manufacturers of such specialised vehicles, hospitals and emergency response service providers, among others, by the end of this month.
- The NHAI has also mooted the inclusion of CNG fuel stations in the wayside amenities coming up along all highways.
- CNG-powered trucks or buses need a top-up after every 100 km, whereas CNG cars can travel up to 200 km before a refill is needed.



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### Centre for an urgent overhaul of inventory management of foodgrains

- The Centre is understood to be carrying out an urgent overhaul of inventory management of foodgrains to eliminate scenarios where it is compelled to allow exports from public stockholding of these items.
- The move is to allay the fears of some World Trade Organisation (WTO)-member nations that India could export surplus grains from food security stockpiles to markets overseas at subsidised prices and distort international trade.
- The development also assumes significance as it comes in the backdrop of increased efforts by India to ensure a permanent solution to the public stockholding issue at the WTO-level talks by this December.
- As per the WTO, public stockholding is a policy tool used by governments to purchase, stockpile and distribute food when needed.
- Incidentally, in July 2012, the Centre had approved the export of two million tonnes of wheat “for managing the over-flowing wheat stocks in the central pool.”
- The move was aimed at “disposing of the excess wheat stocks from the central pool to make space available for the forthcoming kharif crop of paddy and then wheat crop in the rabi Season,” the Centre had said then.
- Meanwhile, Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the Lok Sabha on July 31 that “India has a long-standing position on the need to prioritise the agreed mandate of the (WTO’s ongoing) Doha Round (negotiations).
- In particular, the Ministerial decision to find a permanent solution by December 2017 on public stockholding for food security purposes, which relates to protection of our food-grain procurement programme at Minimum Support Prices.

### Personal liberty cannot be compromised says SC

- Personal liberty cannot be compromised at the altar of what the state may perceive as justice, the Supreme Court has said while granting bail to former Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) chairman Rakesh Kumar Paul in a case of alleged corruption.
- A three-judge Bench headed by Justice Madan B. Lokur, in a majority ruling of 2:1, said Mr. Paul was entitled to ‘default bail’ and the trial judge should release him on such terms as may be reasonable.



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- In the majority verdict, concurred by Justices Lokur and Deepak Gupta, the court said that “in matters of personal liberty, we cannot and should not be too technical and must lean in favour of personal liberty”.
- The apex court was hearing the plea filed by Mr. Paul after his bail pleas were rejected by the Gauhati High Court twice.
- He was arrested in November last year after an FIR was lodged against him under the Prevention of Corruption Act and a charge sheet was filed this January.
- In his dissenting verdict, Justice P.C. Pant held that the allegations did not disclose merely an economic offence but it showed a transgression of the constitutional rights of the victims of the crime.

### Nine Judges bench to deliver verdict on right to privacy

- A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar, will deliver its judgment on the question whether the right to privacy of citizens is a fundamental right under the Constitution.
- The question is important as, in the words of one of the judges on the Bench Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, privacy means “the right to choose solitude if I want solitude or the freedom to socially cohabit, that is, if I want it”.
- Privacy can also extend to other aspects, including bodily integrity, personal autonomy, informational self-determination, protection from state surveillance, dignity, confidentiality, compelled speech, freedom to dissent or move or think.
- The Supreme Court’s judgment gains international significance as privacy enjoys a robust legal framework internationally, though India has remained circumspect.
- The judgment, if it declares privacy a fundamental right, will finally reconcile Indian laws with the spirit of Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, which legally protects persons against the “arbitrary interference” with their privacy, family, home, correspondence, honour and reputation.
- The immediate effect of the judgment would be felt on the government’s Aadhaar scheme which collects personal details and biometrics to identify beneficiaries for accessing social benefits and government welfare schemes.
- A bunch of petitions were filed in the court in 2015 challenging Aadhaar as a breach of privacy, informational self-determination and bodily integrity.
- The petitioners argued that Aadhaar enrolment was the means to a “totalitarian state” and an open invitation for personal data leakage.
- The government countered that the right to privacy of an “elite few” was submissive to the right of the masses to lead a dignified life in a developing country. It said informational privacy did not exist before



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compelling State interests and was not an absolute right.

- It reasoned that collection and use of personal data of citizens for Aadhaar benefits the lives of millions of poor by giving them direct access to public benefits, subsidies, education, food, health and shelter, among other basic rights.
- Both government and service-providers collect personal data such as mobile phone numbers, bank details, addresses, dates of birth, sexual identities, health records, property ownership and taxes without providing safeguards from third parties.
- National programmes such as Aadhaar, NATGRID, CCTNS, RSYB, DNA profiling, reproductive rights of women, privileged communications and brain mapping involve collection of personal data, including fingerprints, iris scans and bodily samples, and their storage in electronic form.
- The Law Commission has recently forwarded a Bill on human DNA profiling. All this adds to the danger of data leakage.
- The Supreme Court has repeatedly asked the government whether it plans to set up a “robust data protection mechanism”.

### Nine judges bench declares right to privacy as inherent part of fundamental rights

- In a unanimous verdict, a nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court declared that privacy is intrinsic to life and liberty and an inherent part of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution.
- The court held that privacy is a natural right that inheres in human beings because they are human. The state does not bestow natural rights on citizens. Natural rights like privacy exist equally in all individuals, irrespective of class, strata, gender or orientation.
- “Privacy is the constitutional core of human dignity. Privacy ensures the fulfilment of dignity,” Justice D.Y. Chandrachud wrote.
- The Centre had argued against the recognition of privacy as a fundamental right. It had assured the court that privacy would be protected through parliamentary statutes.
- But the court retorted that statutory laws “can be made and also unmade by a simple parliamentary majority.”
- The court chided the Centre for describing right to privacy as an “elitist construct.”
- Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal had argued that privacy was the concern of a few, while schemes like Aadhaar, which require citizens to part with their biometric details to the state, reduce corruption and benefit millions of poor.
- However, the court held that privacy is not an absolute right. The government can introduce a law which “intrudes” into privacy for public and legitimate state reasons.
- But a person can challenge this law in any of the constitutional courts of the land — the Supreme Court or the State High Courts — for violation of his fundamental right to privacy.
- Over 40 years after the Supreme Court’s darkest hour when it said citizens had no right to life and liberty



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during the Emergency period, a nine-judge Bench condemned the decision in the infamous ADM Jabalpur case, better known as the habeas corpus case, as “seriously flawed.”

- The habeas corpus judgment in 1976 upheld the Congress government’s move to unlawfully detain citizens, including political rivals, during the Emergency years.
- Of the five judges on that Bench, only Justice H.R. Khanna dissented with the majority opinion of then Chief Justice of India A.N. Ray, Justices M.H. Beg, Y.V. Chandrachud and P.N. Bhagwati. Justice Khanna's dissent cost him the chief justiceship.
- For the first time in Supreme Court's history, a nine-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar, officially condemned the Supreme Court’s majority opinion in the habeas corpus case.

#### **Defence Ministry has delegated administrative and financial powers to BRO**

- As part of efforts to improve the functioning of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and speed up works, the Defence Ministry has delegated administrative and financial powers right up to the level of Chief Engineer and task force commander.
- Earlier, a Chief Engineer in the BRO could give administrative approval of works up to Rs. 10 crore and ADG up to Rs. 20 crore for departmental works.
- For contractual works, all administrative approvals were given by the DGBR, who had powers only up to Rs. 50 crore.
- The BRO, engaged in road construction to provide connectivity to difficult and inaccessible regions, was brought under the control of the Defence Ministry in 2015.
- Completion of strategic border roads has been delayed as was highlighted on various occasions by the Comptroller and Auditor-General and the Parliamentary Standing Committee.

#### **RERA will start issuing show cause notice, to unregistered promoters**

- The Real Estate Regulatory Authority will start issuing show cause notice, to real estate project promoters and agents who have failed to register with the authority.
- Local bodies such as the Chennai Corporation will start sharing information on planning permission applications and building approval data with the Authority shortly.
- In an effort to improve services by RERA, a group of experienced persons who retired from service recently have been roped in by the Authority.
- Just 16 projects and 18 agents have been approved by RERA so far. According to officials, many real



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estate agents and developers whose projects cover more than 500 sq.m or eight dwelling units in the Chennai Metropolitan Area have not registered with the Authority.

- The applications received by RERA will be approved or rejected in 30 days. Any application not processed within the stipulated date will deemed to be approved.
- The deadline for submitting application to RERA was July 31. Another 58 applications for registering projects are likely to be approved shortly.
- The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 is aimed at regulating transactions between buyers and promoters of residential as well as commercial projects.

### Triple talaq verdict to be delivered by constitutional bench

- A five-judge Supreme Court Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar, will pronounce its judgment on the legality of the Islamic personal law practice of triple talaq .
- The court will decide if the law, which allows a Muslim man to divorce his wife by saying talaq (divorce) thrice, violates the fundamental and human rights of Muslim women.
- On October 16, 2015, the court questioned if Muslim personal law practices of marriage and divorce reduce women to chattels. In a rare move, it registered a suo motu PIL petition to examine if arbitrary divorce, polygamy and nikah halala violate women's dignity.
- It rued the missed opportunity to address gender inequality in both the Shah Bano and Danial Latifi cases. In the Shah Bano case, it had merely goaded the government to frame the Uniform Civil Code.
- The Supreme Court's judgment on the constitutionality of triple talaq may also decide the age-old debate whether personal laws can be brought under the ambit of Article 13 of the Constitution.
- While the All India Muslim Personal Law Board ( AIMPLB) has argued that the Supreme Court does not have jurisdiction to strike down provisions of personal law.
- Organisations calling for reform and Muslim women from various walks of life across the country have urged the court to declare triple talaq and polygamy as "un-Islamic".
- This is the first time that aggrieved persons themselves have approached the apex court in person to settle the law on whether religious law is immune from constitutional standards enshrined under fundamental rights.



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- Article 13 includes in its ambit any “ordinance, order, by-law, rule, regulation, notification and even customs and usages” passed or made by the Legislature or any other “competent authority”.
- It mandates that any law in force in the country before or after the commencement of Constitution should not violate the fundamental rights of citizens enshrined in Part III.
- A judicial declaration from a Constitution Bench under Article 13 that personal laws are liable to comply with the fundamental rights guaranteed by Constitution would bring religious law, even uncodified practices, under judicial review.
- In the past, courts have made discordant notes about the immunity enjoyed by personal laws. In 1951, the Bombay High Court in State of Bombay versus Narasu Appa Mali held that personal law is not ‘law’ under Article 13. The judgment was never challenged in the Supreme Court.
- In Ahmedabad Women Action Group versus Union of India , the Supreme Court was asked to consider that unilateral divorce by talaq and polygamy violated Articles 14 and 15.
- The court rejected the claim, saying it was for the legislature to determine. Whether this Constitution Bench will resolve the age-old dispute or leave it to the legislature to decide is to be seen.

### With a historic 3:2 majority judgment SC has set aside Triple Talaq

- A historic 3:2 majority judgment, delivered by a multi-faith Constitution Bench, set aside instant talaq as a “manifestly arbitrary” practice not protected by Article 25 (freedom of religion) of the Constitution.
- On the five-judge Bench, Justices Kurian Joseph and Rohinton Fali Nariman gave separate judgments against the validity of instant talaq.
- Justice U.U. Lalit supported Justice Nariman’s view that instant talaq given by a Muslim man “capriciously and whimsically,” without an attempt at reconciliation, was “manifestly arbitrary and violative of Article 14 (right to equality).”
- The triumvirate of Justices Kurian, Nariman and Lalit overwhelmed the minority verdict pronounced by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar and endorsed by Justice S. Abdul Nazeer, the juniormost judge on the Bench.
- Chief Justice J.S. Khehar held that talaq-e-biddat , as a personal law practice, was an integral part of Article 25 (freedom of religion). Ninety per cent of Muslims in India follow the practice. It was



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constitutionally protected as a fundamental right, he said.

