



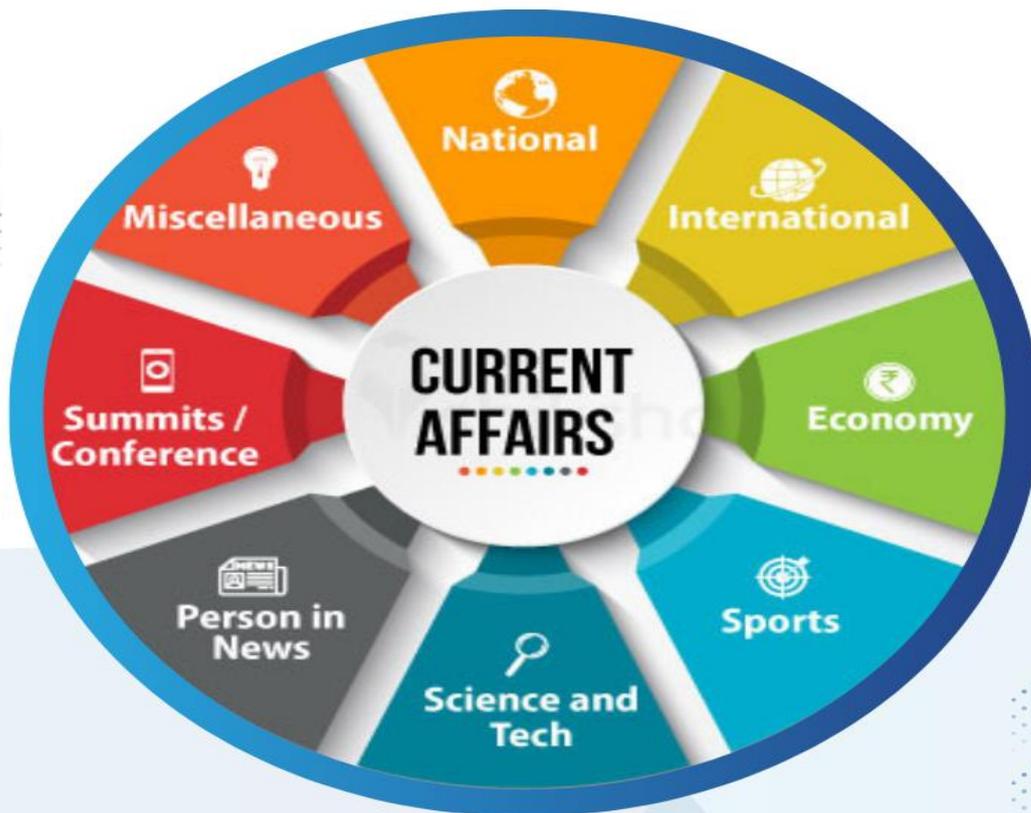
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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & **STUDY CENTRE**

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 19/03/2026 (THURSDAY)



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1. Strategic Evacuation in the Strait of Hormuz: Impact on India's Energy Security

The Indian government has identified 22 India-bound vessels for prioritized evacuation and safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz amid escalating regional tensions. This move underscores the critical vulnerability of India's maritime trade routes and the necessity of proactive naval diplomacy to safeguard national interests.

- **Energy Security Imperative:** Of the 22 vessels, 20 are classified as "critical" to India's energy security, transporting approximately 16.76 lakh tonnes of crude oil, 3.21 lakh tonnes of LPG, and 2.15 lakh tonnes of LNG to meet domestic demand.
- **Composition of Fleet:** The identified vessels include a mix of Indian-flagged (10 ships) and foreign-flagged (carrying flags of Marshall Islands, Liberia, Greece, Malta, and Portugal) tankers and container ships, highlighting the global nature of India's supply chain.
- **Inter-Agency Coordination:** The evacuation involves high-level synergy between the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways; the Directorate of Naval Operations (DNO); the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG); and the Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR).
- **Operational Execution:** The Indian Navy has already successfully escorted vessels like *Shivalik*, *Nanda Devi*, and *Jag Laadki* from the Gulf of Oman to Indian ports like Mundra and Vadinar, employing ship-to-ship (STS) transfer operations for efficient discharge.
- **Geopolitical Chokepoint:** The Strait of Hormuz serves as a vital maritime artery; any disruption here directly impacts India's inflation, fiscal deficit, and industrial output due to its heavy reliance on Persian Gulf hydrocarbons.
- **Precedence of Naval Escorts:** This mission reinforces the "Mission Based Deployments" philosophy of the Indian Navy, transitioning from a buyer's navy to a security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to ensure "unhindered commerce."



Key Definitions

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It is the world's most important oil chokepoint, through which nearly 20% of global petroleum liquids pass.
- **Double-Banking:** A maritime procedure where two ships are moored alongside each other (often at sea or in port) to facilitate the transfer of cargo, fuel, or passengers without using a fixed pier.
- **Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR):** Based in Gurugram, it is a regional hub for maritime domain awareness, tracking merchant shipping and threats like piracy or regional instability.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 73:** Extends the executive power of the Union to matters with respect to which Parliament has the power to make laws, including "Foreign Affairs" and "Maritime Shipping."



- **Maritime Anti-Piracy Act, 2022:** Provides a domestic legal framework to combat piracy and ensure the safety of Indian vessels and crew in international waters.
- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** India adheres to UNCLOS, which governs the "Right of Innocent Passage" and "Transit Passage" through international straits like Hormuz.

