DAILY NEWS PAPER ANALYSIS

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CIVILS WITH AKASH
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH

Ebola crisis: India-Africa summit postponed

Decision taken after consultations regarding 'the emerging public health situation on the continent'

New dates for summit, its associated meetings will be communicated in due course, says MEA

Last such summit was held in 2015; it had also been delayed by one year due to Ebola outbreak

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

The Ebola public health emergency in Africa cast its shadow on India's diplomatic calendar on Thursday, with the Ministry of External Affairs and the African Union announcing the postponement of the India-Africa Forum Summit-IV that was scheduled to take place here on May 28 to 31.

In a joint statement, the MEA and the AU hinted at the Ebola crisis, saying that the decision was taken in view of the "evolving health situation in parts of Africa". The last such summit was held over a decade ago, and had also been postponed by a year due to an Ebola outbreak.

Consultations were held between the Indian government and the Chairperson of the African Union and the African Union Commission regarding the "emerging public health situation on the continent", the MEA and the AU said in their statement.

"Following these consultations, the two sides agreed that it would be advisable to convene the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit at a later date," they added.

There were several other Africa-related events to be hosted by the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations that have been cancelled, though some African delegates have arrived in New Delhi.

New dates for the Summit and its associated meetings "will be finalised through mutual consultations and communicated in due course," the MEA said. The cancellation of the summit is being viewed as a setback to India-Africa ties, though officials insisted that the decision was taken in the best interest of all stakeholders.

Health concern: India has pledged to help governments of African nations to deal with the Ebola crisis. AP

India expressed "solidarity with the peoples and Governments of Africa" and pledged to help them in dealing with the crisis with an "Africa-led" approach.

Earlier, the African Union had called for "collective international solidarity and cooperation" to deal with the outbreak of Ebola virus that affected multiple countries including Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda.

Responding to queries from *The Hindu* earlier this week, a spokesperson for Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, had said the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit would provide an opportunity to work on "future pandemics" and response mechanism.

'Collective cooperation'

"While the Ebola outbreak is affecting a number of African countries, it is important to underscore that pandemics and public health emergencies respect no borders and require collective international solidarity and cooperation," the spokesperson, Nuur Mohamud Sheekh, said in an email response to *The Hindu* on Monday. That came a day after the World Health Organization declared that the Ebola outbreak in the DRC and Uganda was "a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)".

Mr. Youssouf had earlier expressed deep concern about the Ebola virus disease, vowing that Africa would "overcome" this latest public health challenge through "unity, coordination and collective action."

The fourth India-Africa Forum Summit was planned to be held between May 28 and 31, after a gap of nearly 11 years. Indian officials have blamed the COVID-19 pandemic for the long gap since the last such summit was held in 2015.

Former Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Gurjit Singh, expressed confidence that the summit would be held once the latest health emergency stabilises in Africa.

Big cat meet in capital also put on hold

NEW DELHI

In the wake of concerns over the Ebola virus, India has postponed the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit that was scheduled in New Delhi on June 1. The First IBCA Summit was scheduled in conjunction with the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit as several African countries host big cats.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- India and the African Union (AU) postponed the Fourth India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV), scheduled in New Delhi from May 28–31.
- The decision was taken due to the Ebola outbreak in parts of Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) under the International Health Regulations (2005).
- The previous India–Africa Forum Summit was held in 2015 after a similar Ebola-related postponement.

Key Points

India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)

- Launched in 2008.
- Premier platform for India–Africa partnership.
- Summits held:
  - 2008 – New Delhi
  - 2011 – Addis Ababa
  - 2015 – New Delhi
- Areas of cooperation:
  - Trade and investment
  - Capacity building
  - Development partnership
  - Maritime security
  - Healthcare cooperation
  - Technology transfer

Importance of Africa for India

- Africa is important for:
  - Energy security
  - Critical minerals
  - Maritime security
  - Food security
- Africa is a major source of:
  - Crude oil
  - Gold
  - Phosphates
- India's major initiatives in Africa:
  - ITEC Programme
  - Lines of Credit (LOCs)
  - Pan-African e-Network
  - Vaccine diplomacy

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)

- Viral haemorrhagic disease caused by Ebolavirus.
- Reservoir host: Fruit bats.
- Spread through:
  - Bodily fluids
  - Infected animals
  - Contaminated surfaces
- High fatality rate.
- No airborne transmission.

Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

- Declared by WHO under International Health Regulations (2005).
- Indicates a serious international public health threat requiring coordinated global response.
- Examples:
  - COVID-19
  - Ebola
  - Mpox
  - Polio

Static Linkages

- WHO headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland
- African Union headquarters: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- International Health Regulations revised in 2005 after SARS outbreak.
- African Union became a permanent member of the G20 in 2023.
- India follows the SAGAR Doctrine for Indian Ocean cooperation.
- South-South Cooperation is a key pillar of India's foreign policy.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Reflects responsible diplomacy prioritising public health.
- Strengthens cooperative India–Africa engagement.
- Opens scope for deeper health diplomacy.

Challenges

- Delay may reduce momentum in India–Africa relations.
- China's influence in Africa continues to expand.
- Weak healthcare infrastructure in African countries.
- Global pandemics affect trade and connectivity.

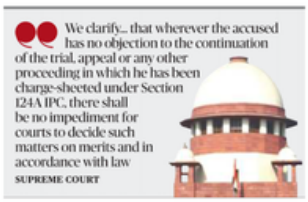
Strategic Concerns for India

- Africa is important for critical minerals and energy imports.
- Instability affects Indian Ocean security.
- Public health crises can disrupt supply chains and trade.

Way Forward

- Strengthen India–Africa healthcare cooperation.
- Promote vaccine manufacturing partnerships in Africa.
- Expand digital disease surveillance systems.
- Fast-track rescheduling of IAFS-IV.
- Increase cooperation in critical minerals and maritime security.
- Support reforms in global health governance institutions.

Sedition trials can go on if accused is willing: SC



Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

Four years after putting on hold trials in sedition cases in courts across the country, the Supreme Court on Thursday said that they could proceed with trials and appeals involving the offence of sedition under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) if the accused had no objection.

The clarification was issued by a Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi while hearing a plea filed by a petitioner who has been in jail for 17 years in a case involving sedition charges.

