

# Headlines

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**Life begins at the end  
of your comfort zone.**

Neale Donald Walsch

# Trump, 47th U.S. President, vows to stop all censorship

Page No. 1, GS 2

**Press Trust of India**

WASHINGTON

Donald J. Trump on Monday took oath for a second term as the United States President, and announced a raft of executive decisions, saying the “golden age” of America had just begun.

In a fiery inaugural address, the 47th U.S. President described January 20 as the “liberation day” and declared that “America’s decline is over” as changes will come “very quickly”.

“America will reclaim its rightful place as the greatest, most powerful, most respected nation on earth, inspiring the awe and admiration from the entire world,” he said.

Mr. Trump has stormed back to the White House with a promise to aggressively reset U.S. policies in a range of domains including immigration, tariffs and energy. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar



U.S. President Donald Trump delivers his inaugural address in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., on Monday. REUTERS

attended the inauguration ceremony. He carried a letter from Mr. Modi for Mr. Trump, sources said.

The new U.S. President listed a series of actions he would roll out immediately including declaring a national emergency at the Mexico border, renaming the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America, and taking back the Panama Canal. “After years and years of illegal and unconstitutional restriction of expression, I will also sign an executive order to stop all censorship

and bring back free speech to America,” he said.

He issued a series of executive orders targeting diversity programmes and gender identity policies.

Mr. Trump further said “as of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders, male and female.”

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**PARIS ACCORD PULLOUT**

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## **Content.**

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# PRESIDENT ELECTION

## VS



# INDIA

Ceremonial head;  
**real power with PM**

[ABOUT](#)

- Indian citizen
- 35+ years
- MPs/MLAs eligible

[ELIGIBILITY](#)

5 years; unlimited  
terms

[TENURE](#)

Needs 50 proposers  
& seconders

[NOMINATION PROCESS](#)

Non-partisan; no  
party involvement in  
elections.

[ROLE OF POLITICAL  
PARTY](#)

Elected by an Electoral  
College of MPs, MLAs of  
state and UTs of **Delhi**  
and **Pondicherry**.

[MANNER OF ELECTION](#)

# USA

Head of State & Government;  
**significant powers**



- Natural-born citizen
- 35+ years
- Resident 14+ years

4 years; **max 2 terms**



Through political  
party primaries

Significant role;  
candidates are from  
political parties



Indirect; voters elect  
Electors in Electoral  
College

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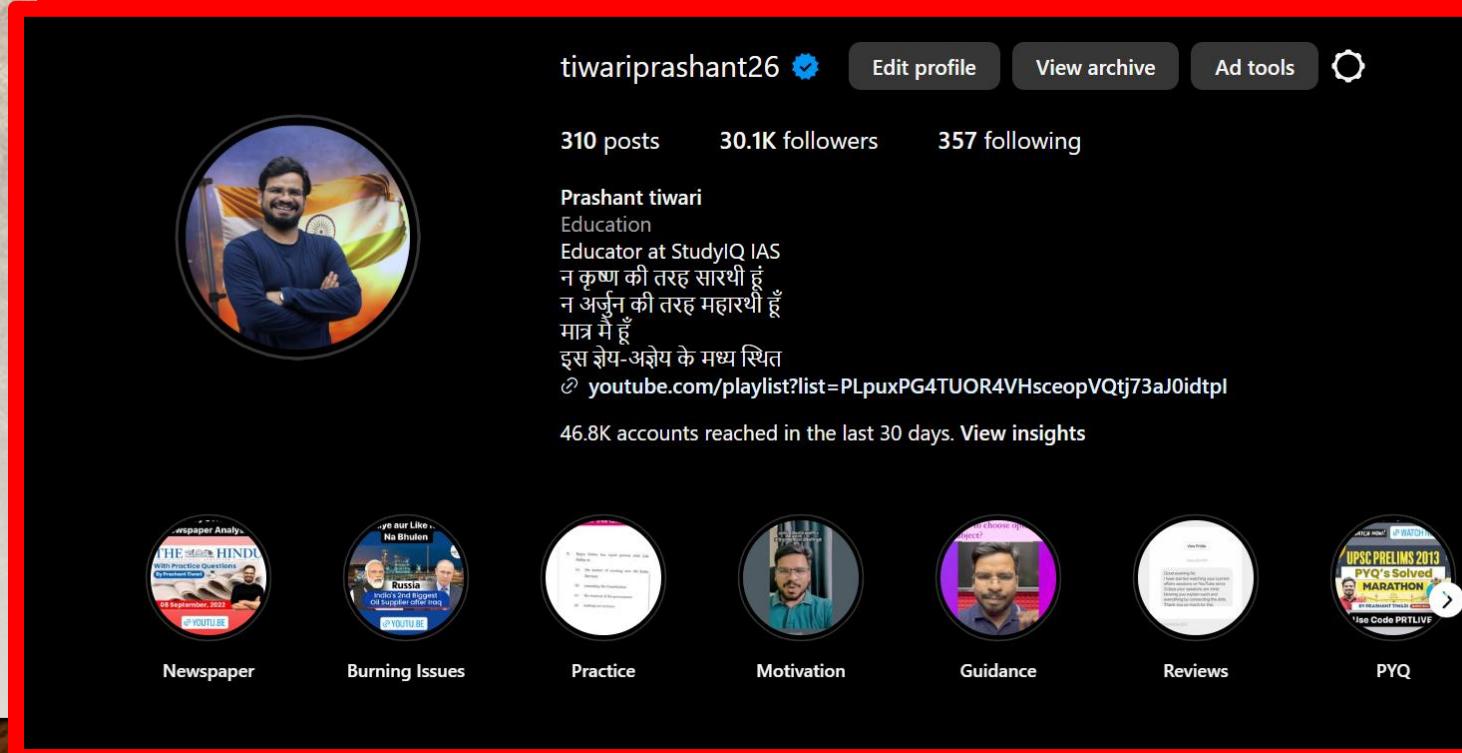
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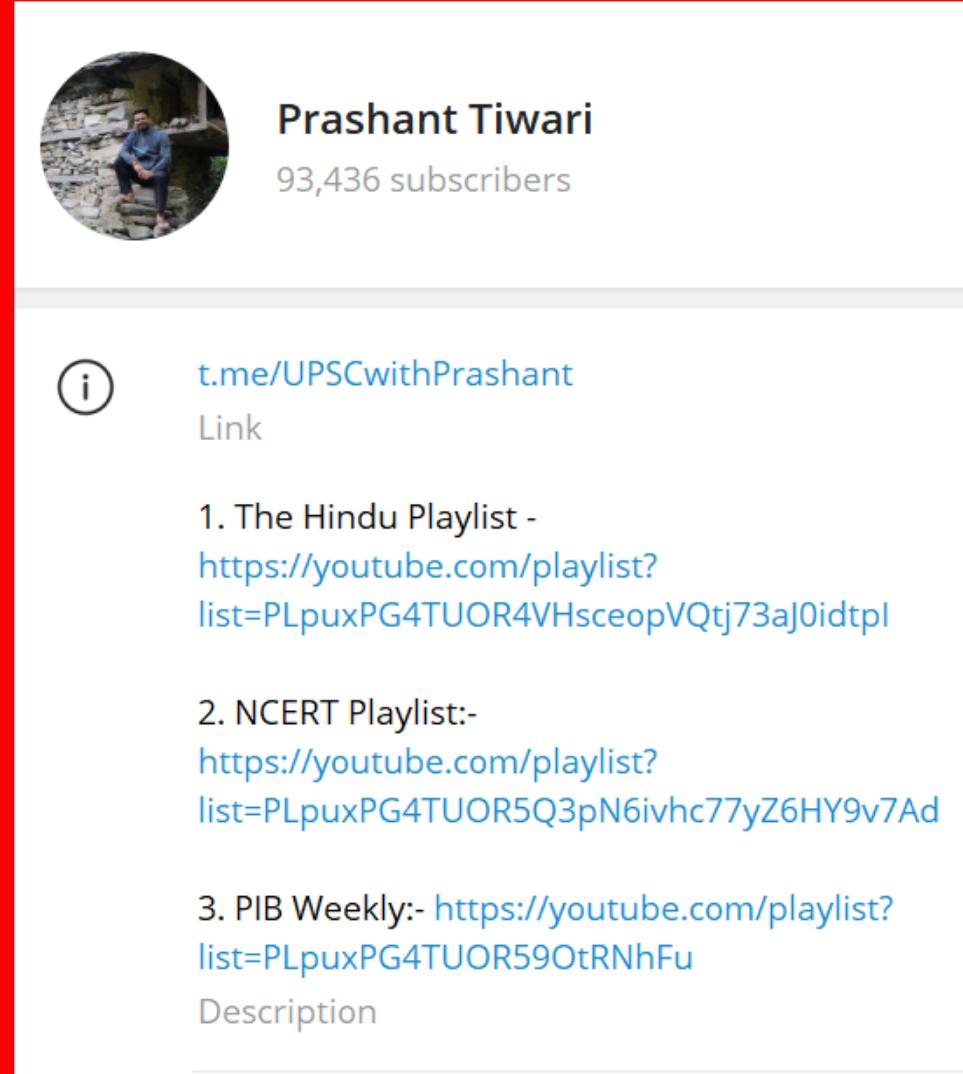
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Prashant tiwari  
Educator at StudyIQ IAS  
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न अर्जुन की तरह महारथी हूँ  
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Description