Conclusion

The evacuation of India-bound ships from the Persian Gulf highlights the inextricable link between maritime safety and national economic stability. By deploying naval assets to escort commercial tankers, India is asserting its role as a "Net Security Provider" in the region while mitigating the risks of a global energy price shock.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** International Relations (Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian Diaspora).
- **GS Paper III:** Security (Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security; Maritime Security) and Economic Development (Energy Security).
- **Prelims:** Mapping of the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Strait of Hormuz; functions of IFC-IOR and UNCLOS.

2. Jharkhand Assembly Resolution: MGNREGA vs. VB-G RAM G

The Jharkhand Legislative Assembly recently adopted a resolution urging the Union Government to retain the existing framework of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005. The resolution specifically opposes the transition to the new "Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin)" (VB-G RAM G), citing concerns over fiscal federalism and the dilution of labor rights.

- **Shift in Funding Pattern:** A primary contention is the proposed 60:40 cost-sharing ratio between the Centre and States under the new Act. The Jharkhand government argues this departs from the predominantly Centrally-sponsored nature of MGNREGA, imposing an "unbearable" financial burden on resource-constrained states.
- **Dilution of Rights-Based Framework:** The state highlights that while MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee to demand work, there are apprehensions that VB-G RAM G might eliminate this demand-driven mechanism, potentially weakening the social safety net for landless laborers and women.
- **Migration and Employment Days:** The resolution advocates for increasing the guaranteed employment days from 100 to 150. This is seen as a critical step to curb rural-to-urban migration, which remains a significant socio-economic challenge in Jharkhand.
- **Federal Structure Concerns:** The move is framed as a defense of the "Cooperative Federalism" principle. The state argues that unilateral changes to shared social welfare architectures undermine the constitutional balance of power and financial autonomy of states.





- **Socio-Economic Impact:** State authorities emphasize that MGNREGA has historically served as a lifeline for rural empowerment and poverty reduction; any tampering with the original 2005 Act's provisions could jeopardize the livelihoods of lakhs of job card holders.

Key Definitions

- **Demand-Driven Scheme:** A system where the government is legally obligated to provide work within a specified timeframe (usually 15 days) once a worker requests it. Failure to do so typically triggers an unemployment allowance.
- **Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS):** These are schemes implemented by State governments but largely funded by the Central Government with a defined share-matching ratio (e.g., 60:40, 90:10).
- **Voice Vote:** A preliminary method of voting in the legislature where members indicate their agreement or disagreement by shouting "Aye" or "No," with the Speaker deciding the outcome based on volume.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life has been interpreted by the Judiciary to include the "Right to Livelihood," which forms the philosophical basis for guaranteed employment acts.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP):** Article 39 (Right to an adequate means of livelihood) and Article 41 (Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases) guide the state in formulating employment guarantees.
- **Seventh Schedule:** "Social Security and Social Insurance; employment and unemployment" falls under the Concurrent List (List III), allowing both Centre and States to legislate, though Central laws generally prevail under Article 254.
- **The MGNREGA Act, 2005:** The parent legislation that mandates 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

Conclusion

The friction between the Jharkhand government and the Centre over the VB-G RAM G transition reflects a broader debate on the evolution of social welfare in India. While the Centre aims for a modified mission-mode approach (Viksit Bharat), states are advocating for the preservation of a rights-based legal entitlement that ensures financial accountability remains largely with the Union.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure; Devolution of powers and finances up to local levels; Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and employment; Government Budgeting.
- **Mains Perspective:** Analyze the impact of changing funding patterns in Centrally Sponsored Schemes on State finances and the effectiveness of the "Rights-based approach" to development.



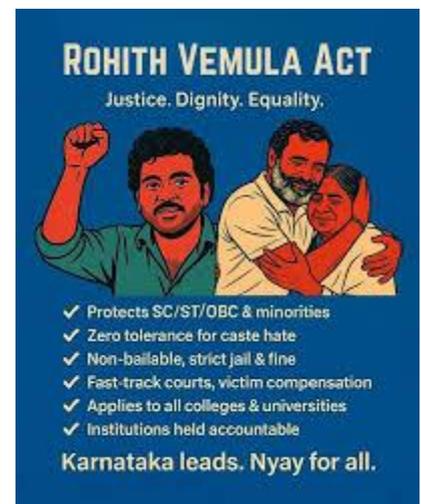
3. Karnataka's Legislative Move Against Caste-Based "Honour" Killings

The Karnataka government has introduced the "Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition (Eva Nammava, Eva Nammava) Bill, 2026." This landmark legislation seeks to provide a specialized legal shield for consenting adults opting for inter-caste marriages, directly addressing the persistence of caste-based violence and social exclusion in the state.

- **Protection of Marital Autonomy:** The Bill explicitly guarantees the right of consenting adults to choose their life partners without coercion from family, community, or traditional institutions, treating such interference as a violation of fundamental dignity.
- **Stringent Penal Provisions:** It proposes a minimum of five years' imprisonment for killings committed in the name of "honour." For cases involving injury, the Bill mandates at least two years of jail time and a fine of Rs 2 lakh, ensuring that the cost of communal interference is high.
- **Curbing Illegal Assemblies:** A significant clause prohibits the assembly of five or more persons gathered with the intent to condemn or oppose a marriage based on caste, tribe, or tradition, thereby targeting the "Khap-style" community adjudications.
- **Institutional Support (Eva Nammava Vedike):** The Bill mandates the creation of "Eva Nammava, Eva Nammava" (He/She is ours) Vedikes at the district level. These forums are designed to solemnize inter-caste unions and provide a formal support system for vulnerable couples.
- **Addressing Systemic Discrimination:** The legislation acknowledges that caste-based discrimination remains a reality and aims to transform social mindsets by promoting the "Eva Nammava" philosophy, which emphasizes inclusivity and human rights over regressive traditions.