- The Chief Justice reasoned that talaq-e-biddat was in vogue for over 1,400 years, and this made instant talaq a “matter of religious faith,” which cannot be tested on the touchstone of Article 14.
- He held that personal laws like instant talaq were an 'exception' to the Constitution's avowed aim to protect gender equality.
- But Justice Nariman countered that Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act of 1937 has already recognised triple talaq as a statutory right and not a fundamental right.
- Instant talaq was no longer a personal law to remain free from the rigours of the fundamental rights as it comes under the ambit of Article 13 of the Constitution, he said.
- Article 13 mandates that any law, framed before or after the Constitution, should not be violative of the fundamental rights.
- Objecting to the Chief Justice's line of reasoning, Justice Kurian, in his separate verdict, held that “merely because a practice ( talaq-e-biddat ) has continued for long (over 1,400 years), that by itself cannot make it valid”.
- The Chief Justice had reasoned that instant talaq cannot be invalidated just because the Koran does not expressly provide for or approve of it. Talaq-e-biddat , though bad in theology, was considered good in law, he held.
- Justice Kurian also referred to Section 2 of the Shariat Act, observing that the statute had put an end to the “unholy, oppressive and discriminatory customs and usages in the Muslim community. After Shariat Act, no practice against the tenet of Islam is permissible.”

#### Microsoft will come to the aid of farmers in Karnataka for price prediction

- If all goes according to plan, software giant Microsoft will come to the aid of farmers in Karnataka who constantly struggle with an unpredictable market.
- The Agriculture Department has signed MoU with Microsoft India to develop an unique ‘farm price forecasting model’ using the latest IT tools in a bid to help farmers, administrators and other stakeholders understand the market behaviour in advance.
- The proposed initiative is said to be the first-of-its-kind in the country, as it is a ‘multi-variate’ one that takes into consideration various factors beyond the conventional supply-demand equation.



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- It will examine a slew of related factors, including weather, rainfall and external factors, that impact market behaviour.
- On the other hand, the forecast would help the government prepare in advance for market intervention if there is an indication of price crash, he pointed out. The model is expected to be in place for the next kharif crop.
- Microsoft has already taken up a 100-day study on the price pattern of onion and toor dal. Depending upon the outcome, the price forecasting model would be applied to other crops later.
- The initiative appears to have caught the attention of the Centre, which has sought suggestions from the KAPC on the importance of price forecasting for its initiative to double farmers' incomes. Microsoft would also develop a software for providing sowing advisory services to farmers.

### Commission to look into sub-categorisation of OBC

- In a move that could have a far-reaching political and social impact, the Union Cabinet approved a proposal to set up a commission which will examine the issue of sub-categorisation of the Other Backward Classes (OBC).
- The committee has a three-point mandate. One, it has to examine the "extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation" among various castes and communities that come under the Central OBC list.
- The committee also has to work out the mechanism, criteria and parameters for the actual sub-categorisation. This will be tricky. The actual reservation will continue to be 27% and within this the committee will have to do the re-arranging.
- For example, if the committee comes to the conclusion that in the last many years Yadavs have benefited far more than Khatiks or Sainis then the amount of reservation for them will be increased vis-à-vis the Yadavs.
- The third task is bringing order to the Central list of OBCs by removing any repetitions.
- The committee will work on a tight schedule and have to deliver the report in 12 weeks.
- The Union Cabinet also increased the "creamy layer" ceiling for the Other Backward Classes to Rs. 8 lakh per annum from the existing Rs. 6 lakh for Central government jobs.
- This means that the umbrella of reservation is widened and those earning up to Rs. 8 lakh per annum would now get the benefits.

### Nine judges bench overruled judgement on Section 377

- The nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court ripped apart its own judgment of 2014 upholding Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalises consensual sexual acts of adults in private.
- The Bench observed that the chilling effect of Section 377 "poses a grave danger to the unhindered



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fulfilment of one's sexual orientation, as an element of privacy and dignity."

- In separate judgments, the Constitution Bench, led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar, concluded that the 2014 verdict by a two-judge Bench of the apex court pandered to a "majoritarian" view.
- They turn down the LGBT community their inherent fundamental rights of life, personal liberty, equality and gender discrimination.
- The 2014 judgment's view that "a miniscule fraction of the country's population constitutes lesbians, gays, bisexuals or transgenders" was not a sustainable basis to deny the right to privacy, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud observed in his judgment.

### Right to privacy judgement could have some bearing on Animal slaughter judgement

- The landmark judgment declaring right to privacy a fundamental right would have "some bearing" in matters relating to slaughter of cows, bulls and bullocks in Maharashtra, the Supreme Court said.
- The Bombay High Court had on May 6 last year struck down Sections 5(D) and 9(B) of the Maharashtra Animals Preservation (Amendment) Act, 1995.
- While Section 5(D) criminalises possession of flesh of cows, bulls or bullocks, slaughtered outside Maharashtra, Section 9(B) imposed burden on the accused to prove that meat or flesh possessed by him/her does not belong to these animals.
- The SC observed this while hearing a batch of appeals filed against the HC verdict decriminalising the possession of beef in case of animals slaughtered outside the state.
- A Bench comprising Justices A.K. Sikri and Ashok Bhushan was told by senior advocate Indira Jaising, representing some of the petitioners, that after privacy verdict, the right to eat food of one's choice was now protected under privacy.
- Senior advocate C.U. Singh also told the apex court that the privacy judgement would have to be looked into while deciding the issue.

### Target reduced for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

- Midway through the government's ambitious Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), which promises housing for all by 2022, the Urban Development Ministry has cut down the scheme's target.
- "The estimation of 1.87 crore houses was based on a 2012 survey. When we did a ground survey, which is still going on, we found that the demand is less. We now peg it at 1.2 crore," Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary said.
- Despite the revised estimates, the speed with which the project is being implemented is less than



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satisfactory.

- By 2017-18, the government was to construct 12 lakh houses under the PMAY, out of this till last year only 1.49 lakh houses have been constructed.
- The Centre seeks to construct 26 lakh houses in 2018-19, 26 lakh in 2019-20, 30 lakh in 2020-21 and 29.80 lakh in the 2021-22 period.
- The Ministry will hold an “India Housing Construction Technology Challenge” calling worldwide bids. The firm that offers a cost-effective technology that is adaptable to Indian climatic conditions will be selected.

### Report claims that picture still not clear on Bt. Cotton

- Reigniting the debate on GM crops, a Parliamentary panel headed by Congress MP in a report said the government agencies have portrayed “a rosy picture” on Bt Cotton which is far removed from the truth.
- The report of the Standing Committee on Science and Technology claimed that the government cited only overall cotton output and not the average yield in area.
- “India’s cotton yields increased by 69% in the five years (2000-2005) when Bt Cotton was less than 6% of total cotton area, but by only 10% in the 10 years from 2005-2015 when Bt Cotton grew to 94% of the total cotton area,” the report noted.
- The “duality of the claims about the increase in yield of cotton” needs further examination, the committee said. It slammed the government for its “casual” approach to the need for a scientific study of GM crop impact on health.
- The committee noted that 20 years after introduction of GM crops in 1996, only six countries continue to account for over 90 % of all GM crop area globally including U.S., Brazil, Argentina, Canada, China and India.
- The Ministry of Agriculture conceded to the committee that herbicide-tolerant gene may escape through pollen into nearby farm and fields, to another GM or non-GM crop.
- Finally, unless bio-safety and socio-economic desirability studies are done through a participatory, independent and transparent process, the committee has recommended that no GM crop should be introduced.



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# INDIA AND WORLD

## China says it values Pakistan's role in Afghanistan issue

- China slammed India for apparently building a new road in the Ladakh sector, but lavished praise on Pakistan, which it said was a key partner.
- Ms. Hua's comments come against the backdrop of a crisis in the Doklam plateau near India-China-Bhutan tri-junction, where Indian and Chinese troops are engaged in a standoff over road-building by China.
- "Indian side is closely following China's road-building recently but India's action itself has proven that the Indian side says something and does another," she added.
- China also backed Pakistan as its partner in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ms. Hua cited a conversation between U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and China's State Councillor Yang Jiechi, where he commended Pakistan on its role in Afghanistan.
- But quoting Mr. Yang, the spokesperson said: "We also value Pakistan's role in the Afghanistan issue and respect Pakistan's sovereign and reasonable security concerns."
- "Against the current backdrop we appreciate Pakistan's efforts in insuring security... in CPEC".

## Doklam issue didn't feature in talks between India and Nepal

- The two-month old standoff between India and China at Doklam did not feature in the official talks between visiting Nepali Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and PM Modi, said officials, but India-China tensions were the highlight of an event that followed, where Mr. Deuba and several Ministers were present.
- "We have excellent relations with China and don't face problems from them," Mr. Deuba told an audience at the event organised by the India Foundation here.
- "India need not have any apprehensions about that. However, under no circumstances would Nepal allow its soil to be used against India," he added.
- Mr. Deuba was responding to a speech by Consumer Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, who had alluded to problems that Nepal could face from its strong northern neighbour.
- Referring to the strain in ties between India and Nepal in 2015, when a blockade during protests by Madhesi groups at the India Nepal border had cut essential goods and fuel supplies to Kathmandu.
- Mr. Deuba's comments reflect the tightrope that Nepal has been attempting to walk in the past few months, especially after it joined China's Belt and Road Initiative, which India had rejected.



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# International

## Venezuela praises India's stand on the ongoing disturbances

- The world would be a safer place if the U.S. emulates India's policy of non-interference in the affairs of other countries, says Venezuelan Ambassador to India Augusto Montiel.
- Mr. Montiel observed that India had maintained an independent position on the ongoing disturbances in Venezuela and has avoided pressure from the U.S.
- In June, when the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. threatened to leave the U.N. Human Rights Council if it did not sanction Venezuela, India was one of the 57 countries that cosigned a statement of support for Venezuela."
- Venezuela has been facing unrest since March when the government of president Nicolas Maduro faced protests from the Opposition following his attempts at constitutional reforms.
- The subsequent crisis has seen clashes almost every day. On August 17, clashes between government guards and convicts in a prison claimed 37 lives and drew strong comments from various members of the U.N.
- However, India has maintained a cautious position on the issue and is yet to criticise either of the parties in the crisis. The envoy said the Non-Aligned Movement, of which Venezuela is the current chair, have been supportive of the government of Mr. Maduro.
- The previous NAM summit was hosted last year in Venezuela where the Indian delegation was led by the then Vice-President, Hamid Ansari. He said the support of NAM will be visible in the U.N. session in September-October.
- Venezuela has been one of the main energy suppliers to India from the western hemisphere and there are obvious concerns that instability in the country could affect India's energy needs.

## U.S. to announce their new strategy for Afghanistan

- President Donald Trump will announce his new strategy for Afghanistan — which his administration now calls a South Asia strategy — during an address to the nation, the White House has announced.



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- Mr. Trump will “provide an update on the path forward for America’s engagement in Afghanistan and South Asia,” a statement from the White House said.
- Defence Secretary James Mattis said the President has taken the “strategic decisions,” and the Pentagon would follow it up once it is announced.
- “The process was rigorous... I’m very comfortable that the strategic process was sufficiently rigorous and did not go in with a pre-set condition in terms of what questions could be asked or what decisions would be made,” he said.
- The President had, during his election campaign, spoken against American involvements in long-drawn foreign battles, but Afghanistan poses a security threat to homeland.
- National security is another of his critical political planks, and his new Afghan strategy will have to balance his desire to disengage from conflicts with the need to secure America against another terrorist strike.

#### **U.S. linked a proposal for India playing a bigger role in Afghanistan**

- President Donald Trump, who announced his new Afghan strategy, linked a proposal for India playing a bigger role in the war-torn country to its trade surplus with the United States.
- “We appreciate India’s important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, but India makes billions of dollars in trade with the United States, and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development,” he said.
- By inviting India to be a partner in Afghanistan, Mr. Trump has entirely overruled Pakistan’s position that India’s involvement to its west is part of the problem.
- The President, who repeatedly took potshots at his predecessor, Barack Obama, without naming him, however, appeared to follow the previous administration’s understanding of South Asia as a nuclear flash point.
- Defense Secretary James Mattis had recently said America was “not winning” in Afghanistan.
- The President said America will fight the war to victory and defined victory in terms similar to his predecessors — to prevent a terrorist attack originating from the region, and to politically stabilise Afghanistan.