# Centre lifts ban, gives nod for sugar export

**Page No. I, GS 3**

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI/COIMBATORE

The Union government on Monday lifted the ban on sugar exports partially, allowing industries to export one million tonnes in the 2024-25 season ending in September.

Union Food Minister Pralhad Joshi said the move would ensure price stability, benefit five crore farmer families and five lakh workers, and strengthen the sugar sector. The export ban came into effect in October 2023 to regulate domestic prices. The Food Ministry said the decision to lift the ban will ensure timely payments to

farmers. The move is expected to boost liquidity for sugar mills and balance sugar availability and prices for farmers. The Food Ministry's order allows the millers to export all grades of sugar within allocated quantities. They can export sugar either directly or through traders until September 30.

The Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association welcomed the decision, saying it will address the issue of surplus sugar stocks.

This timely decision will significantly aid sugar mills by enhancing financial liquidity, the ISMA said in a statement.

## **Content.**

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## **Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme:**

### **About:**

- It was launched by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in 2003 to promote the use of alternative and environment friendly fuels.
- This programme has been extended to the whole of India (except UTs of Andaman Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands) with effect from 1st April, 2019 wherein Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) sell petrol blended with ethanol up to 10%.
- The all-India average blending of ethanol with petrol has risen from 1.6% in 2013-14 to 11.8% in 2022-23.
- India's goal is to grow this ratio to 20% by 2030, but when the NITI Aayog released the ethanol roadmap in 2021, that deadline was advanced to 2025.
- 20% by 2025-26 would mean producing some 1,000 crore litres of ethanol for blending with petrol.

## **Content.**

### **Benefits of EBP programme:**

- It will reduce India's import bill.
- It will reduce environmental pollution.
- It will increase farm income.
- Biofuels demand least incremental investment for manufacturers.

### **Challenges when it comes to 20% ethanol blended fuel:**

- Engines would need to be tweaked so as to process petrol which has been blended with 20% ethanol.
- Ethanol burns completely emitting nil CO<sub>2</sub>. However, it does not reduce the emission of another key pollutant - nitrous oxide.
- Another source of contention is inefficient land usage in ethanol production and the amount of water required to cultivate crops for ethanol.
- Food security concerns, given the uncertainties surrounding future output.

# Which panel is better for Mullaperiyar, SC asks States

Court asks T.N. and Kerala whether the supervisory committee formed by it or a statutory committee under the new Dam Safety Act of 2021 will be more effective in taking care of the dam

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

**T**he Supreme Court on Monday orally asked the States of Tamil Nadu and Kerala to address it on whether the supervisory committee formed by the court would be more effective in taking care of the 129-year-old Mullaperiyar dam or the job must be given to a statutory committee envisaged under the new Dam Safety Act of 2021.

“Which one of these committees would be more effective? If it is the statutory committee under the 2021 Act, then we can avoid overlaps and avoid unnecessary problems,” Justice Surya Kant, heading a Bench, observed orally.

The court listed the case for hearing detailed sub-



**Next sitting:** The Supreme Court listed the case for hearing detailed submissions on February 19. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

missions on February 19.

Section 5 of the 2021 Act mandates the constitution of the National Committee on Dam Safety.

#### Committee's functions

The committee would be chaired by the Central Wa-

ter Commission Chairperson and have representatives from the Centre and States and include three specialists in the field of dam safety and allied fields.

The committee's crucial functions under Section 6

include evolving policy, guidelines and standards to prevent disasters related to dam failures and maintain safety standards.

Senior advocate Shekhar Naphade for Tamil Nadu said if there was an “honest desire to work out” on the part of both States, things would be resolved. Mr. Naphade said the intent of Kerala was to obstruct.

Senior advocate Jaideep Gupta, for Kerala, said Tamil Nadu was owning a dam in Kerala and “they do not want to take care of it”.

Justice Kant said this issue was already resolved and the question now was on whether the supervisory committee of the Supreme Court or the statutory committee of the 2021 Act was the right entity to ensure the safety of the Mullaperiyar dam.

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## **Content.**

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- “Which one of these committees would be more effective? If it is the statutory committee under the 2021 Act, then we can avoid overlaps and avoid unnecessary problems,” Justice Surya Kant, heading a Bench, observed orally.
- Section 5 of the 2021 Act mandates the constitution of the National Committee on Dam Safety.
- The committee would be chaired by the Central Water Commission Chairperson and have representatives from the Centre and States and include three specialists in the field of dam safety and allied fields.

## **Content.**

- The committee's crucial functions under Section 6 include evolving policy, guidelines and standards to prevent disasters related to dam failures and maintain safety standards.

### **Mullaperiyar Dam:**

- Dam situated on the Periyar River in Thekkady, Idukki district, in Kerala.
- It is located 881 m above sea level, on the Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats.
- The dam is built at the confluence of the Mullayar and Periyar rivers.
- Its construction began in 1887 and was completed in 1895. The construction was carried out by the British Corps of Royal Engineers under the leadership of Pennycuick.
- The dam was constructed with limestone and "Surkhi" (burnt brick powder and a mixture of sugar and calcium oxide).
- The dam is 155 ft high and 1200 ft long.