"The petitioner's grievance is that he has no objection if his criminal appeal is heard in its entirety, including with respect to the charge under Section 124A. That being so, we clarify... that wherever the accused has no objection to the continuation of the trial, appeal or any other proceeding in which he has been charge-sheeted under Section 124A IPC, there shall be no impediment for courts to decide such matters on merits and in accordance with law," the Bench observed.

In an interim order issued on May 11, 2022, the top court had put on hold trials in sedition cases pending before courts until the government completed its promised exercise "to re-examine and re-consider" the colonial-era provision.

'Need to balance'

The court had also made it clear that it "hopes and expects" the Centre and States to refrain from registering FIRs, continuing investigations, or taking coercive measures under Section 124A while the "re-consideration" of the provision was under way.

A Bench headed by then Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana had also observed that while it was "cognisant of security interests and integrity of the State on one hand," and the "civil liberties of citizens on the other", there was a requirement to "balance" both sets of considerations.

In the present case, the Bench directed the Madhya Pradesh High Court to take up the petitioner's appeal forthwith, along with connected matters, and decide them on merits.

The petitioner had been convicted by a trial court in 2017 on charges including sedition.

In February, Chief Justice Kant had orally observed that the Union government's decision to review the offence of sedition under the old IPC cannot prevent Parliament from reintroducing a similar provision in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), as the legislature functions independently of the executive.

The observation had come while the court was hearing a batch of PIL petitions challenging various provisions of the BNS, including Section 152, which criminalises acts deemed to endanger the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the country.

'Same old law'

The petitioners had argued that the section was a "repackaged" version of the colonial-era sedition law. "Though the language is altered, its substantive content – criminalising vague and broad categories of speech and expression such as 'subversive activity', 'encouragement of separatist feelings', and acts 'endangering unity or integrity of India' – remains the same or is even more expansive," the petition had said.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context

- Supreme Court clarified that trials/appeals under Section 124A IPC (sedition) can continue if the accused has no objection.
- Earlier, in May 2022, the Court had stayed sedition proceedings while the Union government reconsidered the law.
- Issue linked with Section 152 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, which deals with acts endangering sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India.
- Petitioners argue Section 152 is a broader version of the old sedition provision.

Key Points

- Section 124A IPC (Sedition):
  - Introduced in 1870 by British government.
  - Punishes attempts to bring hatred/contempt against government established by law.
  - Punishment: Up to life imprisonment.
- Supreme Court Interim Order (2022):
  - Stayed pending sedition trials.
  - Directed governments not to register fresh FIRs under Section 124A.
- Present Clarification (2026):
  - Cases can proceed where accused consents.
  - Courts may decide such matters on merits.
- Section 152 BNS, 2023:
  - Criminalises:
    - Secession
    - Armed rebellion
    - Subversive activities
    - Activities endangering sovereignty and integrity of India.

Important Constitutional & Legal Linkages

- Article 19(1)(a):
  - Freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 19(2):
  - Reasonable restrictions on:
    - Sovereignty & integrity
    - Security of State
    - Public order.
- Kedar Nath Singh Case (1962):
  - Sedition valid only when linked to:
    - Incitement to violence
    - Public disorder.
- Balwant Singh Case (1995):
  - Casual slogans without violence not sedition.
- Doctrine Involved:
  - Balance between:
    - National security
    - Civil liberties.

Prelims Pointers

- Sedition under old IPC = Section 124A.
- Replaced IPC under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.
- Section 152 BNS relates to sovereignty and integrity of India.
- Sedition is not expressly mentioned in Constitution.
- Reasonable restrictions derive from Article 19(2).

Mains Focus Areas

Issues with Sedition Law

- Colonial legacy.
- Vague terminology.
- Misuse against dissent/journalists/activists.
- Chilling effect on free speech.
- Low conviction rate.

Arguments in Favour

- Protects sovereignty and integrity.
- Useful against secessionist and extremist activities.
- Helps maintain public order and national security.

Way Forward

- Clearly define "subversive activities" and related terms.
- Restrict law only to:
  - Violence
  - Armed rebellion
  - Incitement against State.
- Ensure judicial and procedural safeguards.
- Balance national security with democratic freedoms.

Ladakh seeks belonging through representation

Gitanjali J. Angmo

Founder of the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh, and an education reformer and public intellectual working to reimagine education, democracy, ecology and Himalayan futures through grassroots leadership and innovation

It is both sad and ironic that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India argues that Ladakh needs more districts rather than a legislature or stronger constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule. It contends that Ladakh's sparse population, strategic sensitivity and financial dependence on the Centre make a legislature unnecessary, and instead offers administrative decentralisation through additional districts as a practical alternative.

This argument is fundamentally flawed and reflects an impoverished understanding of democracy. Not long ago, the British Empire claimed that Indians lacked the maturity and institutional capacity for self-rule – that Indians were too poor, illiterate and divided to govern themselves. It was against such paternalism that Sri Aurobindo championed the idea of Purna Swaraj, or absolute self-governance, as a matter of dignity and national selfhood. History proved the British wrong.

Yet, close to 80 years after Independence, the argument that Ladakh should be content with districts instead of a legislature echoes the same colonial logic in the language of nationalism. Must Ladakhis still prove they are sufficiently populous, profitable and capable enough to deserve political representation? Does being geographically vast, sparsely populated and strategically sensitive disqualify a region from having a legislature?

The recent announcement of five additional districts in Ladakh – Nubra, Changthang, Sham, Zanskar and Drass – has been celebrated as a major governance reform. Certainly, administrative accessibility matters in a region spread across nearly 59,000 square kilometres of high-altitude terrain. Villages separated by mountain passes and harsh winters do require local administrative presence.

But handing out districts is not democracy. Districts cannot legislate on land protection, demographic safeguards, ecological preservation, employment priorities, cultural autonomy, renewable energy negotiations, education policy or the long-term developmental vision of the region. Districts are instruments of administration. Legislatures are instruments of representation. A district magistrate implements policy. A legislature shapes the future of a people. A district reports upward to the bureaucracy. A legislature answers downward to citizens. No amount of administrative decentralisation and convenience can substitute for political agency.

