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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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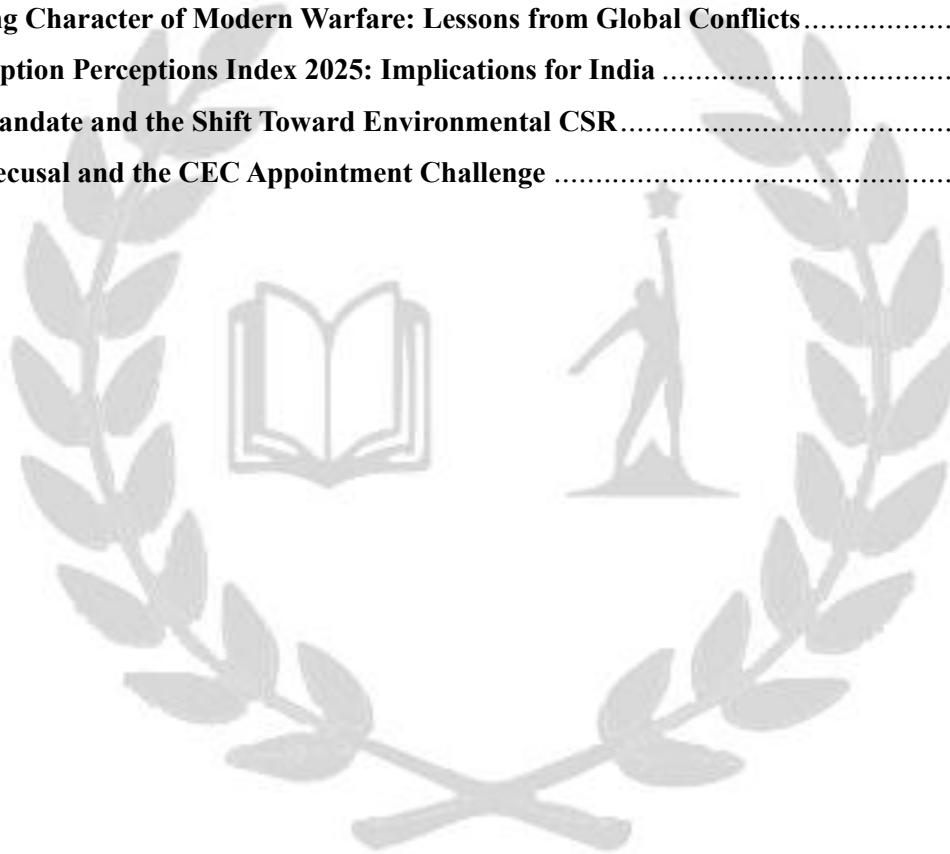
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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. SC Status and Religious Conversion: Judicial Interpretation of the 1950 Order

- The Supreme Court has reaffirmed that Scheduled Caste (SC) status is fundamentally linked to religious identity as defined under the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950.
- Conversion to any religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism results in an immediate and complete loss of SC status, effective from the moment of conversion, regardless of the individual's birth or heritage.
- The Court characterized Clause 3 of the 1950 Order as "categorical and absolute," asserting that the bar against members of other religions being deemed SC is a settled legal provision.
- Protection under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, is contingent upon the complainant maintaining their SC status; once a person converts to Christianity or Islam, they can no longer invoke this specific legislation.
- The ruling was delivered in the case of *Chinthada Anand*, where the court upheld an Andhra Pradesh High Court decision quashing criminal proceedings because the complainant had served as a Christian pastor for a decade.
- The judiciary maintains that since the caste system is not theoretically recognized in Christianity or Islam, the socio-legal disabilities associated with "untouchability" (the basis for SC status) are legally deemed to have ceased upon conversion.

Key Definitions and Terminology

Clause 3 of the 1950 Order: A specific provision in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order stating that no person professing a religion different from Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism shall be deemed a member of a Scheduled Caste. **Profession of Religion:** The outward manifestation or public declaration of faith; the Court views becoming a pastor or active practitioner of a non-Indic faith as definitive proof of "professing" that religion. **Scheduled Castes (SC):** Those castes, races, or tribes specified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution who have historically faced social disabilities like untouchability within the fold of Hindu society.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

Article 341: Empowers the President to specify the castes, races, or tribes which shall be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to a State or Union Territory. **The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950:** The foundational executive order identifying SCs. Initially restricted to Hindus, it was amended in 1956 to include Sikhs and in 1990 to include Buddhists. **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:** A special law enacted to prevent crimes and social disabilities against members of SCs and STs. Its applicability is strictly limited to individuals currently holding a valid caste certificate as recognized by the 1950 Order.

Strategic Analysis and Key Points

- **Historical Evolution:** The 1956 and 1990 amendments recognized that Sikhism and Buddhism are branches of the Indic religious tradition where caste-like social structures persisted, unlike the Abrahamic faiths.
- **Burden of Proof:** In cases involving the 1989 Act, the prosecution must prove that the victim belongs to a Scheduled Caste. If evidence of conversion is presented, the legal protection lapses immediately.

Identity question

The top court said that a person professing a religion other than those mentioned in Clause 3 cannot be part of a scheduled caste

- Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, mandates that 'no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste'
- The Sikh religion was added to the ambit of Clause 3 in 1956
- The provision was further amended in 1990 to include persons professing Buddhism
- The top court observed that the bar in Clause 3 is 'categorical and absolute'



- **Judicial Consistency:** This judgment aligns with previous precedents like *Soosai v. Union of India (1985)*, where the SC held that to be eligible for SC status, a person must show they suffer from the same disabilities even after conversion.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's stance reinforces the strictly religious criteria for SC eligibility, maintaining a clear distinction between Indic faiths and others. While the social reality of "Dalit Christians" or "Dalit Muslims" remains a subject of intense socio-political debate and pending litigation before larger benches, the current legal position remains that conversion entails a forfeiture of all reservation benefits and statutory protections tied to SC status.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper II: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections, and Laws, institutions, and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections. **GS Paper IV:** Ethics and Social Justice regarding the intersection of religious freedom and affirmative action. **Prelims:** Article 341, the 1950 Order amendments (1956 & 1990), and the scope of the SC/ST Act, 1989.