Key Definitions

- **Honour Killing:** A homicide committed by family members or community members against a relative (usually a couple) who is perceived to have brought dishonour upon the family or community by breaking social norms, particularly through inter-caste or inter-religious relationships.
- **Eva Nammava, Eva Nammava:** A Kannada phrase meaning "He is ours; she is ours." Derived from the teachings of the 12th-century social reformer Basavanna, it promotes a sense of universal brotherhood and the rejection of "othering" based on caste.
- **Consenting Adult:** A person who has attained the legal age of marriage (18 for women, 21 for men) and possesses the mental capacity to make a free and informed decision regarding their union.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Liberty):** The Supreme Court in the *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India (2018)* case ruled that the right to choose a life partner is a fundamental facet of Article 21.
- **Article 14 & 15:** The Bill upholds Equality before Law and the Prohibition of Discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.



- **Article 17 (Abolition of Untouchability):** By protecting inter-caste marriages, the Bill indirectly strikes at the roots of endogamy, which is a primary pillar of the caste system and untouchability.
- **Special Marriage Act, 1954:** This existing Central legislation provides a civil form of marriage for residents of India irrespective of the religion or caste followed by either party.

Conclusion

The "Eva Nammava" Bill marks a proactive shift from reactive policing to preventive legislation. By criminalizing community interference and providing district-level support structures, Karnataka is attempting to bridge the gap between constitutional morality and social practice. It reinforces the principle that "tradition" cannot override the "sovereignty of the individual" in a democratic republic.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Social Issues (Casteism, Communalism, and Secularism; Role of women and women's organization).
- **GS Paper II:** Governance and Polity (Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections).
- **GS Paper IV:** Ethics and Human Interface (Social influence and persuasion; Ethical concerns in private and public relationships).
- **Mains Perspective:** Discuss the efficacy of legislative measures vs. social reform movements in tackling deep-rooted social evils like honour killings.

4. Gujarat Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill: Regulatory Framework

The Gujarat government has officially tabled the 'Gujarat Uniform Civil Code, 2026' in the State Assembly, following the recommendations of a high-level committee. The Bill aims to create a singular legal framework governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and succession for all citizens of the state, transcending religious and community-based personal laws.

- **Universal Application:** The proposed legislation seeks to replace diverse personal laws with a uniform set of rules applicable to all residents of Gujarat, regardless of their religion, caste, creed, or gender, ensuring legal parity in civil matters.
- **Regulation of Live-in Relationships:** A significant feature of the Bill is the mandatory registration of live-in relationships. This mirrors recent legislative trends aimed at providing legal recognition and protection to partners while ensuring transparency.
- **Gender Justice and Equality:** By standardizing laws on succession and divorce, the Bill aims to eliminate discriminatory practices inherent in various personal laws, particularly those affecting the rights of women to property and alimony.
- **Succession and Inheritance:** The Bill simplifies the complex web of inheritance laws, providing a clear, uniform procedure for the distribution of assets, which is expected to reduce prolonged civil litigation in state courts.



- **Process of Enactment:** Tabled by Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, the Bill follows a rigorous review by a state-appointed panel. It is scheduled for detailed discussion and approval on March 25, 2026, marking a pivotal shift in the state's legal landscape.

Key Definitions

- **Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** A common set of laws governing personal matters like marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance for all citizens, replacing the existing religion-based personal laws.
- **Personal Laws:** Laws applied to a group of people based on their religious identity, such as the Hindu Marriage Act, Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, and the Indian Christian Marriage Act.
- **Live-in Relationship:** An arrangement where two consenting adults live together in a domestic stable relationship without being formally married, which under this Bill, requires statutory registration.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 44:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) which explicitly states that "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India."
- **Article 25-28:** These articles guarantee the Freedom of Religion. The debate around UCC often involves balancing these fundamental rights with the state's power to regulate secular activities associated with religious practice.
- **Concurrent List (Entry 5):** Marriage and divorce; infants and minors; adoption; wills, intestacy and succession; joint family and partition are subjects under the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule. This empowers both the Centre and States to legislate on these matters.
- **Article 14 & 15:** The principles of Equality before Law and Prohibition of Discrimination form the bedrock of the argument for a UCC to ensure gender and social justice.

Conclusion

The introduction of the Gujarat UCC Bill 2026 signifies a major step toward fulfilling the constitutional aspiration of Article 44 at the state level. While it promises to modernize and secularize personal law, its success will depend on balancing the diverse cultural fabric of the state with the overarching principles of gender equality and legal uniformity.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure; Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.
- **GS Paper I:** Social Empowerment, Communalism, Regionalism & Secularism.
- **Mains Perspective:** Analyze the federal implications of individual states enacting UCC and the impact on the secular fabric of Indian democracy.



5. Youth Unemployment Trends: A Growing Divergence in India's Labour Market

The latest data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) indicates a significant divergence in the Indian labour market for February 2026. While the overall unemployment rate for the general population (15 years and above) has shown signs of easing, the youth unemployment rate has surged to a four-month high of 14.8%. This trend highlights a structural mismatch where broader economic recovery is not translating into adequate job creation for the younger demographic.

