

DAILY NEWSP APER ANALYSIS

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**CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH**

India 'stands firmly' with Israel, Modi says in address to Knesset

Prime Minister addresses Israeli parliament as he begins a visit to the West Asian country; Modi says he supports the Gaza Peace Initiative and adds that India has uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism, with no double standards

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the Knesset on Wednesday, extended a firm hand of friendship to Israel and condemned the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023 as a "barbaric terrorist attack".

Speaking at the Israeli parliament, the Prime Minister supported the Gaza Peace Initiative saying it was necessary to "sustain" the process of peace building in the region. "The Gaza Peace Initiative that was endorsed by the UN Security Council offers a pathway. India has expressed its firm support... We believe that it holds the promise of a just and durable peace for all the people of the region, including by addressing the Palestine issue," he said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, at the Knesset in Jerusalem on Wednesday. ANI

Mr. Modi said India and Israel were working to enhance bilateral relations across sectors such as water management, agriculture, and talent partnership, adding that he had discussed "key developments" in the region with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"I also carry with me the deepest condolences of the people of India for every life lost and for every

family whose world was shattered in the barbaric terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7," said Mr. Modi, adding that India stands with Israel "firmly, with full conviction".

Mr. Modi reminded the members of the Knesset about India's own struggle against terrorism and cited the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai that killed citizens of India as well as multiple other countries, including

Israel. "Like you, we have a consistent and uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism, with no double standard," he said.

Mr. Modi said India had supported Israel's attempts to build friendly ties with the countries in West Asia and North Africa and said Israeli moves to build relationships with Arab countries under the Abraham Accords showed "courage and vision".

"Since then, the situation has changed significantly. The path is even more challenging. Yet it is important to sustain that hope," he said.

Mr. Modi referred to India's ties with the Jewish community as rooted in ancient trade and movement of people, and said there is "great admiration of Israel's resolve, courage and achievements" in India.

He also talked about the absence of discrimination against the Jewish community in India and specifically referred to the Jewish communities in Kerala, Kolkata and Mumbai.

Mr. Modi said India is committed to expanding trade with Israel and informed that both sides are working on it through "cross-border financial linkages" using "Digital Public Infrastructure". He said the two sides are also working on an ambitious Free Trade Agreement.

Earlier, Mr. Netanyahu said Mr. Modi "did not flinch" and that under his leadership, India provided support to Israel in the challenging times over the recent past. "You stood for the Jews. Thank you," said Mr. Netanyahu.

RAHUL TARGETS PM'S TRIP
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KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Knesset.
- Condemned the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack as a terrorist act and reiterated India's zero-tolerance policy on terrorism.
- Expressed support for the UNSC-endorsed Gaza Peace Initiative, emphasizing a just and durable peace including the Palestine issue.
- Held talks with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu on regional security and bilateral cooperation.
- Supported normalization efforts under the Abraham Accords.
- Announced progress on India-Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and digital financial linkages.

Key Points

- India follows a consistent zero-tolerance approach to terrorism (UAPA, NIA Act).
- India supports a two-state solution and peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- India-Israel diplomatic relations established in 1992.
- Bilateral trade (excluding defence) ~USD 10 billion (recent official data).
- Cooperation areas:
 - Defence and security
 - Agriculture (Indo-Israel Agricultural Project – Centres of Excellence)
 - Water management (drip irrigation, desalination)
 - Cybersecurity and innovation

- Jewish communities historically present in:
 - Kerala (Cochin Jews)
 - Mumbai (Bene Israel)
 - Kolkata (Baghdadi Jews)

Static Linkages

- Article 51 – Promotion of international peace and security.
- UN Security Council – Binding resolutions under Chapter VII.
- India's foreign policy principles:
 - Strategic autonomy
 - Multi-alignment
- Energy security:
 - ~60% of India's crude imports from West Asia.
- Indian diaspora in Gulf region (~8–9 million).
- Defence indigenisation under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Strengthens strategic and defence cooperation.
- Reinforces India's global anti-terror stance.
- Balances Israel ties with support for Palestinian cause.
- Enhances India's role in West Asian geopolitics.

Concerns

- Balancing relations with Israel and Arab nations.
- Oil price volatility and diaspora vulnerability.
- Regional instability affecting trade routes.

Way Forward

- Maintain balanced diplomacy (Israel security + Palestine rights).
- Fast-track India-Israel FTA.
- Enhance trilateral cooperation (e.g., I2U2 framework).
- Promote humanitarian diplomacy alongside counter-terror policy.
- Safeguard energy and diaspora interests.

Bengal court cases stall with officers busy handling SIR

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Judicial work in the district and metropolitan courts across West Bengal has been severely affected after hundreds of judicial officers were deployed to process nearly 50 lakh claims and objections under the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls ahead of the February 28 deadline.

Except for urgent matters and bail hearings, trials and regular proceedings – including in special courts such as those dealing with Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases – have been affected as judges undertake verification work.

Committees have been formed at the Calcutta High Court and district levels to reassign urgent cases to alternative courts, but litigants and judicial officers remain uncertain about when normal functioning will resume. Now that it has fallen to the judiciary to examine claims and objections, judicial officers have reached out to administrative complexes for the verification work.

These judicial officers are provided log-in credentials to study the claims and objects.

A District Judge asked how judges could participate in SIR work unless they are made electoral returning officers.

Several important cases where the trial process has been or is likely to be affected include the South Calcutta Law College case (June 2025), the sexual assault of a medical student at Durgapur Medical College (October 2025), and the sexual assault and murder of a 13-year-old at Rampurhat in Birbhum (September 2025).

'May be out of depth'
Retired IAS officer and former Rajya Sabha member Jawhar Sircar said that involving judicial officers in the SIR was not a "well thought-out process".

Judicial crunch

SC has directed judiciary to verify about **50 lakh** claims and objections in West Bengal

• Calcutta HC has deployed **294** judicial officers for verifications

• Trials as well as other hearings before district courts and metropolitan courts in the State have stalled following the deployment



The former bureaucrat who has served as the Chief Electoral Officer, West Bengal, said that under the Representation of the People Act, 1950, the District Magistrates or the District Electoral Officer are the ones with whom real authority lies as far as election processes are concerned. When administrative jobs are thrust upon judicial officers, they "may be out of depth" because judges are used to functioning in a particular format, and issuing judicial and quasi-judicial orders over pending disputes, he said.