2. West Asia Crisis: Strategic Implications for the Strait of Hormuz and Indo-US Relations

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump held high-level discussions focusing on the escalating conflict in West Asia and its repercussions on regional stability.
- A primary concern identified was the protection of the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime chokepoint through which a significant portion of the world's liquefied natural gas and oil exports pass.
- India emphasized the necessity of de-escalation and the restoration of peace, citing the direct impact on the safety of the Indian diaspora, with reports confirming at least six Indian casualties in the region.
- The US administration highlighted the military situation, including the deployment of additional Marines to the Gulf, amid ongoing airstrikes between Iran and Israel.
- The dialogue underscores India's growing role as a stakeholder in West Asian security, balancing its strategic autonomy while coordinating with global powers to ensure maritime freedom.
- Both leaders agreed that keeping the Strait open and accessible is essential not just for regional actors but for the global economy to prevent a systemic energy shock.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Strait of Hormuz: A narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea; it is the world's most important oil transit chokepoint. **Maritime Chokepoint:** A strategic narrow passage that can be easily blocked to disrupt international trade or military movement. **De-escalation:** The reduction of the intensity of a conflict or a potentially violent situation through diplomatic or tactical maneuvers.

Strategic and Legal Framework

Article 51 of the Indian Constitution: Directs the State to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations. **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea):** Provides the legal framework for "transit passage" through international straits, ensuring that



vessels have the right to navigate through chokepoints like Hormuz. **Energy Security:** India imports nearly 80% of its crude oil, with a massive share originating from the Persian Gulf, making the security of the Strait of Hormuz a non-negotiable national interest. **Operation Sankalp:** The Indian Navy's maritime security operation launched to ensure the safe passage of Indian-flagged vessels through the Strait of Hormuz amidst regional tensions.

Additional Key Points

- The conflict has transitioned from localized skirmishes to direct exchanges between Iran and Israel, significantly raising the risk of a wider regional war.
- India's "Link West" policy faces a severe test as it navigates relations with the US, Israel, and Iran simultaneously.
- Economic volatility: Any closure of the Strait could lead to a 20-30% spike in global oil prices, impacting India's fiscal deficit and inflation targets.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The telephonic conversation between the two leaders highlights the gravity of the West Asian situation and the shared interest in maritime security. For India, the stability of this region is inextricably linked to energy security and the welfare of millions of expatriates. From a UPSC perspective, this topic is critical for **GS Paper II (International Relations)**, specifically the "Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests" and **GS Paper III (Internal Security & Economy)** regarding energy security and maritime threats. It also provides relevant content for essays concerning global geopolitics and India's strategic autonomy.

3. Judicial Review and Religious Autonomy: The Sabarimala Contention

- The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) has submitted to the Supreme Court that the judiciary should not "sit in judgment" over the subjective beliefs and practices of a religious community.
- This submission precedes a critical review hearing scheduled for April 7, regarding the 2018 judgment that allowed women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala shrine.
- The TDB argues that the court's role is strictly limited to determining whether a practice is an integral part of a religion, rather than testing its rationality or social morality.
- The Kerala Government has significantly moderated its previous stance, suggesting that judicial review of age-old restrictions must be guided by whether the belief is "genuinely and conscientiously held" by the devotees.
- At the heart of the dispute is the "Naishtika Brahmachari" (eternal celibate) status of the deity, which formulates the basis for the restriction on women of menstrual age.
- The case highlights the ongoing tension between Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Articles 25 and 26 (Freedom of Religion and Right to Manage Religious Affairs).

Key Definitions and Terminology

Essential Religious Practices (ERP): A judicial doctrine evolved by the Supreme Court to determine which religious practices are central to a faith and thus protected under the Constitution. **Naishtika Brahmachari:** A form of the deity (Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala) characterized by absolute and eternal celibacy, which





devotees claim necessitates specific entry protocols.

Devaswom Board: An autonomous socio-religious body established by statute (like the Travancore-Cochin Hindu Religious Institutions Act, 1950) to manage Hindu temples and their assets. **Subjective Belief:** A belief held by a community based on their faith and traditions, which may not necessarily align with modern logic or scientific reasoning but is central to their identity.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

Article 25: Guarantees freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality, and health. **Article 26:** Grants every religious denomination the right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion, which is often cited by the TDB to protect temple traditions. **Article 14:** Ensures equality before the law and equal protection of the laws, which formed the bedrock of the 2018 judgment striking down the ban. **Rule 3(b) of Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules, 1965:** The specific rule that previously allowed the prohibition of women at such times as "custom and usage" dictated; it was declared unconstitutional in the 2018 verdict.

Additional Key Strategic Points

- **Institutional Autonomy:** The TDB's stance emphasizes that religious institutions should have the final say in matters of ritual and tradition to preserve the "denominational" character of the shrine.
- **Evolution of State Stance:** The shift in the Kerala government's position from a rigid "equality-first" approach to a more nuanced "faith-sensitive" approach reflects the complex socio-political landscape surrounding the issue.
- **The "Reason vs. Faith" Debate:** The case raises a fundamental question: Can constitutional morality override traditional religious morality in a secular state?

