

11th Dec, 2024

1. Removal of Rajya Sabha Chairman GS 1 (Legislature)

- **Why in News:** The opposition parties, led by Congress, moved a **no-confidence motion** against Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, who is also the **Chairman of Rajya Sabha**, under Article 67(B) of the Constitution. This is the first time such a motion has been filed in Indian Parliament. The opposition claims that Dhankhar has shown **bias** in favor of the ruling party and has **ignored their concerns** during Rajya Sabha proceedings.

- **What is the Process for Removing the Rajya Sabha Chairman?**

- The process for the **removal of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha** is governed by **Article 67** of the Indian Constitution, as well as the rules of procedure of the Rajya Sabha.
- The Chairman is the Vice President of India, who holds office for a **term of five years** from the date of assuming office, unless he **resigns** or is **removed**.

- **Process of Removal of the Chairman of Rajya Sabha:**

- **Initiating the Resolution:** A resolution for the removal of the Chairman can be moved by a member of Rajya Sabha. This must be moved by a majority of the members of Rajya Sabha.
 - The resolution must be passed by a majority of all members of Rajya Sabha (i.e., more than half of the total members of the House, not just those present and voting).
- **Notice for the Resolution:** A 14-day notice must be given before the resolution for removal is moved in the House. This is similar to the process for the removal of the Vice-President (who is also the Chairman of Rajya Sabha). The member wishing to move the resolution must notify the House of their intention at least 14 days in advance.
- **Debate and Discussion:** After the notice period of 14 days, the Rajya Sabha will discuss the resolution. The discussion will allow members to express their views on the removal of the Chairman.
- **Resolution Passage:** The resolution must be passed by a majority of the members of the Rajya Sabha (more than half of the total members, not just those present).
- **Approval from Lok Sabha:** After passing the resolution in Rajya Sabha, it must also be approved by the Lok Sabha. Lok Sabha must also pass the same resolution by a simple majority. This means that the Lok Sabha must agree with the Rajya Sabha's decision.
- **Final Action:** If both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha pass the resolution for the removal of the **Chairman**, the Chairman is removed from office.

- **Key Points:**

- The **Chairman cannot preside over his own removal proceedings**. In case a resolution for his removal is being discussed, he will **vacate the Chair**, and the **Deputy Chairman** will take over the proceedings.
- A **majority of members** of Rajya Sabha must agree to the resolution for the Chairman's removal.
- The Chairman's **removal** requires the **approval of both Houses of Parliament** (Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha).

- **About Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of Parliament)**

- The Rajya Sabha is modelled after the **House of Lords** in the United Kingdom.
- Rajya Sabha is a **permanent body** and is **not subject to dissolution**. However, one-third of the members retire every second year and are replaced by newly elected members.
- Each member is elected for a term of six years.
- The Vice President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, which is the final stop before a bill is sent for presidential assent.

Oust Dhankhar as RS Chairman, says INDIA

Opposition MPs submit notice listing a six-point 'chargesheet' against Vice-President for 'bias'; 'petition unlikely to be taken up this session'

A.M. Jigeeesh
NEW DELHI

In an unprecedented move, nearly 60 Opposition MPs of the INDIA bloc on Tuesday submitted a notice at the office of the Rajya Sabha Secretary-General, P.C. Mody, seeking the removal of the Chairperson of the Upper House, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

They alleged that Mr. Dhankhar had, since assuming office in August 2022, conducted the proceedings of the House in an "extremely biased" manner.

They presented a six-point "chargesheet" against him in the notice.

The notice said Mr. Dhankhar made constant interruptions whenever Opposition MPs attempted to speak. The Chairperson



Jagdeep Dhankhar

also repeatedly denied legitimate requests made by the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, to "intervene and rebut falsehoods propagated by" Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Leader of the House and BJP president, J.P. Nadda, the MPs noted.

Former Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha and veteran civil servant V.K. Agnihotri told *The Hindu*

that he had not in the past witnessed such a request to remove the Chairperson. He said the notice was unlikely to be taken up as a resolution in the House as the Winter Session was to end in less than 14 days (December 20).

"It will not be carried over to the next session. All notices given during a session become invalid once the session is prorogued," he said.

The MPs have used Article 67 of the Constitution to move the notice. A motion for removal of the Vice-President from his office requires a 14-day notice of intent on the part of the members of the Council of States that are in support of the resolution, they noted.

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- **Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**

- The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, who is also the **Vice-President of India**, plays a crucial role in the functioning of the House. As the **Presiding Officer**, the Chairman is responsible for maintaining order, decorum, and ensuring that the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha follow the Constitution, rules, and practices.
- **Key Roles and Responsibilities:**
 - **Presiding Officer:** The Chairman oversees Rajya Sabha meetings, ensuring the orderly conduct of discussions and debates.
 - **Guardian of the House:** The Chairman upholds the prestige and dignity of the House. He is also the principal spokesperson for the Rajya Sabha, representing its collective voice to the outside world.
 - **Impartiality:** The Chairman's decisions are binding, and he is expected to act impartially. His rulings are not open to criticism and cannot be questioned.
 - **Presides Over Key Sessions:** The Chairman presides during critical times, such as **Question Hour**, debates on important bills, and constitutional amendments. He ensures that members' rights to ask questions and receive answers are protected.
 - **Casting Vote:** The Chairman has a **casting vote** in case of a tie during voting, except when the motion concerns his own removal. In such cases, he does not preside and cannot vote.
- **Powers:**
 - **Adjournment and Suspension:** The Chairman has the authority to **adjourn the House** or suspend its sitting if there is no quorum or in case of grave disorder.
 - **Disqualification of Members:** The Chairman determines whether a Rajya Sabha member is disqualified under the **Tenth Schedule** (anti-defection law).
 - **Rulings and Precedents:** The Chairman's rulings are considered precedents and cannot be challenged. He is the final authority on the interpretation of rules and procedures in the House.
 - **Committee Oversight:** The Chairman oversees the functioning of parliamentary committees, appoints their chairs, and ensures the effective conduct of their work. He is also the head of key committees like the **Business Advisory Committee** and **Rules Committee**.
 - **Maintenance of Order:** The Chairman is responsible for maintaining order during debates. He can intervene in cases of **irrelevance** or **defamatory remarks** and can expunge inappropriate language from the records.
- **Administrative Functions:**
 - **Rajya Sabha Secretariat:** The Chairman controls the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and ensures the proper functioning of the House.
 - **Warrants and Communications:** He issues warrants to execute the orders of the House and communicates with external authorities, including messages from the President or foreign countries.
- **Role in Bill Passage:** The Chairman authenticates and corrects any errors in Bills passed by Rajya Sabha before they are presented to the President for assent.
- **Absence of the Chairman:** In the absence of the Chairman, the **Deputy Chairman** presides over the sessions. The Chairman may also delegate duties to **Vice-Chairmen** when needed.
 - **Special Functions:** The Chairman makes obituary references and special references on significant national or international occasions. He represents Rajya Sabha at formal events and welcomes foreign dignitaries or delegates.

