



DAILY NEWS PAPER ANALYSIS

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**CIVILS WITH AKASH
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH**

The Governor who forgot his job

The Tamil Nadu Assembly election verdict of 2026 was decisive. The Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK), contesting its first election, emerged as the single largest party with 108 seats in a House of 234. The ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) was reduced to 59. The AIADMK and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) won 47. TVK founder, C. Joseph Vijay, had defeated the two Dravidian parties that had ruled Tamil Nadu uninterrupted for 59 years between them. The voter had spoken plainly. Lok Bhavan listened selectively.

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar refused to invite the leader of the single largest party to form the government. Instead, he demanded signed letters from 118 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) before he would administer the oath. Mr. Vijay went to the Lok Bhavan three times, and each time he was sent back. Last-minute support from the Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) and the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) eventually took the tally to 121. The Governor then graciously conceded. The swearing-in was fixed for May 10 and the Governor has further directed the Chief Minister to seek a vote of confidence on or before May 13. Every step of this executive is constitutionally wrong. The errors are not minor. They go to the foundation of parliamentary democracy in the States.

What the Governor is required to do
The Governor's function on the morrow of an election is narrow and well settled. He is to identify the person most likely to command the confidence of the House and invite that person to be sworn in. He is not a returning officer. He is not an arithmetic tutor. He has no business demanding that a Chief Minister designate produce a signed master roll before allowing him to take the oath.

The Sarkaria Commission of 1988, the Venkataswami Commission of 2002, and the Punchhi Commission of 2010 were unanimous on the order of preference. The single largest pre-poll alliance comes first. The single largest party that stakes a claim and can form a stable government comes next. Pre-poll combinations command priority because the voter knows what he is voting for. This sequence has been honoured in the breach in Goa, Manipur, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and now Tamil Nadu. The breaches have been remarkably one-sided. In Goa in 2007, Governor Miralda Sinha invited the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had 13 seats in a House of 40, ahead of the Congress, which had 17. In the same year, in Manipur, the BJP with 21 seats was preferred over the Congress



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with 28. In 2018, in Karnataka (a House of 234), Governor Vajubhai Vala invited the BJP with 104 seats and gave it 15 days to assemble a majority, ignoring a written letter from a Congress-Janata Dal(S) post-poll alliance with 115.

In every case of those cases the BJP was the beneficiary of an expansive reading of gubernatorial discretion. In Tamil Nadu, where the BJP is not a contender and the Centre's preferred regional partner has been routed, the doctrine has suddenly contracted. The Governor now demands proof of an absolute majority before he will issue an invitation at all. This is not principle. It is partisanship dressed up as prudence.

There have been minority governments

The Governor seems to have forgotten that minority governments are a familiar feature of Indian parliamentary practice. On May 16, 1996, the BJP's Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in by President Shankar Dayal Sharma and given 13 days to prove a majority he never possessed. He resigned on May 28 without facing a vote. Nobody suggested that he should not have been sworn in. P.V. Narasimha Rao governed for five years at the head of a minority Congress government and survived a no-confidence motion in July 1993 by a single vote. H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral led minority United Front governments at the Centre. In 2004, the first ministry of the Congress's Manmohan Singh was a minority arrangement that ran a full term with outside support.

The constitutional test has never been the production of signatures in advance at Rashtrapati Bhavan/Lok Bhavan. The only testing ground is the floor of the House. A government continues so long as it has not lost a motion of no confidence. That is the essence of Article 164(2) and the convention that flows from it.

The Governor's demand that Mr. Vijay produce signed letters from a majority before being sworn in is, therefore, an invention. No provision of the Constitution requires it. No commission has recommended it. No precedent supports it.

Anyone who wished to challenge Mr. Vijay's claim was free to bring a motion of no-confidence on the floor of the House. The MLAs would then have voted on the record, with their constituents watching. That is how parliamentary democracy is equally objectionable is the direction that a vote of confidence be taken on or before May 13. The convention is that a newly sworn in Chief Minister addresses the House at its first session; the address is debated, and the government's majority is tested in the ordinary course. To compress this into 72 hours is to invite the conduct the anti-defection law was meant to

suppress. A three-day deadline signals to disgruntled legislators, and to those willing to do business with them, that the window for horse-trading is open but short. It is an invitation, written in the Governor's own hand, to the kind of mischief this country has seen too often.

The Karnataka episode of 2018 made this point unambiguously. The Supreme Court of India, hearing the matter at midnight, held that a 15-day window to prove a majority was an invitation to engineered defections. The remedy then was to compress the timetable to a single day. That remedy was tailored to a Governor who had wrongly invited a party that did not have the numbers. It cannot be inverted into a doctrine that the single largest party, which has staked its claim and produced support letters, must prove its majority within 72 hours of taking office.

What the Supreme Court must now say

The Court has had many opportunities, in *S.R. Bommai* (1994), *Rameswar Prasad* (2006) and the Karnataka order of 2018, to lay down the law on gubernatorial discretion in government formation. It has, on each occasion, gone part of the way. The time has come to go all the way.