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- The new strategy in Afghanistan, which seeks troops increase in the country, is an effort to reverse the gains made by the Taliban in the last year or so.
- Once the Afghan government regains the upper hand, the U.S. will seek a political settlement, the President said.
- Secretary of State Rex Tillerson explained the new U.S policy as an effort to force the Taliban to negotiation.

### US commits troops in Afghanistan for an open-ended period of time

- The new U.S. strategy for South Asia, unveiled by President Donald Trump after months of deliberations, has many old elements, but in a departure from the past, it commits troops in Afghanistan for an open-ended period of time.
- The policy also sets the stage for a new wave of U.S. offensive against Islamist forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- The Pentagon and NATO allies are redrawing their operational plans in America's longest war that began in 2001, and an increase in troop levels is expected soon.
- Describing India as "a key security and economic partner of the United States," the President said America would further "develop its strategic partnership with India — the world's largest democracy."
- He also urged India to play a larger role in providing economic and development assistance to the war-torn Afghanistan.
- In another component of his South Asia policy that pleases India, he said America would no longer tolerate Pakistan's policy of harbouring terrorists.
- Hitting out at cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, India welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump's new policy on Afghanistan and said his move would help target "safe havens" of terrorism in South Asia.



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- Senior diplomats said the American leader's call for an end to Pakistan's involvement in terrorism in Afghanistan and his support for Afghan-led peace process had addressed a core Indian concern.
- Mr. Trump urged India to do more to help Afghanistan with its developmental needs and urged Pakistan to stop terror attacks that originate from its territory.

### US believes India's presence in Afghanistan doesn't pose any threat to Pakistan

- India's economic activities in Afghanistan pose "no direct threat" to Pakistan, and Islamabad needs to change some of its "unhelpful behaviour" by cooperating with the U.S. in achieving counter-terrorism goals in the region said U.S.
- U.S. President Donald Trump has sought an enhanced role for India in bringing peace in Afghanistan as he ruled out a hasty withdrawal of troops while announcing his Afghanistan and South Asia policy.
- Mr. Trump had said that a critical part of his South Asia policy was to further develop America's strategic partnership with India. He also sternly warned Pakistan for providing safe havens to terrorists.
- "While we welcome India's role in Afghanistan, it has a lot of goodwill, they are doing developmental projects. They have given \$3 billion in aid and U.S. appreciates that and wants that to continue."
- "I am not going to discuss the steps and measures that the U.S. is considering pursuing with Pakistan," the official said when asked about the critical statements coming out of Pakistan after Mr. Trump announced his South Asia strategy.

### Qatar comes up with new Domestic Employment Law

- Qatar has approved a law limiting domestic staff to a maximum of 10 hours' work a day, the first such protection for thousands of household maids, nannies and cooks in the emirate.
- The "Domestic Employment Law" also orders employers to pay staff wages at the end of each month and entitles workers to at least one day off per week and an annual leave of three weeks.
- They will also receive end-of-service benefits equating to a minimum of three weeks' wages for each year of service when their contract ends. The law prohibits staff being recruited from abroad who are older than 60 and younger than 18.



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- Hundreds of thousands of foreign workers have flocked to the gas-rich Gulf emirate in recent years, including almost 1,00,000 women working as house staff.
- Other domestic workers covered by the new law include cleaners, gardeners and drivers.
- Although Qatar has come under severe international pressure to improve its record on the treatment of construction workers in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup, until now domestic staff have not been protected by any legislation.
- Human Rights Watch backed the introduction of the law. The legislation comes at a time when Qatar's laws remain under scrutiny from the International Labour Organisation.
- The UN body has given Qatar until November to improve its human rights record or face sanctions.

#### Pakistan rattled with US President's comment on its role in terror

- Pakistan rejected the comments made by U.S. President Donald Trump about its counter-terror approach.
- A statement issued by the National Security Committee after a five-hour meeting said "scapegoating Pakistan will not help in stabilising Afghanistan". The meeting was headed by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.
- President Trump had earlier said that Pakistan was providing safe havens to terrorists.
- The Committee stressed that India cannot be a net security provider in South Asia as it has conflictual relationships with its neighbours and is "pursuing a policy of destabilising Pakistan from the east and the west".
- On concerns about nuclear security, the Security Committee said that "as a responsible Nuclear weapon state, Pakistan has in place a robust and credible command and control system which has been universally recognised and appreciated."

#### Bangladesh doesn't allow Rohingya refugees

- Bangladesh's border guards pushed back 146 Rohingya refugees who were coming to the country in the wake of fresh tensions between Rohingya insurgents and Myanmar security forces.
- Border guards intercepted and sent back refugees from different points of the Naf river, said deputy commander of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) battalion in Teknaf.



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- Guards gave the 146 refugees, including women and children, primary care before sending them back to their country, the BGB said.
- An estimated 87,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar and come to Bangladesh since late last year, following a military offensive in Rakhine that began in October.



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# Science and Technology

## Scientific evidence of copper vessel's antibacterial property

- There is an age-old practice of storing drinking water in copper vessels to rid the water of bacteria.
- Scientific evidence of copper vessel's antibacterial property became available in March 2012 when a paper found that water stored in copper vessels for 16 hours killed pathogenic bacteria such as E. coli and cholera causing Vibrio cholerae O1, and Salmonella species.
- Now, researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru have developed a water-filter membrane with copper ions to make drinking water safe.
- Though copper oxide is an excellent antibacterial agent, it can be toxic if the concentration of copper in the water exceeds 1.3 ppm (WHO standard).
- So the researchers coated copper oxide with a biocompatible polymer for controlled release of copper ions. A porous gel-like structure of copper oxide coated with the polymer was used for coating the membrane. The polymer used for coating copper has anti-fouling property.
- The SMA polymer coated on the membrane, which gets partially hydrolysed when in contact with water, interacts with the outer membrane of the bacteria to produce disc shaped structures.
- This enzyme released from the bacteria cleaves the polymer coating found on copper oxide resulting in controlled release of copper ions from the membrane into water.
- But when water with very high concentration of bacteria (10,000 colony-forming units of bacteria per ml of water) was used, the amount of copper ions in water at the end of four hours was 1.6 ppm, which is more than the WHO limit.
- But the ability of copper ions to kill bacteria found in high concentration was four orders of magnitude higher at the end of four hours.
- These membranes with controlled release of copper ion may turn out to be a potential candidate for water purification applications with enhanced antibacterial and antifouling performances.

Solar eclipse to be visible across whole U.S.



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- A solar eclipse is set to take place, which will be visible across all of continental United States. It will begin at the Oregon coast (at 9.36 p.m. IST on Sunday) and end at the South Carolina coast.
- About 16% of the U.S. territory will witness a total eclipse, which will last longest at Carbondale, Illinois, for 2 minutes and 41.6 seconds.
- Since this eclipse has the special feature of lasting for so long over the mainland, scientists across the world are trying to use it to verify their theories on the Sun.
- This can help them model “space weather” and predict solar storms that can affect the operation of satellites and even electric power grids on Earth.
- The “great American solar eclipse” is keeping scientists at the Centre for Excellence in Space Sciences India (CESSI) in the Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISER), Kolkata, busy even before begins.
- Using computer simulations, they have predicted the shape that the outer layer of the Sun — its corona — will take during the total eclipse.
- If their prediction is correct, their model of the Sun will be validated and they can then fine-tune it to make predictions of space weather, for one, which is CESSI’s eventual mandate.
- Space weather impacts modern day technologies such as satellite operations, telecommunications, GPS navigational networks and electric power grids.
- So, astronomical events such as an eclipse, which offers a chance of diagnosing the coronal magnetic field, are an opportunity for solar physicists to test their theoretical ideas and models to be able to refine them.

#### Indian-American doctor developed medicine for sepsis

- Each year globally, more than 600,000 infants die of sepsis, a condition of bacterial infection that spreads fast and leads to organ failure.
- But a therapy developed by a team led by an American professor of Indian origin, Pinaki Panigrahi, over the last 20 years and details of which were published in Nature this week could do wonders.
- The therapy has been found to reduce the risk of infection by 40% in trials and it can be inexpensive — less than one dollar for a course.
- The therapy is to feed the infant with good bacteria that will populate his/her gut and block harmful bacteria.
- The probiotic bacterial strain is aided with a non-absorbable sugar to enhance its ability to effectively



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colonise the gut — researchers call the probiotic-sugar combination a synbiotic.

- The oral therapy starts during day 2-4 of life, as a preventive measure, much like a vaccine.
- More than a quarter of neonatal deaths in India are due to sepsis, which is one of the two most common causes of neonatal deaths globally, according to a study published in the Lancet Global Health in 2016. In a significant number of cases, the infection probably begins in the gut.
- The probiotic study in neonates, largest in medical history, covered 4,556 babies, and stopped short of the initial plan to cover 8,000 of them.
- The indiscriminate use of wide-spectrum antibiotics is causing resistance to many drugs and a probiotic solution such as this could avert a health crisis in the making.
- The concept of consuming probiotics in the form of curd and the importance of gut health dates back to the originating days of Ayurveda that dates back to 6,000 BC.



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# Business and Economy

## Production of coconut-activated carbon has been hit due to GST

- Production of coconut-activated carbon, used for purification of water, edible oil and gas and in sectors such as healthcare and cosmetics, has been hit due to increasing raw material prices post the implementation of GST.
- Whole coconuts, coconut kernel and husk do not attract GST. However, 5% duty is levied on coconut shells. These shells are sold by farmers and vendors in the unorganised sector to charcoal producers.
- Charcoal is not covered under GST. It is the raw material used by activated carbon producers. Activated carbon attracts 18% GST. There are about 15 units in South India making activated carbon from coconut shells.
- According to data available with the Coconut Development Board, activated carbon is exported mainly to the U.S., the U.K. and South Korea. This increased to 40,132 tonnes worth Rs. 402 crore during the same period last year.
- In the case of supply of activated carbon to the domestic market, the buyers are able to take input credit of the GST paid. But, costs have gone up for exporters. The activated carbon industry is growing at 5% annually and exports at 10% to 15%.

## Centre and RBI are working on a scheme to boost capital in public sector banks

- The Centre and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) are working on a scheme to boost capital in public sector banks reeling under the pressure of bad loans. RBI Governor Urjit Patel emphasised time-bound resolution of stressed assets.
- “NPA resolution would necessitate a higher recapitalisation of these banks,” Mr. Patel said. “The Government and the RBI are in dialogue to prepare a set of measures to enable state-run banks to shore up the requisite capital in a time-bound manner,” he said.
- Mr. Patel said measures could include a combination of raising capital from the market, dilution of government holding, additional capital infusion by the government, mergers based on strategic decisions and sale of non-core assets.



- Observing that the ratio of gross non-performing assets in the banking system was 9.6% and that the stressed assets ratio was at 12%, as at the end of March, Mr. Patel said the persistently high ratio over the last few years was a matter of concern.
- He said 86.5% of GNPA's are accounted for by large borrowers that are defined as borrowers with aggregate exposure of Rs. 5 crore and above.
- RBI had recommended that banks initiate insolvency proceedings for 12 large defaulters, constituting 25% of the system's NPAs. Lenders would have to take a haircut in the process, the RBI acknowledged.

#### **Sikka's resignation brought focus on corporate governance again**

- The exit of Vishal Sikka as the chief of multinational IT giant Infosys brings forth the issue of corporate governance yet again.
- Market participants said the capital markets regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), needed to intervene in such matters to protect the interest of investors, especially the retail segment.
- "The supervisory board, comprising eminent personalities, will monitor performance as well as the value system for the company and this alone will create wealth for the company and keep it on the tracks," he added.
- SEBI had constituted a committee on corporate governance under the chairmanship of Uday Kotak in June this year.
- The committee is expected to submit its report within four months. Market participants said that the Infosys issue too should be considered in detail by the committee.
- "Unfortunately, this had degenerated into an ugly battle played out with the media and as a result we are seeing whatever has happened," said Mr. Bhat.
- Another view is that differences between stakeholders on the vision for the company caused the turmoil.
- "This is a fight between modern, free-market capitalism on the one side and the forces of 'compassionate capitalism' on the other," he said.
- The governing board or a supervisory board, he said, would be an important top layer setting the direction for such companies.