2. Deepening India's steps as a key space-faring nation GS 3 (Science and Tech)

- Why in News:** India's space program is focused on ambitious goals for the coming decades, with key projects like the **Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission** and an Indian space station by 2030. A critical component of these aspirations is the development of reusable, heavy-lift rockets, notably the **Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV)** by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**, which has been approved for development. Additionally, India's private sector involvement is seen as vital to meeting these goals and ensuring strategic autonomy in space access.

Deepening India's steps as a key space-faring nation

India has set ambitious goals for its space programme in the next two decades. These goals hinge on powerful, reusable rockets such as the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) upcoming Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV). In addition to the NGLV, India must tap into its private sector to develop more such rockets in order to secure strategic autonomy in its access to outer space.

ISRO's road map

From an infant space programme in the 1960s, India has grown into a powerful space-faring nation. Preparations for the Gaganyaan mission are underway. Gaganyaan will take an Indian crew to space for the first time, demonstrating Indian human-spaceflight capability. By the end of the next decade, India aims to have a more sustained presence in space by having its own space station in orbit around earth. It also aims to expand its human-spaceflight capabilities to the moon.

Realising these objectives effects a road map that consists of multiple successful missions to the moon, mastering human-centric technologies for space travel and developing powerful new rockets. These rockets have to carry heavier payloads to support human in space. They should also be financially viable as it will take many test flights to reach the safety and the reliability standards for human spaceflight to the moon. ISRO is fulfilling these requirements with its upcoming NGLV, which has been recently approved for development by the Union Cabinet. The significance of the NGLV lies in its heavy lift capability and reusability. The NGLV will triple the payload capacity of the LVM3 (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk III), which is India's most powerful rocket. This comes with numerous benefits. Heavy lift rockets ease restrictions related to weight and volume. It frees up the focus of engineers and scientists that



Anshuman Prasad
A research scientist at
the Indian Space
Research Organisation

would otherwise have to be spent on miniaturisation or weight reduction. It greatly increases the potential of space-related missions. The possibilities increase exponentially.

In contrast to all of India's existing rockets which are expendable as they are built for one-time use, a major part of the NGLV will be reusable. Reusability requires that the rocket keep some of its fuel for controlled descent back to the earth's surface. This reduces the capacity of the rocket to carry heavier loads but offers massive cost savings. Reusability has become necessary for rockets to remain competitive.

The immediate need

The NGLV's development phase will last for the next eight years. In the meantime, the need for heavy lift capability is already felt. India's next uncrewed moon mission is slated to use not one, but two rockets. Two LVM3s will carry the requisite modules. They will then be assembled in space to form one composite vehicle that will go to the moon.

In another instance, GSAT-N2, a communication satellite built by ISRO, was launched on Space's Falcon 9 rocket. It weighed 4,000 kg while the maximum weight that an LVM3 can carry to the Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO) is 4,000 kg. A reusable Falcon 9 from Space's, a U.S. company, can carry up to 5,500 kg to the Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO).

Forgoing reusability, an expendable Falcon 9's capacity increases to 6,300 kg. Even this figure is dwarfed in comparison to Space's Falcon Heavy and Starship rockets.

The Starship, which completed its sixth test flight recently, has already achieved significant milestones surrounding heavy lift and reusability. Its mind-boggling capacity to lift over 20,000 kg to the GTO (100,000 kg in the Low Earth Orbit) while remaining reusable, shows that the Starship is already past the level of advancement that the

NGLV hopes to achieve at the end of its eight-year development phase.

Leveraging the private industrial base

This is no surprise given ISRO's wider scope, capability and focus. However, it also raises questions about why India is not exploring more paths to produce multiple reusable, heavy lift rockets.

In parallel to developing the NGLV, the Department of Space can give out contracts to the private industry in India to design and develop reusable, heavy lift rockets of their own. Space is an emergent sector with massive potential for commercialisation.

There is likely to be strong private sector interest in India to take up these contracts with the right incentives. Even with a lack of existing facility in rocket technology among Indian corporations, they can explore foreign collaboration. For instance, various rocket engines are already sold commercially. A milestone-based funding mechanism where the Department of Space pays private players after they meet certain objectives at every stage is a great way to ensure accountability and reduce cost overruns. In the best case, India may end up with multiple NGLV-like rockets alongside the NGLV, resulting in much-needed redundancy and greater launch frequency. In the worst case, there may be delays but that is accompanied by positive spin-offs of innovation, technical capability and infrastructure which will ultimately yield positive outcomes.

The entire gamut of space activities, which ranges from using satellite data for development to extending Indian presence to the moon and Mars, hinges on a resilient supply of space transportation services. India must foster a strong ecosystem for the growth of a specialised industrial base that can cater to India's needs and ambitions in outer space.