Expendable electoral promises

The most troubling aspect of the present discourse is that the Government of India itself repeatedly promised constitutional safeguards to Ladakh. After the abrogation of Article 370 and the creation of the Union Territory in 2019, assurances regarding Sixth Schedule protections were publicly articulated by leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and reflected in their election manifestos for the MP and Hill Council elections in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

Yet, once the elections were over, and the party won based on these very manifestos, it went back on its commitments, raising ethical questions: Can promises made to frontier populations become expendable after elections?

The case of the northeast

What of the objections themselves? Take the first one – that Ladakh is too strategic a border to be trusted with self-government. Arunachal Pradesh shares one of India's most sensitive borders with China. It is geographically vast, sparsely populated, strategically critical and financially dependent on the Centre. Yet, when it was granted full statehood in 1987, its strategic location was not viewed as a security risk, but as a strategic necessity. India understood that border populations cannot be held merely through bureaucratic administration or military presence. The people who feel politically enfranchised and constitutionally respected defend a nation more fiercely than people who merely live inside its lines. If strategic sensitivity was an argument for empowerment in one Himalayan frontier, by what logic does it become an argument against it in another?

The same applies to much of the Northeast. When Nagaland was granted statehood in 1963, its population was barely around 3.5 lakh. Mizoram became a State in 1987 with a population of roughly five lakh. Sikkim entered the Indian Union as a state in 1975 with a population of barely two lakh. Arunachal Pradesh itself had roughly six lakh people at the time of statehood. None of these States was financially self-sufficient. Many remain substantially dependent on central transfers even today. India did not tell them that they were too small, or too poor, or too remote for a legislature. It understood that you do not integrate a frontier through subsidy and garrison alone. You integrate it through belonging.

Which brings us to the fiscal objection – the weakest of the three. Ladakh, we are told, cannot cannot generate enough revenue to sustain itself. But since when has fiscal solvency become the price of admission to Indian democracy? India's federal structure is built on redistribution; the Finance Commission exists precisely because some States earn more than others and the Union shares it out. Even large States depend heavily on central devolution.

Uttar Pradesh, the most populous State, draws enormous sums from the Centre through tax devolution, central schemes and grants-in-aid. Bihar, Assam and several Northeastern States also rely heavily on central transfers (between 70% and 90% of their expenditure) to bridge developmental gaps.

In many of these States, mountainous terrain, sparse populations and strategic constraints limit conventional revenue generation. Yet, no one would argue that Uttar Pradesh should surrender its legislature because it depends on central funds. The suggestion would be absurd. Democracy in India has never been a reward for profitability – and if it were, much of the country would fail the test.

Ladakh needs its own voice

And Ladakhis are worth hearing – especially when the same establishment that calls Ladakh economically negligible is planning some of India's largest energy infrastructure projects on its land. The renewable energy project in the Pang region of Changthang is expected to generate nearly 13 gigawatts of power, spread across acres of high-altitude pastureland. With investments of around ₹50,000 crore and and a potential of ₹7,000 crore of annual income, this is hardly the arithmetic of an insignificant region. It is the arithmetic of a region that is central to India's energy future.

Ladakhis are increasingly watching decisions being made on solar parks, transmission corridors, mining, tourism expansion and land use. The real question, then, is who negotiates the terms of this transformation. Who decides land rights, grazing rights for Changpa herders, ecological limits, local jobs, royalties and inter-generational sustainability? A district officer cannot answer these questions. Nor was he ever meant to. That is the role of a legislature – made up of representatives accountable to the people whose lives are being shaped by these decisions.

This is what the argument ultimately comes down to. India's greatness was never administrative tidiness, but the constitutional imagination to hold staggering difference within one Union without flattening it. That same imagination produced the Sixth Schedule, recognising that fragile and distinct frontier regions need protections the plains do not. Uniformity is not equity. And Ladakh is not asking to belong to India less; it is asking to belong more fully – not as a territory administered from afar, but as a people shaping their own future. That distinction matters.

Sri Aurobindo wrote that freedom is the necessary atmosphere for a nation's soul to grow. India's spirit has often been strongest at its edges – in places that chose Bharat and defended it through hardship and sacrifice without asking what it cost. The strength of a republic is not measured by how tightly it controls its frontiers, but by how deeply even its farthest regions feel they belong. The voice rising from Ladakh today is not a demand for privilege, but a quiet appeal to be trusted with its own future.

Ladakh's democratic aspirations cannot be reduced to the administrative convenience of districts

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context

- Union Government announced creation of five new districts in Ladakh — Nubra, Changthang, Sham, Zanskar and Drass.
- Debate revived over demands for:
  - Sixth Schedule status,
  - Constitutional safeguards,
  - Legislature/statehood for Ladakh.
- Ladakh became a Union Territory without legislature after the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.
- Concerns relate to:
  - Protection of tribal identity,
  - Land rights,
  - Ecological conservation,
  - Local participation in governance.

Key Points

- Ladakh is administered directly by the Centre through the Lieutenant Governor.
- Government argues:
  - Sparse population,
  - Strategic border location,
  - Financial dependence,
  - make legislature unnecessary.
- Sixth Schedule demand seeks:
  - Protection of tribal land,
  - Cultural autonomy,
  - Local self-governance.
- Comparisons made with:
  - Nagaland,
  - Mizoram,
  - Arunachal Pradesh,
  - which received greater political autonomy despite low population and strategic sensitivity.
- Large renewable energy projects planned in Ladakh raise concerns over:
  - Grazing rights,
  - Ecological sustainability,
  - Local participation in decision-making.

Static Linkages

- Article 239 – Administration of Union Territories.
- Article 239A – Legislature for certain UTs.
- Article 244(2) – Sixth Schedule areas.
- Sixth Schedule applicable to:
  - Assam,
  - Meghalaya,
  - Tripura,
  - Mizoram.
- Autonomous District Councils:
  - Legislative,
  - Judicial,
  - Administrative powers on specified subjects.
- Asymmetric federalism in India.
- Finance Commission and fiscal federalism.
- Border area integration through political participation.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Greater representation can strengthen democratic participation.
- Constitutional safeguards may protect:
  - Tribal identity,
  - Land,
  - Local employment.
- Political empowerment can improve border integration.
- Local participation essential in ecological governance.