#### **India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum to focus on Visa curbs**

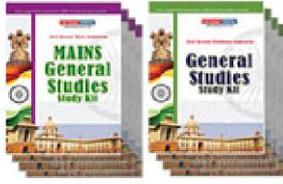


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- The Centre will, during the India-U.S. Trade Policy Forum (TPF) meeting likely in October, raise Indian industry's concerns over the U.S. visa 'curbs' and the 'delay' in inking a bilateral social security pact (or totalisation agreement).
- In the TPF meeting, the premier forum to resolve bilateral trade and investment issues, the U.S. is expected to table its worries over India's 'restrictions' on e-commerce as well as the 'challenges' faced by American innovative industries due to India's 'weak' Intellectual Property Rights regime.
- In addition, New Delhi would take up the 'non-tariff barriers' by the U.S. that are hurting Indian agriculture, pharmaceuticals and other industrial exports, while Washington is likely to raise its concerns over India's 'excessively high tariffs' on imports.
- Deputy Assistant USTR for South and Central Asia, and Brendan Lynch, Director for India at the USTR Office, will participate in a round-table discussion on August 23 being organised by the advocacy body U.S.-India Business Council to take inputs for the TPF meeting and the comprehensive review of bilateral trade ties.
- There were doubts about the future of the TPF, especially following a U.S. government statement on August 15 mentioning that U.S. President and PM Modi had decided to 'establish a new 2-by-2 ministerial dialogue that will elevate their strategic consultations.'
- However this meant that the 'commercial' track will be taken out of the India-US 'Strategic and Commercial Dialogue' (S&CD), and from now on take place independently.

#### Public sector banks have most of the debts

- The country's largest lender State Bank of India accounts for over 27% of the total amount owed to public sector banks by wilful defaulters.
- As many as 1,762 wilful defaulters owed Rs. 25,104 crore to SBI as on March 31, putting pressure on its balance sheet.
- Punjab National Bank (PNB) is next on the list with 1,120 wilful defaulters having outstanding non-performing assets of Rs. 12,278 crore. Together these two banks account for Rs. 37,382 crore or 40% of the total outstanding loans.
- Total outstanding loans due to PSU banks by wilful defaulters amounted to Rs. 92,376 crore, according to the Finance Ministry data.
- The total outstanding loans by wilful defaulters rose to Rs. 92,376 crore at the end of financial year 2016-17, from Rs. 76,685 crore at the end of last fiscal 2015-16, up 20.4%.



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### Discussions are at a 'well-advanced' stage for Australia's uranium sale to India

- Discussions are at a 'well-advanced' stage for Australia's uranium sale to India, to fuel nuclear power plants in the energy-starved developing nation, according to an Australian government body's top official.
- Dismissing allegations that uranium supply was facing 'delays' due to the Australian coal mining sector 'lobbying' to protect its interests, the official, however, said coal exports will not slow down any time soon from Australia for use in India's thermal power stations.
- Leonie Muldoon, Minister, Commercial and Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner, South Asia, Australian Trade and Investment Commission said that the process of uranium sale was progressing as anticipated by the two sides and without delays.
- Rejecting reports regarding the alleged efforts by Australian coal mining sector to 'delay' uranium supply to India, Ms. Muldoon said, "It's [the allegations] more of a domestic issue in Australia... it's not appropriate for me to comment."
- She said Mr. Turnbull and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a one-on-one meeting in April as they were enthusiastic about energy and energy solutions.
- On the reported environmental concerns over such mining projects, Ms. Muldoon said, "In Australia, we have very tough environmental regulations. Therefore, Australian companies have developed a range of technology solutions to deal with these aspects and to ensure that the environment remains protected."

### Indian Tea Association (ITA) has sought a revival package for the industry

- Estimating a Rs. 400-crore loss to the Darjeeling tea industry due to prolonged closure, the Indian Tea Association (ITA) has sought a revival package for the industry, including moratorium on long-term loans and interest-subsidies.
- In an appeal to the Govt, ITA said that the Darjeeling tea industry had already incurred an estimated crop loss of about 4.5 million kg due to the more than two-month-long strike called by the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha.
- "The indefinite shutdown in tea estates in Darjeeling has coincided with the high-quality second flush period which generates substantial export revenue ..this has caused severe financial stress to



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the industry threatening its viability," according to the letter. Wages had not been paid to the workers since the gardens' closure, it added.

- ITA secretary general Arijit Raha feared a loss in the export market for Darjeeling tea as importers/international blenders and packeteers may be compelled to replace Darjeeling tea with leaves sourced from other origins.
- ITA has sought relief on repayment of loans by a two-year extension and 6% interest subsidy. The industry's loan exposure is about Rs. 500 crore and the interest subsidy is estimated at about Rs. 30 crore annually.
- Additionally, ITA also sought expeditious settlement of pending subsidy claims for the development works, enhancement of the 3% export incentive rate, and waiver of fees on certificate of origin (payable to the Tea Board).
- However, the Darjeeling Tea Association has not yet finalised its revival package, saying it would need further discussions with the Tea Board. The loss assessments were, however, close to the ITA estimates.

#### Alternate mechanism for merger of PSB's

- Paving the way for quicker consolidation among public sector banks, the Cabinet approved 'in-principle' the constitution of an alternative mechanism, likely to be a ministerial group, that will oversee the proposals for mergers among banks.
- Stressing that the decision to create 'strong and competitive banks will be solely based on commercial considerations and such decisions must start from the boards of the banks,' the Minister said the proposals received from banks will be reviewed by the members of the alternative mechanism, enabling 'quick decisions.'
- The Centre's nudge towards consolidation among public sector banks assumes significance as most of them are grappling with huge levels of non-performing assets or NPAs, slow credit offtake and resultant pressures on capital adequacy.
- Rating agency Crisil termed the Cabinet decision as an important first step towards kick starting the consolidation process and said such mergers would improve NPA resolution following swifter decision making and an unified strategy.
- When asked the likely criteria for bank mergers, the Minister said these will have to be driven by the bank boards.
- An official statement said that stronger public sector banks will help meet the credit needs of a growing



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economy, absorb shocks and give them the capacity to raise resources without depending unduly on the state exchequer.

- This year's Budget provided Rs. 10,000 crore for bank recapitalisation, which, most bankers said, was inadequate. Mr. Jaitley had, however, held out the possibility of allocating more funds for banks if the requirement arose.
- The Centre said though suggestions to have fewer but stronger banks had been around since 1991, it was in May 2016 that effective action to consolidate them began.
- The merger of six banks into SBI was completed in 'record time unlike earlier mergers of State Banks of Indore and Saurashtra,' it stressed.

### RBI is not in favour of NBFC's to accept deposits

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is not in favour of allowing non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) to accept deposits, Deputy Governor N.S. Vishwanathan said.
- Mr. Vishwanathan said the licences already given would, however, not be revoked.
- The Deputy Governor said that NBFCs were one of the bright spots of the Indian economy, with advances growing by 14-15%, which was higher than at banks, Mr. Vishwanathan noted.
- The RBI regulates NBFCs for three reasons, he said. The reasons include depositor protection, the fact that many NBFCs rely on banks to finance their liabilities and also to regulate the interface between customers and NBFCs.

### RBI said banks must initiate bankruptcy proceedings against loan defaulters

- To expedite stress resolution in the banking system, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor Viral Acharya said banks must initiate bankruptcy proceedings against loan defaulters if the lenders are unable to resolve bad loans in three months.
- "RBI should not be in the business of creating restructuring schemes for banks to resolve a company," Mr. Acharya said.
- The Deputy Governor said the recovery of bad debts in India was low compared with other countries.
- "Our loan recoveries are in the order of 15-25 paise to a rupee. In other parts of the world, where



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bankruptcy system is working well, and these things are being done in a timely manner, the recovery is to the order of 85-90 cents to a dollar," he said.

- The central bank also stressed on the need for counter-cyclical buffers — in terms of setting aside higher capital — during periods of higher growth.
- Most banks in the country do not make adequate provisioning — above the regulatory mandate — which could be used when non-performing assets are increasing.
- The Indian banking sector has been battling a surge in bad loans over the last three years with gross NPAs climbing to about Rs. 8 lakh crore.
- In percentage terms, gross NPA (GNPA) ratio of the banking system is at 9.6% and the stressed advances ratio at 12% as of March 31, 2017.
- Recently, RBI Governor Urjit Patel had said that it was a matter of concern that 86.5% of the GNPA's were accounted for by large borrowers, that is borrowers with aggregate exposure of Rs. 5 crore and above.

#### China wants to address growing trade imbalance with India

- China has agreed to send a high-level official team by December-end to address the issue of growing trade imbalance with India.
- The development could be termed a breakthrough for India which faces a ballooning goods trade deficit with its neighbour.
- China — which was earlier dilly-dallying on a bilateral meeting on the issue despite India's repeated requests — has now relented.
- This assumes significance as it comes amid reports of the possibility of the ongoing Doklam stand-off hurting bilateral trade ties.
- The sources said China is keen to ensure that trade with India is not adversely affected by the prevailing military tension.
- In case of a full-fledged 'trade war,' China will have much to lose with its goods exports to India in 2016-17 valued at a whopping \$61.3 billion against India's shipments worth just \$10.2 billion to that country.
- The trade deficit was \$52.7 billion in 2015-16.
- Anti-dumping duty is in force on 93 products concerning imports from China, covering products in broad



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groups of chemicals and petrochemicals, products of steel and other metals, fibres and yarn, machinery items, rubber or plastic products, electric and electronic items and consumer goods.

- In addition, 40 cases concerning imports from China have been initiated by Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties.

#### Various changes to increase participation in UDAN

- The Civil Aviation Ministry announced increasing viability gap funding for helicopter operators, diluting exclusivity clause and relaxed other norms to facilitate more participation in its regional connectivity scheme, UDAN.
- The government announced that all 13 passenger seats for helicopters will be considered for subsidy under the scheme.
- States including, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, North Eastern region, Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands have been designated as priority areas.
- Airline operators flying from these priority areas will be allowed to operate 14 weekly departures as against the limit for seven weekly flights for other routes.
- The Ministry also abolished the 150-km minimum distance required between two airports to be qualified for operations under the scheme.
- It said airline operators may issue no-objection certificates to other airlines willing to operate on the same route.

#### New Rs. 200 note printed by RBI

- RBI said production of the newly-circulated Rs. 200 note is being ramped up by currency printing presses and will be made available in adequate quantities. RBI started circulating the Rs. 200 note from some of its offices and banks.
- "The production of these notes is being ramped up by the currency printing presses, and over time as more notes are printed, it will be distributed across the country through the banking channels and will be available for public in adequate quantity," RBI said in a statement.
- "These notes are available only through select RBI offices and banks as is normal when a new denomination of notes is introduced and the supply increases gradually," RBI said.
- While the notes are available from some bank branches, it will take some time before it is available through ATMs.

#### Committee on data protection to submit report by year end



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- The Centre expects the expert committee working on a framework for data protection to submit its report by the end of this year.
- This could lend greater clarity on data privacy requirements that could be imposed on companies like Google and Facebook.
- Asked about protection of user data with firms such as Google and Facebook, Mr. Prasad said while he appreciated how these firms were helping in empowering citizens, “they will need to respect and follow the law of the land.”
- Whether there is a need for a separate law or introducing regulations under the IT Act... the government is open to both options, but that will totally depend on the nature of the recommendations.
- The Centre had formed a 10-member panel to identify “key data protection issues” and propose a framework for a data protection law.



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## MCQ

Ques- Which of the following is correct regarding new US South Asia policy?

1. It looks for phase-wise withdrawal of all troops from Afghanistan by 2021
  2. Afghanistan wants India to fill the void created by pull off of US. Forces.
- A. 1 only  
B. 2 only  
C. Both  
D. None

Ans D

Ques- Which of the following is called as reserve money?