Conclusion

The Sabarimala review petition represents a watershed moment in Indian constitutional law. While the 2018 judgment prioritized individual rights (Article 25(1)) and gender equality, the TDB's current submissions seek to re-establish the primacy of denominational rights (Article 26) and the sanctity of long-standing religious customs. The outcome will likely redefine the boundaries of judicial intervention in matters of faith for decades to come.

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper II: Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, and significant provisions. Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary. **GS Paper I:** Social empowerment, communalism, and secularism; the role of tradition in a modernizing society. **Essay/Ethics:** Conflict between traditional values and modern constitutional ethics; the concept of "Constitutional Morality."

4. Landmark Passive Euthanasia Ruling: The Harish Rana Case

- **Judicial Milestone:** The Supreme Court of India recently permitted the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment for Harish Rana, marking the first time such an order was granted for a patient in a Permanent Vegetative State (PVS) since the 2018 guidelines.
- **Legal Expansion:** This case expands the 2018 *Common Cause* verdict by extending passive euthanasia protocols to patients receiving long-term care at home, rather than limiting it strictly to hospital settings.



- **Procedural Simplification:** The ruling eases the previously stringent procedural requirements and reduces the necessity for constant court intervention, aiming to provide a "dignified exit" for terminally ill patients.
- **Distinction of Care:** The court emphasized that passive euthanasia involves withholding or withdrawing medical interventions (like the PEG feeding tube in this case) while maintaining palliative and comfort care.
- **Socio-Economic Context:** The 13-year struggle of the Rana family highlights the immense financial, emotional, and physical toll of long-term vegetative care on Indian households in the absence of a comprehensive social security net.
- **Future Precedent:** This case serves as a definitive legal template for thousands of families across India dealing with patients in irreversible comas, balancing the "Right to Life" with the "Right to Die with Dignity."



Key Definitions

- **Passive Euthanasia:** The act of withdrawing or withholding life-prolonging medical treatment (like ventilators or feeding tubes) to allow a terminally ill patient to die naturally.
- **Active Euthanasia:** The intentional act of causing death through a direct intervention, such as a lethal injection. This remains **illegal** in India.
- **Permanent Vegetative State (PVS):** A condition of wakeful unresponsiveness where the patient has lost higher cerebral powers but retains autonomic functions; it is generally considered irreversible after a certain period.
- **Living Will (Advance Medical Directive):** A legal document in which a person specifies what actions should be taken for their health if they are no longer able to make decisions for themselves due to illness or incapacity.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Supreme Court has interpreted the "Right to Life" to include the "Right to Die with Dignity." Life is not mere animal existence but includes the right to a dignified procedure of death.
- **Common Cause v. Union of India (2018):** A landmark 5-judge Bench ruling that first legalized passive euthanasia and recognized the validity of "Living Wills" in India.
- **Aruna Shanbaug Case (2011):** The starting point for the euthanasia debate in India, where the SC first allowed "passive euthanasia" under exceptional circumstances and strict judicial monitoring.
- **Section 309 & 306 IPC:** While the SC has decriminalized the attempt to suicide (in effect via the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017), abetment to suicide (Section 306) remains a criminal offense, distinguishing it from medical passive euthanasia.

Additional Keypoints

- **Palliative Care:** The ruling underscores that even when life support is withdrawn, the medical team must ensure the patient does not suffer pain, highlighting the role of Palliative Oncology and Anaesthesia units.



- **The "Best Interests" Test:** In cases where a patient cannot express their will (and has no Living Will), the court and medical boards apply the "best interests" principle to decide on the withdrawal of treatment.
- **Medical Boards:** The process requires two boards: a Primary Medical Board (at the hospital) and a Secondary Medical Board (often involving a district-level officer) to certify the irreversible nature of the condition.

Conclusion

The passing of Harish Rana concludes a decade-long saga that tested the limits of Indian medical ethics and jurisprudence. By allowing the withdrawal of nutrition for a patient at home, the judiciary has moved toward a more compassionate and practical application of the law, recognizing that "prolonging life" through artificial means can sometimes result in "prolonging suffering." It reinforces the autonomy of the individual and the family over medical technology when recovery is clinically impossible.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Functions and responsibilities of the Judiciary; Important Supreme Court Judgments; Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Health.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Ethical dilemmas in medical practice; Euthanasia (Active vs. Passive); Right to Life vs. Right to Die; Compassion and Empathy toward terminally ill patients.
- **Essays:** Topics related to "Dignity in Life and Death" or "The intersection of Law, Medicine, and Morality."

5. SEBI Tightens Conflict-of-Interest Norms for Top Leadership

- **Enhanced Disclosure Regime:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has mandated a rigorous framework where the Chairman, Whole-Time Members (WTMs), and employees must provide initial, annual, and event-based disclosures regarding assets, liabilities, and trading activities.
- **Investment Restrictions on Direct Equity:** To ensure neutrality, the Chairman and WTMs are now prohibited from holding direct investments in equities. Upon assuming office, they must liquidate, freeze, or sell existing holdings, bringing their restrictions at par with other SEBI employees.
- **Portfolio Concentration Limits:** A new 25% cap has been introduced; no official's portfolio can have more than 25% of assets with a single SEBI-registered intermediary (e.g., a specific Mutual Fund). If breached, the official must recuse themselves from matters involving that entity.
- **Institutional Oversight Mechanisms:** The regulator will establish a dedicated "Compliance Office" and a robust "Whistle-blower Mechanism" to monitor adherence and handle grievances related to governance lapses.
- **Family and Future Employment:** Disclosure rules now extend to immediate family members (spouses and dependents). Furthermore, officials must disclose any negotiations for future employment to prevent "revolving door" conflicts.
- **Digital Transparency:** A digital system will be implemented to record all disclosures and recusals, though public disclosure is currently limited primarily to the immovable property details of senior officials (CGM and above).