ISRO's Road Map and Future Plans

- Gaganyaan Mission:** ISRO aims to send its first crew into space under the Gaganyaan mission, marking India's entry into human spaceflight.
- Space Station Objective:** By 2030, India plans to establish its own space station orbiting Earth, advancing its human-spaceflight capabilities.
- Moon and Mars Missions:** India intends to expand its human-spaceflight missions to the moon and beyond, with ongoing lunar exploration missions as part of its roadmap.
- NGLV Development and its Importance**
 - Heavy Lift Capability:** The NGLV will significantly increase payload capacity compared to ISRO's LVM3, enabling more complex and expansive space missions.
 - Reusability Feature:** Unlike current expendable rockets, the NGLV will feature reusability, which reduces cost and increases long-term operational viability.
 - Strategic Impact:** The development of NGLV is vital for India to reduce dependence on foreign rocket providers and to become more competitive in global space missions.
- Leveraging Private Sector in Space Technology**
 - Private Sector Role:** The Department of Space should encourage Indian private companies to develop their own reusable, heavy-lift rockets to complement ISRO's efforts.
 - Collaboration with Foreign Entities:** Indian corporations lacking rocket technology can collaborate with foreign companies to acquire necessary expertise and components.
 - Innovative Funding Models:** A milestone-based funding system for private players can incentivize timely development while fostering technical innovation and reducing financial risks.

3. The significance of ANI versus OpenAI GS 3 (Science and Tech)

- Why in News:** Asian News International (ANI) has filed a lawsuit against **OpenAI** for the **unauthorized use of its copyrighted content** in training its **Large Language Model (LLM)**. ANI claims that OpenAI scraped its content, used it without permission, and generated fabricated responses based on its work. This marks the first lawsuit of its kind in India, raising significant issues regarding copyright, fair use, and data sovereignty in the era of **Generative AI**.
- Claims by ANI and OpenAI's Defence**
 - Copyright Infringement:** ANI accuses OpenAI of using its copyrighted material without consent, despite ANI's opt-out request, as its content is republished by other websites.
 - Fair Use Argument:** OpenAI defends the use of ANI's content, citing fair use exceptions and claiming its models generate modified language, not verbatim text from sources.

- **Fabricated Responses:** ANI highlights instances where OpenAI's models falsely attributed fabricated content to ANI. OpenAI acknowledged the issue and resolved flagged instances, pledging to prevent future occurrences.

• Legal and Territorial Implications

- **Jurisdictional Issues:** OpenAI argues there is no legal basis for the lawsuit in India, as the training and data processing occur outside the country.
- **Grey Area of Fair Use:** India's copyright law lacks clear provisions for AI training, leaving the application of fair use for AI training models unclear.
- **Data Sovereignty:** The lawsuit brings attention to challenges in regulating cloud-based data services and AI models that rely on distributed data storage, raising questions about territorial laws and data sovereignty.

• Future Outlook

- This lawsuit will serve as a precedent for legal accountability of AI platforms in India. The case underscores the need for clearer legal frameworks regarding AI, fair use, and content ownership, which could shape the country's approach to fostering innovation while protecting intellectual property rights.

OpenAI's models falsely attributed fabricated

The significance of ANI versus OpenAI

In the evolving landscape of digital news dissemination, there is a symbiotic yet contentious relationship between news publishers and technology companies. Publishers depend on these platforms for hosting content and traffic referrals, which they monetise through advertising. Technology platforms, such as Meta, act as intermediaries, driving traffic to news websites and taking a share of the advertising revenue. The latest frontier of this struggle over the distribution of money between platforms and publishers is the field of Generative AI (GenAI). GenAI platforms utilise vast datasets drawn from the open Web to train their models. Some major news publishers, such as The Atlantic, are entering into contractual agreements to license their content to AI firms. Others, such as The New York Times, have taken legal action against AI firms for the use of copyrighted material as training data, and are seeking compensation. Recently, Adam News International (ANI) sued OpenAI for unauthorised use and storage of its copyrighted work to train the company's Large Language Model (LLM).

Claims and defence
In the lawsuit, ANI first claimed that OpenAI used its copyrighted content for LLM training without authorisation. (ANI formally notified OpenAI of the copyright infringement. In October, OpenAI blocked ANI by applying its opt-out policy, which allows websites to opt out of automated use of their text by AI scanners. It operates on the principles of fair use, and is effective for text and data mining (TDM) for scientific research. Fair use is a legal principle that permits limited use of copyrighted material without the owner's permission. Depending on the purpose and character of the use, the type of copyrighted work, the portion used, and its effect on the market for the copyrighted work.



Jyoti Pandey
Regional Director of Asia at the Internet Governance Project at the Georgia Institute of Technology



Saumya Jain
Researcher at the Internet Governance Project at the Georgia Institute of Technology

However, ANI argued that opting out is ineffective because other websites and news organisations republish its content widely, which allows OpenAI's crawlers to scrape its content through these third-party sites. So, ANI went to court. Second, ANI accused OpenAI of generating responses that were either verbatim or substantially similar to ANI's copyrighted content. OpenAI defended its stance on verbatim reproduction by arguing that copyright does not protect ideas or facts, only their expression. It contended that its models never deliver information to users in the same expression as its sources and that the language was modified sufficiently to claim copyright exceptions.

Third, ANI highlighted the issue of fabricated responses, where ChatGPT misleadingly attributed fabricated interviews or news stories to the agency. OpenAI stated that it resolved every instance of false attribution flagged by ANI and pledged to rectify similar issues in the future. In response to these claims, ANI is seeking an interim injunction to restrain OpenAI from storing, publishing, or reproducing its work. ANI is also requesting an order that prohibits OpenAI from accessing its content anywhere, including through its subscribers.