Concerns

- Strategic sensitivity due to border with China and Pakistan.
- Administrative and financial dependence on Centre.
- Fragile Himalayan ecosystem vulnerable to overdevelopment.
- Balance needed between national security and regional autonomy.

Way Forward

- Consider tailored constitutional safeguards for Ladakh.
- Strengthen Autonomous Hill Development Councils.
- Ensure local consultation in infrastructure and energy projects.
- Adopt sustainable mountain development strategy.
- Improve participatory governance in border regions.

Regulation, not bans, can protect online gamers

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The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, was passed with the objective to "protect individuals, especially youth and vulnerable populations, from the adverse social, economic, psychological and privacy-related impacts" of online games involving money. As growing evidence of their impact emerges, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Act is proving counterproductive. Early studies suggest that the use of offshore online betting and gambling platforms has risen since the ban. Following the implementation of the PROG Act in October 2025, users quickly shifted from regulated domestic websites to illegal offshore platforms.

Rise in offshore platform use

An even more worrying consequence is that these platforms not only circumvent domestic laws but may also become channels for money laundering and terror financing. Several reports and surveys conducted after the ban suggest that offshore platform usage has risen sharply. A study by CUTS International found a significant increase in offshore participation after the implementation of the PROG Act — from 68.3% to 82% in Delhi NCR, 67.8% to 83% in Tamil Nadu, and 66.7% to 91.7% in Maharashtra.

In Tamil Nadu, 67.8% of users reported using offshore platforms before the ban, often alongside domestic real-money gaming platforms. After the ban, this rose to 83%, involving the use of offshore platforms, marking an increase of 15.2 percentage points. This increase reflects a net behavioural shift of 15.2% toward offshore platforms, driven by a larger number of respondents starting offshore use after implementation of the PROG Act than those discontinuing it.

This is not a new phenomenon. Across industries, paternalistic bans rarely change consumer behaviour; they merely push users toward underground and more volatile channels. Products which are not physical in nature face an even deeper challenge, as users can quickly shift through VPNs and private links, making effective regulation and consumer protection far more difficult.

A case for strong regulation

In the recently concluded Budget parliamentary session, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology reported to the Lok Sabha that the Centre had blocked 8,376 URLs to combat the financial irregularities and cybercrime havoc being caused by illegal offshore betting networks. Despite this, media reports continue to allude to suicides linked to illegal online betting traps even after the ban. It is therefore crucial to recognise the scale of the problem and reconsider whether strong regulation may be more effective than an outright ban.

Illegal operators use technologically advanced evasion tactics, including virtual private networks (VPN), proxy servers and encrypted platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram, to ensure seamless access and transactions. By the time authorities block one domain, users are often shifted to mirror sites with little disruption. The widespread use of VPNs also masks user locations, weakening geographic restrictions.

When users shift to offshore platforms, domestic authorities face significant limitations in ensuring consumer protection and grievance redress. The easy accessibility of offshore online gambling platforms to Indian users is therefore a serious public concern.

A recent inter-State online gambling and fraud racket that came to light in my constituency in Tamil Nadu – Sivaganga – in February this year involved a fraudulent "Old Coin Purchase Task" promoted on Telegram, in which the accused lured victims into investing money in fake old-coin bidding schemes by promising high returns. They also procured "mule accounts" by persuading villagers in Sivaganga, Paramakudi and Kalayarkovil to open bank accounts in exchange for small payments, which were then used to divert the proceeds of the crime.

Examples from overseas

Looking at other jurisdictions offers useful perspectives on responding to the rise of offshore platforms. The United Arab Emirates, despite its long-standing prohibition, moved in 2023 to establish a tightly controlled federal licensing framework with strict compliance requirements, deposit limits and harm-prevention safeguards, partly to address the risks posed by unregulated offshore activity. Sri Lanka is now moving in a similar direction, with a centralised Gambling Regulatory Authority expected to become operational by June 2026 to consolidate oversight and bring offshore online activity within a clear domestic framework.

The emerging lesson is that the real policy choice is rarely between permitting and banning. It is between creating a regulated domestic framework with accountability and consumer safeguards, or allowing the space to be dominated by offshore operators beyond domestic oversight. Addressing this menace requires sustained coordination between the Centre and State governments. As the evidence suggests, a blanket ban is unlikely to work in the long run. Instead, policymakers should reconsider and test a regulated framework within a controlled environment.

This would enable policymakers to better understand and address the challenges posed by offshore operators, while also generating tax revenue from a regulated ecosystem. These revenues could then be reinvested in strengthening offshore monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, as well as funding player-awareness campaigns — an approach adopted successfully in several western countries.

The implementation of the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, is proving counter productive

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming (PROG) Act, 2025 was enacted to protect youth and vulnerable groups from adverse impacts of online real-money gaming.
- After implementation of the Act, users reportedly shifted from regulated domestic platforms to illegal offshore betting websites.
- CUTS International study highlighted a sharp rise in offshore platform usage after the ban:
  - Delhi NCR: 68.3% → 82%
  - Tamil Nadu: 67.8% → 83%
  - Maharashtra: 66.7% → 91.7%
- MeitY informed Lok Sabha that 8,376 URLs were blocked to tackle illegal offshore betting networks.
- Concerns have increased regarding cyber fraud, money laundering and terror financing through offshore betting platforms.

Key Points

- Offshore betting platforms bypass restrictions using:
  - VPNs
  - Proxy servers
  - Telegram and WhatsApp channels.
- Blocking one domain often leads to emergence of mirror websites.
- Offshore platforms remain outside Indian consumer protection and grievance redressal systems.
- Illegal betting networks are linked with:
  - Financial fraud
  - Mule bank accounts
  - Cybercrime ecosystems.
- Countries like UAE and Sri Lanka are moving toward regulated licensing frameworks instead of blanket prohibitions.
- Debate has emerged between:
  - Blanket prohibition
  - Regulated oversight-based framework.

Static Linkages

- Betting and gambling fall under Entry 34 of State List (Seventh Schedule).
- Article 19(1)(g) provides freedom of trade subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(6).
- Section 69A of Information Technology Act, 2000 empowers blocking of unlawful online content.
- Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 relevant for illegal betting proceeds.
- FATF identifies online gambling platforms as possible channels for money laundering and terror financing.
- Supreme Court in R.M.D. Chamarbaugwala Case (1957) held gambling as res extra commercium.
- Cyber security and digital governance are key components of Digital India framework.
- Consumer protection principles require transparency, accountability and grievance redressal in digital platforms.