## **Content.**

- The dam's primary function is to transfer water from the Periyar River to the Vaigai River basin in Tamil Nadu.
- It distributes water to various regions in Tamil Nadu, facilitating irrigation for approximately 685,000 hectares of land across five districts.
- The construction of the dam paved the way for the creation of the artificial lake at the centre of the Reserve.
- The Periyar National Park is located around the dam's reservoir.
- Although the dam is located in Kerala, it is operated and maintained by the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu.
- It was according to a 999-year lease agreement made during British rule, that the operational rights were handed over to Tamil Nadu.

## **Content.**

- The Periyar River is the longest river in the state of Kerala with a length of 244 km.
- It is also known as ‘Lifeline of Kerala’ as it is one of the few perennial rivers in the state.
- Periyar River originates from Sivagiri hills of Western Ghats, in Tamil Nadu and flows through the Periyar National Park.
- The main tributaries of Periyar are Muthirapuzha, Mullayar, Cheruthoni, Perinjankutti.
- The Dam Safety Act, 2021 came into force in December 2021.
- The act is aimed at addressing the long-felt need for addressing issues concerning the safety of major dams all over the country.
- It provides for surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of certain dams for prevention of disasters related to dam failure, apart from institutional mechanisms to ensure their safe functioning.
- The Act covers those dams having a height of over 15m and between 10m and 15m with certain stipulations.

# UGC's draft regulation has serious constitutional issues

The draft regulation by the University Grants Commission (UGC) on the selection and appointment of vice chancellors of universities has evoked protests by non-Bharatiya Janata Party-headed State governments. Their main objection against this regulation is that it constitutes a violation of the federal principles enshrined in the Constitution of India. The State governments concerned have demanded its withdrawal.

The UGC has sought to amend Regulation 2010 that relates to the selection and appointment of vice chancellors by widening the area of selection. Under the existing regulations, a vice chancellor can be selected only from among academicians who have a minimum experience of 10 years as professor. Through this amendment, the UGC declares that professionals with 10-plus years of experience in industry, public administration or public policy, shall also be considered.

The draft regulation raises serious constitutional issues which need to be examined by separating the political context of protest and a possible political reaction from the UGC or the party in power.

## The objective of the UGC Act

The University Grants Commission Act, 1956 was enacted by Parliament to make provision for "the co-ordination and determination of standards in Universities and for that purpose, to establish the University Grants Commission". The Act, therefore, mandates the UGC to take all steps as it thinks fit for the promotion and the coordination of university education, and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities. For performing these functions the UGC can allocate funds to the universities essentially for the maintenance and development of the universities, recommend measures necessary for the improvement of university education, advise the Union or State governments on the allocation of grants to universities for any general or specific purpose, collect information on all matters relating to university education in India and other countries and make them available to any university, regulation of fees.....

Section 26 of the UGC Act empowers the UGC to make regulations for implementing the mandate of the Act. But it is made clear in this section that these regulations need to be consistent with the Act and the rules made there under. The most important among these regulations relate to defining the qualifications required of a person to be appointed to the teaching staff in a university, the minimum standards of instructions for the grant of any



P.D.T. Achary

is former Secretary  
General, Lok Sabha

The problem arises when the UGC begins to regulate an area which is not a part of the parent Act – namely the selection and the appointment of university vice chancellors

degree by a university, and regulating the maintenance of standards and the coordination of work or facilities in universities.

## It is not the job of the UGC

The crucial point that needs to be considered here is whether the regulation made by the UGC in respect of the selection, qualification and appointment of vice chancellor is consistent with the provisions of the UGC Act. As a matter of fact, the Act does not contain any provisions relating to the selection and the appointment of vice chancellors. The fundamental objective of the Act is to determine standards in universities and the promotion and the coordination of university education. To lay down the standards of teaching and to prescribe the qualifications of teaching staff whose job is to give instructions, is the main function of the UGC – which it does by making periodic regulations. But the problem arises when this statutory body begins to regulate an area which is not a part of the parent Act. Rules, and regulations are technically called subordinate legislation. The subordinate legislation can be made only in consonance with the provisions in the Act. If the regulation goes outside the scope of the Act, it will be *ultra vires* the Act, and hence invalid.

A close reading of the Act would show that it was not meant to prescribe the qualifications or mode of selection of vice chancellors. All universities, whether under the Union or the States, are established under a statute made by the respective legislature. Therefore, it is the legislature which prescribes the qualifications, mode of selection, and conditions of service of vice chancellors. It is not the job of the UGC. The selection and the appointment of vice chancellors cannot be considered to be an exercise connected with maintaining the standards of education or promotion and coordination of university education. The Bombay High Court in *Suresh Patilkhede vs The Chancellor Universities of Maharashtra and Others* (2011) corroborates this view in the following words "we are of the view that qualifications and method of appointment of Pro-Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the University cannot be treated as satisfying the 'direct impact' test [on the standards of education]". Therefore, it is safe to assume that under Section 26 of the UGC Act, the UGC has no mandate to make any regulation in respect of the selection and the appointment of vice chancellors.

An interesting constitutional question which arises in the context of the UGC's regulations is whether a regulation can over-ride an Act passed by a State legislature. This question came up in the context of the termination of the appointment

of some vice chancellors in the past. The Bombay High Court in the *Suresh Patilkhede* case (*supra*) took the view that "Regulation 7.3.0 of UGC Regulations, 2010 being a subordinate legislation under an Act of Parliament cannot override plenary legislation enacted by the State Legislature...." However, the Supreme Court of India, in *Kalyani Mathivanan vs K.V. Jeyaraj and Ors* (AIR 2015 SC 1875 para 22) overruled it by holding "we hold that the U.G.C. Regulations through a subordinate legislation has binding effect on the Universities to which it applies...." The reason given by the Court for reaching this conclusion is that "it is only when both the Houses of the Parliament approve the regulation, the same can be given effect". It may be clarified here that Parliament does not formally approve any rule or regulation laid in the House. It can only amend a rule which has already come into effect before it is so laid; if Parliament amends the rule, it will, thereafter, be effective in the amended form. With due respect to their lordships, the observation of the Court does not correctly reflect the parliamentary procedure relating to the laying down of rules and regulations in the Houses of Parliament.

The question whether the UGC regulations override a State law can be answered only in terms of Article 254 of the Constitution which deals with repugnancy. Under this Article, if a State law is repugnant to the central law, the State law, to the extent of repugnancy, be void. But is a regulation made by the UGC, a central law within the meaning of Article 254? Clause (2) of this Article says that if the law made by the legislature of a state has been reserved for the consideration of the President and has received his ascent, it shall prevail in the State. In this clause the word 'law' simply means the Bill passed by the legislature and sent to the President. It does not include the rules and regulations which are framed only after ascent is received. So, what overrides a State law is a Bill passed by both Houses of Parliament and assented to by the President, and certainly not the subordinate legislation.