- A. M0  
B. M1  
C. M2  
D. M3

Ans A

Ques- Pink bollworm is problem related to which of the following?

- A. Bt. Cotton  
B. Rice  
C. Wheat



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D. Sugarcane

Ans A

Ques- Which of the following cases is popularly referred as habeas corpus case?

- A. First Judge case
- B. Second Judge Case
- C. Sajjan Singh Case
- D. ADM Jabalpur case

Ans D

Ques- Which of the following is correct regarding India's current account deficit (CAD)?

- 1. India's yearly CAD in terms of GDP has continuously increased during last decade
  - 2. India has highest trade deficit with the USA
- A. 1 only
  - B. 2 only
  - C. Both
  - D. None

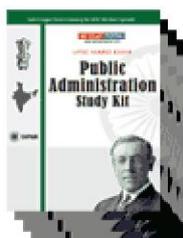
Ans A

Ques- Which of the following Indian states share boundary with Nepal?

- 1. Bihar
  - 2. Jharkhand
  - 3. Uttarakhand
  - 4. Sikkim
- A. 1,2
  - B. 1,2 and 3
  - C. 1,3



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D. 1,3 and 4

Ans D

Ques- Consider the following statements

- i) North America is surrounded by Atlantic Ocean in the East.
- ii) It is surrounded by gulf of Mexico in the west
- iii) Pacific ocean lies to its south

Which of the above are true?

- a) i and ii
- b) ii and ii
- c) i only
- d) ii only

Ans C

Ques- Consider the following statements in the context of Directive principles of state policy.

- 1) Directive principle of state policy are contained in Part III of the Indian Constitution in Art. 37-51.
- 2) The idea of DPSP was borrowed from the constitution of Ireland.
- 3) Constitution of India declares that DPSPs are "fundamental in the governance of the country" (Art. 37).
- 4) Both the Legislature and the Executive should apply DPSPs while making and implementing policies in social & economic spheres.

Which of the statement given above is / are correct.

- a) 1 only
- b) 1, 2 & 4 only
- c) 2, 3 & 4 only
- d) All of the above

Ans C

Ques- With reference to 'IFC Masala Bonds', sometimes seen in the news, which of the statements given below is/are correct?

- 1. The International Finance Corporation, which offers these bonds, is an arm of the World Bank.



2. They are the rupee-denominated bonds and are a source of debt financing for the public and private sector.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Ans C

**Ques-** Which of the following is/are correct regarding Triple Talaq?

- 1. 'Triple Talaq' is a **procedure of divorce under the Sharia Law** which is a body of the Islamic law
  - 2. It has been completely abolished by SC recently
- A. 1 only
  - B. 2 only
  - C. Both
  - D. None

Ans A

**Ques-** Which of the following is/are correct regarding new South Asia policy of U.S.?

- 1. It asks for increased role of India in Afghanistan
  - 2. It is sympathetic towards Pakistan
- A. 1 only
  - B. 2 only
  - C. Both
  - D. None

Ans A

**Ques-** Which of following countries is largest Uranium producer in the world?



- A. Canada
- B. Kazakhstan
- C. Australia
- D. USA

Ans B

Ques- Which of the following is correct regarding Real estate regulatory authority?

1. Property transactions will now be subject to a regulator — the national level Real Estate Regulatory Authority.
2. RERAs are intended to perform the same role for your property transactions as the SEBI does for security transactions in the capital markets.
3. Every developer launching any residential project with area of over 500 square metres or eight apartments, has to register it with RERA and upload all the project details to the RERA site before he initiates any sale.

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. All of the above

Ans B

Ques- Which among the following are the works of Rail Development Authority?

1. recommending passenger fares,
2. setting performance standards for rail operations
3. creating a level playing policy for private sector participation

- A. 1,2 only
- B. 2,3 only



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C. 1,3 only

D. All

Ans D

Ques- Which of the following correctly defines initial public offering?

1. First sale of shares to the public

2. Sale of shares in the share market

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both

D. None

Ans A

Ques- Red line campaign is related to which of the following?

A. Curb over-the-counter sale of antibiotics

B. Increasing infrastructure in naxal affected areas

C. More generic drugs to be introduced

D. Integrating power grids across country

Ans A

Ques- Which of the following country does not touch mediterranean sea?

A. Tunisia

B. Serbia

C. Turkey

D. Lebanon

Ans B

Ques- Which of the following is correct regarding Border road organisation?



1. It came up during the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi
  2. It works strictly in Indian boundary
- A. 1 only  
B. 2 only  
C. Both  
D. None

Ans D

**Ques-** Consider the following statements

1. national highway authority of india is not a autonomous body
2. National Housing Bank (NHB), is a wholly owned subsidiary of Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

Which of the above statement is/are true

- A. only 1  
B. only 2  
C. Both 1 & 2  
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Ans A

**Ques-** Which of the following statements are correct regarding World Trade organisation?

1. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.
2. Kazakhstan is the latest member to join WTO

- A. 1 only  
B. 2 only  
C. Both



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D. None

Ans A

**Ques-** Which of the following is correct regarding Non-Aligned movement?

1. Movement has its origin in Asia-Africa conference in India
2. Conference was led by Indian PM Nehru along with Naseer and Soekarno

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both

D. None

Ans B



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# IMPORTANT ARTICLES FROM VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS

## Politics of probe (The Hindu)

In ordering a judicial inquiry into the circumstances leading to the death of former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has adopted a political response to a political demand. There is little doubt that Jayalalithaa received the best possible medical treatment when hospitalised. However, the purpose of ordering an inquiry is to satisfy one of the three conditions put forward by the faction of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the AIADMK (PTA) led by O. Panneerselvam, for a merger. Having first removed V.K. Sasikala's nephew, T.T.V. Dhinakaran, as the party's deputy general secretary, Mr. Palaniswami fulfilled another condition set by the faction, by declaring Jayalalithaa's residence a public memorial. These demands were a cover for backroom bargaining on ministerial berths and party posts. But by acceding to them, Mr. Palaniswami seems to have put the pressure back on Mr. Panneerselvam to move towards a merger. The larger purpose behind the AIADMK (PTA)'s demands was to force the ruling AIADMK faction, the AIADMK (Amma), to distance itself from the Sasikala family. Now, at least for public consumption the AIADMK (Amma) seems to have done so in the interest of the merger (to pave the way for the retrieval of the Two Leaves election symbol), and to maintain good relations with the BJP-led government at the Centre.

By all accounts, the BJP wants the two factions to merge, and it can be expected to put added pressure on the AIADMK (PTA) to do so. In any case, Mr. Panneerselvam no longer can hope to be recognised as the sole inheritor of Jayalalithaa's political legacy. MLAs in his camp are tired of waiting it out without the benefits of being in office. If his demand for a judicial inquiry into Jayalalithaa's death is to yield real political dividends, then the inquiry would have to point to some shortcomings on the part of Sasikala in administering good care during the days immediately before hospitalisation. Some of the leaders in his faction have been asking for an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation, perhaps in the hope that the agency would do the bidding of the Centre. The BJP seems to have opted for a strategy that allows it to deal with a united AIADMK that is beaten into submission as an ally, instead of pushing for a high-risk scenario that would have meant aiding the AIADMK factions to self-destruct and waiting to take up the political space vacated by them. Any other course would have amounted to surrendering the political advantage to the main Opposition party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which lost the Assembly election narrowly last year. Clearly, the BJP is unwilling to sacrifice its short-



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term political interests in Tamil Nadu in the implementation of a long-term vision.

### **Safeguarding the interests of farmers (The Hindu)**

Transformational changes are taking place in India currently, improving the way we live. These changes are impacting all our lives in small or significant ways. It is gratifying to know that the citizens at large are happy with these changes. However, for some who have fed themselves on the fodder that such changes are not for the near future, there is consternation. Even worse, these people find it difficult to comprehend that technology and policy are working together to remove discretion and opaqueness.

The PDS in Tamil Nadu is intact and continues to retain the feature of universal coverage even after implementation of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA). Although the guidelines under the NFSA prescribe identification of priority households, there is no denial of any benefit under the PDS. There is no reduction even in the total coverage from the earlier Targeted Public Distribution System, which was effective till Tamil Nadu joined the NFSA in November 2016. The average annual offtake or the annual allocation has remained 36.78 lakh tonnes. The major part of the subsidy for the distribution of foodgrains (90.81% for rice and 91.70% for wheat) is borne by the Government of India.

The implication of this subsidy allocation to Tamil Nadu alone on the Government of India is approximately Rs. 843 crore per month and approximately Rs. 10,120 crore per year. Since the central issue price under the NFSA is much lower compared to the erstwhile Targeted Public Distribution System, the burden on the State government has come down. On implementing the NFSA, the savings for the State exchequer on account of this subsidy, thanks to the lower central issue price, is approximately Rs. 436.44 crore per year.

The Trade Facilitation Agreement was agreed on in 2013 in Bali and came into force from February 2017 after two-thirds of the WTO's 164 members ratified it. Several trade-related issues such as transparency, predictability and efficiency at the ports, faster clearance procedures, and improved appeal rights for traders are to be addressed by countries. They shall notify various provisions to bring in the facilitation, over three years or more. Only the basic set of provisions will be implemented within one year. The Trade Facilitation Agreement allows for consultations before any new trade rules are notified. A WTO study indicated that when the Trade Facilitation Agreement is fully implemented, trade costs for member countries will decrease by an average of 14.3%. It is also estimated that the time taken to export and import will come down drastically. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has made budgetary allocations for bringing in single-window clearance and improving customs clearance at the ports. A high-level committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary will monitor logistics and efficiency at ports and related issues.



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The Public Stock Holding issue remains unresolved at the WTO. Although agreed on in Bali in 2013 and reiterated in Nairobi in 2015, that a permanent solution for Public Stock Holding be found by 2017, it is still a 'work-in-progress'. The existing WTO rules would have allowed a legal challenge to our Public Stock Holding and minimum support price-based procurement programme in case we breached 'the limit' on procurement. 'The limit' is defined as 10% of the value of production of the particular grain being procured.

WTO rules classify procurement and holding of public stocks for food security purposes as 'Green Box' or non trade-distorting. However, if foodgrains for the public stocks are procured through an administered price/minimum support price and if this minimum support price is higher than the archaic fixed reference price (calculated on base period 1986-88), then it is considered as trade-distorting agriculture support. Such trade-distorting support should be within 'the limit', which is 10% of the value of production of the particular grain being procured.

One of the first things that this government did in 2014 was to intensely engage with the WTO to obtain a 'peace clause' so that even if we did breach 'the limit', no one shall challenge our programme till such a time a permanent solution is found, agreed on, and adopted by the WTO membership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on this matter, personally engaged with global leaders, and by November 2014 we obtained an open-ended peace clause from the General Council of the WTO, which was later reaffirmed at the Nairobi Ministerial. So Prime Minister Modi has safeguarded the interests of the farmer and ensured that India's sovereign right to protect them is not diluted.

### Recasting the steel frame (The Hindu)

The civil services need to bring about three fundamental changes, some of which are already under way under the new dispensation. First, specific clauses under All India Services and Central Services Conduct Rules have been invoked to sack officers on grounds of incompetence and/or corruption. The rules always existed in the rule book but this government has had the courage to use it in public interest and more will follow soon. The black sheep should be identified and sent home, with public opprobrium.

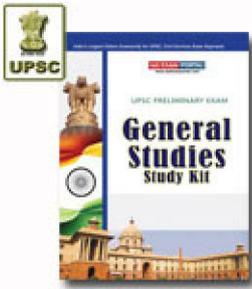
Second, lateral entry into the higher civil services should be welcomed but with some caveats. Espousing lateral entry as a manna for all failures of governance will only set it up to fail, for history is replete with examples of some of the most accomplished private sector professionals failing inside government. Let's not forget that Hasmukh Adhia who delivered the Goods and Services Tax, Parameswaran Iyer who manages sanitation, Aruna Sundararajan who gave us Digital India, Sanjay Mitra who delivered highways, S. Jaishankar who places India on the global map, Anil Swarup who led coal auctions, Rita Teatota who led GEM (government e-marketplace) and preferential procurement for "Make in India" products, each along with their respective team of civil servants



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from various services, and the entire leadership of Prime Minister's Office who oversee and catalyse all the above, did not come into government through lateral entry. Conversely, lateral entry has also produced a pilot who was designated Cabinet Secretary in a State who then ran amok, and thoughtful economists who were disasters as leaders inside government.