Critical Analysis

Positives of Ban

- Protects vulnerable groups from gambling addiction.
- Attempts to reduce financial exploitation and social harm.
- Shows proactive state intervention in digital regulation.
- Helps curb predatory gaming practices.

Concerns

- Users shift toward illegal offshore platforms.
- Enforcement becomes difficult due to VPNs and encrypted apps.
- Increased risk of cyber fraud and money laundering.
- Lack of consumer protection on offshore platforms.
- Revenue loss for government due to underground operations.
- Fragmented State-level regulations create policy inconsistency.

Governance Challenges

- Cross-border jurisdictional issues.
- Technological sophistication of illegal operators.
- Need for Centre–State coordination.
- Balancing regulation with digital innovation.

Way Forward

- Create a comprehensive national regulatory framework for online gaming.
- Shift from blanket bans to regulated licensing systems.
- Introduce:
  - KYC norms
  - Deposit limits
  - Age verification
  - Responsible gaming safeguards.
- Strengthen cyber forensic and monitoring mechanisms.
- Improve coordination between:
  - MeitY
  - Enforcement Directorate
  - State Police agencies.
- Enhance international cooperation against offshore operators.
- Conduct awareness campaigns regarding online betting frauds.
- Use tax revenues from regulated platforms for cyber enforcement and rehabilitation measures.

Caste away

People must have the option to state they are casteless in the Census

The Supreme Court was not wrong to dismiss a petition that sought to stall the caste census, which is part of the ongoing Census 2027. The Chief Justice of India remarked, in support of the caste count, that "any government of the day must know how many people are backward and how many need welfare". In April 2025, the Narendra Modi government had made a turnaround to announce caste enumeration alongside the fresh census, the first such exercise since 1931. Mr. Modi had earlier derided the idea as a sign of "urban Naxal" thinking, and the RSS had warned that such surveys were attempts to fracture Hindu society. The Congress, too, had made a dramatic turnaround in its historical position to demand a caste census. Early governments of independent India decided not to enumerate caste with the census. The dominant thinking then was that counting caste communities would only reinforce the institution of caste that the state wanted to dismantle. On the one hand, state policies sought to create a casteless society, while on the other, they also accounted for caste identities for positive discrimination in legislative representation and employment. This dual approach to caste that was baked into the nation's founding principles has created a paradox that continues to this day. The clamour for a caste census is the latest manifestation of it.

The Census itself has been long overdue. The decennial population survey was originally due in 2021 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and logistical hurdles. The caste enumeration will take place in the second phase and will involve asking every individual their caste, rather than merely recording whether they belong to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, as in previous Censuses. The delay in the Census has a bearing on planning of all sorts. In India, a considerable portion of state policy is directly or indirectly linked to the caste profile of the target group. The one attempt at a post-Independence national caste count came in 2011. The open-ended caste identification process of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census produced over 46 lakh distinct caste names and 8 crore data errors, rendering the dataset unusable. Most of its findings remain unpublished. The Modi government is still grappling with the challenge of finding the appropriate methodology for an accurate enumeration of caste communities. A caste census detracts from the effort to eradicate caste as it ossifies identities, but is helpful if viewed alongside other socioeconomic indices to better target welfare measures and ensure representation. The annihilation of caste must remain a goal, and people must be allowed to classify themselves as casteless if they so wish.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- Supreme Court dismissed a petition seeking a stay on caste enumeration in Census 2027.
- Chief Justice of India observed that governments require data on backward communities for welfare and policy planning.
- Union Government announced caste enumeration in April 2025 along with the delayed Census exercise.
- First nationwide caste enumeration since the 1931 Census.
- Census 2021 was postponed due to COVID-19 and administrative constraints.
- Earlier post-Independence Censuses recorded only SCs and STs, not all caste groups.
- SECC 2011 attempted caste data collection but faced major classification and data accuracy issues.

Key Points

- Census conducted under the Census Act, 1948.
- Caste enumeration to be undertaken during the second phase of Census 2027.
- Enumeration will involve self-identification of caste by individuals.
- SECC 2011 generated:
  - More than 46 lakh caste names.
  - Around 8 crore data inconsistencies.
- Demand for caste census linked to:
  - Reservation policy review.
  - Welfare targeting.
  - Political representation.
  - Social justice measures.
- Debate reflects tension between:
  - Goal of casteless society.
  - Need for caste-based affirmative action.

Static Linkages

- Article 14 – Equality before law.
- Article 15(4) – Special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes.
- Article 16(4) – Reservation in public employment for backward classes.
- Article 46 – Promotion of educational and economic interests of weaker sections.
- Census Act, 1948.
- Mandal Commission recommendations.
- Indra Sawhney Case (1992):
  - Upheld OBC reservation.
  - Introduced creamy layer concept.
  - 50% ceiling principle.
- Kalelkar Commission:
  - First Backward Classes Commission.
- Concept of substantive equality and protective discrimination.
- B.R. Ambedkar's idea:
  - Social justice with eventual annihilation of caste.

Critical Analysis

Significance

- Enables evidence-based policymaking.
- Helps identify deprived caste groups.
- Improves targeting of welfare schemes.
- Assists in rationalisation of reservation policies.
- Strengthens inclusive governance.

Concerns

- May reinforce caste identities.
- Possibility of caste-based political mobilisation.
- Data standardisation challenges.
- Risk of inaccurate self-reporting.
- Privacy and confidentiality concerns.
- Administrative complexity due to large number of caste categories.

Constitutional Dimension

- Balancing equality with affirmative action.
- Debate between:
  - Casteless society.
  - Social justice through caste recognition.

Way Forward

- Develop standardised caste classification methodology.
- Integrate caste data with socio-economic indicators.
- Ensure transparency and data verification.
- Strengthen data privacy safeguards.
- Use data primarily for developmental and welfare purposes.