## A key ruling

In any case, the Court made a significant ruling on the question of mandatory application of Regulation 7.3.0 of the UGC relating to the selection and appointment of vice chancellors in the *Kalyani Mathivanan* case (*supra*) it says: "However, the finding of the Bombay High Court that Regulation 7.3.0 has to be treated as *recommendatory* in nature is upheld in so far as it relates to Universities and Colleges under the State Legislation." This ruling may perhaps help resolve the present controversy.

**Page No. 6, GS 2**

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- The draft regulation by the University Grants Commission (UGC) on the selection and appointment of vice chancellors of universities has evoked protests by non-Bharatiya Janata Party-headed State governments.
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- The UGC has sought to amend Regulation 2010 that relates to the selection and appointment of vice chancellors by widening the area of selection.
- Under the existing regulations, a vice chancellor can be selected only from among academicians who have a minimum experience of 10 years as professor.
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- The University Grants Commission Act, 1956 was enacted by Parliament to make provision for “the co-ordination and determination of standards in Universities and for that purpose, to establish the University Grants Commission”.
- The Act, therefore, mandates the UGC to take all steps as it thinks fit for the promotion and the coordination of university education, and for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities.
- Section 26 of the UGC Act empowers the UGC to make regulations for implementing the mandate of the Act. But it is made clear in this section that these regulations need to be consistent with the Act and the rules made there under.
- The most important among these regulations relate to defining the qualifications required of a person to be appointed to the teaching staff in a university, the minimum standards of instructions for the grant of any degree by a university, and regulating the maintenance of standards and the coordination of work or facilities in universities.

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## **University Grants Commission (UGC)?**

- The Sargeant Report was the first attempt to formulate a national system of education in India in 1944.
- It recommended the formation of a University Grants Committee, which was established in 1945 and was tasked with dealing with all of the then-existing Universities in 1947.
- Soon after independence, the University Education Commission was established (in 1948) under the chairmanship of Dr. S Radhakrishnan to report on Indian university education and suggest improvements and extensions.
- It proposed reorganizing the University Grants Committee along the lines of the University Grants Commission of the United Kingdom.
- As a result, the UGC was formally inaugurated in 1953 by Maulana Abul Kalam, the then Minister of Education.
- However, the UGC was established [by the Ministry of Education's Department of Higher Education] as a statutory body in November 1956 by the UGC Act 1956.

## Capex quandary

Private investments remain tentative  
amid growth concerns

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centre has been using public capital expenditure on infrastructure to pump prime the economic recovery. The mantra has been that infrastructure building will stoke demand for products such as cement and steel, generate jobs in construction, and together trigger a strong multiplier effect on the economy, eventually creating conducive conditions for private investors to plan greenfield and brownfield projects. In Budget 2024-25, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government will endeavour to maintain strong fiscal support for infrastructure over the next five years, in conjunction with imperatives of other priorities and fiscal consolidation. She announced ₹1.11 lakh crore of capex spends this year, amounting to 3.4% of GDP. That goal is unlikely to be attained partly due to spending curbs in the poll-affected first quarter. While industry has urged the Centre to continue the capex push in 2025-26 as well, it has failed to respond to the government's constant nudges and persuasions to ramp up their own operations.

Data show that two of this year's first three quarters have recorded a notable sequential decline in private investment plans, particularly by domestic industry. In Q1, private capex plans dropped to multi-year lows, and though the July-September quarter recorded a recovery in investment intentions, that uptick has dissipated in Q3. Projects Today data suggest domestic investments' value dropped 1.4% from Q2, while new projects' value dropped over 22% from a year ago as per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. There are many factors playing on corporate risk-taking capacity – weak Q2 results, global uncertainties, spiking costs and waning demand in more lucrative urban markets. Going by current indications, including the early bird Q3 results, demand has not really improved, nor is there ostensible pressure on factory capacities to warrant expansions. For a sustainable breakout from this slowdown, private capital should take the driving seat because there are limits to enhancing public capex while maintaining fiscal rectitude and providing for myriad welfare schemes. The government must accept that exhortations to industry are unlikely to spur fresh outlays, and incentives focused on themes such as import-substitution are insufficient. Not one new rupee will be deployed if a project is unviable and demand flaky. Policy focus should remain firmly on ensuring the ground is ripe to instigate investments and easing the realisation of such plans into billowing chimneys and new jobs. For that, boosting incomes and consumption is critical as is expediting macro- and micro-level reforms. That an economic policy framework outlining next generation reforms, promised in the Budget, has not been heard of since then, is not very comforting.

**Page No. 6, GS 3**

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- Data show that two of this year's first three quarters have recorded a notable sequential decline in private investment plans, particularly by domestic industry.
- For a sustainable breakout from this slowdown, private capital should take the driving seat because there are limits to enhancing public capex while maintaining fiscal rectitude and providing for myriad welfare schemes.

# Prioritising IMEC is in America's best interest

The United States-India relationship has evolved into an increasingly vital strategic partnership ever since the Clinton administration laid the foundation for a new direction in the 1990s. Today, broad bipartisan consensus supports building upon these ties even further, driven by converging interests in economic growth, regional security, and democratic values. As global dynamics shift, the importance of this relationship for the Trump administration becomes even more pronounced.

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) agreement presents a tremendous opportunity for President Donald Trump to solidify this multilateral partnership while advancing both the strategic interests of the U.S. and India. By leading the effort to secure cooperation among the participating nations, the U.S. can help create a robust economic corridor to ensure free and open trade routes, with enhanced energy security and technological innovation, which, in turn, will also benefit American companies.

## More conceptual now

Announced in 2023, IMEC represents an ambitious vision to forge an integrated network spanning three vital regions through advanced physical and digital infrastructure. The corridor must develop efficient transportation routes, including railways, shipping networks, and maritime connections, while also establishing cross-border electricity and hydrogen pipelines and digital communication cables. The end goals should be to enhance trade connectivity and reduce transportation costs, while diversifying global supply chains and promoting deeper economic integration among participating countries (India, the U.S., the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Italy, France, Germany, and the European Commission).

At the moment, it is reasonable to suggest that IMEC is more conceptual than concrete. Meeting its lofty goals requires extensive planning and cooperation. The Trump administration's leadership on this matter could enhance his legacy on the international stage. By supporting IMEC, the U.S. and India can establish a



**Sanjeev Joshipura**

is Executive Director  
of Indiaspora



**Kapil Sharma**

is Principal at  
Kapstone Strategies  
and Non-Resident  
Fellow, Atlantic  
Council

compelling alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), creating a more balanced global economic architecture that aligns with western democratic values and market principles.

IMEC was never destined to be a straightforward endeavour. Each participating nation faces a complex calculus of investment, political will and economic strategy. The corridor demands substantial infrastructure investments that directly compete with other national priorities. Moreover, private sector engagement introduces another layer of complexity. Corporate investors require clear pathways to return on investment; and without active engagement from the private sector, it is unlikely that the project could succeed.