Three propositions must be settled. First, the Governor's task is to identify the person most likely to command confidence. He must follow the order of preference set out by the Sarkaria, Venkataswami and Punchhi Commissions. He has no power to demand pre-swearing in proof of an absolute majority. Second, a minority government, like any other, falls only on the floor of the House. Third, the convention that the first session of a new Assembly tests the government's majority in the ordinary course should be replaced by requiring the Opposition to bring in a motion of no confidence if they so desire. Ordering a confidence vote is anathema. Minority governments will die before they are born. The only democratic way is a no-confidence vote with debate on why a government needs to be thrown out.

A sworn in government must be allowed to debate and defend its record on governance, on the floor of the House. In a fresh House, the threat of dissolution is the strongest discipline against defection. An MLA who has just won a five-year term is reluctant to risk a fresh election. If a government is allowed to settle, prove its majority on the floor in the normal course, and govern, the cost of pulling it down rises sharply.

The Governors of India are appointed at the pleasure of the President of India. They are not elected. The least the country can ask is that they remember at whose pleasure they hold office, and whose mandate they are bound to respect. It is the voter's. Not the Centre's.

- Floor Test Principle:
 - Majority should be tested on the floor of the House.
- Minority governments are constitutionally valid if they retain confidence of the House.
- Governor is expected to function as a neutral constitutional authority.

Static Linkages

- Parliamentary form of government based on:
 - Collective responsibility,
 - Legislative accountability,
 - Executive responsibility.
- Federalism forms part of Basic Structure Doctrine.
- Constitutional conventions supplement written Constitution.
- Anti-defection law:
 - 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985,
 - Tenth Schedule.
- Judicial review applies to gubernatorial discretion.
- Constitutional morality requires restraint and neutrality by constitutional authorities.

Critical Analysis

Positive Aspects

- Governor may seek to ensure stability before inviting government formation.
- Early floor test can reduce prolonged political uncertainty.
- Prevents unstable coalitions from assuming office without support.

Concerns

- Constitution nowhere mandates pre-swearing-in proof of majority.
- Floor of House—not Raj Bhavan—is the constitutional forum to test majority.
- Selective exercise of discretion raises allegations of political bias.
- Short deadlines may encourage:
 - Horse-trading,
 - Resort politics,
 - Defections.
- Weakens spirit of parliamentary democracy and cooperative federalism.

Way Forward

- Codify conventions regarding government formation in hung Assemblies.
- Implement Sarkaria and Punchhi Commission recommendations uniformly.
- Ensure politically neutral conduct by Governors.
- Limit arbitrary discretionary powers through judicial guidelines.
- Conduct transparent and reasonable floor tests.
- Strengthen constitutional morality and federal principles.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- In the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections:
 - TVK emerged as the single largest party with 108 seats in the 234-member Assembly.
 - DMK secured 59 seats.
 - AIADMK won 47 seats.
- Governor initially refused to invite TVK leader C. Joseph Vijay to form the government and sought written proof of majority support.
- After obtaining support from VCK and IUML, TVK crossed the majority mark and was invited to form the government.
- Governor further directed the government to prove majority within a short period.
- The controversy triggered debate on:
 - Governor's discretionary powers,
 - Constitutional conventions,
 - Floor test,
 - Federalism,
 - Constitutional morality.

Key Points

- Article 163:
 - Governor acts on aid and advice of Council of Ministers except in limited discretionary situations.
- Article 164:
 - Chief Minister appointed by Governor.
 - Council of Ministers collectively responsible to Legislative Assembly.
- Constitution does not explicitly define procedure for government formation in a hung Assembly.

Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1973, India and South Korea have maintained defence ties. Their first formal agreement, the 2005 MoU on Defence Industry and Logistics, promoted cooperation in production, research and development, and procurement. Subsequently, they signed separate five-year memoranda of understanding on defence cooperation and defence research and development (R&D) in 2010.

The first established exchanges of expertise, training, visits and joint exercises, while the second focused on emerging technologies such as marine, electronics, and intelligent systems through links between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the South Korean defence industry. In 2015, the partnership was elevated to a Special Strategic Partnership.

Furthermore, the 2020 Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation expanded engagements into key areas, such as land, naval, and air, and guided weapons systems, along with investments and technology transfer in India's defence industrial corridors. A notable outcome of this partnership is the K9 Vajra-T self-propelled artillery system, manufactured in India by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Hanwha Aerospace, South Korea under the 'Make in India' initiative, whose success led to a follow-on production contract.

The new platform

On April 23, 2026, at the India-South Korea Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Lee Jae Myung, a new defence innovation platform called the Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X) was announced.

As part of the Joint Strategic Vision, KIND-X aims to connect businesses, incubators, investors, defence start-ups, and universities from both sides. KIND-X is not a new model of cooperation for India.