He argued that had the judicial officers been engaged in the process about a month ago, the solution may have worked, but now only two or three days were left to meet the February 28 deadline. The Supreme Court has directed the EC to publish the final voter rolls in West Bengal on February 28. However, the supplementary lists would be published on a continuous basis till the date of nomination of candidates for the upcoming Assembly polls, the Supreme Court said.

The Supreme Court on February 20 highlighted a trust deficit between the West Bengal government and the EC and directed that judicial officials of the State would look into claims and objections.

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Key Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- Article 324 – Election Commission of India (ECI) has superintendence, direction and control of elections.
- Representation of the People Act, 1950
 - Deals with preparation and revision of electoral rolls.
 - District Magistrate acts as District Election Officer (DEO).
- Article 50 – Separation of judiciary from executive.
- Article 21 – Right to speedy trial (judicial interpretation).
- POCSO Act, 2012 – Mandates special courts for time-bound trial of child sexual offences.

Core Issues for UPSC

1. Separation of Powers
 - Judiciary performing executive election-related functions raises concerns.
 - Possible dilution of institutional specialization.
2. Judicial Independence
 - Involvement in administrative tasks may blur functional boundaries.
 - Risk of judiciary being drawn into political controversies.
3. Electoral Integrity vs Administrative Capacity
 - Judicial scrutiny may enhance neutrality and credibility.
 - However, it signals lack of confidence in regular election machinery.
4. Impact on Justice Delivery
 - Delay in criminal trials affects Article 21.
 - Sensitive cases (POCSO, sexual assault) disrupted.

Constitutional & Governance Dimensions

- Balance between Article 324 powers of ECI and Article 50 principle of separation.
- Institutional coordination vs institutional overreach.
- Need for capacity building in electoral administration.
- Ensuring electoral credibility without compromising judicial efficiency.

Way Forward

- Strengthen ECI's district-level verification mechanisms.
- Develop dedicated electoral grievance redressal systems.
- Avoid routine deployment of judicial officers for executive tasks.
- Protect time-bound criminal trials from administrative diversion.
- Clarify legal framework for exceptional judicial involvement.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- Nearly 50 lakh claims and objections were received during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.
- The Supreme Court of India directed that judicial officers examine these claims due to a trust deficit between the State Government and the Election Commission.
- Judicial officers were deployed across district courts, affecting regular trials, including POCSO cases.
- Final electoral rolls were directed to be published by February 28, with supplementary lists allowed later.

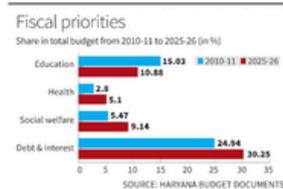
Education outlay in Haryana shows downward trend as debt, welfare expenditures rise

Ashtok Kumar
GURUGRAM

Budgetary trends in Haryana over the past 15 years reveal that allocation for education has steadily declined as a share of total budget, even as provisions for social welfare have grown significantly. At the same time, the share of debt and interest payments in total expenditure has also seen a sharp rise.

The government spends more than half of the total budget for social welfare on two populist schemes – the Old Age Samman Allowance Scheme, implemented in 1966, and the Deen Dayal Lado Lakshmi Yojana, promised by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the 2024 Assembly election.

Of the total budget of ₹18,751.78 crore towards social empowerment, mi-



SOURCE: HARYANA BUDGET DOCUMENTS

trition and welfare of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes in 2025-26, the two schemes together were allocated ₹10,210 crore. The total allocation for education was ₹22,312.46 crore.

In 2010-11, the expenditure on education was ₹5,946.29 crore out of the State's total expenditure of ₹39,554.83 crore, whereas ₹2,176.15 crore was ear-

marked for social welfare programmes. The allocation for education also includes the capital and revenue outlay on sports, arts and culture.

0.77% GDP on health Though the health budget has seen an increase over the past 15 years, it is still below the national average of 5.7%, according to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

report – State Finance: A Study of Budgets of 2025-26, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi fare better than Haryana on the health front with spending percentages of 5.8%, 6.1%, 7.6%, and 12.9% respectively.

As per the performance audit on Public Health Infrastructure and Management of Health Services, 2022-23, Haryana spends 0.77% of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) on health.

The total number of beneficiaries under the Old Age Samman Allowance Scheme in February this year stood at 20,05,367 – 10,44,069 men and 9,61,298 women.

The monthly pension has recently been hiked to ₹3,200 per month.

Similarly, eight lakh women from families with an annual income of less than

₹1.80 lakh are given ₹2,100 per month under the Lado Lakshmi Yojana.

The BJP, in its Assembly election manifesto, had promised the monthly assistance to all women. As per electoral data, there are 95 lakh women in the State.

As per the RBI report, the national average for expenditure on education, sports and arts and culture as a percentage of the total expenditure is 13.1%.

Except Punjab, which allocated 9.3% towards education, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi have higher spending rates at 17.5%, 13.0%, 16.4%, and 19% respectively.

The allocation for technical education, skill development and industrial training, as a percentage of the total expenditure, has also decreased in Haryana

from 1.08% to 0.6% over this period.

State of Institutions Compared with high-income States such as Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, none of the universities and higher educational institutions in Haryana figure in the QS World University Rankings 2026 or find a mention in the top 150 higher educational institutions in the NIRF ranking, according to the Haryana Vision Document, 2047.

In contrast, Tamil Nadu was home to 18 of the NIRF 2024's top 100 institutions while Maharashtra had 10 universities in the QS World University Rankings for 2025.

The vision document, released in December last year, also highlights a 4.9% dropout rate and notes the adverse impact on mar-

ginalised communities. It also contrasts the proportion of government schools with internet – 69.3% – with that in private schools – 94.5%.

As per an RTI reply, around 50% regular teaching posts are vacant in government and government-aided colleges in Haryana.

On the technical education front, the Vision 2047 document calls for the need to address the high vacancy rate of ITI instructors, which currently stands at 50%.

Experts voice concern Rupamanjari Sinha Ray, Associate Professor, Economics & Public Policy, Management Development Institute (MDI), Gurugram, said: "The capital outlay for education is a cause for concern for Haryana."