Several countries, such as Greece and Italy, have shown substantial initiative on IMEC. France has distinguished itself by appointing a special envoy in Gérard Mestrallet, who is not a traditional diplomat. France's President Emmanuel Macron has chosen a proven business leader from France to head this geopolitical and economic initiative, as he recognises its economic potential for France. The UAE and Saudi Arabia appreciate the role IMEC can play in advancing relationships with the West, and have spearheaded efforts for its implementation. Without regular, strategic engagement, there is a significant risk of creating an uneven economic landscape that could breed tension and political friction among participating nations. The corridor offers transformative economic opportunities not just for coastal regions and primary ports but also for inland areas that could become crucial nodes in this expansive trade network. Even within the region, we have already seen countries such as Iraq and Türkiye initiate trade agreements to compliment IMEC.

## As an alternative to China's BRI

IMEC promises substantial economic advantages for India by dramatically reducing trade costs and transforming maritime logistics. This strategic network reduces vulnerability to potential disruptions such as those that might occur in the Suez Canal, but also creates compelling opportunities for increased foreign direct

investment. By positioning itself as an alternative to the BRI, the corridor allows India to strengthen diplomatic ties with West Asian and European countries.

## Better for the environment

There are implications to this deal that could impact the earth's climate health. India has emerged as a significant player in green hydrogen development, positioning itself as a potential global leader in this emerging clean energy technology. The country has launched ambitious initiatives to develop green hydrogen as a strategic component of its energy transition and decarbonisation efforts.

India is collaborating with international partners such as Germany and Japan, and developing infrastructure for green hydrogen production, storage, and transportation. This will help reduce carbon emissions, decrease dependence on fossil fuel imports and create new job opportunities in emerging green technology sectors.

The Trump administration's role in facilitating the Abraham Accords proved instrumental in creating the diplomatic conditions that made IMEC possible. Former U.S. President Joe Biden has been a strong proponent of IMEC. Looking ahead, questions remain about IMEC's future under potential new U.S. leadership. One intriguing factor is Mr. Trump's warm personal relationship with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This rapport could prove significant to ongoing relations. Now that there is a peace agreement between Israel and Hamas, both leaders could facilitate the much needed (and required) meeting of IMEC participants to discuss the next steps.

This endeavour transcends traditional infrastructure development; it represents a fundamental reimagining of regional economic cooperation that requires unprecedented levels of coordination among diverse stakeholders. The U.S. and India, as key architects of the corridor, must work closely to shepherd this project to completion, recognising both its economic significance and environmental implications for all participating countries.

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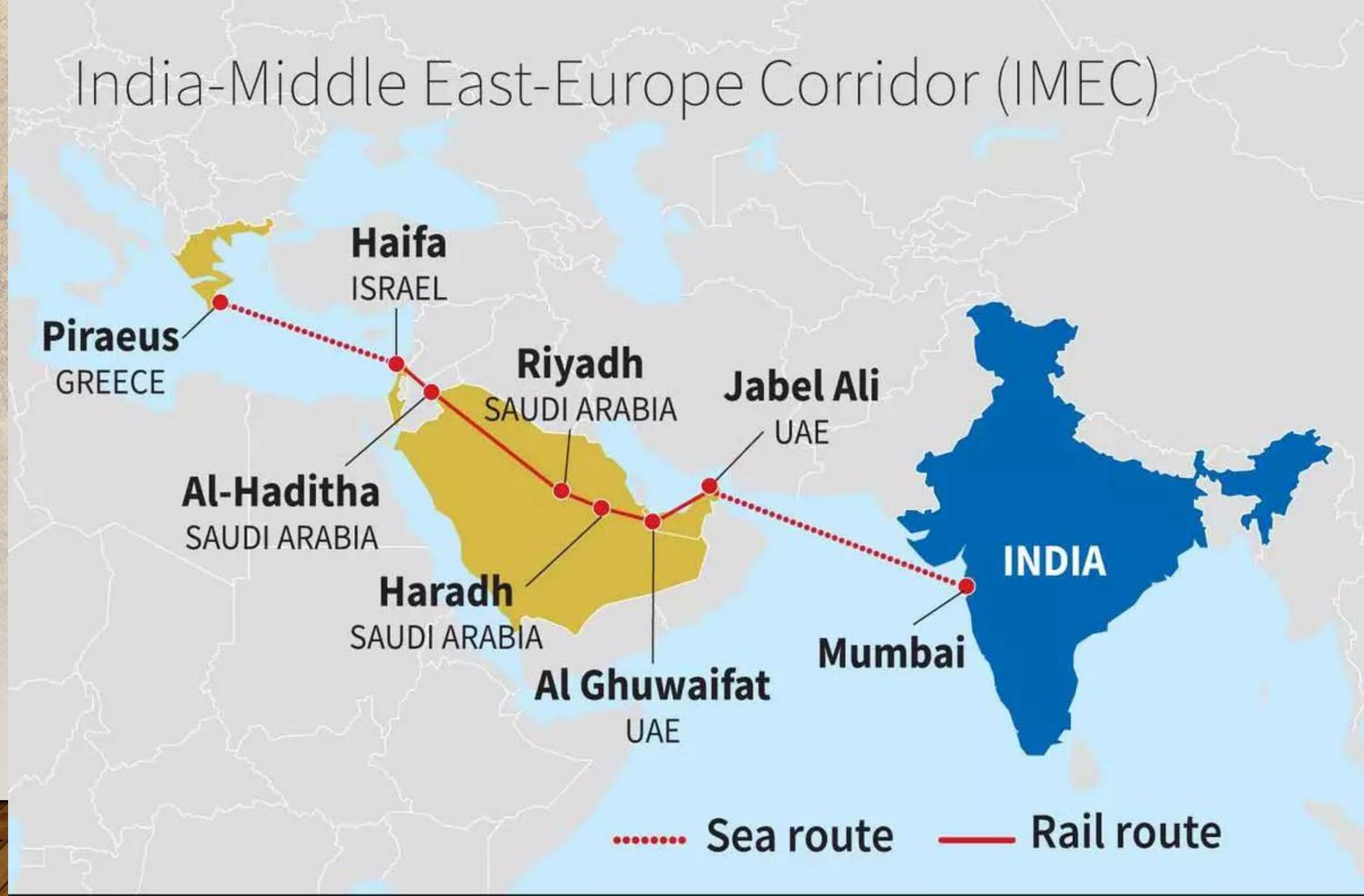
## **Content.**

- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) agreement presents a tremendous opportunity for President Donald Trump to solidify this multilateral partnership while advancing both the strategic interests of the U.S. and India
- Announced in 2023, IMEC represents an ambitious vision to forge an integrated network spanning three vital regions through advanced physical and digital infrastructure.
- The corridor must develop efficient transportation routes, including railways, shipping networks, and maritime connections, while also establishing cross-border electricity and hydrogen pipelines and digital communication cables.
- The end goals should be to enhance trade connectivity and reduce transportation costs, while diversifying global supply chains and promoting deeper economic integration among participating countries (India, the U.S., the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Italy, France, Germany, and the European Commission).

## Fact

- At the moment, it is reasonable to suggest that IMEC is more conceptual than concrete.
- By supporting IMEC, the U.S. and India can establish a compelling alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), creating a more balanced global economic architecture that aligns with western democratic values and market principles.
- As an alternative to China's BRI
- India has emerged as a significant player in green hydrogen development, positioning itself as a potential global leader in this emerging clean energy technology.
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# India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)



# We need distinguished jurists as judges

A critical aspect of a judicial system is the effective and timely delivery of justice. This can be achieved in the Indian judicial system only if the significant crisis of backlogs and vacancies is addressed urgently by both the judiciary and the government.