It is highly unlikely that a private sector professional will view civil services as a 'career' for, say, 10-15 years given the modest compensation and significant ecosystem issues which often mitigate against measurable inputs and outcomes. Earlier the 'lal batti' (red beacon) used to be one fatal attraction but now that's also gone. Whether they would want to break their heads working with the many inscrutable gems and political dynasties of corruption and non-performance spread across parties, at the national and State levels, remains to be seen.

Lateral entry does open the risk and prospect of powerful corporate groups placing their men in key positions of government. However, when one looks at the serious lack of decision-making abilities or willingness in some of the government's senior leadership, as also the existing allegiances of some in the system with groups outside government, on balance, lateral entry is indeed a necessary condition of good governance.

The third big step should be to infuse more and more technology into every touch point where a citizen interacts with the government. Today with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), global technology leaders such as IPsoft use virtual assistants to deliver citizens services in the U.K. and U.S. In the context of government service delivery, cognitive intelligence can deliver it with greater superiority, accuracy, consistency and at lower cost than humans can. The time is ripe for introducing AI in government services such as passports, licences, building permits, certificates, etc. where it can communicate in natural language with citizens and ensure process compliance.

At 70, India needs independence from bad bureaucracy and inane processes and meaningless forms — not necessarily from "good" bureaucracy, which in every country, system and time has been the harbinger of positive change.

### Rebooting India-Nepal ties (The Hindu)

Nepal is run by a revolving door of political leaders who have weakened the polity and economy over the years, but who did battle the odds to promulgate a new Constitution. India, meanwhile, has a Chief Minister-turned-Prime Minister who has had to learn geopolitics on the job. Prime Minister Narendra Modi would have realised the limits of optics in geopolitics, and Nepal serves as a marker of adventurism gone awry.

With global geopolitics on the boil, and the Hindi-Chini relationship in free fall, it should be in India's interest to



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secure its own neighbourhood, and that can only be through letting national politics and governance of the smaller neighbours evolve without interference. True, India played a valued role in ending the Maoist insurgency in 2006, but the period thereafter was marked by escalating micro-meddling in Nepal's internal affairs. In Constitution-writing, there were attempts to define the new provincial boundaries according to Indian dictates — pushing first an unwieldy and unworkable plains-only province, then a two-province formula.

The presence of India's heavy hand contributed in numerous ways to the distortion of consensual governance needed in transitional times. Kathmandu's civil society was preoccupied with managing the fallout, and much time has been spent rallying around the flag rather than stabilising the new republican democracy, trying to end 'bhagbanda' share-the-spoils politics, and working to ensure that the inclusion enshrined in the Constitution is observed in practice.

While keeping silent for years on Nepal's post-conflict transitional justice process, in November 2015 India's representative in Geneva cynically utilised the forum of the Human Rights Council to influence government change in Kathmandu. A year ago, Indian interlocutors pushed the Nepali Congress to renege on its promise to continue in coalition with the mainstream left Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), and engineered what is the implausible current embrace of the Congress with the Maoist party of Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

In trying to push some or all of these goals, New Delhi made deep inroads into Nepal's political class, but none did it use more than the Madhesbaadi parties. Besides the fact that this has done great injustice to the plains-based Madhesi citizens of Nepal, the Madhesbaadi leadership is presently incensed that after all its goading New Delhi now seems to be backtracking — a recent example of this 'use and throw' policy is seen in how the Madhesbaadi leaders were made to stand against local government elections, followed by a volte-face of the Indian Embassy urging them to join.

As Mr. Deuba deplanes, indeed there are indications of a scaling back of Indian involvement. Hopefully this is a response to a growing realisation in New Delhi that a peaceful, stable Nepal that evolves of its own volition is good for India, and especially for the central Ganga plains.

From the Kathmandu perspective, politically micromanaging Nepal could not have but backfired. Take the Great Blockade, which forced the Kathmandu political leadership to reach out to Beijing and sign a slew of trade, transit and infrastructural agreements with it. Few know that Nepal is today better connected by air to Chinese cities than to India.

Once Nepal and India get past the era of interventionism as but a bad memory, the two can concentrate on the numerous matters that need concentration and resolution. An important issue is the open border



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itself, which is a unique joint heritage of the two countries. While it is Nepal's Left that has traditionally demanded restrictions on the border, the call now rises from the Indian security establishment.

The Kosi Barrage and attendant embankments have the possibility of wreaking havoc because siltation of six decades has raised the riverbed within the levees far above the outlying tracts. The easy answer for the Indian politician is to demand a high dam in the hills of Nepal even as alternatives are not studied, such as redistribution of waters into various older channels of the Kosi in Bihar.

There are many other matters pending between Nepal and India, much of it due to neglect by the Kathmandu intelligentsia, such as regarding the impact of demonetisation and the application of Goods and Services Tax on Nepal's economy and citizenry. Similarly, Kathmandu prefers not to discuss the fact that the Nepali rupee is pegged to the Indian rupee and what it means for the long run. The rights of migrant Indian labour in Nepal and Nepali labour in India is a topic that rarely comes up. There are border disputes pending between the two countries — at Susta, Kalapani and the 'tri-junction' of Lipulekh — but Kathmandu has been timid in raising these matters.

Nepal has since long planned to sell electricity to India once it has a hydropower surplus, and the completion of the much-delayed Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line was supposed to facilitate that. But along comes an Indian government directive that it will not allow import of electricity other than from power companies with more than 51% Indian equity.

### Undoing injustice (The Hindu)

By declaring the discriminatory practice of instant triple talaq as unconstitutional, the Supreme Court has sent out a clear message that personal law can no longer be privileged over fundamental rights. Three of the five judges on the Constitution Bench have not accepted the argument that instant talaq, or talaq-e-biddat, is essential to Islam and, therefore, deserves constitutional protection under Article 25. The biggest virtue of the two opinions constituting the majority judgment is that they do not have to undermine any religious tenet to make their point. On the contrary, as Justice Kurian Joseph says, the forbidden nature of triple talaq can be gleaned from the Koran itself. Justice Rohinton Nariman, writing the main judgment, locates the practice in the fourth degree of obedience required by Islamic tenets, namely, makruh, or that which is reprobated as unworthy. The main ground on which the practice has been struck down is a simple formulation: that "this form of talaq is manifestly arbitrary in the sense that the marital tie can be broken capriciously and whimsically by a Muslim man without any attempt at reconciliation so as to save it." In fact, the final summation is so simple that the court did not even have to elaborate on how triple talaq violates gender equality. On the contrary, Justice Nariman says that having held the practice to be arbitrary, there is really no need to go into the element of



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discrimination. The court deserves commendation for undoing the gender injustice implicit in the practice so effortlessly, within constitutional parameters as well as the Islamic canon.

The present case was initiated suo motu by the court, but opinion against triple talaq could not have gathered critical mass and the case against it significantly bolstered if it weren't for a few women standing up to the community's conservative elements and challenging it. Any other outcome would have been a great injustice to them. Even the judges in the minority have had to concede that their reasoning is based mainly on the fact that this form of talaq is a matter of personal law, and therefore entitled to constitutional protection. "It is not open to a court to accept an egalitarian approach over a practice which constitutes an integral part of religion," writes Chief Justice J.S. Khehar in his minority opinion. Interestingly, even his view segues into a somewhat egalitarian position, restraining Muslim men from pronouncing triple talaq until Parliament enacts a law to regulate it. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board, and all those who supported its regressive opinion that even an unworthy practice should not be dislodged by judicial verdict, should now accept the verdict in the interests of a modern social order. And there is no reason to contend that their faith has been unduly secularised. For, as Justice Joseph concludes, "what is bad in theology is bad in law as well."

### Understanding work (The Hindu)

The Global Commission on the Future of Work, established on Monday, has a critical role in addressing the decent jobs deficit that affects the lives of roughly three billion working people. The body, which includes two representatives from India, is to present a report at the 2019 commemoration of the centenary of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Experts will build on recent dialogues in over 100 states on the implications for individuals and societies from the changing dynamics of work, production processes and rapid technological transformation.

Meanwhile, the ILO's ongoing assessment of major trends in different segments of the employment scenario points to the challenges that lie ahead and the adaptations required to advance its broader mission to promote social justice. Foremost, the far-reaching modifications witnessed in the means of production and access to mobile information and communication technology have created a flexible overall work environment. These applications allow relative independence from the rigid office settings and make room for people to function with autonomy and even achieve a better work-life balance. But in an increasingly competitive economic climate, these same developments invariably entail more intense activity and longer hours. Noteworthy is the acceleration in the demand for industrial robots, at an annual rate of 9% since 2011, making the upgradation of human skills imperative upon corporations and governments alike. In the manufacturing sector, where two-thirds of them are concentrated, the robot density — one machine deployed per 1,000 employees, in 2015 — was at 14 in the advanced world and two in developing countries. Harnessing the opportunities from



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these new technologies and mitigating the human costs from this unfolding transformation is a function of recognising the rights and responsibilities of individuals and employers.

In this latter respect, the overall record is not particularly encouraging. In 2016, less than half of all women in the working age bracket were engaged in the labour market, compared to over 75% among men. Worse, this situation is projected to persist over the next 15 years. Similarly, declining ratios of the population in the working age are expected to exacerbate the challenge of care for the elderly. Persistently high levels of unemployment since the global financial crisis perhaps encapsulate most of these concerns. The growth in international migration by as much as 50% since 1990 and the rise of xenophobia in many parts of the world illustrate the dangers from the lopsided trajectory of the current phase of globalisation. Compounding the effects of these challenges are two not unrelated factors. The first is the continued exclusion of about 50% of the global labour force from the formal sector of employment, with all-round insecurity. The other is the absence of meaningful social protection coverage for the majority of the world population; only 27% has recourse to comprehensive minimum support. Given this backdrop, the 2019 centenary must necessarily be more than an occasion for ceremony and symbolism.

### Two cheers for the Supreme Court (The Hindu)

On the 4th of November, 1948, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar rose to address the Constituent Assembly, and proudly stated that “the... Constitution has adopted the individual as its unit”. On Tuesday, this constitutional vision, under siege for much of India’s journey as a democratic republic, came within a whisker of destruction at the hands of the Supreme Court. But when all the dust had cleared in Courtroom No. 1, it finally became evident that Chief Justice J.S. Khehar had been able to enlist only one other judge, out of a Bench of five, to support his novel proposition that the religious freedom under the Indian Constitution protected not just individual faith, but whole systems of “personal law”, spanning marriage, succession, and so on. This view would not only have immunised instantaneous triple talaq ( talaq-e-biddat ) from constitutional scrutiny, but would also — in the Chief Justice’s own words — have ensured that “it is not open for a court to accept an egalitarian approach, over a practice which constitutes an integral part of religion”.

Had the Chief Justice managed to persuade one other judge to sign on to his judgment, we would have found ourselves living under a Constitution that sanctions the complete submergence of the individual to the claims of her religious community. A reminder, perhaps, of how even the most basic constitutional values, often taken for granted, hang by nothing more than the most fragile of threads. But if the relegation of the Chief Justice’s argument to a legally irrelevant dissenting opinion narrowly averted disaster, the separate opinions of three judges invalidating the practice of talaq-e-biddat gave us something to cheer about — but not much. By a majority decision, instantaneous triple talaq is now invalid, a significant victory that is the result of



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many decades of struggle by the Muslim women's movement for gender justice. That is something that must be welcomed. However, the value of a Supreme Court judgment lies not only in what it decides, but also in the possibilities and avenues that it opens for the future, for further progressive-oriented litigation. In that sense, the triple talaq verdict is a disappointment, because even the majority opinions proceeded along narrow pathways, and avoided addressing some crucial constitutional questions.