Bat for the better

Courts must treat tax exemptions to the BCCI as a form of state grant

The RTI Act was originally designed to scrutinise the state, a limit that the BCCI has repeatedly tested thanks to its outsized power. The BCCI is a private body that operates commercially and lacks direct public financing. RTI disclosures could expose competitive information and compromise the flexibility required to govern a sport, especially since the BCCI already has anti-corruption measures and comes under judicial review if required. If the BCCI is brought under the Act's remit, there is also a risk of political forces abusing transparency requirements to exert greater influence on cricket administration. Even so, the Central Information Commission's (CIC) recent decision to exclude the BCCI from the RTI Act is unlikely to go uncontested because the body has also monopolised a national sport. The BCCI benefits from national symbolism, police deployment at matches, concessional land allotments, and State hospitality; uses public stadium infrastructure; enjoys the regulatory privileges accruing to its monopoly status; and negotiates with foreign boards in ways that sometimes overlap with diplomacy. These liberties have thus sustained civil society concerns about being unable to scrutinise its conflicts of interest and governance arrangements.

Under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, the BCCI is not a constitutional or statutory body and was not created by government notification, leaving the matter to turn on whether it can be said to be under state control or financing. Following disputes in 2005 and 2013, the Supreme Court repeatedly said in 2015-16, when the BCCI was adopting the Lodha committee recommendations, that it performs public duties. The Law Commission furthered this position in 2018 because, it added, the BCCI also serves as a National Sports Federation without the Sports Ministry recognising it as one and received tax exemptions worth ₹2,100 crore in 1997-2007 alone, a figure the Commission interpreted as foregone state revenue. Subsequently, former Information Commissioner Sridhar Acharyulu ruled the BCCI to be a public authority under Section 2(h). The Madras High Court stayed the order, and the CIC has now reversed the ruling. The CIC has admitted that the BCCI exerts a significant influence on public life while insisting that its decision is based on Section 2(h) alone. There is a contradiction between writ jurisdiction applying to the BCCI – as the Court affirmed in 2015 – even as the body is private enough to conceal its internal records. At this time, Section 2(h) should be amended to include any body discharging public duties, especially with monopoly power, perhaps by creating a category that simultaneously protects the BCCI's commercial interests. Courts must also treat tax exemptions as a form of state grant.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- The Central Information Commission (CIC) ruled that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is not a "public authority" under Section 2(h) of the Right to Information Act, 2005.
- The ruling reversed the earlier decision of former Information Commissioner Sridhar Acharyulu.
- Debate continues on whether bodies performing "public functions" should fall under RTI.
- The issue gained importance after Supreme Court observations during implementation of Lodha Committee reforms (2015–16).

Key Points

- Section 2(h) of RTI Act defines "public authority".
- Public authority includes bodies:
  - Established by Constitution/law/government notification.
  - Owned, controlled, or substantially financed by government.
- BCCI argues:
  - It is a private autonomous body.
  - It does not receive direct government funding.
- Arguments for bringing BCCI under RTI:
  - Monopoly control over cricket in India.
  - Uses public infrastructure and stadiums.
  - Receives concessional land allotments and tax exemptions.
  - Performs public functions linked to national representation.
- Law Commission (2018):
  - Recommended inclusion of sports bodies like BCCI under RTI.
- Supreme Court in Zee Telefilms Case (2005):
  - BCCI not considered "State" under Article 12.
- Supreme Court later observed that BCCI performs public duties and is amenable to writ jurisdiction under Article 226.

Static Linkages

- Article 19(1)(a) → Right to Information as part of freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 12 → Definition of "State".
- Article 226 → Writ jurisdiction of High Courts.
- Doctrine of Public Function.
- Principle of Transparency and Accountability in governance.
- Lodha Committee reforms in sports governance.
- Second ARC recommendations on ethical governance and transparency.

Critical Analysis

Arguments in Favour of RTI Coverage

- Monopoly status creates public accountability obligations.
- Cricket has national importance and public impact.
- Public resources and indirect state support justify transparency.
- RTI can improve governance and reduce conflicts of interest.

Arguments Against RTI Coverage

- BCCI is not government-created or directly funded.
- Commercial confidentiality may be affected.
- Risk of political interference in sports administration.
- Existing judicial oversight mechanisms already available.

Key Constitutional Issue

- Contradiction between:
  - BCCI being subject to writ jurisdiction,
  - But remaining outside RTI scrutiny.

Way Forward

- Amend Section 2(h) to include bodies performing significant public functions.
- Develop graded transparency norms for sports bodies.
- Protect commercially sensitive information while ensuring accountability.
- Strengthen governance reforms in sports administration.
- Treat indirect benefits like tax exemptions as forms of state support.

I want to daydream & write, not parade up the Instagram square

MAITHREYI KARNOOR

SOMEONE I met at a literary event where I spoke about translation asked me if he might continue the conversation online. I agreed, and thought we would exchange email addresses. But he said he would message me on Instagram, where, apparently, we followed each other. I am not on Instagram.

The assumption that everyone is on social media must be the predicament of our times. To deny it inspires disbelief.

Keeping a low profile in an aggressively "networking" world, for me, isn't as much a sanctimonious choice as an instinct of laziness that lets me daydream. My writing is a byproduct of the dreaming. My ability to be lost in thought has endured constant assault from an early age and, as a hard-won talent, it is precious to me. Networking, which feels like the exact opposite of dreaming, isn't worth losing it to.

Not wanting to network might be a non-pragmatic choice for a participant in what is essentially a capitalistic trade. Being fashionably out of reach of the reader is only afforded to the "A-lister" who "divides his time" between two homes: A swanky Western city, and an ancestral village back in the sweltering homeland that feeds his postcolonial angst. A middling unknown like me without friends and/or enemies in high places and whose books and effigies aren't worth the price of the matchstick in the pocket of the unread reactionary has no choice but to go out dressed in khadi silk, smile a lot, take selfies, seek and give blurbs, exchange gossip, infiltrate coteries, utter well-articulated witticisms, and all but parade in a tutu up and down the Instagram square.