She said the govern-

ment could, in order to meet the needs of the health and education sectors, consider raising funds for social expenditure through corporate social responsibility funds.

For infrastructure projects, the State could aim for public-private partnerships as it has done in the power transmission sector, she added. Ms. Ray, along with Sami Ashra, Professor, Economics & Public Policy, MDI, had prepared a report titled "Evaluation of Finances of State of Haryana" at the request of the Sixteenth Finance Commission last year.

Haryana spends significantly less on education and health as a percentage of its social service expenditure than other high-income States despite having a much higher per capita income than the national average, the report stated.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- RBI's State Finances: A Study of Budgets 2025-26 highlights trends in Haryana's expenditure.
- Over the last 15 years:
 - Share of education expenditure in total budget has declined.
 - Share of social welfare expenditure has increased significantly.
 - Debt and interest payments have risen sharply.
- Major allocations concentrated in two schemes:
 - Old Age Samman Allowance Scheme
 - Deen Dayal Lado Lakshmi Yojana

Key Data Points

Education

- 2010-11:
 - ₹5,946 crore (out of ₹39,554 crore total expenditure).
- 2025-26:
 - ₹22,312 crore.
- National average spending on education (as % of total expenditure): 13.1% (RBI).
- Technical education share declined from 1.08% to 0.6%.
- ~50% vacancies in regular teaching posts in colleges.
- 4.9% dropout rate at secondary level.

Health

- Health expenditure: 0.77% of GSDP (Performance Audit 2022-23).
- National benchmark (National Health Policy 2017): 2.5% of GDP.
- Several states spend higher proportions than Haryana.

Social Welfare

- 2025-26:
 - ₹18,751 crore for social empowerment, SC/BC welfare.
 - ₹10,210 crore allocated to two major schemes.

- Old Age Pension:
 - 20 lakh beneficiaries.
 - ₹3,200 per month.
- Lado Lakshmi Yojana:
 - ₹2,100 per month for eligible women.

Institutional Indicators

- No Haryana university in QS World Rankings 2026.
- No institution in top 150 of NIRF rankings.
- Govt schools with internet: 69.3% (vs 94.5% private).

Constitutional & Policy Linkages

- Article 41 – Public assistance in old age (DPSP).
- Article 21A – Right to Education.
- FRBM Acts – Fiscal discipline for Union and States.
- National Education Policy (2020) – 6% of GDP target.
- National Health Policy (2017) – 2.5% of GDP public health target.
- Human capital formation as driver of long-term growth (Economic Survey theme).

Issues for Analysis

1. Fiscal Structure Concern
 - Rising revenue expenditure (pensions, cash transfers).
 - Increasing debt servicing burden.
 - Potential crowding out of capital expenditure.
2. Human Capital Gap
 - Low spending on education and health relative to income level.
 - High vacancy in educational institutions.
 - Weak higher education performance.
3. Populism vs Welfare State
 - Targeted vs universal transfers debate.
 - Electoral commitments vs fiscal sustainability.
 - Short-term consumption vs long-term productivity gains.

Way Forward

- Increase education allocation toward 6% benchmark.
- Raise public health spending in line with NHP 2017.
- Rationalize welfare schemes with:
 - Better targeting.
 - Periodic outcome evaluation.
- Fill vacancies in teaching and technical institutions.
- Strengthen outcome-based budgeting.
- Maintain fiscal prudence under FRBM framework.

Loose connection made satellite miss orbit: panel

The apex committee says the signal meant to activate a key valve in the engine's oxidiser line never reached it; this valve is crucial for firing the engine to raise the orbit of NVS-02

Jacob Koshy

NEW DELHI

After nearly a year's delay, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) made public the report of a committee constituted to analyse why the NVS-02 satellite, which was launched aboard a GSLV rocket on January 29 last year, could not be placed in its intended orbit.

The apex committee, as it is called, concluded that the main reason for what happened was that the signal meant to activate a key valve in the engine's oxidiser line never reached it. This valve is crucial for firing the engine to raise the spacecraft's orbit.

Faulty connection
The committee said the most likely explanation was that at least one connection in the electrical connector – in both the primary and back-up lines



Off track: The NVS-02 navigation satellite aboard the launch vehicle GSLV-F15 in Sriharikota on January 29, 2025. ANI

– came loose or failed, preventing the signal from getting through.

NVS-02, the second spacecraft in the NVS series, was placed successfully into an 'elliptical transfer' orbit on January 29, 2025 at 00:53 UT but its subsequent transfer to a circular orbit was unsuccessful.

This was also a special occasion being the 100th launch from the Sriharikota launchpad. The spacecraft was separated from

the launch vehicle (GSLV/F15) following which a series of autonomous activities on the satellite were carried out, including deploying the solar panel and stabilising the orientation for power generation.

The NVS-02 was to be the second satellite in the NVS series, and part of India's Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC). The committee, an ISRO statement said, gave a set of recommendations to

"enhance" the redundancy and reliability of pyro system operations for pyro system operations for future missions. These were "successfully implemented in CMS-03 spacecraft launched on November 2, 2025 by LVM-3 M5, and the pyro systems performed satisfactorily placing the satellite in the intended orbit."

The CMS-03, or GSAT-7R, is an indigenously designed and developed satellite, weighing approximately 4,400 kg – India's heaviest communication satellite – and is critical to the Navy's space-based communications and maritime domain awareness.

The *Hindu* reported this week that a committee that includes K. Vijaybhaskar, former Principal Scientific Adviser, and S. Somanath, former Chairman, ISRO, will probe "systemic issues" underlying the successive failures of ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) released the report of an apex committee examining the failure of the NVS-02 satellite to reach its intended circular orbit.
- NVS-02 was launched on 29 January 2025 aboard GSLV F15 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre.
- The launch marked the 100th mission from Sriharikota.
- The satellite was successfully placed in an elliptical transfer orbit, but orbit-raising manoeuvres failed.
- NVS-02 is part of the NavIC constellation (second-generation satellites).

Key Findings of the Committee

- The failure occurred because the signal to activate a key valve in the oxidiser line did not reach the engine.
- Most probable reason: Loose or failed electrical connection in both primary and backup lines.
- As a result, the engine could not fire for orbit raising.