Key Definitions

- **Conflict of Interest:** A situation where a person's private interests or personal relationships could improperly influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.
- **Recusal:** The act of an official or judge removing themselves from a particular case or decision-making process due to a potential conflict of interest or bias.
- **Whole-Time Member (WTM):** Executive members of the SEBI board who are appointed by the Central Government to look after specific departments on a full-time basis.
- **Insider:** Under the new rules, the Chairman and WTMs are explicitly defined as "insiders," making them subject to stringent Prohibition of Insider Trading (PIT) regulations.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **SEBI Act, 1992:** Provides the statutory backing for SEBI to regulate the securities market and protect investor interests. Section 4 deals with the management and composition of the Board.
- **SEBI (Employee's Service) Regulations:** These internal codes of conduct govern the behavior, ethics, and investment patterns of the staff, which have now been tightened for the top brass.
- **Article 14 & 21:** From a constitutional standpoint, transparency in public institutions ensures "Equal Protection of Law" and "Right to Life" (encompassing the right to a fair and corruption-free administration).
- **Nolan Principles of Public Life:** Though not a law, these international benchmarks (Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership) guide the ethical framework of Indian regulatory bodies.

Additional Keypoints

- **Hindenburg Precedent:** These reforms were triggered by the August 2024 allegations by Hindenburg Research regarding undisclosed offshore stakes of the leadership, emphasizing the need for institutionalized transparency over individual denials.
- **The Compliance Gap:** Critics argue that disclosing only "immovable assets" is insufficient. For true accountability, liquid assets (stocks, bonds, offshore holdings) should also be part of the public record.
- **Government Approval:** Amendments relating to the Chairman and WTMs require final approval from the Union Finance Ministry, making the executive a stakeholder in regulatory independence.

Conclusion

The tightening of conflict-of-interest rules is a proactive step toward restoring investor confidence in India's market regulator. By treating the top leadership as "insiders" and mandating equity liquidation, SEBI aims to eliminate perceived biases. However, the effectiveness of these rules will depend on the autonomy of the newly proposed Compliance Office and whether it holds the power to scrutinize those at the very top of the hierarchy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Governance; Transparency and accountability.



- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development; Role of SEBI in capital markets.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Corporate Governance; Conflict of Interest; Ethical dilemmas in public administration; Probity in Governance.

6. Formation of Seven Empowered Groups to Mitigate West Asia War Impact

- **Strategic Crisis Management:** The Union Government has constituted seven empowered groups of officials and experts to proactively assess and counteract the socio-economic fallout of the escalating conflict in West Asia.
- **Functional Areas of Focus:** These groups are tasked with monitoring critical sectors including energy (petrol, diesel, LNG), food security (fertilizers, essential commodities), macroeconomics (inflation, exchange rate volatility), and logistics (supply chain resilience).
- **Policy Precedent:** The structure follows the "Empowered Groups" model successfully utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing a cross-departmental, mission-mode approach to handle national emergencies.
- **Supply Chain Vulnerability:** A primary focus is the Strait of Hormuz, a global maritime chokepoint through which 20% of world oil and gas passes; any disruption here directly threatens India's energy security, as the country imports approximately 85% of its crude requirements.
- **Inflationary Safeguards:** The groups will implement strategies to manage "imported inflation" caused by depreciating rupee values and rising input costs, ensuring that domestic availability of essential goods remains stable.
- **Integrated Governance:** Led by senior secretaries (including External Affairs, Economic Affairs, and Petroleum), these teams are authorized to formulate time-bound implementation plans and identify alternative import sources to reduce external dependencies.



Key Definitions

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; it is considered the world's most important oil transit chokepoint.
- **Imported Inflation:** A general rise in prices in a country because of an increase in the cost of imported products, often driven by currency depreciation or global commodity price spikes.
- **Empowered Group of Officers (EGO):** A specialized committee granted the authority to take quick, executive decisions across multiple ministries to bypass traditional bureaucratic delays during crises.
- **Strategic Reserves:** Emergency stockpiles of crude oil maintained by a country to ensure energy security during supply disruptions or wars.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 73:** Specifies the extent of the executive power of the Union, which allows the Centre to take necessary administrative actions for the management of national interests.



- **Allocation of Business Rules, 1961:** Provides the legal framework for the government to create committees and groups of secretaries to coordinate work between different ministries.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Empowers the government to control the production, supply, and distribution of specific commodities to prevent hoarding and ensure fair pricing during global supply shocks.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** While primarily for natural disasters, its principles of coordinated response and "empowered" decision-making often inform the administrative structure of these crisis groups.

Additional Keypoints

- **The "Chokepoint" Risk:** With Iran's influence over the Strait of Hormuz, India faces a double-edged sword of high procurement costs and potential physical blockage of tankers.
- **Fiscal Impact:** High oil prices widen the Current Account Deficit (CAD) and put pressure on the fiscal deficit due to increased subsidies on fertilizers and LPG.
- **Rupee Volatility:** External shocks lead to capital outflow, weakening the rupee, which in turn makes all dollar-denominated imports more expensive for Indian industries.
- **Alternative Sourcing:** One of the core mandates is "de-risking" by identifying suppliers outside the immediate conflict zone to improve the resilience of the national energy basket.

Conclusion

The establishment of these seven empowered groups signifies a shift toward "anticipatory governance." By treating the West Asia crisis with the same institutional rigor as a pandemic, the government aims to insulate the Indian economy from external shocks. The success of this initiative will depend on the speed of policy calibration regarding strategic reserves and the ability to maintain the delicate balance between managing inflation and sustaining industrial growth during global volatility.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Government policies and interventions for development.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and growth; Energy Security; Effects of liberalization on the economy.
- **International Relations:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian Diaspora (security of Indians in West Asia).