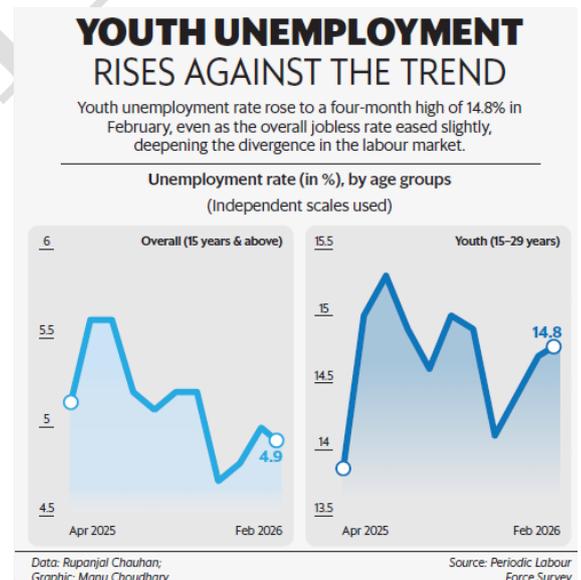
- **Widening Gap:** The unemployment rate for the 15-29 age group rose to 14.8% in February 2026, contrasting with the overall jobless rate which remained significantly lower (hovering between 4.5% and 6% as per independent scales).
- **Structural Mismatch:** The data suggests a "jobless growth" scenario for the youth, where industrial and service sector expansion may be favoring experienced workers or automation over fresh entrants.
- **Four-Month Peak:** This rise marks the highest level of youth joblessness since late 2025, signaling that seasonal employment or recent policy interventions have yet to stabilize the entry-level job market.
- **Divergent Trends:** While the overall economy shows resilience, the "youth bulge" in India's population faces barriers such as skill gaps and a lack of high-quality formal sector opportunities.
- **Sectoral Impact:** The rise is particularly concerning for the "educated unemployed" category, where individuals with degrees are finding it harder to secure roles that match their qualifications compared to informal or low-skill labor.

Key Definitions

- **Youth Unemployment Rate:** The percentage of the unemployed population within the 15-29 age group relative to the total labour force in that same age bracket.
- **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS):** An initiative by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) to estimate key employment and unemployment indicators (like Worker Population Ratio, Labour Force Participation Rate) at shorter time intervals.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** The percentage of persons in the labour force (working or seeking work) in the total population.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 41 (DPSP):** Directs the State to ensure the "Right to Work" within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
- **Article 39:** Mandates the State to direct its policy toward securing that citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.
- **National Youth Policy, 2014:** Focuses on empowering youth through education, skill development, and entrepreneurship to maximize the "Demographic Dividend."





- **Code on Wages, 2019:** Aims to universalize the provisions of minimum wages and timely payment of wages, which impacts the attractiveness of formal employment for youth.

Conclusion

The rising trend of youth unemployment amidst a stabilizing overall jobless rate is a red flag for India's demographic transition. Without targeted vocational training, credit ease for startups, and labour-intensive manufacturing growth, the potential demographic dividend risks turning into a "demographic disaster." Addressing the divergence requires moving beyond aggregate data to solve the specific bottlenecks faced by first-time job seekers.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
- **GS Paper I:** Social Issues (Population and associated issues, Poverty and developmental issues).
- **Mains Perspective:** Analyze the factors contributing to the divergence between youth and general unemployment rates in India. Discuss the effectiveness of schemes like PM-Kushal Yuva Yojana and PM-SVANidhi in bridging this gap.

6. The Growing Risk of a Fertilizer Squeeze: Implications for India

The escalating conflict in West Asia has triggered significant concerns regarding India's fertilizer security. While India is less import-dependent on finished fertilizers compared to energy, a deeper analysis reveals a high reliance on the region for critical feedstocks. This dependency exposes the Indian agricultural sector to global supply shocks, price volatility, and a ballooning fiscal subsidy burden.

- **Effective Import Reliance:** Although the headline import figure for finished fertilizers is approximately 30%, the effective dependence rises to nearly 69% when including essential feedstocks such as natural gas, rock phosphate, phosphoric acid, sulphur, and ammonia.
- **Geopolitical Chokepoints:** The Strait of Hormuz is a vital artery for the fertilizer trade. Approximately 45% of global sulphur, 34% of urea, and 23% of DAP and ammonia supplies originate from countries directly involved in or adjacent to the West Asia conflict.
- **Product-Specific Vulnerabilities:** While urea import dependence is roughly 20%, India faces much higher risks for Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) at 50-60%, while Muriate of Potash (MOP) is almost 100% imported.
- **Fiscal Subsidy Burden:** To insulate farmers from global price spikes, the Centre absorbs the additional costs. Past crises, such as the Russia-Ukraine war, saw the fertilizer subsidy bill swell to 2.5 times the initial budget, straining the national fiscal deficit.
- **Transmission to Food Inflation:** Historically, global food and fertilizer prices move in tandem. Disruptions in West Asia risk "imported inflation," where high input costs eventually manifest as rising domestic cereal and food prices.
- **Diversification and Buffers:** India is actively exploring alternative suppliers in Morocco, Indonesia, and Belarus to mitigate West Asian risks. Currently, a national stock of 18 million tonnes provides a safety buffer for approximately two months of consumption.



Key Definitions

- **Feedstock:** Raw materials used in an industrial process to create a finished product. In fertilizer production, natural gas is the primary feedstock for urea, while rock phosphate is essential for phosphatic fertilizers.
- **Imported Inflation:** A general rise in prices within a country attributed to an increase in the cost of imported goods, such as essential raw materials or energy.
- **Kharif Season:** The monsoon sowing season in India (typically June to October) which requires the highest volume of fertilizer application for crops like paddy and maize.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Entry 33 (Concurrent List):** The Seventh Schedule empowers both the Centre and States to regulate the production, supply, and distribution of "Fertilizers," ensuring coordinated legislative action during crises.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Fertilizers are declared as an "essential commodity." The government uses this Act to regulate prices, prevent hoarding, and ensure equitable distribution across states.
- **Article 39 (b) & (c):** These Directive Principles guide the State to ensure that the ownership and control of material resources are distributed to subserve the common good and prevent the concentration of wealth, forming the basis for fertilizer subsidies.