Importance for India

1. NavIC System

- Indigenous regional navigation system.
- Provides:
 - Standard Positioning Service (SPS) – civilian use.
 - Restricted Service (RS) – encrypted for strategic users.
- Coverage: India and up to 1500 km beyond.
- Reduces dependence on foreign systems like GPS.

2. Strategic & Security Relevance

- Critical for:
 - Defence operations.
 - Maritime domain awareness.
 - Disaster management.
 - Transportation & logistics.

Corrective Measures Taken

- Recommendations to enhance redundancy and reliability of pyro systems.
- Successfully implemented in CMS-03.
- CMS-03 was launched by LVM-3 M5 (November 2025).
- CMS-03 (GSAT-7R):
 - ~4,400 kg.
 - Strengthens Navy's secure communications.

Static Linkages

- PSLV – Primarily used for polar and Sun-synchronous orbits.
- GSLV – Used for Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit missions.
- LVM-3 – Heavy-lift launch vehicle.
- India is a signatory to the Outer Space Treaty (1967).
- Space sector functions under the Department of Space (DoS).

Mains Dimensions

- Indigenisation of critical technologies.
- Strategic autonomy in space infrastructure.
- Reliability challenges in high-technology missions.
- Space as a component of internal security and blue economy.
- Public accountability and transparency in strategic sectors.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Transparent disclosure of technical findings.
- Quick implementation of corrective recommendations.
- Strengthening self-reliant navigation infrastructure.

Concerns

- Failure in both primary and backup systems indicates design-level vulnerability.
- Successive mission issues may affect India's commercial launch credibility.
- Need for stronger quality control mechanisms.

Way Forward

- Independent mission assurance audits.
- Strengthened vendor and supply-chain certification.
- AI-based predictive diagnostics.
- Deeper private-sector quality benchmarking under IN-SPACe.
- Institutionalised post-mission transparency.

Balancing faith, dignity and constitutional rights

When a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India delivered its verdict, in September 2018, in *Indian Young Lawyers Association vs State of Kerala*, opening the doors of Kerala's Sabarimala temple to women of all ages, it provoked a range of reactions. There were protests across the country, especially in Kerala, where many believed that the Court had overlooked, and even disrespected, religious creed. Others saw the verdict as transformative, as outlining a vision that embraced the Constitution. Now, close to a decade later, the Court will hear final arguments on review petitions that seek to overturn the earlier verdict and the law it laid down.



Subirith Parthasarathy is an advocate practicing in the Madras High Court

Opinion, dissent and turning point

The original ruling was delivered through a 4:1 majority. There was an opinion from the Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Mishra, to which Justice A.M. Khanwilkar joined. There were separate, concurring opinions from Justices Rohinton Nariman and J.Y. Chandrachud and a notable dissent from Justice Indu Malhotra. But despite the cleavage in the rationales adopted, the majority's findings were clear.

First, the Court ruled that the deities of Lord Ayyappa did not constitute a separate religious denomination; second, that the bar enforced on women between the ages of 10 and 50 from entering the temple violated the rights of women to freedom of religion; and third, that Rule 3(b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules, 1965, on which the ban was grounded, violated not only the Constitution but also Section 3 of its parent law, which promised free access to temples for all classes of Hindus.

In her dissenting opinion, Justice Malhotra found, among other things, that fundamental rights in a secular polity needed harmonising, that a generic doctrine of equality cannot override the collective rights of individuals to practise their faith in the way their customs and ideals. She also found that, as a matter of custom, women of a certain age had been excluded from the temple's precincts, and this constituted a non-derogable "essential religious practice".

The latter finding represented the central axis on which the case turned. The Constitution recognises both the freedom of religion as an individual right and the right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion. Both rights are subject to public order, morality and health, and in the case of an individual's right to freedom of religion also to other fundamental rights.

Balancing communitarian interests with individual conscience has long plagued our jurisprudence. Over the years, when it has been

called to resolve tensions of this kind, the Court has used a test that has allowed it to virtually sit in theological judgment over religious practice.

That is, it examines and arrives at a factual conclusion on whether a practice in question is essential to the religion or not. This has meant that the Court has effectively determined not only those areas where it might be constitutionally justifiable for the state to intervene but has also determined what kinds of practices are deserving of constitutional protection in the first place.

For example, in *Sastry v. Uthayakumaran* (1966), CJI P.R. Gajendragadkar decried what was essential to the followers of the Swaminarayan sect through selective references to Hindu texts without so much as asking what the conscience of the followers, in fact, dictated. In one passage, he even concluded that the "genesis of the suit... is founded on superstition, ignorance and complete misunderstanding of the true teachings of Hindu religion".

A court sitting as a moral arbiter on religion ought to be anathema to secularism. Therefore, that we need a theory that departs from the essential religious practices test ought to be beyond doubt. As Justice Chandrachud wrote, in his judgment in *Indian Young Lawyers Association*, "The rationale for allowing a religious community to define what constitutes an essential aspect of its religion is to protect the autonomy of religious and religious denominations. Protecting that autonomy enhances the liberal values of the Constitution... By entering upon doctrinal issues of what does or does not constitute an essential part of religion, the Court has, as a necessary consequence, been required to adopt a religious mantle".

The test also suffers from other practical limitations. It calls upon a constitutional court to arrive at fully fleshed-out factual findings without allowing parties to lead oral evidence or subject witnesses to cross examination. What is more, the doctrine also does not offer a clear solution for what is really an obvious problem: what must a court do when a practice it finds essential to religion also undermines, or is inimical to, the rights of individuals?

On an 'anti-exclusion test'

It is for this reason that Justice Chandrachud proposed an "anti-exclusion test". In his formulation, this term would allow for due deference to be shown to each religious group to determine for themselves what doctrines and tenets to follow. At the same time, should any such practice exclude an individual in a manner which impairs their dignity or hampers their access to basic goods, "the freedom of religion must give way to the over-arching values of a liberal constitution".

At a doctrinal level, the test is not beyond complications. At first glance, it might well seem to replicate some of the difficulties that have long beleaguered the essential religious practices doctrine. To determine whether a particular form of exclusion impairs dignity or access to basic goods, a court must inevitably engage with the meaning and purpose of the practice in question. Such an inquiry cannot be carried out in the vacuum. It may have an impact on the normative content of faith itself. But where it differs is that the investigation remains grounded in constitutional terms rather than theological ones.