I am not entirely unambitious. I want my books to be read, and maybe, just maybe, someday not have to have a day job in order to indulge my literary vice. But somehow, my natural instinct is to trail off mid-sentence in a conversation, words vanishing from my mouth, and everyone save me moving on to greener signing tables. Then there is the inadvertent poking of the hornet's nest of rivalries. A certain Slovenian novelist I once met oozed charm and rat-tat-tatted her publishing profile upon first introduction and insisted — without provocation — that writing in any language other than the mother tongue was linguistic treachery. Her enthusiasm dimmed when I didn't gush at her shining successes or applaud her passionate speech. When I asked her casually if she knew a Slovenian translator friend, her smile froze. "You think everyone knows everyone in Slovenia?" she snorted and turned her back to me. I overheard her extracting an invitation to a speaking engagement in Israel from the next personage she had attached herself to.

That is the essence of literary networking. It is aggressive, result-oriented politeness by those who claim to be dreamers. It cannot get any more ironic than that.

To be artless in the world of art may not be the most strategic thing to do. But if there are clouds where you live and your sense of pareidolia is strong, it's easy to face the consequences of your luddite choices with glee.

I have a tiny social-media presence: A locked Facebook account under a pseudonym and 300 friends with whom I share puns, cat videos, and my observations of absurdities. We laugh at how ridiculous everything is, say kind and clever things to each other, and go back to real lives. I have no time or patience to argue with strangers. I may be existing in the proverbial echo chamber, but I am too cynical to want to change other people's minds. I am also smug in my position of "compassion, humour, respect, free speech" where detractors have very little leeway. If I hear of a publishing opportunity, I share it with fellow writers. I'm happy to give advice if someone asks for it. In turn, I feel uplifted and grateful when I receive help. And that is all the friendship and goodwill I need. I think the world would be a better place if everyone — including writers — networked less and dreamed more.

Karnoor is a translator and writer, most recently of the short story collection Gooday Nagar, and the Kannada novel, Hettavara Neralu

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context

- The rise of social media and digital networking culture has transformed professional, literary, and social interactions.
- Increasingly, individuals are expected to maintain an active online presence for visibility, career opportunities, and networking.
- The issue raises concerns regarding:
  - Attention economy,
  - Decline of deep thinking and creativity,
  - Mental health impacts,
  - Commercialisation of social relationships.
- The debate is relevant in India due to rapid internet penetration, growth of digital platforms, and expansion of the creator economy.

Key Points

- Social media platforms influence:
  - Public discourse,
  - Professional opportunities,
  - Cultural expression,
  - Political communication.
- Networking culture often prioritises:
  - Visibility,
  - Branding,
  - Engagement metrics,
  - over intellectual depth and creativity.
- Excessive digital engagement can lead to:
  - Reduced attention span,
  - Information overload,
  - Anxiety and stress,
  - Echo chambers.
- At the same time, digital platforms provide:
  - Democratisation of expression,
  - Opportunities for independent creators,
  - Wider public participation.
- India's digital ecosystem has expanded through:
  - Affordable internet,
  - Smartphone penetration,
  - Digital India initiatives.

Static Linkages

- Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of Speech and Expression.
- Article 21 – Right to Life and Privacy.
- Justice K.S. Puttaswamy Case (2017) – Privacy recognised as a Fundamental Right.
- Information Technology Act, 2000.
- Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.
- Concepts:
  - Attention economy,
  - Social capital,
  - Echo chambers,
  - Surveillance capitalism.
- Ethics:
  - Authenticity,
  - Emotional intelligence,
  - Responsible communication.
- NCERT themes:
  - Media and society,
  - Technology and social change.

Critical Analysis

Advantages

- Expands access to opportunities and communication.
- Encourages entrepreneurship and digital participation.
- Gives voice to independent creators and marginalised groups.
- Enhances awareness and information sharing.

Challenges

- Encourages superficial and transactional relationships.
- Reduces deep thinking and reflective creativity.
- Creates echo chambers and social polarisation.
- Raises concerns regarding privacy and misuse of personal data.
- Excessive usage affects mental well-being and productivity.

Ethical Concerns

- Conflict between authenticity and performative online identity.
- Commercialisation of social interactions.
- Responsibility of digital platforms in ensuring healthy discourse.

Way Forward

- Promote digital literacy and responsible online behaviour.
- Strengthen privacy and data protection frameworks.
- Encourage balanced use of technology and social media.
- Promote critical thinking and media literacy in education.
- Develop ethical accountability mechanisms for digital platforms.
- Encourage healthy offline social and intellectual engagement.

Animal slaughter ban misreads farm economy

WEST BENGAL is India's largest meat producer, accounting for roughly 12.5 per cent of the country's estimated output of 10.5 million tonnes (mt) in 2024-25. It is also India's second-biggest fish producer, next to Andhra Pradesh. That makes the state significantly "non-vegetarian" and one of the few — Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Sikkim and Assam are the others — to permit consumption of beef and slaughter of cattle. The fact that West Bengal's milk production has increased from 5.6 mt in 2018-19 to nearly 8 mt in 2024-25, alongside a 25 per cent rise in its in-milk cow population during this period, is proof of the meat sector's growth not being at the expense of dairying either.

It is against this background that one must examine the implications of the Suvendu Adhikari-led BJP government's decision to "strictly" enforce the West Bengal Animal Slaughter Control Act. The 1950 law does not allow slaughter of any animal unless it is over 14 years of age and certified as "fit for slaughter" by the head of a municipality or panchayat samiti and a government veterinary surgeon. Given that the normal lifespan of a cow or bull is about 15 years and no farmer rears them beyond 10 years, it practically bans any slaughter. The Act, moreover, only mentions "certain animals" without specifying cattle or buffalo, and male or female. With most farmers having no means to prove the age of their bovines, nor access to veterinarians for issuing fit-for-slaughter certificates, it leaves them with two options. The first is to maintain unproductive animals by diverting scarce fodder, feed and water even if these stop giving enough milk — typically after five-six calvings when they are eight-nine years old — or are incapable of working the fields. The second option is to stop keeping animals and exit dairying.