Implications
A lawsuit of this nature is a first in India. However, OpenAI asserts that there is no basis for legal action within the country, as no reproduction of content took place in India. The AI platform stated that it has no offices and servers in India, and so the AI model's training and data processing occurs outside India. ANI's claims and OpenAI's defence highlight two significant issues. A balance between copyright infringement and fair use, and territoriality in data storage. The first issue has been persistent since the rise of the internet. The dispute between AI platforms and content owners

reproduces this old wine in new bottles. Fair use, TDM, and the opt-out option are rooted in two principles: permissionless innovation and free inquiry. The first principle advocates that experimentation with new technologies and business models should be allowed by default. Unless a compelling case proves that a new invention will cause serious harm to society, innovation should proceed unimpeded, with any arising issues addressed later. The second principle treats facts and data as a commons and advances public knowledge by allowing anyone to share data for scientific purposes.

In India, the law of fair use outlines an exhaustive list of exceptions to copyright protection that do not directly or indirectly reference AI training models. Consequently, whether AI model training falls under fair use in India remains a grey area. Moreover, the absence of TDM provisions in Indian law raises questions about the country's approach to fostering innovation in AI while creating a balance with copyright infringement. Given India's lack of AI-specific provisions, policymakers should adopt a permissionless innovation approach to stimulate AI development while protecting the private rights of content creators.

The issue of territoriality in data storage poses major challenges to data sovereignty, which requires that data be regulated by the laws of its country of origin. OpenAI's defence highlights the complexities of applying territorial laws to cloud-based services and distributed AI models. While these services and models use data generated by Indian users or organisations, the data is dispersed across multiple servers or cloud environments making it challenging to extend traditional concepts of territoriality over data. The lawsuit against OpenAI in India will set a precedent for determining if developers' legal accountability for content generated by their platforms.

4. Judicial Ethics GS 2 (Judiciary)

- **Why in News:** Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court made controversial remarks during a Vishwa Hindu Parishad event, drawing public backlash and calls for disciplinary action, including impeachment. The Supreme Court has taken notice, and the matter is under investigation.

• Judicial Ethics and Conduct:

- The **code of judicial conduct** that governs judges emphasizes impartiality and the importance of maintaining public confidence in the judiciary. Some key principles from the **Restatement of Values of Judicial Life (1997)** and the **Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct (2002)** are:

- **Impartiality:** Judges must always act in a way that reaffirms public trust in the fairness and neutrality of the judiciary.
- **Public Perception:** Judges should avoid any actions or statements that could damage their credibility, both inside and outside the court.
- **Diversity and Equality:** Judges must treat all individuals equally, aware of the diversity in society, and avoid comments that could be seen as discriminatory.

- Justice Yadav's comments, which seemed to favor one community over others, could be seen as a violation of these principles, especially since judges are expected to maintain the dignity and impartiality of their office.

• Impeachment Process:

- The **Indian Constitution** allows for the impeachment of judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts on grounds of "proved misbehaviour or incapacity." The process is complex:

- A motion for removal can be introduced in Parliament and must be supported by:

The code of conduct judges need to follow

Judicial conduct is power from two fountains, public acceptance of the authority of the judiciary and the integrity of the judiciary. The Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct 2002 presents a framework to regulate judicial conduct

LETTER TO A JUDGE

Archives/Adapted

The comments made by Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav, Justice of the Allahabad High Court, during a Vishwa Hindu Parishad event, have drawn public backlash and calls for disciplinary action, including impeachment. The Supreme Court has taken notice, and the matter is under investigation.

The Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct 2002 presents a framework to regulate judicial conduct. The code of judicial conduct that governs judges emphasizes impartiality and the importance of maintaining public confidence in the judiciary.

On Judicial Ethics

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THE GIST

Archives/Adapted

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- A **special majority** of the **total membership** of the House.
- At least **two-thirds** of the members present and voting.
- Alternatively, the **Supreme Court** has an **in-house procedure** for dealing with allegations against judges. The process works as follows:
 - Complaints can be filed against a High Court judge with the **President, Chief Justice of India (CJI)**, or the **Chief Justice of the concerned High Court**.
 - The complaint is reviewed, and if serious, the CJI may appoint a fact-finding committee.
 - If the committee finds enough evidence, the judge may be asked to retire voluntarily.
 - If the judge refuses, the matter can be referred to the **President** for impeachment.
- This process provides a way to investigate judicial misconduct while maintaining the dignity of the judiciary.

5. PM POSHAN Scheme GS 2 (Governance)

- **Why in News:** The Indian government has announced it will bear an additional cost of Rs 425.62 crore in FY 2024-25 due to **inflation in food material costs** under the **PM POSHAN Scheme**, which provides hot cooked meals to school children.
- **About PM POSHAN Scheme**
 - **Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)** earlier known as the **National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools** is one of the foremost rights based **Centrally Sponsored Schemes** under the **National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA)**.
 - The Scheme aims at providing nutritional support and enhancing school participation of students.
 - This scheme serves hot meals to 11.70 crore students in 10.24 lakh government and government-aided schools. The students are from **Balvatika (pre-primary) to class VIII**.
 - Under the PM POSHAN Scheme, 'Material Cost' is provided for procurement of following ingredients required for cooking the meals :

PM POSHAN: Centre to bear additional cost of ₹425.62 cr. due to food inflation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre has announced that it will bear the additional cost of ₹425.62 crore on account of inflation in food material cost under the Centrally sponsored PM POSHAN Scheme in the financial year 2024-25.

Under the scheme, one hot cooked meal is served to 11.7 crore students studying in Balvatika and Classes I to 8 in 10.24 lakh government and government-aided schools.

On the basis of the inflation index provided by the Labour Bureau, the Education Ministry has enhanced the material cost of pulses, vegetables and oil by 13.7%.