A crucial distinction

In other words, the anti-exclusion test does not ask whether a practice is essential to religion; it asks whether the consequences of a practice are compatible with the Constitution's guarantees of equal treatment and protection. This distinction is crucial. Under the essential religious practices test, constitutional protection turns on whether a court sees a practice as critical to the exercise of faith.

By contrast, under the anti-exclusion test a court accepts, as a starting point, the autonomy of religious groups to define their own tenets. It only intervenes to ensure that the exercise of that liberty does not lead to a systematic exclusion of individuals from places or benefits that are integral to their ability to lead a life of dignity.

When the nine-judge Bench begins its hearings, it will have the opportunity to reflect on the broader architecture of India's religious freedom clauses. The principles it lays down will have a bearing not only on the Sabarimala dispute but also on a host of other controversies as well – including the rights of Dawoodi Bohra community members against excommunication and of Parsi women to continue to practise the Zoroastrian faith upon marrying outside the religion.

As the framers of the Constitution recognised, religion and social life are inextricably connected in India. This makes it impossible for courts to remain entirely indifferent to the real-life consequences of religious practice. The anti-exclusion test acknowledges that faith must remain autonomous in its own domain, but its outward exercise must comport with the Constitution's commitment to equal moral membership.

If the individual is to remain the basic unit of constitutional concern, communitarian claims cannot override a person's right to access spaces and institutions that shape civic life. In placing dignity at the heart of the inquiry, the anti-exclusion test offers a framework that remains true to the Constitution's transformative promise, by protecting belief without licensing discrimination in its name.

- Courts decide whether a practice is essential to religion.
- Criticism:
 - Judiciary acts as theological authority.
 - Inconsistent application.
 - Difficult to reconcile with secularism.

Anti-Exclusion Test

- Focus shifts from "Is it essential?" to:
 - "Does it violate dignity and equal access?"
- If a practice results in systematic exclusion affecting dignity → State/Court can intervene.
- Grounded in constitutional morality and transformative constitutionalism.

Static Constitutional Provisions Relevant

- Article 14 – Equality before law.
- Article 15(2) – Access to public spaces.
- Article 21 – Dignity jurisprudence.
- Article 25 – Freedom of religion (subject to morality, health, public order, other FRs).
- Article 26 – Rights of religious denominations.
- Basic Structure Doctrine – Secularism.

Critical Analysis

In Favour of 2018 Judgment

- Strengthens gender justice.
- Reinforces dignity as central constitutional value.
- Expands scope of Article 25(2)(b) social reform.

Concerns

- Judicial overreach in theological matters.
- Tension between group rights and individual rights.
- Potential impact on denominational autonomy.

Way Forward

- Develop a clear constitutional test balancing:
 - Religious autonomy
 - Individual dignity
- Limit judicial theological inquiry.
- Strengthen principle of constitutional morality.
- Harmonise Articles 14, 25, and 26 through proportionality analysis.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- In 2018, the Supreme Court in *Indian Young Lawyers Association vs State of Kerala (2018)* allowed entry of women of all ages into Sabarimala Temple.
- The judgment struck down the practice excluding women aged 10–50 years.
- Several review petitions were filed.
- A nine-judge Constitution Bench is now examining broader constitutional questions:
 - Scope of Articles 25 & 26
 - Validity of the Essential Religious Practices (ERP) doctrine
 - Balance between religious autonomy and individual dignity

Core Constitutional Issues

- Whether Sabarimala devotees constitute a religious denomination under Article 26.
- Whether exclusion of women violates:
 - Article 14 – Equality before law
 - Article 15(1) – Non-discrimination
 - Article 25(1) – Freedom of religion
- Scope of Article 25(2)(b) – Social reform and temple entry.
- Whether courts should determine what is an "essential religious practice".

Essential Religious Practices (ERP) Doctrine

- Origin: 1954 *Shirur Mutt* case (Commissioner, Hindu Religious Endowments vs Sri Lakshmindra Thirtha Swamiar).

The Sabarimala review's final arguments will also centre on the broader architecture of India's religious freedom jurisprudence

Unpackaging the myth of safe bottled water in India

In contemporary India, bottled water has quietly shifted from an occasional convenience to an everyday necessity. Across railway stations, offices and restaurants, packaged drinking water is now routine, driven by declining trust in municipal supplies and the belief that water sealed in plastic is safer.

In recent years, however, scientific studies, including research conducted in India, have begun to challenge this perception. While bottled water is regulated and generally found to be microbiologically safe, concerns are no longer limited to bacteria and pathogens. Attention is now turning to less visible risks, including microplastic particles and trace chemicals that leach from plastic containers, and their potential long-term implications for human health and environmental sustainability.



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Microplastics as top contaminant
Microplastics are plastic particles smaller than five millimetres. Bottled drinking water has become a direct and significant route of human exposure to these particles.

A study based in Nagpur, Maharashtra, detected microplastics in all sampled brands of bottled water, with concentrations ranging from 72 particles to 212 particles per litre. Locally bottled water showed higher contamination than national brands, pointing to possible gaps in bottling practices and quality control measures.

This pattern is not isolated. Studies examining bottled water from Mumbai and coastal Andhra Pradesh detected microplastics in every sample analysed, indicating that contamination occurs across regions and supply chains. Taken together, these findings indicate that microplastics in bottled drinking water is an emerging contaminant in India, not just confined to western markets.

The health effects of ingesting microplastics are still under investigation. However, these particles are known to carry toxic additives and pollutants. Emerging research suggests that smaller particles may cross biological barriers, raising concerns about the safety of bottled drinking water. The issue is further compounded

by nanoplastics, which are even smaller particles, fall below current detection thresholds, and remain outside existing safety regulations.

This reveals a regulatory gap: while exposure through everyday sources such as bottled water is increasingly documented, safety standards remain focused on visible or short-term contaminants, leaving potential long-term risks largely unmonitored.

Bottled water is also vulnerable to chemical leaching from plastic containers. Additives such as antimony, phthalates and other plasticisers can migrate into water, particularly when bottles are exposed to heat or stored for prolonged periods—conditions common in India's supply chains.