It mirrors similar defence industrial innovation bridges with the United States under INDUS-X (India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem) and with France under FRIND-X (France-India Defence Startup Excellence). There have also



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been suggestions to create an INDUS-X like model with South Korea. Drawing on these existing models, KIND-X is expected to be led by South Korea's Defence Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) and India's Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO). Both countries run defence innovation programmes to strengthen their defence start-up ecosystems, such as South Korea's specialised Innovation enterprise system and India's Innovations for Defence Excellence (IDEX).

According to India's Ministry of External Affairs special briefing on April 20, 2024, KIND-X is expected to align with the 2020 Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation.

What can be unlocked

What can KIND-X unlock? KIND-X can emerge as the "defence innovation bridge", expanding defence R&D, innovation, co-development and co-production, involving startups, investors, universities, academia, and think tanks, essentially creating a joint defence innovation and industrial ecosystem from both countries. This may involve release of joint challenges and grants by DAPA and DIO for their respective startups to develop defence technologies in the areas envisaged under the 2020 road map.

It may facilitate access to testing facilities through universities and laboratories in both countries, promote joint certification and standardisation processes, and support accelerator and incubator programmes connecting investors and innovators from both sides. It may also include workshops to help stakeholders navigate each other's markets and production systems. These workshops can address export control regimes, funding models for defence production, and intellectual property and licensing requirements related to technology transfer for co-production and co-development.

An annual summit, similar to the INDUS-X summit, could convene high level representatives from defence ministries, industry, universities, think tanks, and academia in Seoul, New Delhi, and other industrial hubs. The KIND-X summit could also convene Track 1.5 dialogues to

emphasise the strategic rationale for bilateral defence cooperation, foster networking, and periodically assess progress on deliverables under the initiative.

The success of KIND-X will depend on leveraging existing co-production ventures such as the K9 Vajra-T howitzers by L&T and Hanwha Aerospace to create templates for future defence projects. It will connect South Korea's Innovation clusters in Changwon, Daejeon, and Gumi with India's defence corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, and with aerospace hubs in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. Involving major firms such as Hyundai, L&T, Tata Advanced Systems Limited, Mahindra, Bharat Forge, Hanwha, JLG, and Kangnam, alongside start-ups and R&D ecosystems, can further expand linkages.

As an innovation bridge

The launch of KIND-X as a defence innovation bridge signals both governments' keenness to unlock their respective deep tech innovation ecosystems to develop dual-use technologies. With deepening ties across other strategic sectors such as shipbuilding, artificial intelligence, space, critical minerals, and semiconductors, KIND-X can complement and draw on convergences in these sectors for defence.

Aligning with India's Defence Forces Vision 2047 and South Korea's Defence Innovation 4.0 strategy, and co-investing in emerging and future technologies will be key to making this initiative forward-looking. Potential areas under KIND-X include Artificial Intelligence platforms for military applications, autonomous weapon systems and robotics, joint development of satellites for space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), Space Situational Awareness (SSA), communication and navigation, critical mineral supply chains, and defence semiconductor fabs. Given both countries' growing defence exports, KIND-X can emerge as an important facilitator.

The onus is now upon both defence ministries to curate tangible deliverables under KIND-X, clarifying its steering template, funding mechanisms and areas of joint innovation.

- Self-propelled artillery system.
- Manufactured by:
 - L&T (India)
 - Hanwha Aerospace (South Korea)
- Example of:
 - Technology transfer
 - Co-production
 - Make in India

Significance

- Supports:
 - Atmanirbhar Bharat
 - Defence indigenisation
 - Defence exports
 - Indo-Pacific cooperation
- Reduces dependence on traditional defence suppliers.

Static Linkages

- Strategic autonomy requires diversified defence partnerships.
- Defence corridors promote manufacturing ecosystems.
- Technology transfer is crucial for indigenisation.
- Dual-use technologies have civilian and military applications.
- Semiconductor resilience is linked to national security.
- Space assets are vital for modern warfare and surveillance.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Strengthens defence innovation ecosystem.
- Enhances co-development and co-production.
- Boosts startup participation.
- Expands India's Indo-Pacific strategic role.

Challenges

- Technology transfer restrictions.
- IP and regulatory concerns.
- Procurement delays.
- Funding constraints for startups.
- Geopolitical sensitivities involving China and North Korea.

Way Forward

- Institutionalise KIND-X framework.
- Increase defence R&D funding.
- Improve startup-industry-academia collaboration.
- Strengthen semiconductor and critical mineral supply chains.
- Promote joint testing and certification systems.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context

- India and South Korea established diplomatic relations in 1973.
- Key defence agreements:
 - 2005 MoU on Defence Industry and Logistics
 - 2010 agreements on Defence Cooperation and Defence R&D
 - 2015: Special Strategic Partnership
 - 2020 Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation
- In April 2026, both countries launched KIND-X (Korea-India Defence Accelerator) during the bilateral summit.
- KIND-X aims to connect:
 - Defence startups
 - Industries
 - Universities
 - Investors
 - Incubators
- Similar initiatives:
 - INDUS-X (India-US)
 - FRIND-X (France-France)