Justice Rohinton F. Nariman, writing for himself and Justice U.U. Lalit, held that the 1937 Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act had codified all Muslim personal law, including the practice of triple talaq. This brought it within the bounds of the Constitution. He then held that because talaq-e-biddat allowed unchecked power to Muslim husbands to divorce their wives, without any scope for reconciliation, it was "arbitrary", and failed the test of Article 14 (equality before law) of the Constitution. The practice, therefore, was unconstitutional.

Justice Nariman's reasoning, while technically faultless, avoided the elephant in the room that had been ever-present since the hearing began. Under our constitutional jurisprudence, codified personal law — that is, personal law that has been given a statutory form, such as the Hindu Marriage Act — is subject to the Constitution. However, uncodified personal law is exempted from constitutional scrutiny. In other words, the moment the state legislates on personal law practices, its actions can be tested under the Constitution, but if the state fails to act, then those very practices — which, for all relevant purposes, are recognised and enforced by courts as law — need not conform to the Constitution. This anomalous position, which had first been advanced by the Bombay High Court in a 1952 decision called *Narasu Appa Mali*, and has never seriously been challenged after that, has the effect of creating islands of "personal law" free from constitutional norms of equality, non-discrimination, and liberty.

By holding that the 1937 Act codified all Muslim personal law, Justice Nariman obviated the need for reconsidering this longstanding position, even as he doubted its correctness in a brief, illuminating paragraph. As a matter of constitutional adjudication and judicial discipline, he was undoubtedly right to do so. However, it is impossible to shake off the feeling that the court missed an excellent opportunity to review, and correct, one of its longstanding judicial errors. It seems trite to say that in our polity, there should not exist any constitutional black holes. The basic unit of the Constitution, as Ambedkar said, is the individual, and to privilege state-sanctioned community norms over individual rights negates that vision entirely.

In a separate opinion — which turned out to be the "swing vote" in this case — Justice Kurian Joseph did not go even that far. He simply held that talaq-e-biddat found no mention in the Koran, and was no part of Muslim personal law. Effectively, he decided the case on the ground that talaq-e-biddat was un-Islamic, instead of unconstitutional — begging the question whether secular courts should be adjudicating such questions in the first place. If Justice Nariman's opinion was narrow and technical, Justice Joseph's was narrow and



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theological. Therefore, in a case that involved, at its heart, issues of the intersection between personal law, the Constitution, and gender discrimination, there is no majority view on any of these topics.

Ultimately, what separates religious norms and personal law systems — and this includes all religions — from the laws of a democratic republic is the simple issue of consent. This is why the Chief Justice's conflation of religious freedom and personal law was so profoundly misguided: because, in essence, he took a constitutional provision that had been designed to protect an individual, in her faith, from state interference, and extended it to protect a personal law system that claims authority from scriptures — scriptures whose norms are applied to individuals who had no say in creating them, and who have no say in modifying or rejecting them. The Muslim women challenging triple talaq invoked the Constitution because there was no equivalent within their personal law system; the Chief Justice would have denied not only them that possibility, but would have denied to every other individual, who felt oppressed and unequally treated by her religious community, for all time — and told them, as he did in this case: "Go to Parliament, but the Constitution has nothing for you."

At the very least, the Majority judgments did not close that window. For that, we must say: two cheers to the Supreme Court.

### Lessons not learnt (The Hindu)

The number of influenza A (H1N1) virus cases and deaths reported from across India this year has already crossed 19,000 and 900, respectively. These are lower than the 2015 toll of 32,000 cases and 2,000 deaths, but the revived spread is alarming. In the last month or so there has been a sharp increase in the number of cases and deaths — over 6,000 and 300. Gujarat is the worst-affected, with about 250 deaths recorded so far: Rajasthan, Punjab and Maharashtra and Delhi too have been badly hit. The number of H1N1 cases in the southern States is also high compared with last year, with Tamil Nadu reporting nearly 3,000 cases about a month ago. According to the Pune-based National Institute of Virology, the virus has not undergone any significant mutation and the virulence has remained nearly unchanged. It has however undergone point mutations which resulted in a new strain — the Michigan strain — replacing the California strain that has been prevalent since the 2009 pandemic. While both strains were co-circulating last year, as per surveillance data only the Michigan strain has been circulating this year. The increased caseload and mortality this year compared with last year could be because pre-existing immunity through exposure to the California strain is no longer effective, and people are therefore not immune to the new strain. More research is needed to fully understand the epidemiology of H1N1 caused by the Michigan strain, and who may be more vulnerable.

Despite the high numbers, there is no system in place to release data periodically and frequently. Compare this with the regular updates provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, especially during an



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epidemic. There has also been a near-complete failure on the part of governments to spread awareness about prevention strategies. Uptake of influenza vaccination by people, especially by those belonging to the high-risk category, has been extremely poor, with only about 10,000-12,000 doses of H1N1 vaccine sold in the last six months by the Pune-based vaccine manufacturer. Since the 2009 pandemic, H1N1 has become a seasonal flu virus strain in India even when the temperature soars during the summer months. Vaccination of health-care workers and people in high-risk categories is the only way to reduce the toll. That guidelines for H1N1 vaccination of people belonging to high-risk categories such as pregnant women, very young and old people and those with certain underlying illnesses were released only last month by the Health Ministry is evidence that India has not learnt any lessons from the 2015 H1N1 epidemic. Urgent measures are needed to ramp up preparedness in dealing with epidemics.

### **The Constitution, refreshed (The Hindu)**

Perhaps it ought to be a matter of shame for us that well into our seventh decade as a constitutional democracy, we needed the Supreme Court to tell us whether we possess a fundamental right to privacy or not. But this unanimous verdict delivered through six separate opinions nonetheless marks a watershed moment in our constitutional history. Collectively, the judgments could well herald a new dawn. The verdict's consequences for civil liberties are potentially enormous. They are likely to have an effect not only on the challenge to the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 — or the Aadhaar Act — that is presently pending but also on a slew of other issues, ranging from matters concerning the collection of private data to invasions that go to the root of our bodily integrity and individual autonomy.

The reference to the nine-judge Bench emanated out of the larger challenge to the validity of the Aadhaar Act. There, during the course of hearings before a three-judge Bench, the Union of India raised a rather alarming plea: it said, in response to arguments that the legislation infringed the right to privacy, that there simply existed no such fundamental guarantee. The government predicated this argument on the basis of two previous judgments of the court, *M.P. Sharma v. Satish Chandra* (1954) and *Kharak Singh v. State of U.P.* (1962), rendered respectively by a Bench of eight and six judges, which, it said, had conclusively held that there existed no fundamental right to privacy. Accordingly, it contended that subsequent judgments rendered by Benches of lesser strength which had recognised a fundamental right to privacy were wrongly decided.

Before the nine-judge Bench, in seeking to further its plea, the government made a number of claims, three of which were particularly noteworthy. First, it argued that the Constitution's framers never intended to incorporate a right to privacy, and therefore, to read such a right as intrinsic to the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21, or to the rights to various freedoms, such as the freedom of expression, guaranteed under Article 19, would amount to a rewriting of the Constitution. Second, it claimed that since



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privacy, as a concept, was vague, amorphous, and incapable of precise definition, it cannot be elevated to the status of a fundamental right. Third, it contended that privacy was, at best, a purely elitist concern, and that, in a land like India, rife with poverty, it can never be considered as a value worth universally cherishing.

The court recognises that the constitutional guarantees of a right to personal liberty and of a right to freedom of expression, while abstract in their wording, are subsumed by deep moral values central to the very conception of citizenship. What's more, as Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul notes in his separate opinion, "the Constitution was not drafted for a specific time period or for a certain generation, it was drafted to stand firm, for eternity." The notions of "goodness, fairness, equality and dignity can never be satisfactorily defined," he adds. They were left "abstract for the reason that these rights, by their very nature, are not static." To disregard privacy as a fundamental right would, therefore, fail to make the best sense of the Constitution as a legitimate basis for government.

The idea that privacy is amorphous and vague is similarly made short shrift of. Privacy, as a concept, the court finds, involves not merely a simple right to be left alone, but extends to protecting a number of different values integral to a person's most intimate choices; it constitutes a bundle of liberties, including, as Justice Nariman points out, the right to abort a foetus, the rights of same-sex couples, the rights as to procreation, to contraception, and so forth. This holding, in and of itself, should be sufficient to overrule the court's judgment in *Suresh Kumar Koushal v. Naz Foundation*, where it upheld the abominable Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which, among other things, criminalises homosexual activity.

Ultimately, however, the judgments in *Puttaswamy* will perhaps be remembered best for their vindication of three glorious dissenting opinions of the past. First, Justice Fazl Ali's opinion in *AK Gopalan v. State of Madras* (1950), where he ruled that fundamental rights cannot be slotted into watertight silos that are mutually exclusive, but rather that they have to be read as a collective whole, as rights that give and take meaning from each other. The rights to equality, to freedom of speech and expression, and to life and personal liberty, he therefore held, together stand as a bulwark against the tyrannical powers of the state. This foresight in Justice Fazl Ali's finding, Justice Nariman writes, "simply takes the breath away."

Finally, though, comes the clincher: a specific, explicit avowal of Justice Khanna's daring minority opinion in *ADM Jabalpur v. Shivkant Shukla*. Here, he ruled that the right not to be deprived of our life and personal liberty without the authority of law was not a creature of the Constitution. Such a right inheres in us as human beings. Now, the court in *Puttaswamy* has held that privacy is one such liberty, which is fundamental to our very existence. The court recognises that each of us has, at the least, a kernel of personality, of identity, that we have a right to preserve. How the court applies this verdict in the future, to different cases, not least the *Aadhaar*



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challenge, would no doubt present a significant test. But, for now, it's time to celebrate, and to commend the Supreme Court for its truly momentous ruling.

### **Don't fear trade deficit (The Hindu)**

Amidst rising political tensions between India and China, trade relations between the two countries have come under some pressure recently. India's trade deficit with China, which stands at over \$50 billion, has been projected by many on the Indian side as an economic evil that needs to be curbed by all means. To this end, they have demanded heavy tariffs and bans on Chinese imports. The trade deficit with China, in effect, is seen as a loss to India and a gain to the Chinese economy. So, naturally, steps to curb it are seen as justified.

To make things simple, the balance of trade reflects how an economy earns its foreign exchange, and how it decides to spend it subsequently. Take the case of India's trade deficit with China. India earns Chinese yuans primarily from Chinese investors who seek to invest in assets in the country. At the same time, India uses these yuans that it receives from Chinese investors mostly to purchase Chinese goods, rather than to invest them in Chinese assets. This preference among Indians for Chinese goods rather than assets, combined with Chinese preference for Indian assets rather than goods, is what causes India to suffer a trade deficit. If Indians had a greater preference for Chinese assets, and the Chinese had a greater preference for Indian goods, the situation would reverse and India would enjoy a trade surplus instead. The trade deficit is thus a mirror image of a capital surplus, which is formed by the relatively larger inflow of Chinese capital into India than vice versa.

As one can see, quite obviously, there is very little that is wrong with this state of affairs. A man who sells his assets to his fellow countrymen to purchase goods from them, for instance, would suffer a trade deficit and a capital surplus with the rest of the country. Very few would argue that the man suffers a loss from the trade, while the rest of the country gains from it. The same logic holds true when it comes to trade between countries as well. It is high time irrational fears over trade with China, or any other country, are put to rest once and for all.

### **Winner takes all (INDIAN EXPRESS)**

At a conference on electoral and political reforms held in the capital last week, when Election Commissioner Om Prakash Rawat spoke of the "creeping new normal of political morality", he sounded a cautionary note that must be heeded by all those with stakes in a polity more democratic. His intervention also marked a moment of institutional push-back that is as reassuring as it has become rare.

Election Commissioner Rawat stood against the political current as he warned against the dominant narrative



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that places “maximum premium on winning at all costs — to the exclusion of ethical considerations”, in which “poaching of legislators is extolled as smart political management” and use of money and state machinery to bribe and to intimidate the political opponent is “commended as resourcefulness”, and “the winner can commit no sin”.