Leaching may occur during transportation, warehouse or retail display, especially when bottles are stored in direct sunlight. Studies show elevated temperatures and ultraviolet exposure accelerate this leaching process.

While detected chemicals remain within regulatory limits, existing standards typically assess isolated substances over short durations. They fail to adequately account for cumulative, long-term exposure to multiple additives, in combination with microplastics, thereby creating a critical disconnect between daily consumption patterns and regulations oversight.

Regulations lag behind

In India, packaged drinking water is regulated primarily by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which oversees licensing, testing and compliance under updated norms following the removal of mandatory BIS certification. While this framework has improved baseline quality, its scope remains limited. These standards do not include testing for, or limit on, microplastics, nor do they adequately address long-term exposure to plastic-derived chemicals under real-world storage conditions.

State-level surveys, including those conducted in Karnataka, have frequently identified bottled water samples that are unsafe or substandard, highlighting gaps in enforcement rather than the absence of regulations. This challenge is compounded by a fragmented industry of

thousands of small bottling units, many operating with minimal oversight and drawing on already stressed groundwater reserves.

The public health risks of bottled water usage cannot be separated from its environmental footprint. India is already grappling with a plastic waste crisis, generating millions of tonnes annually, of which single-use water bottles form a large share. As plastic degrades in landfills, rivers and oceans, it fragments into microplastics that re-enter ecosystems and water sources, which ultimately contaminate water sources, including bottled water supplies themselves. This convergence of environmental degradation and human health risk underscores the inadequacy of treating bottled water merely as a consumer convenience.

Towards safer alternatives

Bottled water remains indispensable during emergencies, disaster relief and areas lacking reliable potable water infrastructure. The concern, therefore, is not prohibition but over-dependence and misplaced trust.

In the interim, exposure risks can be reduced through point-of-use filtration capable of removing particulate matter, avoiding prolonged storage of bottled water under heat, and expanding access to refill stations and public water dispensing systems.

At a systemic level, strengthening the municipal water supply system, ensuring transparent public disclosure of water quality, expanding access to affordable household filtration, and improving consumer awareness can help recalibrate public trust toward monitored and accountable public water systems.

Equally important is updating regulatory frameworks to include routine testing for microplastics and plastic-derived contaminants currently absent in FSSAI and BIS standards.

When harm is clearly documented and scientific evidence continues to accumulate, the issue is no longer whether the problem exists, but whether policy institutions and regulatory instruments are willing to acknowledge it, measure it honestly, and assign responsibility.

Key Issues

1. Public Health Concerns

- Microplastics may carry toxic additives and pollutants.
- Nanoplastics may cross biological barriers.
- Long-term cumulative exposure not fully studied.

2. Regulatory Gaps

- Standards focus on microbiological safety.
- No routine testing for microplastics.
- Weak enforcement in fragmented small bottling units.

3. Environmental Dimension

- India generates over 3 million tonnes of plastic waste annually (CPCB).
- Single-use PET bottles contribute significantly.
- Plastic degrades into microplastics contaminating water sources.

4. Groundwater Governance

- Bottling units extract groundwater.
- Links to aquifer depletion.
- Raises concerns of common pool resource exploitation.

Static Linkages

- Article 21 – Right to life includes right to clean water (SC interpretation).
- Article 47 – Duty of the State to improve public health.
- Environmental Protection Act, 1986.
- Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016.
- Polluter Pays Principle.
- Precautionary Principle.
- SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation.
- SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Ensures microbiological safety in areas with poor municipal supply.
- Important during disasters and emergencies.
- Standardised purification in organized sector.

Concerns

- Invisible contaminants (microplastics, nanoplastics).
- Cumulative chemical exposure unregulated.
- Plastic waste crisis.
- Weak monitoring and enforcement.
- Trust deficit in public water systems.

Way Forward

- Introduce mandatory microplastic testing standards.
- Update FSSAI/BIS norms to include long-term exposure assessment.
- Strengthen enforcement of Plastic Waste Management Rules.
- Promote public water refill stations.
- Improve municipal water quality monitoring and transparency.
- Encourage research on health impacts via ICMR/CSIR.
- Strengthen groundwater regulation of bottling units.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- Increasing dependence on packaged drinking water in India due to declining trust in municipal supply.
- Recent Indian studies (Nagpur, Mumbai, coastal Andhra Pradesh) detected microplastics in all sampled bottled water brands.
- Growing concerns about chemical leaching (antimony, phthalates, plasticisers) from PET bottles under high temperature conditions.
- Present regulatory framework under Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) does not prescribe specific limits for microplastics.
- Raises issues of public health, environmental sustainability, groundwater governance and regulatory oversight.

Key Points

- Microplastics: Plastic particles smaller than 5 mm.
- Detected concentration in Indian studies: 72–212 particles per litre (Nagpur study).
- Bottled water is regulated by:
 - Food Safety and Standards Authority of India
 - Standards earlier linked with Bureau of Indian Standards
- Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (amended 2022):
 - Ban on identified single-use plastics.
 - Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) provisions.
- Chemical leaching increases with:
 - High temperature
 - UV exposure
 - Prolonged storage

A jab well done

Following up of adverse events after immunisation is a must

India's move to introduce a nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme, for girls aged 14, strikes a strident note for science at a time when an anti-vaccination sentiment has perilously picked up favourable winds, globally. The impact of shunning vaccines is apparent in the United States where, currently, a measles epidemic is making its way across 26 States. The HPV vaccination will be conducted exclusively at designated government health facilities, and in the presence of trained medical officers, supported by skilled health-care teams equipped for post-vaccination observation and management of adverse events following immunisation (AEFI). A single-dose vaccine, a regimen recommended by the World Health Organization, will be deployed. Adequate evidence exists to show that almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by persistent infection with high-risk types of HPV, particularly 16 and 18. These two types together account for more than 80% of cervical cancer cases in India. Evidence also points to the fact that cervical cancer is largely preventable through HPV vaccination and regular screening, and can be cured if detected early and treated promptly. Globally, over 90 countries are implementing single-dose HPV vaccination schedules. Several countries have demonstrated substantial reductions in HPV infection, precancerous lesions, and cervical cancer incidence following widespread vaccination. Cervical cancer remains a rare cancer where a vaccine has proven to be of great preventive value.