7. RBI Injects Liquidity via Variable Rate Repo (VRR) Auction

- **Liquidity Infusion:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) injected ₹55,837 crore into the banking system through a three-day Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction to address transient liquidity deficits.
- **Auction Dynamics:** Although the RBI notified an intake of up to ₹1 trillion, the actual injection was significantly lower, with funds being disbursed at a cut-off and weighted average rate of 5.26%.
- **Drivers of Deficit:** The recent tightening of liquidity is primarily attributed to massive outflows from the banking system due to quarterly advance tax payments by corporations and individuals.
- **Monetary Policy Tool:** The VRR serves as a "fine-tuning" operation under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) to ensure that the Inter-Bank Call Money Rate remains aligned with the Repo Rate.



- **Market Impact:** Such injections are crucial to prevent a spike in short-term interest rates, ensuring that banks have sufficient funds to meet their lending requirements and statutory obligations.
- **Transition from Surplus:** This move highlights the shifting nature of banking liquidity, which has moved from a surplus state to a "deficit mode" due to seasonal factors and tax-related outflows.

Key Definitions

- **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF):** A tool used by the RBI that allows banks to borrow money through repurchase agreements (repos) or to make loans to the RBI through reverse repo agreements.
- **Variable Rate Repo (VRR):** An auction-based mechanism where the RBI lends money to banks for short durations at interest rates determined by the bidding process, rather than a fixed repo rate.
- **Advance Tax:** A system where taxpayers pay their income tax in installments throughout the year instead of a lump sum at the end, often leading to temporary liquidity drains in the banking sector.
- **Cut-off Rate:** The lowest interest rate at which the RBI decides to accept bids in a repo auction; any bids below this rate are typically rejected.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **RBI Act, 1934:** Grants the Reserve Bank the statutory mandate to regulate the monetary system and maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- **Section 45-ZB:** Provides for the constitution of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) which determines the policy interest rate (Repo Rate) required to achieve the inflation target.
- **Banking Regulation Act, 1949:** Empowers the RBI to monitor the liquidity health of commercial banks and mandate requirements like the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) and Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR).
- **Article 246:** While indirect, this constitutional provision relates to the Union List (List I), giving Parliament the exclusive power to legislate on matters of "Banking" and "Currency, coinage and legal tender."

Additional Keypoints

- **Calibration of Bids:** The fact that banks only took up roughly 56% of the notified ₹1 trillion suggests that while liquidity is tight, the demand for high-cost overnight or short-term funds is being cautiously managed by commercial banks.
- **Call Money Rate:** The RBI's primary objective in VRR operations is to keep the Weighted Average Call Rate (WACR) close to the policy repo rate of 6.50% (or the prevailing rate).
- **Government Spending Linkage:** Liquidity often eases when the government starts spending the tax collections back into the economy through various developmental projects and salaries.
- **Strategic Buffer:** Banks utilize VRR auctions to avoid dipping into their Marginal Standing Facility (MSF), which is a more expensive "emergency" window for borrowing.

RBI injects Rs 48,014 crore in banking system via 7-day variable rate repo auction

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday injected Rs 48,014 crore in transient liquidity into the banking system through a seven-day variable rate repo (VRR) auction



RBI injects Rs 48,014 crore in banking system via 7-day variable rate repo auction. [RBI Watch](#)



Conclusion

The RBI's intervention through the VRR auction underscores its role as the "Lender of Last Resort" and its commitment to proactive liquidity management. By addressing the temporary vacuum created by tax outflows, the central bank prevents volatility in the money markets. This balancing act is vital for maintaining a stable interest rate environment, which is a prerequisite for sustained economic investment and credit growth in the Indian economy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development; Monetary Policy and the role of the RBI.
- **Economic Survey & Budget:** Understanding the impact of fiscal cycles (like tax payments) on monetary liquidity.
- **Prelims Focus:** Specific instruments like VRR, VRRR, Repo, Reverse Repo, and the operation of the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).

8. India-UK Strategic Partnership in Higher Education: The 2035 Vision

- **Bilateral Education Framework:** The India-UK Vision 2035, endorsed in July 2025, positions education and skill development as the cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, aiming to synchronize India's massive student demand with UK's academic expertise.
- **Launch of the UK Education Hub:** Inaugurated in Delhi in February 2026, this flagship interface serves as a centralized platform for UK universities and government activity, streamlining transnational education (TNE) and research collaborations.
- **Institutional Expansion:** Reflecting the reforms of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, nine UK universities have announced plans for physical campuses in India, with the University of Southampton already commencing operations for its first cohort in Delhi.
- **Economic and Social Targets:** The partnership seeks to address India's goal of adding 30 million student places by 2035, while simultaneously supporting the UK's target of reaching £40 billion in education exports by 2030.
- **Diversified Research Hubs:** Beyond traditional teaching, the collaboration includes specialized centers such as the Leicester-Apollo Centre for Digital Health and the Cambridge-India Centre for Advanced Studies, focusing on global challenges like precision medicine and innovation.
- **Digital and Vocational Integration:** Collaborative efforts extend to primary education and employability, evidenced by the Appliansys-Tata Motors pilot program bringing digital tools to 5,000 Indian schools and the focus on English language proficiency for global leadership.



Key Definitions

- **Transnational Education (TNE):** Education delivered in a country other than the one in which the awarding institution is based (e.g., a UK degree earned entirely at a campus in India).
- **International Branch Campus (IBC):** An offsite entity of a higher education institution that is located in another country from the headquarters, offering full degree programs.



- **Dual and Joint Degrees:** Educational arrangements where two or more universities collaborate to offer a single degree (Joint) or two separate degrees (Dual) for the same period of study.
- **Soft Power:** The ability of a country to influence others through cultural or educational appeal rather than coercion (e.g., the 70-year legacy of the British Council in India).