Rawat’s comments come barely days after the Rajya Sabha election for one seat in Gujarat became prime-time theatre, riveting the nation’s attention with its mix of high-profile players and low tactics. Six Congress MLAs crossed over to the BJP ahead of the August 8 poll. The Congress subsequently herded 44 MLAs to a resort in Karnataka to ward off a predatory BJP, whose government at the Centre then presided over income tax raids on one of the Congress’s prominent crisis managers involved in minding the Gujarat MLAs in the state.

Fortunately, the high-voltage political drama did not have a murky ending: It climaxed in Nirvachan Sadan, with the EC using its constitutional powers under Article 324 to invalidate the votes by two rebel Congress MLAs, pointing to a breach of due process. Yet, till the EC stepped in, the Gujarat RS poll unfolded as an unscrupulous no-holds-barred fight, in which parties played to win — by any means, no penalties paid. Rawat is right to warn that the normalising, even extolling, of the poaching of MLAs and misuse of state machinery as the unexceptionable art of political management will only deepen the people’s cynicism and distrust of politics. There is a larger backdrop in which Rawat’s intervention must be read. It is not just the Gujarat RS polls, the winner-takes-all approach to politics is mirrored in the wider polity as well, and it is threatening to undermine the careful mosaic of checks and balances of a constitutional framework. Today, a spectre is threatening to become real: A strong and domineering political executive, emboldened by electoral success, is imposing the logic of the numbers game to conquer all spaces and flatten out dissent.

A majority of the vote in the electoral battlefield is threatening to mutate into a spreading majoritarianism in the life of a diverse nation. At a moment like this one, Rawat’s words are an important and valuable reminder of the need for institutions to speak up and speak back to the powers that be — to act as a corrective, to reassert and reclaim their role in a layered and intricate polity.

### **The whole verdict (INDIAN EXPRESS)**

The Supreme Court has spoken on triple talaq and the verdict is enormously welcome for the outcome. The



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practice, discriminatory and unjust to women, rightly stands struck down by the court. But the verdict is illuminating and valuable also because of the deliberative process that led to it, the issues and arguments that the 5-judge constitution bench agreed upon as well as the disagreements within.

Take the differences within the “majority” view on the bench. While emphasising that they are looking at the question before them “in a very narrow compass”, Justices Rohinton Fali Nariman and Uday Umesh Lalit held triple talaq to be violative of the fundamental right to equality contained in Article 14 of the Constitution. Justice Kurian Joseph agreed with them that triple talaq must be struck down, but not because it fails the test on the anvil of Article 14. It must go, he said, because it is not an integral part of Islamic religious practice and is “against the basic tenets of the Holy Quran”. In effect, no wide, overarching or immutable principle was laid down by the court — it has not held that all personal laws must henceforth meet the constitutionality or fundamental rights or essential practices test.

At the same time, the “minority view” of two judges, which includes, notably, Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar, urged the courts to approach matters of personal law with “absolute restraint”, underlining that these laws have constitutional protection. This verdict of a rainbow bench on a crucial minority and gender issue, needs to be read in its entirety — not by dividing it into its “majority” and “minority” components and privileging the former over the latter. It must be heeded as a plural whole, every strand of which is an essential part, necessary to take forward the debate.

There is a political context to the triple talaq debate. This verdict comes three decades after a government with a decisive majority in Parliament overturned a progressive court intervention on Muslim personal law in the Shah Bano case. Since that moment in 1986, the demand for reform has only grown louder within the Muslim community, particularly among its women, and it has compelled even the All India Personal Law Board to pay attention, and, in many cases, to bend.

But more recently, the coming to power of another government with a large mandate has sparked fears of majoritarianism among the minority. The several voices in which the five-judge bench of the Supreme Court has spoken on a practice seen as intolerable to all, therefore, mirrors and speaks to the complexity of the matter and its fraught political environment — and in doing so, offers perhaps the best chance for reform.

That the court has not unanimously or starkly framed the issue as an opposition between the constitution and



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personal law, may seem to some to be a missed chance to uphold constitutional values. But the lack of stridency and grand claims — while striking down the abominable practice of triple talaq — serves a valuable end: By acknowledging a minority's community's aspirations without being disrespectful of its apprehensions, it keeps open crucial spaces for reform.

### Game is on(INDIAN EXPRESS)

The teenager, hunched over a smartphone, hermetically sealed from the “real” world, is the stuff of parental anxiety. It is hardly surprising, then, that news of the Blue Whale challenge has brought on a panic attack across the world. The idea of a Pied Piper-like game, arising from the unknown spaces of the interwebz and leading vulnerable young people to self-harm and suicide, has rattled governments into action.

In the face of this viral paranoia, the facts are rather shaky. Reports of 80 Russian teens killing themselves after having accepted the challenge have been debunked by fact-checking sites such as Snopes.com. Closer home, in India, there has yet been no evidence to link recent teen suicides to the challenge. The spread of this faceless fear, from Brazil to the US and India, has been compared to the blitzkrieg of fake news.

The Blue Whale is a mirror to a tumultuous time. It reveals our ambivalence about technology and social media, which have never before shaped the intimacies of human life to this extent. It has given us a morality-play like template to deal with the rebellion of adolescent life — all we need to rescue our children is to slay the dementor of the internet (and not by talking to them, or trying to understand their unspoken alienation).

But, most of all, it reveals a crisis of societies in the throes of dizzying, incomprehensible social and political change. It reflects a longing for a more innocent time, when teenagers stayed home and watched state television — or, best of all, deferred to parental authority to discern the good from the predatory. But the real and the fake, in our brave new world, are welded into a mashup. That is, perhaps, why we need bogeys such as the Blue Whale challenge to make sense of these interesting times.

On Thursday, the fundamental rights of the Indian citizen got more teeth against arbitrary action of the state. The Supreme Court's ruling that the “Right to Privacy is an integral part of the Right to Life and Personal Liberty



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guaranteed in Article 21 of the Constitution” will be seen in the light of its immediate context — the Aadhaar case. But the unanimous verdict of the nine-judge bench is much more far-reaching than that.

“Privacy enables each individual to take crucial decisions which find expression in the human personality. It enables individuals to preserve their beliefs, thoughts, expressions, ideas, ideologies, preferences and choices against societal demands of homogeneity. Privacy is an intrinsic recognition of heterogeneity, of the right of the individual to be different and to stand against the tide of conformity in creating a zone of solitude,” the court said. At a time when individuals are being told what to eat, who to love and marry, to respect or oppose, this assertion of the citizen’s autonomy sends out an important message to both society and the state.

The nine-judge bench was necessitated because while several judgments in the past 40 years have held that there is a common law right to privacy — against other individuals and entities — these rulings did not unequivocally empower the citizen vis-a-vis the state. In 2015, during the litigation on the Aadhaar scheme, Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi had argued that the “legal position regarding the existence of the fundamental right to privacy is doubtful”. Drawing on two Supreme Court verdicts — M.P. Sharma vs Satish Chandra, 1954 and Kharak Singh vs State of UP, 1962 — the attorney general had argued that the Constitution does not guarantee a right to privacy. Thursday’s judgment is a departure from such narrow — and textual — interpretations of the Constitution.

“Privacy with its attendant values assures dignity to the individual and it is only when life can be enjoyed with dignity can liberty be of true substance. Privacy ensures the fulfillment of dignity and is a core value which the protection of life and liberty is intended to achieve,” it states. At another place, it notes, “The dignity of the individual, equality between human beings and quest for liberty are the foundational pillars of the Indian Constitution”.

### **Right To Privacy Is A Fundamental Right, Says SC**

DEFINING fundamental rights in a manner that expands their scope has been an evolutionary process in most mature democracies. The US, for example, has moved away from mooring its Right to Privacy in the Fourth Amendment — fundamentally about property rights — to situating the right under other guarantees in the country’s Constitution. Since the 1970s, its highest court has drawn out the Right to Privacy from the “Concept



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of Ordered Liberty”, the Right to Freedom of Association and the Right Against Self-Incrimination.

Thursday’s Supreme Court verdict is in the same spirit: “The attempt of the court should be to expand the reach and ambit of the fundamental rights rather than attenuate their meaning and content by process of judicial construction”, it says. This articulation should shine the light on future jurisprudence pertaining to fundamental rights.

There is another important lesson for future juries — democratic societies require their judiciary to self-correct. Thursday’s verdict subjects some past decisions of the Supreme Court to the test of constitutional propriety and annuls the ones found wanting. The ADM Jabalpur v Shivakant Shukla case, in 1976, for example. The court had then ruled that presidential consent was sufficient to annul the right to liberty of a person who was under preventive detention. This 41-year old verdict was critiqued by the court on Thursday as “seriously flawed. Life and personal liberty are inalienable to human existence. These rights are primordial rights. They constitute rights under natural law”.

The spirit of self-correction — and commitment to human dignity — are also behind the court’s decision to set aside its 2013 verdict that resuscitated Section 377. In 2009, the Delhi High Court had revoked the criminalisation of homosexuality. Criticising its earlier verdict, the court has vindicated the Delhi High Court ruling which held Section 377 to be a denial of the dignity of an individual. Now, the court’s remarks will be seen as a long-awaited course correction: “In a democratic Constitution founded on the rule of law, their [minority] rights are as sacred as those conferred on other citizens to protect their freedoms and liberties. Sexual orientation is an essential attribute of privacy. Discrimination against an individual on the basis of sexual orientation is deeply offensive to the dignity and self-worth of the individual”.

THE court does impose reasonable restrictions on the Right to Privacy. But governments would do well to heed the caveat it sets: “The nature and content of the law which imposes the restriction falls within the zone of reasonableness mandated by Article 14, which is a guarantee against arbitrary state action”. A democracy can survive when citizens have an undiluted assurance that the rule of law will protect their rights and liberties against any invasion by the state and that judicial remedies would be available. Thursday’s ruling is a landmark in that respect. This verdict owes, in no small measure, to the persistence and diligence of lawyers, activists, academics — the people of India owe them a debt of gratitude.



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### Caste in new moulds (INDIAN EXPRESS)

The Union cabinet's decision to set up a commission to explore the creation of subcategories in the central list of the Other Backward Classes is a move in the right direction. It is in step with the proposals submitted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the National Commission for Backward Classes and a Parliamentary Standing Committee towards addressing grievances among OBCs regarding reservations in central government jobs and educational institutions. Many state OBC lists have subcategories and the system has, by and large, worked. Besides, there are no legal restrictions towards creating subcategories in the OBC list: The Indira Sawhney judgment (1992) states there is no constitutional bar to further classification of OBCs on degrees of social and educational backwardness.

The OBC is an umbrella category that, at the Centre, clubs together nearly 5,000 castes that are at different stages of social, political and economic advancement. It is a reasonable assumption that the better empowered castes in the OBC list have cornered the benefits of reservation to the exclusion of the rest. The creation of subcategories could go some way in addressing the problem. However, the subcategorisation needs to be done systematically and after rigorous scrutiny of the necessary data regarding income, education, employment etc, as required by the law. The process must be shielded from various pressure groups, considering that reservation is a politically fraught subject.

The first central OBC list was a compromise between the list of OBCs in the Mandal Commission Report (1980) and the various state lists that existed when the V.P. Singh government decided to implement the Mandal recommendations. To avoid political contestation, only castes common to both the lists made the cut. The Centre has since expanded the list, often including castes to meet political exigencies and courting controversy. The failure of the "creamy layer" concept to make reservations more equitable should serve as a lesson: Governments, under pressure from influential sections, have frequently raised the income bar to defeat the Supreme Court's intervention to eliminate the well-off among OBCs from monopolising reservations.

Ram Rahim convicted in rape case, quantum of sentence on Aug 28

As it happened after Mandal, creating OBC subcategories may force a reconfiguration of OBC politics and end



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the leadership role of certain dominant castes. Electoral politics has always underwritten affirmative action policies in India and, it will remain so unless there is substantial growth in opportunities for all. The reservation policy will be exhausted of its transformative possibilities at some point. The signs are already there in the Jat, Patel and Maratha mobilisations. The cake, surely, needs to be cut equally, but it also ought to get bigger.



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