The sheer burden of cervical cancer in India is what makes this decision a critical life-saving intervention: The South-East Asia Region (SEARO) accounts for the second-highest cervical cancer incident (new cases) and death rate among WHO regions, with India contributing over 65% of the burden. The second most common cancer in women in India, it was estimated that the country had 127,526 new cases and 79,906 deaths from cervical cancer in 2022. National screening coverage remains alarmingly low, with only 1.9% of women aged 30-49 being tested. However, India's dark past with an HPV vaccine trial cannot be forgotten. Seven girls who were part of a trial in 2009-10 in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat died. An ICMR investigation averred that the reasons "were most probably unrelated to the vaccine. However, the cause of death in all the cases cannot be established with certainty". It also flagged, as a key concern, the need to identify and investigate all AEFI. As the government embarks on this exercise that could lead to many health gains, it will do well to ensure a working cold chain to store the vaccines, complete transparency, and meticulous reporting of AEFI across the country.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- Government of India to introduce nationwide HPV vaccination for girls aged 14 years.
- Single-dose schedule as recommended by WHO (2022 update).
- Administered through designated government health facilities with AEFI monitoring.
- Decision taken amid rising global vaccine hesitancy.
- India bears the highest cervical cancer burden in South-East Asia Region (SEARO).

Key Facts

- Causative Agent: Persistent infection with high-risk HPV types, especially 16 and 18.
- Share of types 16 and 18 in India: More than 80% of cervical cancer cases.
- Burden in India (GLOBOCAN 2022):
 - Approximately 1.27 lakh new cases
 - Approximately 79,000 deaths
- Ranking: Second most common cancer among Indian women.
- Screening Coverage (NFHS): Only about 1.9% women (30-49 years) screened.

- Over 90 countries have adopted single-dose schedule.
- Aligns with preventive health approach under National Health Policy 2017.

Static Constitutional and Policy Linkages

- Article 21 – Right to life includes right to health (Supreme Court interpretation).
- Article 47 (Directive Principles of State Policy) – Duty of State to improve public health.
- Health – State List (Entry 6, Seventh Schedule).
- Universal Immunisation Programme (1985).
- WHO 90-70-90 Target (2030):
 - 90% girls vaccinated by 15 years
 - 70% women screened
 - 90% treated

Critical Points

Significance

- Cost-effective preventive intervention.
- Reduces long-term cancer burden and mortality.
- Strengthens women's health and gender equity.
- Supports SDG-3 (Good Health and Well-being).

Challenges

- Vaccine hesitancy (2009-10 HPV trial controversy).
- Weak screening ecosystem.
- Cold chain and last-mile delivery issues.
- Need for robust AEFI monitoring and transparency.

Way Forward

- Strengthen cold-chain under Universal Immunisation Programme.
- Ensure transparent AEFI reporting system.
- Integrate with school health programmes and Health and Wellness Centres.
- Mass IEC campaigns to counter misinformation.
- Scale up screening alongside vaccination.

Demagogue salesman

Donald Trump will need more than words to alter the bitter ground realities

In his 2026 State of the Union address, U.S. President Donald Trump chose to double down on the politics of his conservative support base by touting his second administration's achievements with regard to divisive, if not polarising issues relating to immigration, the cost of living, and foreign policy concerns including tariffs and the prospect of war in the context of Iran. The speech itself comes at a fraught moment for the Trump White House, days after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down its use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to slam a broad swathe of trading partners, including India, with punitive tariffs. An apparently undaunted Mr. Trump repeated his earlier remarks on social media hinting at disdain for the ruling, when he described it during the speech as "unfortunate" and argued, against evidence to the contrary regarding the burgeoning public debt, that the tariff revenues received by his government were "saving" the U.S. Similarly, he neatly avoided alluding to the two Americans killed in ICE raids in Minneapolis or the agency's other heavy-handed actions targeting "criminal aliens" and "drug lords". With regard to Iran, even though Washington has rapidly built up its force posture across West Asia following Teheran's crackdown on protesters, Mr. Trump appeared to be holding out hope for a *modus vivendi* when he said, "My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy. But... I will never allow the world's number one sponsor of terror, which they are by far, to have a nuclear weapon."

If Mr. Trump's remarks in Congress sounded self-congratulatory, that might have been because they echoed a well-rehearsed campaign speech ahead of the critical mid-term elections. While it is true that inflation has gradually come down during Mr. Trump's second term, his description of the price trend as "plummeting" might have appeared to some to be an exaggeration, especially given that it was under his predecessor Joe Biden that prices came off their nearly 9% peak in mid-2022 to 2.9% by the time Mr. Trump entered the White House, leading to the current rate of nearly 2.4%. More concerning for the White House and Republican lawmakers, opinion polls suggest that most Americans are disenchanted with the tariff policy and its cost-escalating pressure on the economy, with the design and implementation of the current immigration policy, and with the perceived involvement of Mr. Trump in the Epstein scandal. While an upbeat address to a joint session of Congress might galvanise the faithful, it will take more than words to alter the bitter ground realities faced by the common people and they tend to express their frustrations in this context at the ballot box.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- In the 2026 State of the Union Address, U.S. President Donald Trump defended his administration's policies on tariffs, immigration enforcement, inflation and Iran.
- The speech followed a ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States, which struck down the administration's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), 1977, to impose wide-ranging tariffs on multiple countries, including India.
- Inflation in the U.S. has declined from nearly 9% (mid-2022 peak) to around 2.4% in 2026.
- The U.S. has strengthened military deployment in West Asia amid tensions with Iran while indicating a preference for diplomatic engagement.
- The address comes ahead of crucial mid-term elections in the U.S.

Key Points

1. Tariffs and Trade Policy

- IEEPA permits the U.S. President to regulate international commerce during a declared national emergency.

- The Supreme Court ruling highlights constitutional limits on executive emergency powers.
- Tariffs may:
 - Protect domestic industries (protectionism)
 - Increase consumer prices (cost-push inflation)
 - Trigger retaliatory trade measures
- Potential implications for India's exports and bilateral trade relations.