Conclusion

The "fertilizer squeeze" underscores the fragile link between global geopolitics and domestic food security. For India, achieving "Atmanirbharta" (self-reliance) in this sector requires not just increasing domestic manufacturing capacity, but also securing long-term overseas assets for raw materials. In the short term, maintaining strategic reserves and diversifying the import basket remain the only viable defenses against West Asian instability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies; Minimum Support Prices; Food security; Effects of liberalization on the economy.
- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood- relations; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
- **Prelims:** Mapping of the Strait of Hormuz and West Asian mineral hubs; Classification of fertilizers (Urea, DAP, MOP) and their chemical compositions.



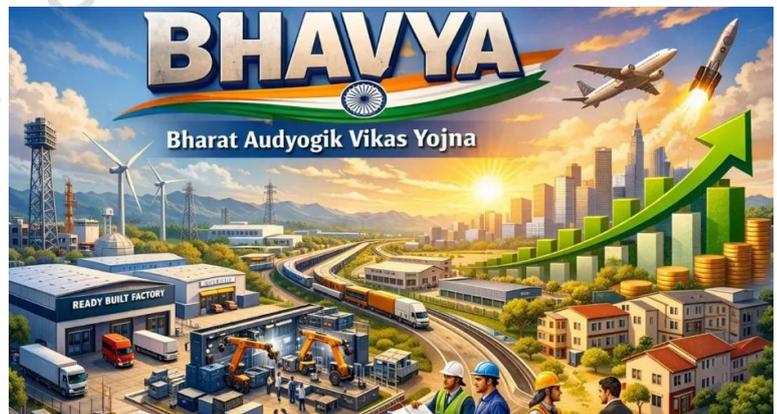
7. Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA): Transforming India's Manufacturing Landscape

The Union Cabinet has approved the "Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA)," a ₹33,660-crore initiative aimed at establishing 100 plug-and-play industrial parks across the country starting from FY27. This scheme represents a strategic shift toward a "ready-to-use" ecosystem, designed to accelerate the transition from investment planning to actual production while significantly enhancing India's global manufacturing competitiveness.

- **Plug-and-Play Infrastructure:** The core objective is to provide businesses with pre-cleared land and core infrastructure (logistics, power, and water), effectively reducing the project gestation period and lowering the compliance burden for domestic and global investors.
- **Financial and Scale Parameters:** The parks will range from 100 to 1,000 acres, with a reduced minimum of 25 acres for North Eastern and hilly states. The Centre will provide financial support of up to ₹1 crore per acre for developing core, value-added, and social infrastructure.
- **Employment Generation:** The scheme aims to generate 15 lakh direct jobs and a substantial number of indirect roles across the manufacturing, logistics, and service sectors, directly addressing the need for large-scale employment in a growing economy.
- **Collaborative Implementation:** BHAVYA will be executed through a partnership model involving the Central government, State governments, and private sector players, building on the success of the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP).
- **Strategic Industrial Smart Cities:** By integrating "industrial smart cities" concepts, these parks are intended to create a holistic environment that includes not just factories, but also social infrastructure, making them attractive for high-tech and high-scale operations.

Key Definitions

- **Plug-and-Play Model:** An industrial setup where all necessary infrastructure (utilities, clearances, and connectivity) is ready beforehand, allowing an entrepreneur to "plug in" their machinery and "play" (start operations) immediately.
- **Gestation Period:** The time elapsed between the commencement of an investment project and the beginning of its production/operation phase.
- **Social Infrastructure:** Facilities that improve the quality of life within or near industrial parks, such as worker housing, healthcare centers, and skill development institutes.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 298:** Grants the Union and State governments the power to carry on any trade or business and the acquisition, holding, and disposal of property for such purposes.



- **Seventh Schedule (State List, Entry 24):** While "Industries" is primarily a State subject, the Centre exercises control over industries declared by Parliament to be necessary for defense or of public interest (Union List, Entry 52).
- **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan:** BHAVYA aligns with this legal and digital framework to ensure integrated planning and synchronized implementation of multi-modal connectivity to these 100 parks.

Conclusion

The BHAVYA scheme is a vital cog in India's "Make in India" 2.0 strategy. By moving away from the traditional model of building factories from scratch, the government is addressing the primary bottlenecks of land acquisition and regulatory delays. If implemented with true center-state synergy, these 100 parks could serve as the bedrock for India to achieve its target of a 25% manufacturing share in the National GDP.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy (Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth); Infrastructure (Industrial Corridors); Employment (Growth and development).
- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- **Mains Perspective:** Discuss how the shift toward "plug-and-play" infrastructure can improve the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) and help India integrate into Global Value Chains (GVCs).

8. DCGI Directive: Towards Uniform Drug Licensing in India

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has issued a critical directive to State Licensing Authorities (SLAs) to adopt a uniform, dossier-based licensing system for drug manufacturing. This move is designed to standardize the quality of pharmaceutical products across India by eliminating existing regional discrepancies in how medicines are approved and regulated at the state level.