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** The primary policy driver allowing top-ranked foreign universities to operate in India, aiming to internationalize Indian higher education and improve the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).
- **UGC Regulations (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) 2023:** The specific legal framework that permits foreign universities to establish campuses, grant degrees, and decide their own fee structures and admission criteria.
- **Article 51 (c):** Under the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), the State shall strive to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations, which underscores India's commitment to bilateral visions like "Vision 2035."
- **Entry 66 (Union List) and Entry 25 (Concurrent List):** Education is a concurrent subject, but the coordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education fall under the Union's domain, facilitating central-level bilateral agreements.

Additional Keypoints

- **Student Mobility:** With over 166,000 Indian students studying in the UK in 2024-25, India remains one of the largest source markets for UK higher education, necessitating a robust regulatory and support framework.
- **Science and Tech Synergy:** Initiatives like the Imperial College London's India International Science Hub indicate a shift from purely academic exchange to high-end scientific and industrial R&D collaboration.
- **Affordability and Access:** Local UK campuses in India are expected to significantly reduce the cost of obtaining a "global degree," making high-quality international education accessible to a wider demographic of Indian students.
- **G20 Outcomes:** This deepening partnership builds on the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration which emphasized the importance of foundational literacy and international research cooperation.

Conclusion

The inauguration of the UK Education Hub marks a transition from "aspiration to action" in India-UK relations. By embedding UK's academic infrastructure directly within India's evolving ecosystem, the partnership transcends traditional student migration models. It fosters a sustainable "two-way street" of talent exchange and innovation, aligning India's demographic dividend with the UK's global education standards to solve 21st-century challenges.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Government policies and interventions for development in Education.
- **GS Paper III:** Issues relating to intellectual property rights; Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.



- **Social Justice:** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources.

9. The Evolving Character of Modern Warfare: Lessons from Global Conflicts

- **Shift from Maneuver to Attrition:** Contemporary conflicts, particularly the Russia-Ukraine war, demonstrate a transition from swift "blitzkrieg" maneuvers to protracted wars of attrition, where endurance and long-term industrial capacity outweigh initial numerical superiority.
- **Democratization of Lethality:** The proliferation of low-cost, high-impact systems like FPV drones and loitering munitions has empowered smaller actors to impose disproportionate costs on advanced militaries, challenging the traditional dominance of heavy platforms like tanks.
- **Battlefield Transparency:** The integration of commercial satellites, Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT), and networked sensors has rendered the modern battlefield "transparent," making operational surprise nearly impossible and forcing a reliance on dispersion and mobility for survival.
- **Multi-Domain Coercion:** The US-Israel-Iran confrontation highlights the "invisible" enablers of war—cyber operations, electronic warfare, and space-based data—which allow for rapid degradation of leadership nodes and critical infrastructure before kinetic strikes occur.
- **Asymmetric and Economic Warfare:** Adversaries are increasingly leveraging non-traditional strategies, such as targeting maritime chokepoints (e.g., Strait of Hormuz) and using proxy networks, to transform regional military conflicts into global economic crises.
- **Supremacy of Adaptation:** Success in the 21st-century theater is defined less by "decisive victory" and more by "escalation management" and the organizational agility to learn and adjust tactics in real-time under constant surveillance.

Key Definitions

- **War of Attrition:** A strategic concept where a side attempts to win a war by wearing down the enemy to the point of collapse through continuous losses in personnel and resources.
- **Multi-Domain Operations (MDO):** A combat doctrine involving the rapid and continuous integration of all domains of warfare—land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace—to counter an adversary.
- **Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Strikes:** Kinetic refers to traditional physical force (bombs, bullets), while non-kinetic involves electronic warfare, cyberattacks, or psychological operations that achieve objectives without direct physical destruction.
- **Loitering Munitions:** Often called "suicide drones," these are weapon systems that hover over a target area for some time and attack once a target is located.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51:** The Directive Principles of State Policy mandate that India shall strive to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **The Geneva Conventions:** International legal treaties that establish the standards of international law for humanitarian treatment in war, which are increasingly challenged by autonomous weapon systems and cyber warfare.



- **Manual on International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare (Tallinn Manual):** While not a treaty, it is the influential academic guide on how international law applies to cyber conflicts and "invisible" domain coercion.
- **Section 3 of the Defence of India Act:** Provides the Union government the power to make rules for ensuring the public safety and interest, and the defense of India, during external aggression.

Additional Keypoints

- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Modern logistics are shifting from "just-in-time" efficiency to "just-in-case" redundancy, recognizing that centralized depots are vulnerable to precision long-range strikes.
- **The "Grey Zone" Conflict:** Many modern confrontations occur in the "Grey Zone"—a space between peace and settled war—involving disinformation, economic coercion, and sub-threshold cyberattacks.
- **Informational Sovereignty:** Controlling the narrative through global media and social platforms has moved from the periphery to the center of strategy, affecting international support and domestic legitimacy.
- **Integrated Deterrence:** The reliance on alliances and regional partnerships (as seen in Western support for Ukraine) shows that military power cannot operate in isolation from diplomatic and economic blocks.

Conclusion

Modern warfare has entered an era of "messy equilibrium" where technological sophistication does not necessarily guarantee a quick end to hostilities. The juxtaposition of high-tech precision in West Asia and industrial-age attrition in Eastern Europe suggests that future conflicts will be multidimensional, persistent, and globally disruptive. For a rising power like India, the lesson is clear: national security depends not just on the acquisition of hardware, but on the indigenous ability to innovate, secure the electromagnetic spectrum, and build an economically resilient state capable of enduring long-term friction.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; International Relations and global security architecture.
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security; Basics of cyber security; Challenges to security in border areas.
- **Ethics (GS IV):** Ethical issues in international relations and funding; Morality of autonomous weapons and "collateral damage" in high-precision strikes.