Key Points

KIND-X

- Expected agencies:
 - India: DIO and iDEX
 - South Korea: DAPA
- Focus areas:
 - AI and autonomous systems
 - Robotics
 - Space-based ISR and SSA
 - Defence semiconductors
 - Guided weapon systems
 - Critical minerals
 - Shipbuilding technologies

Important Example

Cost to access

The opportunity cost of accessing medical care remains high

The Union Labour Ministry has announced that it will provide a free annual health check-up to workers aged 40 years or more, following an existing provision in the new Labour Codes. The programme will be implemented through the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). For workers in hazardous conditions, such as handling toxic chemicals or operating heavy machinery, check-ups are mandatory; if illness is detected, ESIC hospitals and dispensaries will provide free treatment. India already has a few workers' health obligations on paper, including under the Factories Act 1948 (only within factories), the ESI Act 1948, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code 2020. The new programme will be financed through the well-endowed ESI fund, although the government is still shoring up the number of beds and doctors available via PMJAY-empowered facilities. At this time, operational evidence suggests that insured workers will be the main beneficiaries.

Commendable though the initiative is, its success is not guaranteed. At present, only around 31 crore of 94 crore workers are on the e-Shram portal, whose integration with ESIC is still in its early stages in many States. Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya also failed to address how a woman working in a garment home unit or as a domestic worker could access the longer maternity leave if she has no 'employer'. Annual check-ups for women also warrant specific medical staff needs whereas many ESIC camps are crowded and dominated by men. As with many of its predecessors, the programme does not address the opportunity costs of accessing health care, forcing workers to continue contending with lost wages. An ESIC facility may also refer a worker to another centre if it lacks the resources for specific tests, leading to repeat visits and added time and cost. The new programme focuses predominantly on non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Heat-related illnesses are not explicitly recognised as occupational diseases under the ESI Act whereas construction and agriculture workers are most at risk of them. Waste-pickers and sanitation workers on the other hand face greater risk of infectious diseases such as hepatitis and leptospirosis. The scheme offers screening but does not mandate proactive vaccination. The government must meet workers where they are, through mobile occupational health units and – as the OSH Code 2020 stipulates for organised workers – at their places of work, and provide tokens to compensate them for time spent on check-ups. Otherwise, any scheme of this nature will not improve upon the already deficient system.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context

- Union Labour Ministry announced free annual health check-ups for workers aged 40 years and above under ESIC.
- Mandatory health screening for workers engaged in hazardous occupations.
- Implemented through:
 - Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)
 - Labour Codes framework
 - OSH Code, 2020 provisions
- ESIC hospitals/dispensaries to provide free treatment if illness is detected.
- Government plans support through PMJAY-empowered hospitals.

Key Points

- ESIC established under:
 - Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948
- Covers:
 - Medical care
 - Maternity benefit
 - Disability benefit
 - Sickness benefit
- Around 31 crore workers registered on e-Shram portal out of nearly 94 crore workers.

- Scheme mainly benefits:
 - Organised sector workers
 - Insured workers under ESIC
- Major concerns:
 - Informal workers excluded
 - Weak ESIC infrastructure
 - Loss of wages during health visits
 - Lack of occupational disease recognition for heat stress
- Occupational risks:
 - Construction/agriculture workers → Heat-related illness
 - Sanitation workers/waste-pickers → Infectious diseases

Static Linkages

- Article 21:
 - Right to health as part of Right to Life
- DPSPs:
 - Humane conditions of work
 - Public health improvement
- Labour welfare linked with:
 - Human capital
 - Productivity
 - Inclusive growth
- Informal sector dominates Indian workforce.
- Preventive healthcare reduces long-term economic burden.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Strengthens preventive healthcare.
- Early detection of NCDs.
- Improves labour productivity.
- Expands social security architecture.

Challenges

- Limited coverage of informal workers.
- Weak e-Shram-ESIC integration.
- Opportunity cost due to wage loss.
- Shortage of doctors and facilities.
- Women workers face accessibility barriers.
- Heat stress not recognised adequately under occupational disease framework.

Way Forward

- Expand ESIC coverage to informal/gig workers.
- Strengthen ESIC infrastructure and manpower.
- Mobile occupational health units at workplaces.
- Recognise climate-related occupational diseases.
- Wage compensation for health check-up visits.
- Better convergence of:
 - ESIC
 - e-Shram
 - PM-JAY

AI isn't disrupting education. It's diagnosing what's wrong



SUBHASHIS BANERJEE

THE ARRIVAL of powerful AI systems in higher education has triggered a familiar cycle of excitement and anxiety. Students can now generate essays, solve problem sets, write code, and even summarise entire bodies of literature in minutes. Predictably, concerns about plagiarism, assessment integrity, and the declining value of education have followed.

But this framing misses the deeper point. AI does not fundamentally threaten higher education. Instead, it exposes an uncomfortable truth: Much of what we have been measuring and rewarding in education was never central to it. At its core, higher education has never been about producing answers or imparting job skills. It has been about cultivating judgement — learning how to reason, justify claims, recognise the limits of one's knowledge, and decide what can be trusted. If AI appears to disrupt education, it is only because we have conflated learning with its proxies — outputs, surface-level coherence, and measurable performance.