- **Standardization of Approvals:** The directive mandates a comprehensive guidance document that shifts the licensing process toward a rigorous dossier-based system, ensuring that all manufacturers meet the same stringent criteria regardless of their geographic location.
- **Elimination of Regulatory Arbitrage:** By enforcing a single standard, the DCGI aims to prevent "regulatory arbitrage," where manufacturers might seek licenses in states with perceived lenient oversight, thereby compromising the overall "Pharmacy of the World" brand.
- **Focus on Product Quality:** The primary objective is to maintain high-quality standards for both domestic consumption and exports, addressing international concerns regarding the consistency and safety of Indian-made pharmaceuticals.
- **Dossier-Based Compliance:** A dossier-based system requires manufacturers to submit detailed technical documentation regarding the drug's composition, manufacturing process, and quality control measures, moving away from more perfunctory check-list approvals.



Drugs Controller General of India



- **Cooperative Federalism in Healthcare:** The success of this initiative depends on the active cooperation of State and Union Territory regulators, highlighting the need for a unified "One Nation, One Redline" approach in drug safety and public health.

Key Definitions

- **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI):** The head of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), responsible for the approval of licenses of specified categories of drugs and the setting of standards for manufacturing, sales, and distribution.
- **Dossier-Based Licensing:** A regulatory requirement where an applicant must submit a comprehensive collection of documents providing detailed information about the drug's safety, efficacy, and manufacturing quality before a license is granted.
- **State Licensing Authority (SLA):** The state-level body responsible for granting licenses for the manufacture, sale, and distribution of drugs within a specific state, operating under the broader framework of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** The primary legislation governing the import, manufacture, distribution, and sale of drugs in India. The DCGI operates under the rules framed within this Act.
- **Seventh Schedule (Concurrent List):** "Drugs and Poisons" falls under Entry 19 of the Concurrent List, allowing both the Centre and States to legislate and regulate. This shared jurisdiction is why the DCGI must "push" states for uniform adoption rather than mandating it unilaterally.
- **Article 47 (DPSP):** The State is directed to regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties, providing the ethical mandate for strict drug regulation.
- **Mashelkar Committee (2003):** A landmark committee that recommended a centralized national drug authority to tackle the problem of spurious drugs and inconsistent state-level licensing standards.

Conclusion

The DCGI's push for uniform drug licensing is a significant step toward creating a more predictable and robust regulatory environment for the Indian pharmaceutical industry. While India has excelled in scale, ensuring uniform quality through a dossier-based system will be crucial for maintaining global trust and safeguarding public health. Achieving this uniformity will require overcoming the administrative hurdles of India's dual-level regulatory structure.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
- **GS Paper III:** Issues related to the pharmaceutical industry (Internal Security/Economy); Intellectual Property Rights.
- **Mains Perspective:** Analyze the challenges of implementing a "One Nation, One Standard" policy in the pharmaceutical sector given the federal structure of Indian drug administration.



9. FFFAI Contention Against War Risk Surcharges Amid West Asia Crisis

The Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations in India (FFFAI) has formally requested the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways to intervene against the unilateral imposition of "War Risk Surcharges" (WRS) by global shipping lines. This development follows escalating geopolitical tensions in West Asia, which have disrupted traditional maritime routes and increased operational costs for carriers, subsequently impacting India's export-import (EXIM) competitiveness.

- **Impact on Trade Logistics:** Global shipping lines have begun levying heavy surcharges on cargo moving to and from specific high-risk zones, significantly inflating the landed cost of goods and hurting the thin margins of Indian exporters.
- **Unilateral Pricing Concerns:** The FFFAI argues that these surcharges are often implemented without adequate transparency or standardized justification, leading to a "cost-push" inflationary effect on the Indian economy.
- **Supply Chain Disruption:** Beyond the financial burden, the West Asia crisis has forced vessels to take longer routes (e.g., bypassing the Suez Canal for the Cape of Good Hope), leading to container shortages and delayed shipments.
- **Demand for Regulatory Oversight:** The industry body has sought a structured mechanism or government-led mediation to ensure that shipping lines do not exploit geopolitical volatility to impose arbitrary fees.
- **Vulnerability of MSMEs:** Small and Medium Enterprises, which form the backbone of India's export sector, are the most affected as they lack the collective bargaining power to negotiate these sudden additional freight costs.



सत्यमेव जयते

Ministry of Ports,
Shipping & Waterways
Government of India

Key Definitions

- **War Risk Surcharge (WRS):** An additional fee levied by shipping companies to cover the increased insurance premiums and operational risks associated with operating in or near conflict zones.
- **Freight Forwarder:** An intermediary that organizes shipments for individuals or corporations to get goods from the manufacturer or producer to a market, customer, or final point of distribution.
- **EXIM Trade:** An abbreviation for Export-Import trade, representing the total international commercial transactions of a country.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 301:** Guarantees the Freedom of Trade, Commerce, and Intercourse throughout the territory of India, which serves as the bedrock for challenging arbitrary barriers to trade.
- **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958:** The primary legislative framework governing Indian shipping, providing the government with certain powers to regulate and oversee maritime trade and safety.
- **Seventh Schedule (Union List, Entry 25 & 27):** "Maritime shipping and navigation" and "Ports" fall under the Union List, empowering the Central Government to legislate and intervene in matters involving international shipping lines and port operations.



- **Major Port Authorities Act, 2021:** Provides for the regulation, operation, and planning of major ports in India and gives the government oversight on various charges levied within the port ecosystem.