10. The Corruption Perceptions Index 2025: Implications for India

- **Global Decline in Integrity:** The 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International reveals a troubling global trend, with the average score dropping to 42/100. Over 67% of the 182 countries surveyed scored below 50, indicating deeply entrenched systemic corruption and weakening democratic accountability worldwide.
- **India's Stagnant Performance:** India holds a score of 39 and is ranked 91st out of 182 countries. Despite being the world's fourth-largest economy, India's score has remained stagnant between 38 and 41 for over a decade, highlighting a significant gap between rapid economic expansion and governance perceptions.



- **Economic Cost of Corruption:** Corruption acts as a hidden tax, with global estimates suggesting a loss of 5% of global GDP annually. For India, direct and indirect losses are estimated between 1% and 1.5% of GDP, diverting tens of billions of dollars away from critical sectors like infrastructure, healthcare, and education.
- **Regulatory Over-Criminalization:** A major hurdle in India's compliance architecture is the presence of 26,134 imprisonment provisions across business regulations. For instance, a pharmaceutical start-up must navigate 998 compliance obligations, of which nearly 49% carry potential criminal liability, inadvertently creating avenues for rent-seeking.
- **Digital Transformation as a Counter-Measure:** India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) serves as a positive counter-current. The expansion of Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) and the rise in the RBI's Digital Payments Index (reaching 516.76 in Sept 2025) have significantly reduced leakages and minimized discretionary power in welfare distribution.
- **Governance as a Competitive Variable:** Transparency is no longer just a moral imperative but a strategic economic variable. Institutional independence, judicial efficiency, and regulatory simplification are now essential for maintaining sovereign risk assessments and attracting long-term global capital.

Key Definitions

- **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI):** An annual index that ranks countries by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys.
- **Rent-Seeking:** An economic concept where an individual or entity seeks to increase their own wealth without creating any benefits or wealth for society, often through manipulation of the political or regulatory environment.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** A government mechanism to transfer subsidies and benefits directly into the bank accounts of beneficiaries, reducing intermediaries and corruption.
- **Compliance Architecture:** The set of rules, regulations, and legal requirements that an organization or entrepreneur must follow to operate legally within a jurisdiction.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 14 & 15:** Ensure equality before the law and prohibit discrimination; corruption undermines these by providing undue advantage to those with influence.
- **Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), 1988:** The primary legislative framework in India targeting bribery and corruption among public servants. It was significantly amended in 2018 to include the act of "giving a bribe" as a direct offense.
- **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002:** Focuses on preventing the laundering of proceeds from crimes, including corruption, and provides for the confiscation of property derived from such activities.
- **The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013:** Establishes statutory bodies at the Union and State levels to investigate allegations of corruption against public functionaries.



Additional Keypoints

- **SHAKTI Initiative:** The Biopharma Strategy for Healthcare Advancement highlights the government's focus on technology-led growth, yet underscores the need for "Ease of Doing Business" by reducing the compliance burden.
- **Judicial Role:** A capable and independent judiciary is critical for CPI improvement; delay in judicial proceedings often perceived as a lack of effective enforcement against corrupt practices.
- **Formalization via GST:** The Goods and Services Tax has increased traceability in the economy, reducing "shadow" transactions and improving the fiscal transparency of businesses.

Conclusion

The 2025 CPI serves as a strategic benchmark for India. While digital reforms have successfully plugged leakages in "petty corruption," systemic "grand corruption" perceptions persist due to regulatory complexity and institutional friction. To achieve the goal of a \$10 trillion economy and a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047, India must move beyond episodic crackdowns toward sustained institutional reforms that prioritize transparency as a core economic pillar.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, and limitations; Role of civil services in a democracy.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Probity in Governance; Concept of public service; Philosophical basis of governance and probity; Challenges of corruption.

11. Judicial Mandate and the Shift Toward Environmental CSR

- **Constitutional Linkage:** The Supreme Court has recently reframed environmental spending from "discretionary charity" to a "constitutional mandate" by invoking Article 51A(g). The judiciary asserts that the right to conduct business is inseparably linked to the duty to protect and improve the natural environment.
- **Funding Imbalance:** Despite India's net-zero 2070 commitment, CSR data reveals a "human-centric" bias. Education (38%) and healthcare (22%) dominate allocations, while environmental projects stagnate between 7%-9%, reflecting a corporate tendency to prioritize immediate social needs over long-term ecological crises.
- **The Restoration Gap:** While India aims to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 under the Bonn Challenge, private corporate contribution currently stands at a negligible 2%. Companies often favor "quick win" awareness drives over arduous, long-term forest and habitat recovery.
- **Critique of "Quick Wins":** Current environmental CSR often focuses on high-visibility projects like Miyawaki plantations (rapid growth) which may compromise native biodiversity. There is an urgent need to shift from simple greening to "ecosystem recovery" involving soil carbon sequestration and water retention.





- **Institutional Barriers:** Effective restoration is hindered by a lack of specialized ecological skills among CSR partners, an urban bias in project selection, and poor collaboration with forest departments and scientific bodies.
- **Strategic Reimagining:** The way forward involves establishing "Restoration Trusts" or escrow funds to ensure long-term financing, and evolving corporate governance from being "shareholder-centric" to "ecosystem-centric," where directors act as fiduciaries for the planet.