2. Inflation and Public Debt

- Inflation decline attributed to post-pandemic normalization and monetary tightening.
- Debate over the role of tariff revenues in addressing public debt.
- Protectionist policies affect:
 - Supply chains
 - Exchange rates
 - Balance of Payments

3. Immigration Policy

- Intensified enforcement by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).
- Immigration remains a politically polarizing issue.
- Raises concerns regarding:
 - Civil liberties
 - Federal-state relations
 - Executive accountability

4. Iran and West Asia

- U.S. reiterates that Iran must not acquire nuclear weapons.
- Continued sanctions and strategic deterrence posture.
- Implications for:
 - Global energy markets
 - Maritime security (Strait of Hormuz)
 - India's energy security

Static Linkages

- Separation of Powers – Executive actions subject to judicial review.
- Judicial Review – Core principle of constitutional governance.
- Protectionism vs Free Trade – Theory of Comparative Advantage (David Ricardo).
- Types of Inflation – Demand-pull and Cost-push.
- Public Debt sustainability and fiscal deficit.
- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- Energy security and geopolitical risks in West Asia.

Critical Analysis

Advantages

- Protection of domestic manufacturing sectors.
- Political consolidation ahead of elections.
- Strong deterrence posture toward Iran.

Concerns

- Judicial rebuke indicates institutional friction.
- Tariffs may increase inflation and hurt consumers.
- Risk of trade retaliation and global supply chain disruption.
- Escalation in West Asia may increase crude oil prices, affecting India.
- Immigration enforcement may raise ethical and human rights concerns.

Implications for India

- Potential tariff impact on Indian exports.
- Concerns for skilled migration and IT sector.
- Oil price volatility affecting fiscal stability.
- Need for strategic balancing in West Asia policy.

Way Forward

- Strengthen multilateral trade mechanisms through WTO reforms.
- Diversify export markets and enhance domestic manufacturing competitiveness.
- Build and maintain strategic petroleum reserves.
- Promote diplomatic resolution of West Asia tensions.
- Support rule-based international economic order.

The space between us — and how to bridge it



ROOPALI
SINHA

PLEASE, MIND the gap." Whenever I hear this announcement in the Metro, it brings me a moment of pause. I have seen it written on the back of trucks and heavy vehicles: *Kripaya doori ka dityan rakhen* (Please maintain distance).

In the case of vehicular traffic, these warnings stand vindicated. If you don't mind the gap, you may end up paying a heavy price. But there are other areas in which we cling to the warning. "Mind the gap" is entrenched in us when it comes to social hierarchy — "*apni aukat mei raho* (stay in your lane)", we keep reminding each other, making sure that the distance of caste, class and gender is never bridged.

The only place where people never seem to mind the gap is when it comes to our attitude to women. They feel entitled to offer advice for what they believe is the "benefit" of women. From governments telling women who they may or may not love, to courts advising prudence and circumspection in dealing with partners before marriage, women are at the receiving end of well-meaning patronage at all points of time.

The reaction is often revealing when the tables are turned. Many men feel like it is an attack on their entitlement if they hear a woman assert her rights or push back. But why men alone? It is the way of most power equations — between teacher and student, blue-collar worker and employee, and the list goes on. "Mind the gap", in that sense, is really about three entities: Two people, and the chasm between them. Neither would exist without the other. The gap is essential to recognise the individuality of, and the relationship between, the two.

What can we do to erase this distinction, especially in a world in which inequality is normalised and othering is routine? *Goswami Tulsidas* says, "*Jaki rahi bhavna jaisi, prabhu murat dekhni tin taise*" — the world, and the people in it, appear to us through the prism of our own inner conditioning. It is a difficult path because it demands that we examine the lacunae that shape our prejudices. It pushes us to ask whether the distances we defend are boundaries or biases. Imagined thus, the gap is a space for engagement. Between the train and the platform, it is a silver of risk but also a threshold. It makes movement possible. Without that small gap, there would not be any step forward.

In life, too, it is no different. Perhaps what we need is not to obsessively mind every gap, nor deny its existence, but to transform our relationship with it. To see the gap as an opportunity to examine why it exists and whom it serves. There are gaps that protect, others that exclude. We need to be able to discern one from the other.

The philosophical culmination of "mind the gap" lies in attention and empathy: Be conscious of the distance you maintain, the distance you impose, and the distance you are afraid to cross and ask yourself why. The Metro announcement may be about physical safety, but it could also be an unintended metaphor for ethical living.

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IN GOOD
faith

Perhaps what we need is not to obsessively mind every gap, nor deny its existence, but to transform our relationship with it. To see it as an opportunity to examine why it exists and whom it serves

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- A recent opinion piece used the metaphor "Mind the Gap" to highlight entrenched social hierarchies in India, especially caste, class, and gender divisions.
- The discussion is relevant amid:
 - Ongoing debates on women's autonomy in marriage and relationships.
 - Judicial emphasis on constitutional morality over social morality.
 - Persistent concerns regarding caste discrimination, gender inequality, and power asymmetry.

Key Points

- Article 14 – Equality before law and equal protection of laws.
- Article 15(1) – Prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth.
- Article 15(3) – Permits special provisions for women and children.
- Article 17 – Abolition of untouchability.
- Article 21 – Protection of life and personal liberty (includes dignity, privacy, autonomy).
- Preamble – Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity assuring dignity of the individual.
- Constitutional Morality – A judicially evolved doctrine requiring adherence to constitutional values over societal prejudices.

Static Concepts to Revise

- Difference between social morality and constitutional morality.
- Role of judiciary in protecting Fundamental Rights.
- Fraternity as a constitutional value.
- Intersectionality (caste, gender, and class disadvantages).
- Attitude, prejudice, and empathy (Ethics syllabus).

Critical Analysis

Issues

- Persistence of caste-based exclusion and honour crimes.
- Patriarchal control over women's choices.
- Gap between constitutional guarantees and ground realities.
- Majoritarian morality influencing institutional decisions.

Significance

- Ensures dignity and autonomy of individuals.
- Promotes substantive equality, not merely formal equality.
- Strengthens democratic ethos through fraternity.

Way Forward

- Promote constitutional literacy and civic education.
- Ensure strict enforcement of laws protecting women and marginalized groups.
- Institutionalize gender sensitization mechanisms.
- Increase representation of vulnerable groups in governance.
- Encourage ethical public discourse rooted in empathy and constitutional values.