Consider computer science. AI can generate moderately complex code with ease. However, this does not render the study of algorithms redundant. The central issue was never merely whether a program works, but understanding why it works, the assumptions under which it is valid, and whether one can provide a convincing proof of its correctness. A program without clearly specified preconditions and invariants is not just incomplete; it is untrustworthy. AI can produce code, but cannot certify its correctness through disciplined reasoning. As Edsger W Dijkstra famously observed, "Program testing can be used to show the presence of bugs, but never to show their absence."

The same distinction applies across disciplines. A student can produce an essay on history, but can they distinguish between competing explanations and defend their interpretation? A model can report "95 per cent accuracy", but does the student understand what that number means in context? These are not narrow skills; they are habits of mind — forms of intellectual discipline and epistemic rigour that cannot be outsourced.

AI systems are extremely good at producing the "artefacts" we treat as evidence of ability, such as coherent essays, functional code, and sophisticated-looking analyses. In

doing so, they destabilise the proxies we rely on. When outputs become cheap and abundant, they cease to be reliable indicators of understanding. The "assessment crisis" is not simply that students can cheat more easily. It is that our methods — take-home assignments and coding exercises without personal interaction — were always imperfect measures of learning. AI has simply made their limitations impossible to ignore.

AI tools can summarise large literatures and generate plausible syntheses, but can also fabricate citations and produce misleading conclusions. This raises a question of epistemic trust: If we cannot distinguish well-founded knowledge from plausible-sounding fabrication, the integrity of scholarly communication is at stake. The appropriate response then is not to retreat from AI or increase surveillance, but to re-centre education on its original purpose. This has several implications. First, the shift from outputs to reasoning. It is no longer sufficient to ask for answers; we must ask for justification. Oral examinations and iterative problem-solving that probe understanding become essential.

Second, we must prioritise verification. Students must be trained to question claims, interrogate metrics, and identify assumptions. In an information-rich environment, the ability to decide what to trust is foundational. Third, intellectual maturity involves an awareness of uncertainty. A student who recognises the limits of an argument demonstrates deeper understanding than one who confidently presents a machine-generated answer. Finally, institutional leadership must resist framing AI as a mere technological upgrade. The challenge is aligning these tools with educational purpose rather than reinforcing failing proxies.

AI is not a disruption but a diagnostic. It reveals where we have substituted measurable outputs for meaningful learning and mistaken fluency for understanding. When answers are cheap, judgement is the scarce resource. Higher education must decide whether it is in the business of producing the former or cultivating the latter.

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It reveals where we have substituted measurable outputs for meaningful learning and mistaken fluency for understanding. When answers are cheap, judgement is the scarce resource

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context

- Rapid rise of Generative AI tools like OpenAI ChatGPT has raised concerns regarding:
 - plagiarism,
 - academic integrity,
 - relevance of conventional assessments,
 - future of higher education.
- Debate focuses on whether AI threatens education or exposes weaknesses in existing education systems.
- AI can generate essays, code, summaries, and analytical outputs, challenging traditional evaluation methods.

Key Exam Relevant Points

- Higher education is fundamentally about:
 - critical thinking,
 - judgement,
 - reasoning,
 - verification of claims,
 - ethical understanding.
- AI exposes flaws in education systems dependent on:
 - rote learning,
 - memorisation,
 - output-based assessments.
- AI-generated outputs may:
 - fabricate citations,
 - spread misinformation,
 - create epistemic trust issues.
- Conventional assessments like:
 - take-home assignments,

- coding exercises,
- essay writing,
- are becoming unreliable indicators of actual understanding.
- Increasing relevance of:
 - viva voce,
 - oral examinations,
 - analytical reasoning,
 - problem-solving-based evaluation.
- AI cannot replace:
 - moral judgement,
 - contextual understanding,
 - human reasoning,
 - ethical responsibility.
- India's AI ecosystem linked with:
 - IndiaAI Mission,
 - NEP 2020,
 - Digital India,
 - NITI Aayog's National Strategy for AI.

Static Linkages

- Scientific temper includes inquiry, verification, and evidence-based reasoning.
- Education aims at development of constitutional values and critical thinking.
- Technology acts as an enabler, not a substitute for human judgement.
- Human capital formation is essential for demographic dividend.
- Ethical use of technology is necessary for inclusive governance.
- Digital divide can widen educational inequality.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Democratisation of knowledge access.
- Personalised learning opportunities.
- Faster research and data processing.
- Improved productivity in education and coding.

Concerns

- Plagiarism and academic misconduct.
- Decline in critical thinking abilities.
- AI hallucinations and fake citations.
- Weakening reliability of traditional assessments.
- Ethical concerns regarding bias and accountability.
- Digital divide in AI accessibility.