Key Definitions

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** A statutory requirement for specific companies to spend 2% of their average net profits on social and environmental upliftment.
- **Bonn Challenge:** A global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
- **Miyawaki Method:** A technique for creating dense, multi-layered "urban forests" that grow rapidly; however, experts warn it should not replace natural, diverse forest ecosystems.
- **Fiduciary Responsibility:** A legal or ethical relationship of trust between two or more parties; here, it refers to a director's duty to protect environmental interests as much as financial ones.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(g):** A Fundamental Duty of every citizen (and by extension, the entities they run) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Article 21:** The Right to Life includes the right to a clean and healthy environment, as established in the *Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar* case.
- **Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013:** The legal provision that mandates CSR for companies with a net worth of ₹500 crore+, turnover of ₹1000 crore+, or net profit of ₹5 crore+.
- **Schedule VII (Companies Act):** Lists the activities which may be included by companies in their CSR policies, specifically Point (iv) which covers "ensuring environmental sustainability and ecological balance."

Additional Keypoints

- **Corporate Trailblazers:** Projects like Mahindra's 'Project Hariyali' (25 million trees) and ITC's forestry programs (1.3 million acres) serve as benchmarks for measurable environmental impact.
- **Escrow Funds for Ecology:** The suggestion for an escrow fund addresses the mismatch between the 3-year CSR project cycle and the 10-20 year cycle required for forest maturity.
- **Scientific Supervision:** Alliances between universities, NGOs, and Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) are essential to ensure that native species are prioritized over invasive, fast-growing ones.

Conclusion

The transition from voluntary "charity" to a judicially-backed "mandate" marks a new era for corporate accountability in India. For a nation facing severe water scarcity and air pollution, environmental CSR cannot remain a peripheral concern. By shifting from basic compliance to genuine ecosystem restoration, the Indian corporate sector can transform from a driver of ecological depletion into a partner in national sustainability.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Government policies and interventions for development.
- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment; Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its economic impact.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Corporate Governance; Ethical responsibilities of business; Environmental ethics.

12. Judicial Recusal and the CEC Appointment Challenge

- **CJI Recusal from CEC Case:** Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant recently recused himself from hearing petitions challenging the *CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023*. This follows a previous recusal by CJI Sanjiv Khanna, citing potential "conflict of interest" as the CJI was removed from the selection panel by the new law.
- **Doctrine of Natural Justice:** Recusal is rooted in the maxim *nemo iudex in causa sua* (no one shall be a judge in their own cause). Indian jurisprudence has evolved from "pecuniary interest" to a standard of "reasonable apprehension of bias," where a judge withdraws if a fair-minded observer might doubt their impartiality.
- **The Doctrine of Necessity:** A critical legal principle which suggests that if a conflict of interest affects all available judges of a competent court, the conflict must yield to the duty to adjudicate. In the *NJAC Case (2015)*, Justice J.S. Khehar refused to recuse using this doctrine, arguing that the entire court had an institutional stake in judicial appointments.
- **Procedural Anomalies:** The CJI's direction to exclude all "successor" judges from the replacement bench is seen by some as a departure from precedent. Since every SC judge is in the potential line of succession, this creates a vacuum that the Doctrine of Necessity is designed to fill.
- **Judicial Conscience vs. Codification:** Unlike the United States (under Section 455 of Title 28), India has no statutory framework or codified rules governing judicial recusal. It remains an act of individual judicial conscience, making the process subjective and dependent on the "Master of the Roster."
- **Institutional Credibility:** The repeated recusals in a case concerning the "guardians of elections" highlight a growing need for transparency. Critics argue that a lack of formal rules for recusal can lead to "bench hunting" or institutional delays in hearing high-stakes constitutional matters.

Key Definitions

- **Recusal:** The act of a judge removing themselves from a legal proceeding due to a conflict of interest or lack of impartiality.
- **Master of the Roster:** The privilege of the Chief Justice to constitute benches and allocate cases to fellow judges.
- **Nemo Iudex in Causa Sua:** A fundamental principle of natural justice stating that no person can judge a case in which they have an interest.
- **Line of Succession:** In the Indian judiciary, this refers to the convention where the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court succeeds the retiring Chief Justice.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Third Schedule:** Contains the form of oath for Supreme Court judges, which binds them to perform duties "without fear or favour, affection or ill-will."
- **Article 124:** Governs the establishment and constitution of the Supreme Court. The interpretation of this article regarding appointments led to the "Judges Cases" and the current Collegium system.
- **CEC Act, 2023:** The specific legislation under challenge, which replaced the CJI with a Union Cabinet Minister in the selection committee for the Poll Body, effectively altering the *Anoop Baranwal (2023)* judgment.
- **Article 145:** Empowers the Supreme Court to make rules for regulating the practice and procedure of the Court, subject to the approval of the President.

Additional Keypoints

- **Pre-emptive Disqualification:** The CJI's oral remark to exclude future CJIs from the bench is controversial because recusal is typically an individual decision, not one mandated for others by a predecessor.
- **Accidents of Mortality:** The seniority line is not absolute; resignations or health issues can elevate "out of line" judges to the CJI post, making pre-emptive exclusion rules logically inconsistent.
- **Transparency in Recusal:** As noted by Justice Kurian Joseph in the *NJAC* case, a judge has a constitutional duty to provide reasons for recusal to maintain public trust in the judiciary.

Conclusion

The recusal of two successive Chief Justices in the CEC appointment case underscores a systemic dilemma in Indian constitutional law: the tension between individual impartiality and institutional necessity. While "conflict of interest" is a valid personal concern, the "Doctrine of Necessity" ensures that the highest court does not become incapacitated. Moving forward, the judiciary may need to move toward a codified recusal framework to transform personal discretion into a predictable institutional obligation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies; Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Conflict of interest; Principles of Natural Justice; Ethical dilemmas in public service and the judiciary.
- **Polity:** Evolution of the appointment process for the Election Commission and the independence of the judiciary.