The Adhikari government can claim that it is merely implementing an existing law. The previous Trinamool and Left Front administrations should, indeed, have done away with the Act's provisions that have no place in today's farming environment. In 1950, India had hardly 5,000 tractors, as against over 12 million now. Bullocks have increasingly yielded to tractors, combines and electric pumpsets for ploughing and irrigating fields and harvesting, threshing and hauling produce to mandis. With chemical fertilisers and artificial insemination, too, replacing organic manure and natural breeding, farmers have incentive to rear bovines only for milk. Governments, whether of Adhikari or of Yogi Adityanath in UP, should realise that Indian agriculture, like the rest of the economy, is no longer in the age of the bullock cart.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- West Bengal government has decided to strictly enforce the West Bengal Animal Slaughter Control Act, 1950.
- The Act permits slaughter only when:
  - the animal is above 14 years of age, and
  - certified fit for slaughter by authorities and a veterinary surgeon.
- The issue has triggered debate over:
  - dairy economy,
  - farmer livelihoods,
  - livestock management,
  - and constitutional provisions related to cattle preservation.
- West Bengal is:
  - India's largest meat producer,
  - and second-largest fish producer after Andhra Pradesh.
- Milk production in the state has also increased significantly in recent years.

Key Points

- Strict implementation may practically restrict cattle slaughter due to:
  - lack of age records,
  - limited veterinary access,
  - economic unviability of maintaining old cattle.
- Farmers generally keep bovines mainly for:
  - milk production,
  - breeding,
  - dairy income.
- Mechanisation has reduced dependence on bullocks in agriculture.
- Maintaining unproductive cattle increases:
  - fodder burden,
  - input costs,
  - pressure on small farmers.
- Restrictions may contribute to:
  - stray cattle problem,
  - declining dairy profitability,
  - rural distress.

Static Linkages

- Article 48 directs the State to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern scientific lines.
- Preservation of milch and draught cattle is part of Directive Principles.
- Agriculture and animal husbandry are State List subjects.
- White Revolution made India the world's largest milk producer.
- Livestock sector is an important source of supplementary income for small and marginal farmers.
- Agricultural mechanisation reduced dependence on animal labour.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Supports cattle preservation objectives.
- Prevents illegal slaughter.
- Reflects Directive Principles under Article 48.
- Encourages animal welfare.

Concerns

- Economic burden on dairy farmers.
- Increase in stray cattle population.
- Reduced viability of dairying for small farmers.
- Law may not align with mechanised agriculture.
- Administrative difficulties in certification process.

Way Forward

- Modernise outdated cattle laws based on current agricultural realities.
- Ensure scientific livestock management policy.
- Expand veterinary infrastructure in rural areas.
- Support farmers through fodder and cattle shelter schemes.
- Balance:
  - farmer welfare,
  - animal welfare,
  - and constitutional objectives.

At UNGA, incomplete climate justice

IN JULY last year, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that countries are "obliged" to "prevent harm from climate change". The verdict has now received the imprimatur of the UN General Assembly. More than two-thirds of UN members, 141, voted in favour of the resolution on Wednesday; eight nations, including the US, said no and 28, including India, abstained. The resolution could change the tenor of the international climate debate — it strengthens the idea that mitigation measures cannot be founded on the principle of voluntarism. It gives vulnerable nations, particularly small island states — among the sponsors of the move — stronger diplomatic and legal grounds to demand action from major emitters.

That said, the resolution does not fully reflect the concerns of developing countries like India, which have always argued that countries with a longer history of industrialisation, accompanied by extractive colonialism, bear greater responsibility for addressing the climate crisis. Transition to green energy systems must take into account the need for economic and social development in countries outside the developed world. The resolution does not adequately recognise this imperative, especially since it is silent on climate finance. Opening the global-warming mitigation plans of countries to legal scrutiny without similar audits of the financial commitments of industrialised countries further undermines one of the already-embattled principles of climate negotiations — common but differentiated responsibilities.

India's abstention should, however, not be seen as a vote against the concerns of the small island states. New Delhi's initiatives such as SAGAR, and projects like the International Solar Alliance, have been sensitive to the anxieties of the countries most threatened by the rising seas. India has also made appreciable progress towards the attainment of its Paris Pact commitments. At the same time, it must remain alert to the growing sentiment among the most climate-vulnerable countries that emerging economies need to do more to reduce their fossil-fuel dependence — debates at the UNFCCC and now the passing of the UN General Assembly resolution show that this stance has the support of several countries in the West. Even as India pushes its justified position in international climate fora, it must stay the course on its green-transition targets. Doing so will be in the interests of the well-being of its people and the competitiveness of its industry.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Context of the News

- The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution supporting the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on states' obligations regarding climate change.
- 141 countries voted in favour, while eight countries opposed it; India abstained.
- The resolution seeks to strengthen international accountability on climate mitigation.
- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) supported the move due to threats from sea-level rise and climate disasters.
- India raised concerns regarding equity, climate finance, and differentiated responsibilities of developed nations.

Key Points

- The resolution strengthens the idea that climate action is a legal and international responsibility, not merely voluntary.
- It may increase scrutiny of countries' climate mitigation commitments.
- Developing countries fear weakening of the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR).
- India stressed that:
  - Developed nations bear historical responsibility for emissions.
  - Climate finance commitments remain inadequate.
  - Developmental needs of emerging economies must be protected.
- India continues to support climate initiatives through:
  - International Solar Alliance (ISA)
  - Panchamrit targets
  - Renewable energy expansion
  - Net-zero target by 2070

Static Linkages

- Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR-RC)
- Polluter Pays Principle
- Sustainable Development
- Climate Justice
- Paris Agreement
- UNFCCC
- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
- Green Climate Fund (GCF)
- Loss and Damage mechanism
- Article 21 – Right to healthy environment
- Article 48A – Protection of environment
- Article 51A(g) – Fundamental duty towards environment

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Strengthens global climate accountability.
- Supports climate-vulnerable nations.
- Encourages stronger emission reduction measures.
- Reinforces climate justice discourse.

Concerns

- Weak focus on climate finance obligations of developed countries.
- May dilute CBDR principle.
- Could increase pressure on developing economies.
- Developmental priorities and energy security concerns remain unresolved.

India's Stand

- Supports equitable climate action.
- Emphasises historical responsibility of developed nations.
- Advocates balance between growth and sustainability.
- Focuses on renewable energy-led transition without compromising development.

Way Forward

- Strengthen climate finance mechanisms.
- Protect CBDR principle in climate negotiations.
- Accelerate renewable energy transition.
- Enhance adaptation support for vulnerable countries.
- Promote technology transfer and green innovation.
- Ensure climate action remains equitable and development-oriented.