Way Forward

- Shift from rote learning to competency-based education.
- Emphasise reasoning-oriented assessments.
- Promote AI literacy and ethical AI use.
- Strengthen scientific temper and verification skills.
- Reform examination and evaluation systems.
- Ensure equitable digital infrastructure access.
- Integrate ethics with technology education.

What to expect from our cities when you are expecting



EKTA CHAUHAN

AS SOON as I found out I was pregnant, my first instinct was to redesign my life. Should we move to a house with a bigger balcony? Rearrange furniture to make space for a crib? Install anti-slip mats in the bathroom?

As a faculty member in a design school, I am now trained to notice how design shapes behaviour. Pregnancy sharpened that instinct. Every corner of my home suddenly felt like a decision — about safety, comfort, care. But as I adjusted my interiors, a more unsettling question emerged: What about the city outside? Was it designed to accommodate pregnancy, or early childcare? Both experience and evidence suggested the answer is no.

The challenges begin each morning with my commute. Despite owning a car, I spend nearly 90 minutes navigating potholes, uneven roads, unplanned speed breakers, and frequent water-logging. Potholes, we are often told, are an inconvenience. But they are also deadly. Government data show that 9,438 lives were lost in pothole-related accidents between 2020 and 2024. Not just pregnant women, the national capital's roads are unsafe for all vulnerable bodies, including children, the elderly, the unwell.

And then comes the second challenge: On my route, there is not a single reliable, safe, and clean public toilet. The only options are at petrol pumps, often locked, poorly lit, or lacking water. As pregnancy progresses, so does the need for frequent urination — and with it, the risk of urinary tract infections. Even as the city ranks high on municipal cleanliness, data from Praja Foundation (2024) reveal the scale of the problem: One toilet seat for nearly 10,000 people in Indian cities. It is telling that the most practical solution suggested to me recently was a personal workaround — wearing adult diapers. This is how urban India manages — by pushing individuals to privately solve what are public failures.

If weekdays are consumed by navigating the city, weekends are spent planning the birth. I was delivered at home by a *dai*, whose skilled hands brought most of the children in our neighbourhood into the world. Midwifery, once a trained and respected practice, has been steadily absorbed into institutional healthcare since the 1970s. Auxiliary nurse midwives have been redirected toward immunisation and family planning. India has made remarkable progress in maternal health. Over three decades, maternal deaths have declined by 86 per cent. These achievements conceal a complex shift: Childbirth has become increasingly medicalised. In 2008-09, caesarean births accounted for just 6.4 per cent of institutional births in India. By 2024-25, that number had crossed 27 per cent. The World Health Organisation recommends an optimal rate of 10-15 per cent. In private hospitals, the average now stands at 47.4 per cent.

Pregnancy, I am beginning to realise, is not just a personal journey. It is a way of reading the city differently — through vulnerability, dependence, and care. It makes visible what cities are designed to ignore. That care is treated as private, that vulnerability is seen as an inconvenience, and that survival often depends on personal *jugaad* rather than public systems.

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As a faculty member in a design school, I am now trained to notice how design shapes behaviour. Pregnancy sharpened that instinct

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context

- Recent discourse highlighted how Indian cities remain inadequately designed for pregnant women and caregivers.
- Issues raised:
 - Unsafe roads and potholes
 - Lack of hygienic public toilets
 - Gender-insensitive urban planning
 - Rising medicalisation of childbirth
- The issue links urban governance with maternal health, dignity, and inclusive development.

Key Facts & Data

- 9,438 deaths due to pothole-related accidents (2020-24) — MoRTH.
- Public toilet availability in Indian cities:
 - Around 1 toilet seat per 10,000 people — Praja Foundation (2024).
- India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR):
 - Reduced to 97 per 100,000 live births (SRS 2018-20).
- Caesarean delivery rate:
 - Increased from 6.4% (2008-09) to over 27%.
 - Private hospitals: nearly 47%.
- WHO recommended C-section rate:
 - 10-15%.

Static Linkages

- Article 21 — Right to life and dignity.

- Article 42 — Humane work conditions and maternity relief.
- Article 47 — Improvement of public health.
- 74th Constitutional Amendment:
 - Functions of municipalities:
 - Public health
 - Sanitation
 - Urban planning
- SDGs:
 - SDG 3 — Good Health
 - SDG 5 — Gender Equality
 - SDG 11 — Sustainable Cities
- National Urban Sanitation Policy.
- Smart Cities Mission.
- AMRUT Mission.
- National Health Mission (NHM).

Critical Analysis

Major Concerns

- Urban infrastructure is not gender-sensitive.
- Poor roads increase health risks for pregnant women.
- Lack of toilets affects dignity, mobility, and health.
- Rising unnecessary C-sections indicate commercialisation of healthcare.
- Care work remains invisible in urban planning.

Governance Issues

- Weak urban local body capacity.
- Poor coordination between:
 - Municipalities
 - Health agencies
 - Urban planners
- Insufficient investment in social infrastructure.