Data as of January 1, 2025, show that 371 posts of the 1,122 posts sanctioned across the High Courts of the country remain vacant. The Allahabad High Court functions at only 50% of its total sanctioned strength. Naturally, this has a direct impact on the already alarming levels of backlog. As millions of people have to wait for a long time for justice, their faith in the judicial system is eroding. Although this has been a perennial issue, there are now about 60 lakh cases pending across all the High Courts, an astonishing number. To solve this, we need both immediate remedial steps and reformative measures.

While it is true that the pace of Collegium recommendations and the resulting appointments has picked up in the last couple of years, it has unfortunately not been able to match the number of retirements and ever-increasing number of filings. In turn, this has put enormous strain on the system, compelling judges to take on a higher caseload than feasible. This is likely to adversely impact both the time given to as well as the depth of engagement with a particular case. Therefore, a well-staffed judiciary functioning at near-total sanctioned strength is the need of the hour.

## A game changer

In that context, Article 124(3)(c) and Article 217(2)(c), now repealed, of the Constitution become increasingly significant. These provisions allow for the appointment of individuals who, in the opinion of the President (read Collegium), are 'distinguished jurists', as judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts. Unfortunately, Article



**Kumar Ritwik**

Delhi-based Advocate, currently serving as a Law Clerk in the Supreme Court of India

124(3)(c) remains unutilised and Article 217(2)(c) has been repealed without any stated reason. In other words, no jurist has been found to be distinguished enough to be appointed to these posts till date. Although it is a routine practice in jurisdictions across the globe to appoint jurists as judges, appointments to the High Courts and the Supreme Court in India have always been either from the Bar (practising advocates) or the judicial services.

At a time when the issue of vacancies and backlogs is stifling the system, introducing and invoking the provision to appoint 'distinguished jurists' to High Courts of the country can turn out to be a game changer. In fact, a similar idea was floated by Shri Shibban Lal Saxena but negated by the Constituent Assembly on June 7, 1949, without any meaningful deliberation.

Involving the world of academia directly into the mainstream Indian judicial system can bring both immense benefits and challenges. A vast pool of specialised knowledge, research-based critical thinking, and expertise can provide unique insights and add a hitherto missing dimension to the judiciary's understanding of complex socioeconomic and socio-legal cases. At the same time, the lack of courtroom experience, procedural knowledge, understanding of limits to exercising judicial power, and a certain degree of resistance among the status quoists within the institution are challenges that will need to be overcome as well.

By drawing upon the expertise of its sharpest academic minds, India will be able to enhance the quality of the judiciary's output

and grievances of not having been adequately nurtured or supported, re-introducing Article 217(2)(c) and appointing jurists or academics as judges of the High Courts would send across an important message. At the same time, with adequate training of procedural know-how and courtroom experience, the presence of our sharpest academic minds on the Bench would ensure that the judicial discourse is enriched and that judicial decision-making is further strengthened.

Granting an opportunity to distinguished academics to effectively engage with the complex problems of the contemporary legal world would lend a fresh perspective to the cause of justice. Such appointees would naturally serve as a bridge between academia and practice. This would lead to a synergistic interaction of legal research with the more nuanced and practical aspects of delivering justice.

Therefore, the need of the hour is to tide over the current crisis of increasing backlogs, and bridge the widening gap between the actual strength and the sanctioned strength of courts. First, the government must comply with the Collegium's recommendations within a strict time frame. Second, deploying innovating solutions, such as re-introducing and invoking Article 217(2)(c) to appoint distinguished jurists to High Courts, would help fill existing vacancies. Tapping into the academic world as a valuable resource sector would help ensure that the Indian judicial system remains dynamic, robust, and diverse, grounded in practical realities as well as an in-depth understanding of its underlying constitutional principles. By drawing upon the expertise of our sharpest academic minds, India will be able to address the existing concerns and enhance the quality of the judiciary's output. Such a step could prove to be transformative for the Indian judiciary in the years to come.

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- These provisions allow for the appointment of individuals who, in the opinion of the President (read Collegium), are ‘distinguished jurists’, as judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts.
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- Involving the world of academia directly into the mainstream Indian judicial system can bring both immense benefits and challenges.
- A number of countries (such as the United States, Poland, Myanmar, Kenya, Thailand, Spain and Italy) that allow jurists or professors of law to be appointed to posts equivalent to that of a judge in the High Courts and/or the Supreme Court of India have vastly benefited from this practice.
- Granting an opportunity to distinguished academics to effectively engage with the complex problems of the contemporary legal world would lend a fresh perspective to the cause of justice.

# One in three Indians wants to buy an electric vehicle next: report

Women influence 52% of the decisions related to the purchase of EVs in Indian households

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## DATA POINT

### The Hindu Data Team

One in three consumers in India is eyeing electric vehicles (EVs) for their next purchase, says the 'Think Mobility' report by Google and BCG. Women are emerging as key decision-makers in the EV market. While EV-related challenges persist, innovations and localised manufacturing could pave the way for greater adoption, says the report.

The report highlights significant growth potential in India's automotive market. **Chart 1** shows that the vehicular market has the highest potential for growth in developing countries such as India. On the other hand, countries such as the U.S., Switzerland, and Denmark, which already have a high vehicle penetration rate, have limited room for further growth.

**Chart 2** shows that 36% of consumers are considering an EV for their next four-wheeler, while 30% are inclined towards an electric two-wheeler.

When read together, Charts 1 and 2 show that not only is there significant growth potential in India's automotive market as only a small share of the population (3.3%) owns cars, but a substantial portion of this growth is likely to be driven by consumers who are increasingly inclined towards EVs.

The study also estimates a 2.7-fold increase in elite households by 2035. This suggests that the affordability of higher-priced EVs is unlikely to deter a substantial share of households.

However, barriers remain. Over half express concerns about the availability of charging infrastructure, while 45% are dissatisfied with the high acquisition costs of EVs. One in three worry about battery life, and one in five feel the current variety of models is insufficient (**Chart 3**).

To address these challenges, the report suggests several solutions:

improving the availability and discoverability of charging infrastructure, offering innovative financing options, scaling up localised manufacturing, extending warranties, ensuring transparency in battery health, and introducing new models 60% of which are being developed by major Indian-original equipment manufacturers and are new to the market.

Women influence 52% of EV purchase decisions, while they influence only 38% of non-EV purchase decisions in India. The report says that over 41% of Indian customers with two-wheelers prefer vehicles with in-built navigation systems on the dashboard. It also says that 85% of Indian users are open to considering the car model they rented as their next purchase. Notably, Gen Z is 2.7 times more likely to use self-drive rentals compared to the older generations.

One in four consumers who are buying a car for the first time are planning to purchase a pre-owned vehicle. To convert these intentions into actual sales, factors such as digitisation, transparency, and trust are essential. Additionally, one in three consumers seek pre-owned cars to upgrade their lifestyle. High-income, status-driven commuters are drawn towards luxury second-hand cars for their uniqueness, while those who take frequent road trips prefer pre-owned vehicles for their durability (**Chart 4**).