"The material cost is enhanced from ₹5.45 to ₹6.19 for primary and Balvatika classes and from ₹8.17 to ₹9.29 for upper primary classes with effect from December 1," said a release



On the basis of the inflation index, the material cost of pulses, vegetables and oil have been enhanced by 13.7%. FILE PHOTO

from the Ministry. The material cost could not be revised during 2023-24; therefore, the inflation value of items under PM POSHAN basket for both 2022-23 (6.45%) and 2023-24 (6.74%) has been considered for enhancement of cost.

Each Balvatika and primary school student is eligible for 20 grams of pulses, 50 grams of vegeta-

bles and five grams of oil. Similarly, each upper primary student is eligible for 30 grams of pulses, 50 grams of vegetables and seven grams of oil.

State contribution

The new rates will be applicable across all the States and Union Territories.

"These rates of material cost are the minimum

mandatory rates; however, States and UTs are free to contribute more than their prescribed share, as some States and UTs have been contributing more than their minimum mandatory share from their own resources for providing meals with augmented nutrition under the PM POSHAN Scheme," the statement said.

The Centre also provides about 26 lakh tonnes of foodgrains through the Food Corporation of India for which it bears 100% cost, including subsidy of approximately ₹9,000 crore a year and 100% transportation cost from FCI depots to schools.

"The per meal cost after adding all components including foodgrains cost under the scheme comes to approximately ₹11.54 for Balvatika and primary classes and ₹16.74 for upper primary classes," the statement said.

- The **Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour** provides data on inflation for these items under the **PM POSHAN basket on the basis of Consumer Price Index – Rural Labourers (CPI-RL)** in consonance with CPI index for PM POSHAN and accordingly CPI index for PM POSHAN basket has been worked out.

Ingredients	Per student per meal quantity	
	Bal Vatika & Primary	Upper Primary
Pulses	20 gm	30 gm
Vegetables	50 gm	75 gm
Oil	5 gm	7.5 gm
Spices & Condiments	As per need	As per need
Fuel	As per need	As per need

- The CPI-RL is constructed by **Labour Bureau, Chandigarh** on the basis of collecting continuous monthly prices from the sample of 600 villages spread over 20 States of the country.

6. India-Russia ties 'higher than highest mountain' GS 2 (International Relations)

- **Why in News:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited Moscow for a three-day trip. His main meeting was with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Singh's visit came five months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia, where both countries agreed to further strengthen their defence ties.
- **Meeting Highlights:**
 - **Friendship and Cooperation:** During his meeting with President Putin, Rajnath Singh emphasized the deep and enduring relationship between India and Russia. He described the partnership as **"higher than the highest mountain and deeper than the deepest ocean."**
 - India has always stood by Russia and will continue to do so in the future. This remark reflects the strong, long-standing ties between the two countries, particularly in defence and military cooperation.
 - **India-Russia Military Cooperation:** Rajnath Singh co-chaired the **21st session of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Cooperation**. The session focused on the ongoing and future collaboration between the two nations in defence matters.
 - Both sides agreed that their partnership holds significant potential and that their combined efforts will lead to positive outcomes in the future.

DEFENCE MINISTER ON THREE-DAY VISIT TO RUSSIA



Russian President Vladimir Putin greets Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Kremlin, Tuesday

India-Russia friendship higher than highest mountain: Rajnath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 10

INDIA-RUSSIA friendship is "higher than the highest mountain and deeper than the deepest ocean", Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said at a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Tuesday.

Both leaders expressed that the partnership between the countries holds immense potential and combined efforts will pave the way for remarkable outcomes, an Indian readout of the meeting said.

highest mountain and deeper than the deepest ocean", the readout by Defence Ministry said. Singh conveyed to Putin that India has always stood by its Russian friends and will continue to do so in future, it said.

The Defence Minister also conveyed warm greetings of PM Narendra Modi to President Putin. Glad to call on the Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin in Moscow, Singh said on Tuesday.

Singh embarked on the three-day trip to Russia on Sunday. The Defence Minister's visit to Russia came five months after Modi travelled to Moscow and held summit talks with Putin.

summit talks with PM Modi. In his talks with Belousov, Singh pressed for expediting the supply of the two remaining units of S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile systems to India.

Singh showcased new opportunities in India for Russian defence industries in joint production of various military hardware, noting that India-Russia engagement is very strong and has lived up to the "responsibilities" of a special and privileged strategic partnership.

He voiced India's determination to extend the capabilities of its domestic defence industry across domains and industrial collaboration, the defence ministry said. Official sources said Singh strongly pitched for expediting the delivery of the two S-400 missile systems.

Singh reiterated India's commitment towards special and privileged strategic partnership with Russia, the ministry said.

- **Defence Deals and S-400:** One of the key points discussed was the **S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile system**. India had previously signed a deal with Russia for the purchase of these advanced missile systems.
- **Upcoming Russian Visit:** President Putin is expected to visit India next year for the annual summit talks with Prime Minister Modi. This visit will further solidify the defence and strategic relations between the two nations.

Why Centre wants states to make snakebites notifiable disease

ANONIMA DUTT
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 10

THE UNION Health Ministry has urged states to make snakebites a notifiable disease – a disease that is legally required to be reported to the government by both private and public hospitals.

Snakebites are a major public health challenge in the country. Seven to ten million cases of snakebites are reported every year, and an estimated 50,000 people die because of them annually, according to the 2020 Indian Medical Death Study, a large-scale study that examined the causes of premature death in India.

Earlier this year, the government launched the National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAPSE) with the aim of halting snakebite deaths by 2030. NAPSE recommended that snakebites should be made a notifiable disease.

Which types of diseases are considered notifiable?

Usually, infectious diseases that are likely to cause an outbreak, lead to deaths, and those that need to be investigated quickly to take appropriate public health measures, are declared as notifiable diseases.

While the list of notifiable diseases differs from state to state – state governments are responsible for bringing up the notification – most of them consider infectious such as tuberculosis, HIV, cholera, malaria, dengue, and hepatitis among others to be notifiable.