Ethical Dimension

- Raises issues of:
 - Equity
 - Dignity
 - Accessibility
 - State responsibility toward vulnerable groups

Way Forward

- Promote gender-responsive urban planning.
- Improve road safety and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Increase accessible public toilets for women.
- Integrate maternal health with urban policy.
- Strengthen midwifery-based care.
- Regulate unnecessary Caesarean deliveries.
- Enhance municipal capacity and funding.
- Mainstream “care economy” in public policy.

Judicial reform shouldn't stop at SC

THE UNION Cabinet's decision to approve a Bill increasing the Supreme Court's strength from 34 to 38 judges (including the Chief Justice of India) is a welcome step towards easing the backlog of cases before the apex court. However, without structural reforms, the judicial hours that the four new judges may contribute could be absorbed by the ever-expanding docket. According to the National Judicial Data Grid, as of May 7, the Supreme Court is burdened with over 93,000 pending cases — more than a 50 per cent increase since 2019, when the number of SC judges was last raised.

Pendency before the SC accounts for only about 0.14 per cent of total case pendency across all courts. This is negligible compared to around 12 per cent in the high courts and 88 per cent in the district courts. The SC mostly functions at or close to its sanctioned strength. SC judges dispose of roughly 90 per cent of the cases instituted each year. Additional judges or better calendar management may marginally ease the pressure on individual benches, but they cannot address the underlying reasons for mounting pendency: The Court's expanding jurisdiction and the volume of litigation generated by the state, the country's biggest litigant. Last year, Supreme Court Justice B V Nagarathna underscored this concern. She stressed the need for the government to "litigate with restraint and be a model litigator".

Courts must keep pace with the rising volume of disputes accompanying population growth and expanding economic activity. At the apex court — the court of last resort — it is especially important to ensure that access to justice is given real meaning; prolonged incarceration of undertrials due to delays undermines this right. However, given the overwhelming volume of cases in district courts, a purely top-down approach to reform is unsustainable. Trial courts account for over 4.92 crore pending cases. Successive Law Commission reports have highlighted that India's judge-population ratio, at roughly 19 judges per million people, remains far below that of countries such as the US and China, where the figure is about 150 per million. The move to increase the number of SC judges must therefore form part of a comprehensive plan to reduce pendency across the judicial system.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context

- Union Cabinet approved a Bill to increase the sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court of India from 34 to 37 judges (including CJI).
- Aim: Reduce rising pendency of cases in the Supreme Court.
- As per National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG):
 - Supreme Court pending cases: 93,000+
 - District courts pending cases: 4.92 crore+
- Pendency in SC increased by more than 50% since 2019.

Key Facts

- Article 124 → Establishment and composition of Supreme Court.
- Parliament can increase SC judge strength through law.
- Supreme Court pendency = only 0.14% of total pendency.
- High Courts = around 12% pendency.
- District/Subordinate Courts = around 88% pendency.
- India's judge-population ratio:
 - Around 19 judges per million
 - Compared to ~150 per million in countries like US/China.
- Government is the largest litigant in India.
- Article 21 includes:
 - Right to speedy justice.
- Article 39A:
 - Equal justice and free legal aid.

- Important reforms:
 - e-Courts Mission Mode Project
 - National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG)
 - Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)
 - Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008

Importance for Exam

- Articles related to judiciary.
- Judge appointment and strength.
- NJDG, e-Courts, ADR.
- Constitutional provisions on justice delivery.
- Structure and functioning of judiciary.
- Judicial reforms.
- Access to justice.
- Governance and accountability.
- "Justice delayed is justice denied."
- Ethical responsibility of State as "model litigant".

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Reduces workload on SC judges.
- Faster disposal of constitutional and civil/criminal matters.
- Improves access to justice.
- Helps undertrial prisoners get timely hearings.

Concerns

- SC pendency is relatively small; core problem lies in lower courts.
- Mere increase in judges may not solve structural inefficiencies.
- Vacancies in High Courts and subordinate courts remain high.
- Excessive government litigation increases burden.
- Infrastructure and digitization gaps persist.

Way Forward

- Fill vacancies in all courts quickly.
- Increase judge-population ratio.
- Strengthen district judiciary infrastructure.
- Reduce unnecessary government appeals.
- Expand ADR mechanisms:
 - Mediation
 - Arbitration
 - Lok Adalats
- Improve e-governance and virtual courts.
- Implement National Litigation Policy effectively.

How new DRDO system helps air missiles fly longer, strike better

Sushant Kulkarni
Pune, May 10

THE DEFENCE Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Air Force (IAF) last week successfully carried out the first flight trial of a system that can transform an unguided missile into a guided one.

The homegrown Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA) system is essentially a kit that can be attached to a conventional missile. This helps the missile glide over long distances, and accurately strike a target.

How it works

The TARA glide weapon system is primarily a modular kit that can be attached to a conventional unguided warhead. DRDO scientists say it can be fired from multiple fighter jets in the IAF's service.

Once released from an aircraft at a certain altitude and speed, foldable wings and aerodynamic surfaces come into play, allowing the weapon to glide over long distances instead of falling directly onto the target. An on-board navigation and guidance system corrects the missile's flight

path to improve its accuracy.