Sellers are 1.5 times more likely to prefer organised channels when selling their cars. These platforms act as one-stop shops, offering streamlined processes, improved valuations, and hassle-free ownership transfers. However, while purchasing pre-owned vehicles, buyers are less inclined towards organised platforms and prefer local networks of brokers and friends. This hesitation stems from a perceived lack of transparency in organised systems, rigid payment structures, and a lower level of trust compared to familiar in-network sources.

## Steering towards a greener future

The data were sourced from 'Think Mobility', a research report published by BCG & Google



Chart 1: The chart plots the penetration of personal cars in 2023 versus the GDP per capita

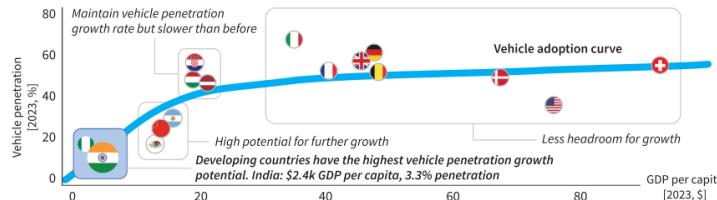


Chart 2: Those who consider an EV for their next car purchase



Chart 3: The share (%) of customers who found the following issues to be of concern while adopting electric vehicles are depicted in blue, and those who did not are depicted in red

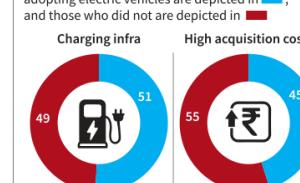
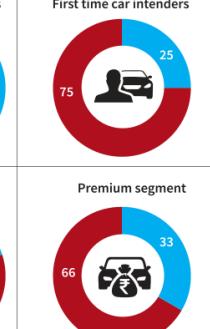


Chart 4: Share (%) of consumers in various segments planning to purchase a pre-owned vehicle



Share of those who consider EV for their next bike purchase



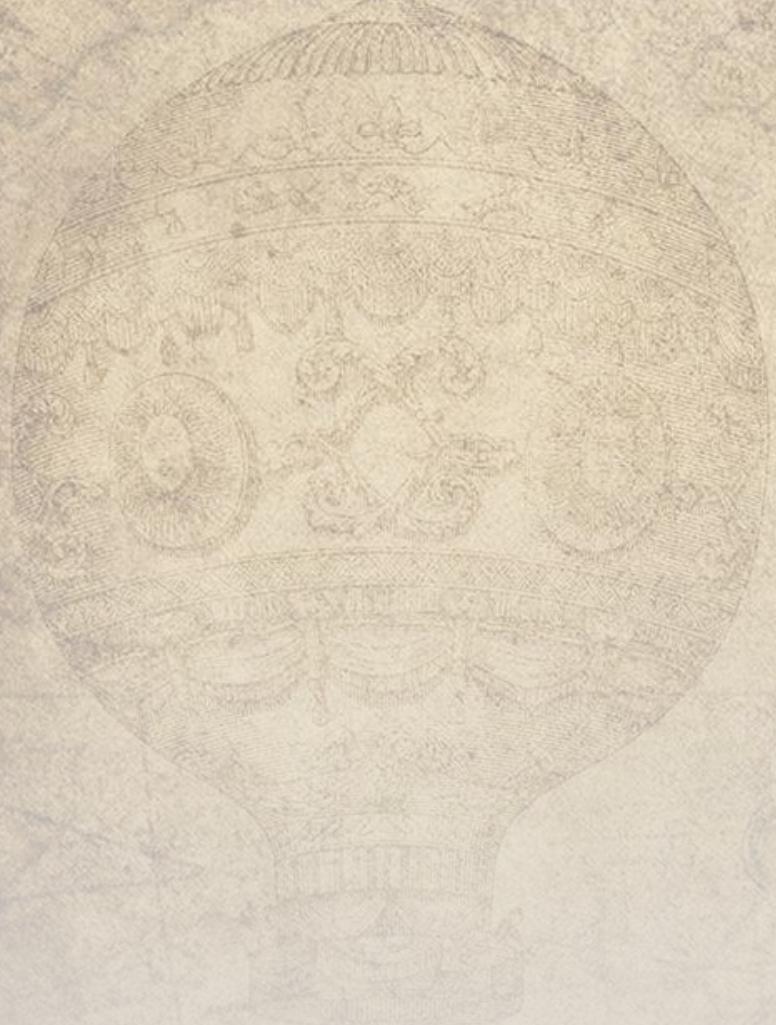
The research leverages BCG analysis, primary research and industry sources to shed light on India's auto ecosystem and the future of mobility in India