Why is snakebite considered a 'disease'?

Snakebites can lead to acute medical emergencies that require immediate care. They can cause severe pain and can prevent breathing, can lead to a fatal haemorrhage, and damage different tissues.

Snakebites are also associated with antivenom to prevent death and severe symptoms.

The bites of which snakes can be fatal?

There are more than 300 species of snakes in India – 66 of them are venomous and 42 are mildly venomous. Twenty-three snake species are considered to be of medical importance as their venom can kill. However, almost 90% of snakebites in the country are caused by the 'Big Four' – the Indian cobra, common krait, Russell's viper, and saw-scaled viper.

The commercially available polyvalent antivenom contains venom from all four species, and is effective against 80% of snakebites.

Why does the Centre want snakebites to be made notifiable?

Making snakebites notifiable is expected to lead to proper surveillance, and to help determine the precise numbers of snakebite cases and deaths across India. The government can then use this information to effectively manage, prevent, and control cases of snakebites. Adequate antivenom can be

provided to various regions, and proper training can be imparted in areas where snakebites are frequent. In a letter to all state health secretaries, Union Health Secretary Purni Salia wrote: "A mandatory notification of all snakebite cases and deaths is required to strengthen snakebite surveillance. It will help snakeholders gauge accurately the high risk areas, factors responsible for deaths of snakebite victims, resulting in improved clinical management."

Most snakebites happen in densely populated, low-altitude, agricultural areas in states including Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, according to NAPSE.

What are the challenges of treating snakebites?

The challenges are mainly on three fronts. **Treatment:** Snakebite victims either do not reach a healthcare centre in time or do not go there at all – and many reach to faith-based healers instead.

Primary cases staff at healthcare centres are not adequately trained in treating snakebites. Tests for confirming snakebites are also not available.

Antivenoms: Almost all the venom that is used to develop the antivenom in the country comes from snakes caught by the hula tribe, who live in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala. This is a major challenge as the biochemical constituents and the effect of the venom from the same snake species may differ based on geography.

Three differences result in the commercial ASV (anti-snake venom) prepared against the venom samples from a particular geographical location of the country showing poor immune cross-neutralisation and toxicity neutralisation," according to a 2020 paper published in the Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR).

Studies also show that the venom pro-

duces changes with age. For instance, the venom of Russell's viper renews itself more once for mammals and reptiles than that of the adult ones, according to a 2024 study.

Besides, antivenoms themselves cause various reactions. There are also local snake species – such as the banded krait, monocolled cobra, and green pit viper in the Northeast – against which the commercially available antivenom does not work.

Due to these limitations of antivenoms, researchers are now developing artificially produced antibodies that can help neutralise the toxins across various snake species. They are also looking at artificially designed peptides to fight the toxin.

Venom collection: Experts have suggested setting up rural venom collection banks across the country to develop antivenoms that can cover the regional differences. However, The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, limits access to snakes, making it difficult to set up such banks.

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India-Russia Relations (brief background)

- **Diplomatic Relations:** India and Russia (then the Soviet Union) established diplomatic relations in April 1947, shortly before India's independence.
- **Cold War Era:** The Soviet Union became a crucial ally for India during the Cold War, particularly during conflicts like the 1971 war with Pakistan. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in the same year.
- **Supportive Role:** The USSR mediated during the 1965 India-Pakistan war and consistently used its veto in the UN Security Council to support India on issues like Kashmir.
- **Post-Cold War Relations:** After the Cold War, the relationship continued with annual summits and strategic partnership agreements established in 2000 and upgraded in 2010.
- India and Russia have also been holding so-called 2+2 meetings – joint meetings with foreign and defence ministers – since 2021.
- **Current relationship between India and Russia**
 - Russia remains a key strategic partner for India for both practical and ideological reasons.
 - **Economic Cooperation:** India benefits significantly from access to discounted **Russian crude oil**, which has increased from less than 2 per cent of India's total imports before the Russian invasion of Ukraine to over 40 per cent in June 2024.
 - Indian companies have also benefitted from exporting refined Russian oil products, some of which have found their way onto Western markets.
 - India and Russia aim to increase bilateral trade from \$68 billion to \$100 billion by the end of this decade.
 - Connectivity initiatives include the **Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor** and the **International North-South Transport Corridor**.
 - **Military Cooperation:** Russia accounts for over 50% of India's military hardware. Key acquisitions include the S400 missile system and joint projects like the **BrahMos missile**.
 - **Managed Decline:** While Russia remains a key partner, India's dependence on Russian arms has decreased from 76% in 2009-2013 to 36% in 2019-2023, driven by a push for diversification and domestic production.
 - **Nuclear Collaboration:** India and Russia have historical ties in nuclear cooperation, including an agreement to build six nuclear power plants in Tamil Nadu.
 - **Pragmatic Approach:** India maintains a neutral stance on the Ukraine conflict, abstaining from UN votes condemning Russia, while also expressing concern over the war's humanitarian impacts.

7. Centre wants states to make snakebites notifiable disease GS 2 (Governance)

Why in News:

- The Union Health Ministry has urged states to classify snakebites as a notifiable disease, requiring both private and public hospitals to report cases.