Conclusion

The friction between freight forwarders and shipping lines highlights the fragility of global supply chains during regional conflicts. While shipping lines face genuine insurance hikes, the lack of a transparent surcharge mechanism can lead to predatory pricing. Government intervention is essential to balance the commercial interests of carriers with the national objective of maintaining "Ease of Doing Business" and protecting India's trade volumes from external shocks.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development; Infrastructure (Ports and Shipping); Effects of liberalization on the economy.
- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests (Impact of West Asia crisis on Indian Trade).
- **Mains Perspective:** Discuss the impact of maritime chokepoints and geopolitical instability on India's energy and trade security. Evaluate the role of the Ministry of Shipping in regulating international maritime players.

10. Global Remittance Cost Reduction: India's Push at WTO MC14

India, alongside Morocco, Pakistan, and the African Group, has circulated a revised draft ministerial declaration ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon (March 26–29, 2026). The proposal advocates for a global framework to drastically lower cross-border remittance transaction costs, positioning the issue as a critical development priority for emerging economies and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

- **Strategic Leadership at WTO:** By leading this initiative, India aims to shift the WTO negotiating space toward development-linked financial issues, especially as progress remains stalled in traditional trade areas like agriculture and intellectual property.
- **Economic Magnitude for India:** India remains the world's largest recipient of remittances, with inflows reaching an estimated \$135.4 billion in FY25. Even a marginal reduction in transaction fees could result in billions of dollars in additional net inflows for Indian households.
- **The 3% Target Gap:** Current global remittance costs often hover between 5% and 6% on several corridors. The push seeks to align global policy with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10(c), which targets reducing transaction costs to less than 3% by 2030.
- **Formalization of Channels:** High fees often drive migrants toward informal or unregulated "Hawala" channels. Lowering official costs promotes financial inclusion, enhances transparency, and ensures better monitoring by central banks.
- **Socio-Economic Safety Net:** Remittances are recognized as a key source of external financing that bolsters resilience against economic shocks, improves health and education outcomes, and directly contributes to poverty alleviation in developing nations.



Key Definitions

- **Remittances:** Money sent by migrants working abroad to their home country. They represent one of the largest financial inflows for many developing countries, often exceeding Foreign Direct Investment (OFI).
- **WTO Ministerial Conference:** The highest decision-making body of the World Trade Organization, which usually meets every two years to negotiate trade agreements and set global trade rules.
- **SDG 10(c):** A specific target under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that aims to reduce the transaction costs of migrant remittances to less than 3% and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5%.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 253:** Empowers Parliament to make any law for the whole or any part of the territory of India for implementing any treaty, agreement, or convention with any other country or countries or any decision made at any international conference.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** The primary legal framework in India that regulates foreign exchange inflows, including remittances, and empowers the RBI to manage cross-border financial transactions.
- **Seventh Schedule (Union List, Entry 10 & 16):** Foreign affairs and entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries are the exclusive domain of the Central Government.

Conclusion

India's proactive stance at the WTO underscores its role as a voice for the Global South. Reducing remittance costs is not merely a technical financial adjustment but a vital developmental tool. If the Yaoundé declaration succeeds, it will empower millions of migrant workers and provide a much-needed boost to the foreign exchange reserves of developing nations, while simultaneously curbing the influence of informal and risky money-transfer networks.

UPSC Relevance

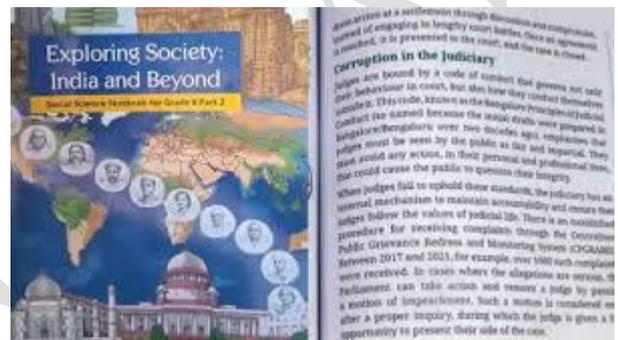
- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Important International institutions (WTO).
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth and development; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
- **Mains Perspective:** Evaluate the significance of remittances in India's Balance of Payments (BoP) and discuss how India can leverage its position at the WTO to protect the interests of its vast diaspora.



11. Judicial Accountability and Freedom of Expression: The NCERT Textbook Controversy

The Supreme Court of India recently directed a "complete blanket ban" on a Class 8 NCERT social science textbook, citing passages concerning judicial delay and corruption as an attempt to undermine institutional dignity. This move has sparked a significant constitutional debate regarding the boundaries of judicial authority, the right to free speech under Article 19, and the necessity of institutional transparency in a healthy democracy.

- **Censorship and Article 19:** Legal experts argue that a book ban is an extreme form of censorship. Under the Constitution, free speech can only be restricted by a "law" made by the state on specific grounds mentioned in Article 19(2); however, judicial orders generally do not fall under the definition of 'law' for such restrictions.
- **Contempt of Court Threshold:** For a publication to be considered criminal contempt under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, it must "scandalize" the court or interfere with justice. The controversy centers on whether general references to case backlogs and judicial ethics meet this high threshold of malicious intent.
- **Due Process Concerns:** The Court ordered the "disassociation" of the textbook's authors from future government projects. Critics point out that this punishment was awarded without a formal hearing or due process, potentially signaling a narrowing space for academic dissent.
- **Acknowledging Systemic Challenges:** While the Court viewed the omissions of its "transformative initiatives" as problematic, historical precedents like *K. Veeraswami vs Union of India (1991)* established that judges are "public servants" and must be subject to the highest standards of honesty to maintain public trust.
- **Global Best Practices:** International examples, such as the Kenyan judicial reforms (2011–2013), demonstrate that institutional credibility is restored through acknowledging corruption and establishing ombudspersons rather than suppressing critical discourse.
- **Role of Civil Society:** The incident underscores the tension between protecting the "dignity of the robes" and the democratic requirement for an informed citizenry that understands both the strengths and the systemic challenges of the third pillar of the State.