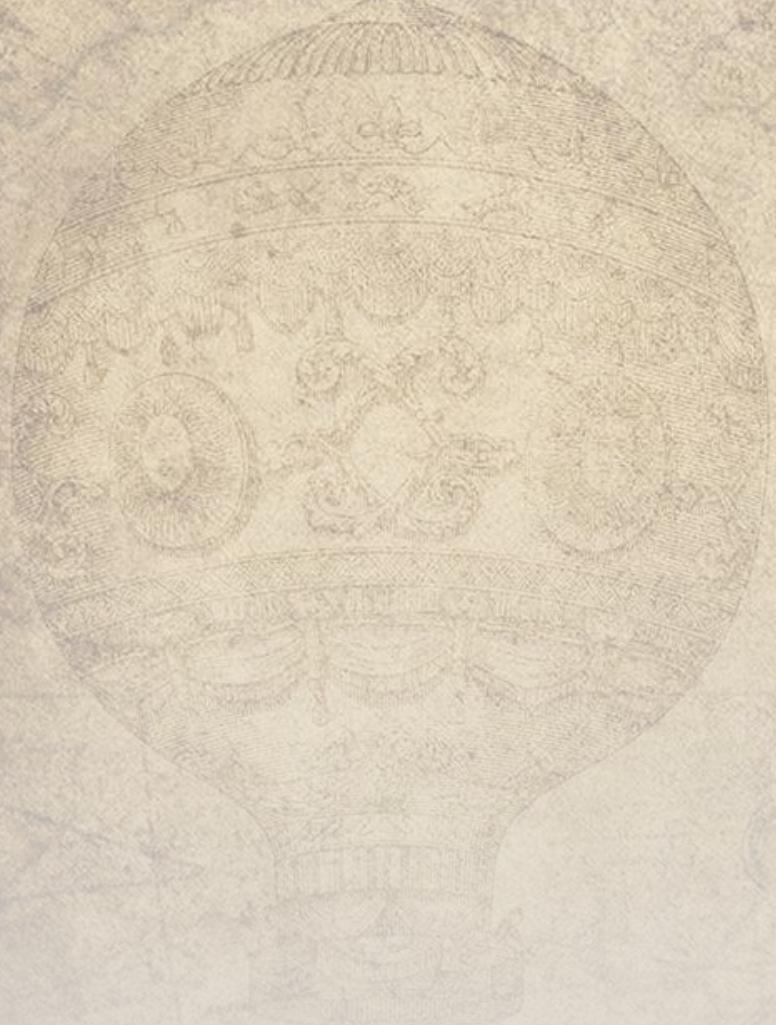
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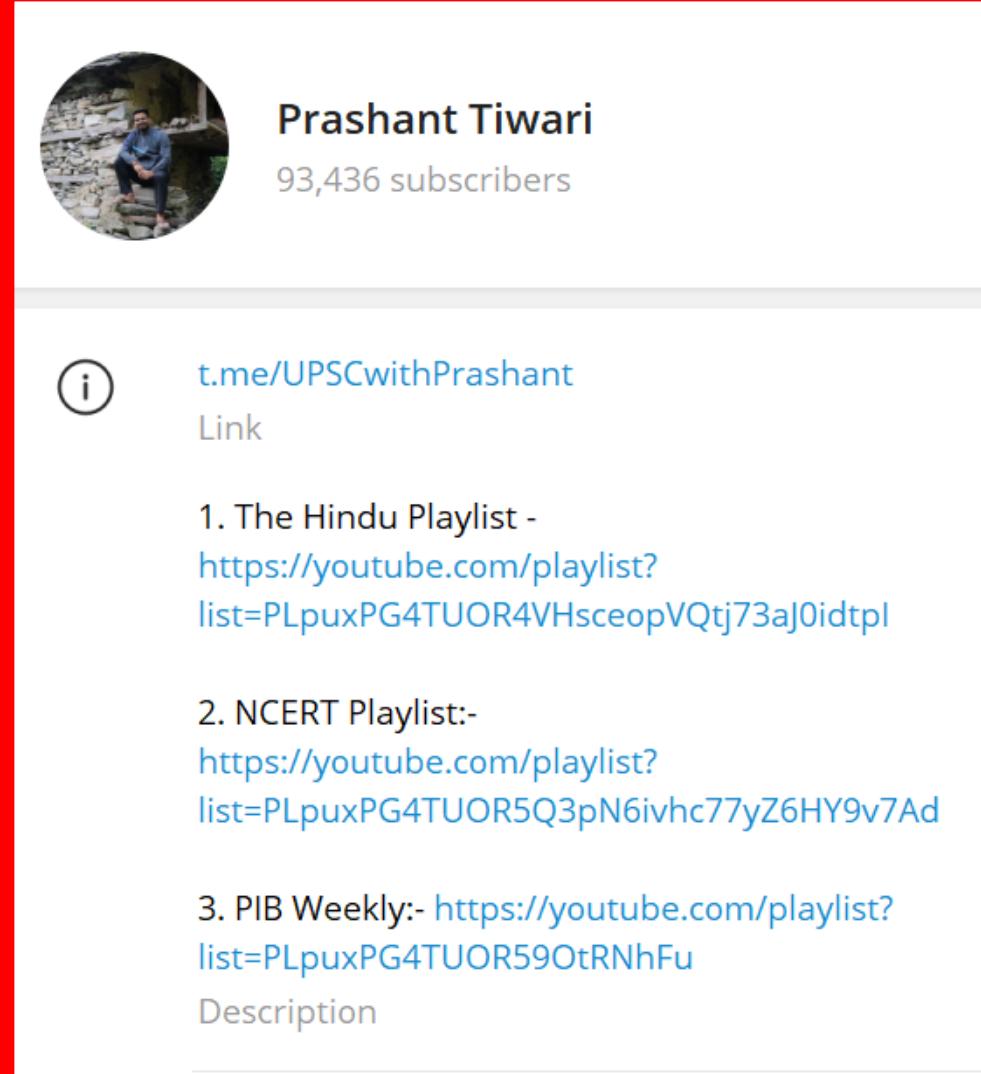
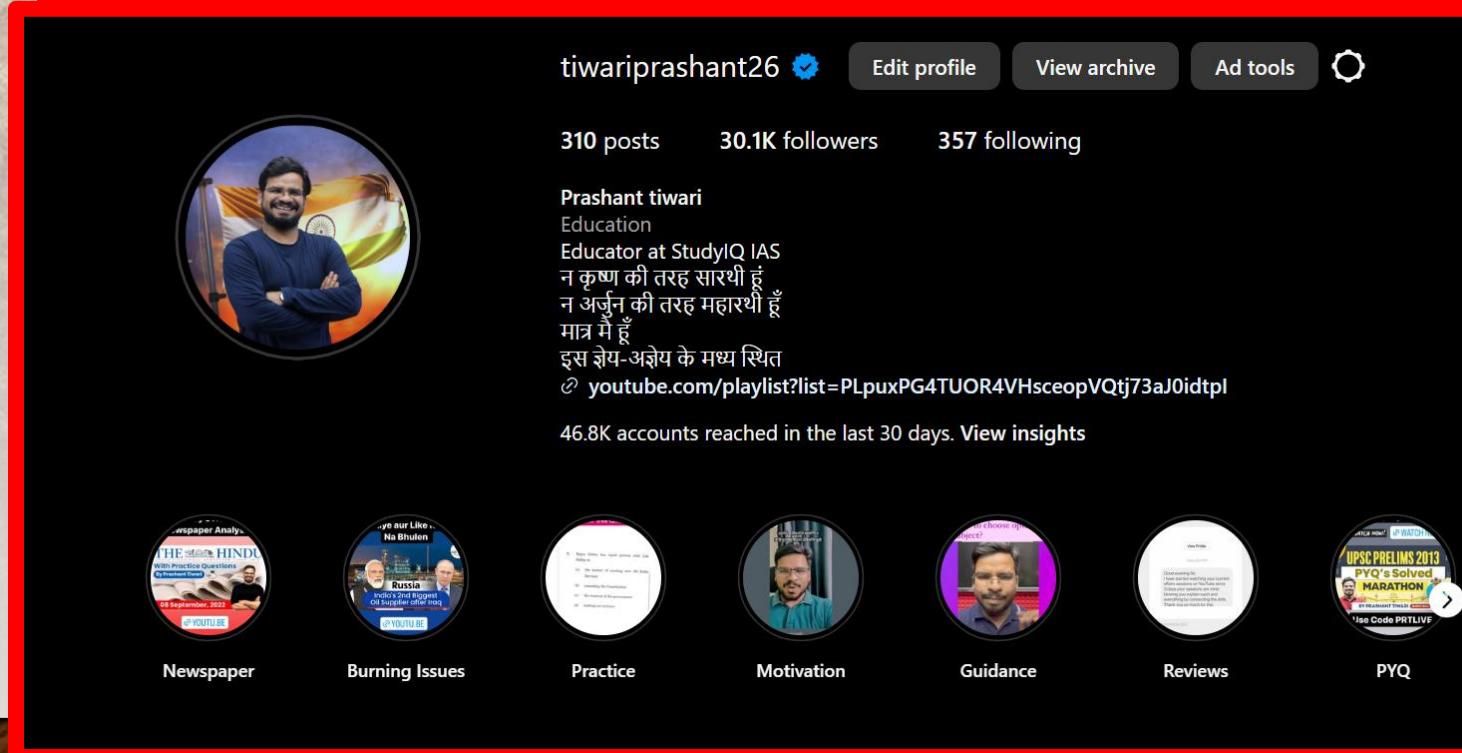
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