- Diseases likely to cause outbreaks, result in fatalities, or require immediate public health action are classified as notifiable. Common examples include tuberculosis, HIV, cholera, malaria, dengue, and hepatitis.
- **Snakebites in India**
 - **Statistics**
 - Snakebites pose a significant public health challenge in India, **with 3-4 million cases and an estimated 58,000 deaths annually**, according to the 2020 Indian Million Death Study.
 - **National action plan**
 - To address this, the government launched the **National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAPSE)** earlier this year, aiming to halve snakebite deaths by 2030.
 - NAPSE recommends making snakebites a notifiable disease.
 - **Bites of which snakes can be fatal**
 - India has over 310 snake species, 66 venomous and 42 mildly venomous. Of these, 23 species are medically significant, **with the majority of bites caused by the “Big Four”**
 - Indian cobra
 - Common krait
 - Russell’s viper
 - Saw-scaled viper
 - Commercial **polyvalent antivenom is effective against bites** from these four species and covers 80% of snakebites.
 - **Snakebite - a ‘Disease’**
 - Snakebites can lead to acute medical emergencies that require immediate care.
 - They can cause severe paralysis that can prevent breathing, can lead to a fatal hemorrhage, and damage different tissues
 - Snakebites need to be treated with antivenom to prevent death and severe symptoms.
- **Why Make Snakebites Notifiable?**
 - Classifying snakebites as notifiable could improve surveillance and provide precise data on cases and deaths.
 - This information would help allocate antivenoms and train healthcare workers in high-risk areas.
 - In a letter to state health secretaries, Union Health Secretary emphasized mandatory notification to strengthen snakebite surveillance and improve clinical management.
 - **High-risk states** include **Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.**
- **Challenges of treating snakebites**
 - The challenges are mainly on three fronts:
 - **Treatment**
 - **Delayed or No Healthcare Access:** Victims often do not reach healthcare centers in time or rely on faith-based healers.
 - **Lack of Training:** Healthcare staff often lack adequate training to treat snakebites.
 - **Testing Gaps:** Tests to confirm snakebites are unavailable.
 - **Antivenoms**
 - **Development of the antivenom**
 - Almost all the venom that is used to develop the antivenom in the country comes from snakes caught by the **Irula tribe**, who live in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala.
 - This is a major challenge, as the **biochemical constituents and the effect of the venom from the same snake species may differ based on geography.**
 - **Venom potency changes with snake's age**
 - For instance, neonatal Russell’s viper venom is more toxic than that of adults.
 - **Other challenges related to antivenoms**
 - Antivenoms themselves cause various reactions.

- There are also local snake species — such as the banded krait, monocled cobra, and green pit viper in the Northeast — against which the commercially available antivenom does not work.
- **Artificial interventions**
 - Due to these limitations of antivenoms, researchers are now developing artificially produced antibodies that can help neutralise the toxins across various snake species. They are also looking at artificially designed peptides to fight the toxin.
- **Venom collection**
 - Experts recommend creating zonal venom collection banks to account for regional venom differences.
 - However, the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** restricts access to snakes, complicating efforts to establish these banks.

8. The President's power to issue Pardon, in the United States and in India

GS 2 (Governance)

• Why in News:

- U.S. President Joe Biden has issued a full and unconditional pardon to his son, Hunter Biden, for cases involving tax evasion and lying about drug use while purchasing a firearm.
- Reports suggest Biden is also considering **pre-emptive pardons** for allies, including Vice President Kamala Harris, former Chief Medical Officer Anthony Fauci, and Republican Congresswoman Liz Cheney, to protect them from potential prosecution under President-elect Donald Trump.

The President's power to issue pardon, in the United States and in India

EXPLAINED LAW

JOY SINHA KARPURAM
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 10

EARLY THIS month, US President Joe Biden issued a full and unconditional pardon to his son Hunter Biden, who was awaiting sentencing in tax evasion and lying about drug use while buying a handgun. American media have reported that the President is now considering a series of "pre-emptive" pardons for allies, including Vice President Kamala Harris, the doctor who shielded his allies from vindictive arrest and prosecution when President-elect Donald Trump assumed office.

What is the United States' power to pardon?
Article 2, Section II, Clause 1 of the US Constitution states that the President "shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment". Effectively, a pardon eliminates the punishment imposed following conviction for an offence, though it does not overturn the conviction. In a 2020 report by the White House Historical Association, former US architect Colleen Shegans summed up the power to pardon as having roots in English history. The Cornell Legal Information Institute says after the British colonised the Americas, "The King's pardon authority applied in the American colonies." The English legal tradition of pardon then directly influenced the framers of the US Constitution following independence. Today, the Office of the Pardon Attorney under the Department of Justice (DOJ) assists the President by processing thousands of petitions for pardons received annually, or conducts an initial review and an FBI background check before a final, non-binding recommendation is made to the President, who makes the final decision.

Are there any limits to this power?
Under Article 2, there are two key limitations. The first is that the President can only pardon "offences against the United States", which refers to criminal offences under federal law, applicable in multiple states and investigated by federal agencies such as the FBI. The President cannot pardon an offence under a state-specific law. Second, the President cannot grant pardons in cases of impeachment. Once a federal crime is committed, the power can be exercised at any stage, including before charges have been filed, as the US Supreme Court ruled in the *Ex Parte Garland* (1866) case. The decision stated that the power can be exercised "either before legal proceedings are taken, or during their pendency, or after conviction and judgment". According to the Office of the Pardon Attorney, a pardon "does not signify innocence" and "the pardoned offence would not be removed from your criminal record". Though it may not indicate innocence, there is no clear answer on whether a pardon is an admission of guilt.

What are "pre-emptive" pardons?
Can the President pardon someone to protect them "pre-emptively" from future criminal prosecution? According to Constitution Annotated – a government-sanctioned record of constitutional interpretations – the *Ex Parte Garland* ruling reflects "that the President may not preemptively immunise future criminal conduct". While the President may not be able to pardon someone yet to be convicted, according to Shegans, it is possible for the President to "preemptively" pardon an individual after a crime is committed but "before federal charges have been filed or a sentence has been imposed", and has been done multiple times. She states, "Such was the case when then-President Harry [Truman] pardoned former President Richard [Nixon] and President Abraham Lincoln also issued preemptive pardons during the Civil War (1861-65). Notably, when Ford pardoned Nixon, it was broadly understood any offences he "had committed or may have committed".