Key Definitions

- **Judicial Review:** The power of the judiciary to examine the constitutionality of legislative enactments and executive orders, ensuring they align with the fundamental rights of citizens.
- **Criminal Contempt:** As per Section 2(c) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, it includes the publication of any matter which scandalizes or lowers the authority of any court or prejudices judicial proceedings.
- **In-house Procedure:** A self-evolved mechanism by the Supreme Court to look into complaints against judges, aimed at maintaining internal accountability without external political interference.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions



- **Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression to all citizens.
- **Article 19(2):** Allows the State to impose "reasonable restrictions" on free speech in the interests of the sovereignty of India, public order, and "contempt of court."
- **Article 124(4):** Outlines the stringent process for the removal of a Supreme Court Judge on the grounds of "proved misbehaviour or incapacity."
- **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988:** As interpreted in the *K. Veeraswami* case, this applies to the judiciary, although prior sanction from the President (consulting the CJI) is required for prosecution.

Conclusion

The balance between judicial dignity and public criticism is delicate. While protecting the court from baseless vitriol is essential for the rule of law, the suppression of academic data on delays and ethics may inadvertently hamper reform. A judiciary that remains open to introspection and acknowledges its "bad apples" is more likely to command genuine public respect than one that relies on the power of prohibition.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution—significant provisions and basic structure; Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary; Issues arising out of the design and implementation of policies.
- **GS Paper IV:** Ethics and Human Interface (Values in public life); Accountability and ethical governance.
- **Mains Perspective:** "Constructive criticism is the lifeblood of democracy." In light of this statement, evaluate the impact of judicial censorship on academic freedom and the right to information in India.

12. Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026: Key Contested Changes

The Union government has introduced a significant Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha to modify the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. This legislative move has triggered widespread debate, as it seeks to fundamentally alter the legal recognition of gender identity in India, shifting from a rights-based "self-determination" model to a medicalized and socio-cultural classification.

- **Omission of Self-Perceived Identity:** The Bill proposes to delete Section 4(2) of the 2019 Act, which currently guarantees a person the "right to self-perceived gender identity." This is seen as a direct reversal of the autonomy recognized by the judiciary.
- **Redefining "Transgender Person":** The new definition narrows the scope to specific socio-cultural identities (like *kinner*, *hijra*, *aravani*, *jogta*) and those with "congenital variations" in biological characteristics. Crucially, it explicitly excludes "self-perceived sexual identities" and "different sexual orientations."
- **Medical Board Certification:** While the 2019 law allowed for certification based on a self-declared affidavit, the amendment introduces a "Medical Authority" (headed by a Chief Medical Officer). The District Magistrate must now "examine the recommendation" of this board before issuing a certificate.



- **Mandatory SRS Reporting:** The Bill mandates that individuals apply for a revised gender certificate specifically after Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) and requires medical institutions to furnish details of such procedures to the District Magistrate.
- **Graded Penalties for Offences:** A notable addition is the expansion of punishments for crimes against transgender persons and children, introducing rigorous imprisonment that can extend to life and fines up to Rs 5 lakh.
- **Government's Rationale:** The Centre argues the 2019 definition was "vague" and "unworkable," stating that benefits should reach "genuine oppressed persons" who face exclusion due to biological reasons rather than "personal choice" or "gender fluidity."



Key Definitions

- **Self-Determination of Gender:** The legal principle that an individual has the sole authority to decide their gender identity based on their internal sense of self, without requiring medical or state validation.
- **Intersex Variations:** A term used for people born with biological sex characteristics (such as genitals, reproductive organs, or chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.
- **Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS):** A surgical procedure (or series of procedures) by which a person's physical appearance and function of their existing sexual characteristics are altered to resemble that of the identified gender.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **NALSA vs. Union of India (2014):** The landmark Supreme Court judgment which held that "self-determination of gender" is integral to personal autonomy and falls under **Article 21** (Right to Life and Liberty).
- **Article 14, 15, and 19:** The 2014 judgment linked transgender rights to Equality, Prohibition of Discrimination, and Freedom of Expression, stating that gender identity is a core component of one's personality.
- **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019:** The parent legislation that provided for non-discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare, and established the National Council for Transgender Persons.

Conclusion

The 2026 Amendment Bill represents a paradigm shift in India's approach to transgender rights. By re-introducing medical scrutiny and narrowing the definition to biological or specific socio-cultural markers, the Bill challenges the "spectrum" view of gender established by the NALSA judgment. While the government aims for "precision" in administrative identification, the community fears this will lead to systemic exclusion and a loss of the hard-won right to bodily and mental autonomy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Laws, institutions, and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections; Mechanisms of Social Justice.



- **GS Paper I:** Social Empowerment (Issues related to Transgender community).
- **Mains Perspective:** "The right to choose one's identity is the bedrock of a modern democracy." Critically analyze the 2026 Amendment Bill in the light of the NALSA judgment and the principle of constitutional morality.



VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE PROGRAM (IGP) FOR KAS PERSONALITY TEST

A Panel Of KAS Officers

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- 2 NEWSPAPER AND CA
- 3 STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS
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- 5 ONE -ON-ONE FEEDBACK

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Expert Panel Members



PRAMOD KUMAR J
(KAS-2014)
OSD TO CHIEF MINISTER OF KARNATAKA



ASHAPPA
(KAS-2014)
ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER



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