The speed at which the aircraft is moving at the time of the launch is a key factor in this system's operation. It uses a combination of inertial navigation and satellite-based positioning to steer the missile towards the target.

The TARA system glides, rather than relying on a rocket motor. This makes it lightweight and cost-effective while still extending the missile's range. Its modular design also means the kit can potentially be integrated with different classes of warheads depending on requirements.

Strategic and logistic significance

Strategically, TARA is significant because it enhances the IAF's stand-off strike capability. This means an aircraft can hit targets from a distance that puts it out of the reach of air defence systems.

In a battlespace, the capability to accurately strike a target from a distance can increase the chances of a fighter jet's survival and lend it greater flexibility.

Unguided bombs, which are referred to as gravity bombs or dumb bombs, can thus be upgraded to smart bombs, or precision-



TARA is India's first indigenous glide weapon system to convert unguided warheads into precision guided missiles. X/@DRDO_INDIA

'Smart' bombs

Using TARA, unguided bombs can be upgraded to precision-guided munitions with relatively low effort

This can lower costs by reducing the need to develop new missile systems

guided munitions, with relatively low effort. This can reduce the need to develop entirely new missile systems. This approach can substantially reduce costs while allowing rapid scaling of precision strike inventory. The use of indigenous low-cost systems and its production by Indian industry partners will also reduce import dependence.

It is learnt that three TARA versions, with different weight variants, are being produced, to be used with warheads of weights ranging from 250 to 500 kg.

Path to deployment

The TARA system was tested from an IAF fighter off the coast of Odisha.

TARA has been designed and developed by the Hyderabad-based DRDO facility Research Centre Imarat in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and industry partners.

The successful flight trial is a critical milestone in the weapon's development. This will pave the way for a series of developmental, validation and user trials before induction into the service. All these trials will evaluate the system's guidance accuracy, range, reliability, performance from different platforms, and effectiveness under varied operational conditions.

"It is the first glide weapon to utilise state-of-the-art low-cost systems. The development of the kit has been undertaken with Development cum Production Partners (DcPPs) and other Indian industries, which have already started the production activity," the Defence Ministry said Friday.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described the flight-trial as a significant development in advancing India's indigenous defence capabilities.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- Defence Research and Development Organisation and Indian Air Force successfully conducted the first flight trial of the Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA) system.
- The test was conducted off the coast of Odisha from an IAF fighter aircraft.
- TARA is an indigenous glide weapon kit designed to convert conventional unguided bombs into precision-guided munitions.
- Developed by Research Centre Imarat in collaboration with DRDO laboratories and Indian industry partners.
- The development supports India's defence indigenisation and Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiatives.

Key Points

About TARA

- TARA is a modular glide weapon system.
- It can be attached to conventional unguided bombs.
- Converts "dumb bombs" into precision-guided smart bombs.
- Uses:
 - Foldable wings
 - Aerodynamic control surfaces
 - Guidance and navigation systems
- Guidance mechanism based on:
 - Inertial Navigation System (INS)
 - Satellite-based positioning systems
- Designed for launch from multiple IAF fighter aircraft.

Operational Features

- Provides stand-off strike capability.
- Enables aircraft to strike targets from beyond enemy air-defence range.
- Improves:
 - Strike accuracy
 - Aircraft survivability
 - Operational flexibility

- Three variants reportedly under development for warheads ranging from 250–500 kg.

Strategic Importance

- Enhances India's precision-strike capability.
- Cost-effective alternative to developing entirely new missile systems.
- Enables rapid expansion of precision-guided munition inventory.
- Reduces dependence on imported defence systems.
- Strengthens indigenous defence manufacturing ecosystem.

Static Linkages

- Precision-guided munitions (PGMs) improve targeting accuracy and reduce collateral damage.
- Stand-off weapons are important components of modern air warfare doctrine.
- Inertial Navigation System (INS) functions using gyroscopes and accelerometers and does not require continuous external signals.
- Defence indigenisation promoted through:
 - Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020
 - Make in India initiative
 - Positive Indigenisation Lists
- India's regional navigation system:
 - Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System
- DRDO functions under the Ministry of Defence and was established in 1958.

Critical Analysis

Advantages

- Enhances long-range precision strike capability.
- Increases survivability of fighter aircraft during operations.
- Converts existing bomb inventory into smart weapons at low cost.
- Reduces import dependence in critical defence technology.

- Promotes indigenous R&D and private-sector participation.

Challenges

- Requires extensive operational and user trials before induction.
- Vulnerable to electronic warfare, jamming, and spoofing.
- Integration with multiple aircraft platforms may be technologically demanding.
- Precision-guided systems require robust satellite and communication support.

Way Forward

- Strengthen indigenous navigation and anti-jamming capabilities.
- Increase integration of NavIC in defence systems.
- Enhance DRDO-private industry collaboration.
- Invest in AI-enabled and next-generation precision weapon systems.
- Expand domestic defence manufacturing and export capability.