What is the power to pardon in India?
Under Article 72 of the Indian Constitution, the President of India can "grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or, suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence".

■ In all cases where the punishment or sentence is by a Court Martial.

■ In all cases where the punishment or sentence is for an offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the Union extends.

■ In all cases where the sentence is a sentence of death.

In *Mars Jit Singh v. Union of India* (1980), a five-judge Constitution Bench held that the President cannot grant pardon on her own, and must act upon the advice of the Council. The court also held that it would only hear a challenge to the exercise of this power in the "rare" cases where the decision is "wholly irrelevant, irrational, discriminatory or mala fide".

• The US President's power to pardon

- **About**
 - The President of the US has the constitutional right to pardon or commute sentences related to federal crimes.
 - The US Supreme Court has held that this power is "granted without limit" and cannot be restricted by Congress.
 - Clemency is a **broad executive power, and is discretionary.**
 - The President is not answerable for his pardons, and does not have to provide a reason for issuing one.
- **Constitutional provision**
 - Article 2, Section II, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution grants the President the power to issue pardons for federal offenses, except in cases of impeachment.
 - A pardon nullifies punishment but does not overturn convictions.
- **Historical Roots of the Pardon Power**
 - The concept of pardon originates from English legal traditions, tracing back to King Ine of Wessex in the 7th century, who exercised the "prerogative of mercy."
 - This authority was later delegated to colonial authorities in America before influencing the framers of the U.S. Constitution.
- **Inclusion in the U.S. Constitution**
 - In 1787, Alexander Hamilton proposed the Presidential pardon power at the Constitutional Convention.
 - A debate followed about Senate involvement, but the power was ultimately vested solely in the President as part of the Executive branch, separate from legislative and judicial functions.
- **Role of the Office of the Pardon Attorney**

- The Department of Justice's Office of the Pardon Attorney processes pardon petitions, conducting initial reviews and FBI background checks.
- The office makes **non-binding recommendations to the President**, who has the final authority.
- **Application Process for Pardons**
 - While the **President can pardon federal crimes at any time**, the DoJ requires individuals to **apply only after a five-year period following release from confinement**, demonstrating a law-abiding life during this time.
- **The limits of the US President's power to pardon**
 - **Express Limitations on Presidential Pardons**
 - **Federal Offenses Only:** The President can pardon crimes under federal law but not offenses under state laws.
 - **No Pardons in Impeachment Cases:** The President's authority does not extend to impeachment cases.
 - **Implied Limitation on Pardons**
 - A crime must first be committed for the President to issue a pardon.
 - As ruled in *Ex Parte Garland* (1866), a **pardon can be granted at any stage: before legal proceedings, during them, or after conviction and judgment.**
 - **Impact and Interpretation of Pardons**
 - **No Erasure of Record:** A pardon **does not remove the conviction**; both the conviction and pardon remain on the individual's criminal record.
 - **No Declaration of Innocence:** A pardon does not imply innocence, nor is it definitively considered an admission of guilt.
- **Pre-emptive pardons**
 - **Can the President pardon someone to protect them 'pre-emptively' from future criminal prosecution?**
 - The President cannot preemptively pardon future criminal acts, as clarified by the *Ex Parte Garland* ruling and the Constitution Annotated.
 - **Preemptive Pardons for Past Crimes**
 - While not applicable to future offenses, **the President can pardon individuals for crimes already committed, even before charges are filed or sentences imposed.**
 - **Historical examples include:**
 - **Gerald Ford pardoning Richard Nixon:** A broad pardon for any offenses Nixon "has committed or may have committed."
 - **Abraham Lincoln:** Pardoned Confederate deserters during the Civil War to encourage defections.
 - **Jimmy Carter:** Pardoned Vietnam War draft evaders who had not been charged.
- **The power to pardon in India**
 - **Presidential Pardon Powers under Article 72 of Indian Constitution**
 - The President of India is empowered to grant pardons, reprieves, respites, or remissions of punishment and to suspend, remit, or commute sentences in the following cases
 - **Court Martial:** Sentences imposed by military courts.
 - **Union Law Offenses:** Punishments for offenses under laws where the Union has executive authority.
 - **Death Sentences:** Cases involving the death penalty
 - **Judicial Interpretation of Article 72**
 - **Acting on Advice:** In *Maru Ram v. Union of India* (1980), the Supreme Court ruled that the President must act on the advice of the Central Government when granting pardons.
 - Although the President is bound by the Cabinet's advice, Article 74(1) empowers him to return it for reconsideration once.
 - If the Council of Ministers decides against any change, the President has no option but to accept it.
 - **Judicial Review:** Challenges to the use of Article 72 are limited to rare cases where the decision is deemed "wholly irrelevant, irrational, discriminatory, or mala fide."

MCQ Current Affairs
11th Dec, 2024

1. Which one of the following literary works is *not* authored by C. Subramania Bharati?

- a) Kannan Pattu
- b) Panchali Sapatham
- c) Kuyil Pattu
- d) Silappatikaram

2. 'AgeXtend', recently seen in the news, is a/an:

- a) medical device to track ageing
- b) natural supplement for anti-ageing
- c) government program for geriatric care
- d) platform to discover molecules that could slow down ageing

3. Consumer Confidence Survey, recently seen in the news, is published by:

- a) Reserve Bank of India
- b) NITI Aayog
- c) Union Ministry of Finance
- d) Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry

4. Consider the following statements regarding the Diamond battery:

- A. It functions by capturing fast-moving electrons from within the diamond structure.
- B. It is used to power pacemakers, hearing aids and ocular devices.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

5. Consider the following statements regarding the Bluetooth Low Energy Gateway:

- A. It launched under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS).
- B. It is used in precision farming for monitoring critical factors such as soil moisture and air quality.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) A only
- b) B only
- c) A and B
- d) Neither of two

Answers Current Affairs
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1. d
2. d
3. a
4. c
5. c

