

Headlines

Vice-President on Judiciary - Page No.1 , GS 2

Life unknown - Page No.8 , GS 3

James Webb telescope - Page No.16 , GS 3

Indian startups - Page No.9 , GS 3

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) - Page No.14 , GS 2

India Justice Report 2025 - Page No.14 , GS 2

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“

**Keep watering
yourself.
You're growing.**

E. Russell

Judiciary can't attack forces of democracy, says Vice-President

Page No. 1, GS 2

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Questioning the judiciary for setting a timeline for the President to take decisions and accusing it of acting as a “super Parliament”, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday said the Supreme Court cannot fire a “nuclear missile” at democratic forces.

Addressing Rajya Sabha interns on Thursday, Mr. Dhankhar held an extended critique of the judiciary, citing alleged incursions by the judiciary into the domains of the executive and Parliament. His remarks come days after the Supreme Court sought to fix a timeline for the President and Governors to grant assent to the Bills reserved for their consideration.



Jagdeep Dhankhar

“So, we have judges who will legislate, who will perform executive functions, who will act as super Parliament and absolutely have no accountability because the law of the land does not apply to them,” Mr. Dhankhar said.

Stressing the principle of separation of powers, Mr. Dhankhar underlined that a government elected by the people is accounta-

ble to the people and to Parliament.

“There is a principle of accountability in operation. In Parliament, you can ask questions... But if this executive governance is by the judiciary, how do you ask questions? Whom do you hold accountable in elections? Time has come when our three institutions – legislature, judiciary, and executive – must blossom. Any incursion by one in the domain of the other poses a challenge, which is not good,” Mr. Dhankhar added.

The Vice-President said his worries were at the “very highest level” and he never thought in his life that he would have the occasion to see it.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Content.

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Fact

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Educator at StudyIQ IAS

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Life unknown

The cosmos holds limitless mysteries for the constrained human mind

The University of Cambridge issued a press release regarding a paper coauthored by one of its scientists that reported an exoplanet called K2-18b may be habitable, with the misleading headline, “Strongest hints yet of biological activity outside the solar system”. The paper, published on April 17, made headlines because astronomers have been interested for some time in this exoplanet’s peculiar surface physiochemistry. The paper is to its credit sedate in its prognostications: the authors have reported detecting the presence of dimethyl sulphide or dimethyl disulphide in K2-18b’s atmosphere; the former is considered a sign of life on the earth and could be on the exoplanet. Independent scientists and the paper’s authors have called for dispassionate efforts to refine the data and reduce uncertainties as well as to double-check the implications. If the history of the search for biomarkers on other planets both within and without the solar system is any guide, there is no guarantee that the findings will not be overturned. The cosmos still harbours too many mysteries for us to not be surprised by new information awaiting discovery. Research of this nature – initiated by curiosity and a pursuit of the unknown – has sometimes been overtaken by hype. Unfortunately, it faces another threat today: funding cuts of the type U.S. President Donald Trump has unleashed in his country.

After downsizing or cancelling grants issued via the National Institutes of Health, Mr. Trump began holding entire universities hostage: draw-down DEI initiatives and rein in student protests or forgo federal funding, he seemed to say. The institutions affected count some of the world’s best in their ranks and the funding withheld, a non-trivial fraction of that spent on certain subjects worldwide. Earlier this month, the White House’s budget proposal for the 2026 fiscal revealed its plans to cut National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration funding by 27%, nix most spending for science at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, and halve NASA’s earth-science budget. The essential programme is to control the practice and pursuit of science that does not align with Republican state ideology. Curiosity-driven research, such as that concerned with the possibility of extraterrestrial life, both proves universities’ freedom to explore the unknown and fulfils the innate curiosity of humankind. However, the Trump government’s policies leave whatever research freedom that remains very precious yet also more vulnerable to misinformation and ideological capture, and the world itself more short-sighted.

Page No. 8, GS 2

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Content.

- **NASA's James Webb Space Telescope in its study of K2-18 b discovered the presence of carbon dioxide and methane.**
- **K2-18 b is a super Earth exoplanet that orbits an M-type star.**
- **It is 120 light years from earth and orbits the cool dwarf star K2-18 a.**
- **It is 8.6 times as massive as Earth and the size lies that of between earth and Neptune.**
- **Its discovery was announced in 2015.**
- **The observations of James Webb also provided a possible detection of a molecule called dimethyl sulfide (DMS).**
- **On Earth, DMS is only produced by life.**
- **The bulk of the DMS in Earth's atmosphere is emitted from phytoplankton in marine environments.**

Content.

- Planet k2-18b is within the “habitable zone” of its star, that is conditions are just right – neither too hot nor too cold – for life to exist.

What is an exoplanet?

- – An exoplanet is any planet beyond our solar system.
- – All of the planets in our solar system orbit around the Sun. Planets that orbit around other stars are called exoplanets.
- – Exoplanets are very hard to see directly with telescopes. They are hidden by the bright glare of the stars they orbit.

Scientists using James Webb telescope find 'strongest sign of life' on alien planet

Reuters

WASHINGTON

In a potential landmark discovery, scientists using the James Webb Space Telescope have obtained what they call the strongest signs yet of possible life beyond our solar system, detecting in an alien planet's atmosphere the chemical fingerprints of gases that on Earth are produced only by biological processes.

The two gases – dimethyl sulfide, or DMS, and dimethyl disulfide, or DMDS – involved in Webb's ob-

servations of the planet named K2-18 b are generated on Earth by living organisms, primarily microbial life such as marine phytoplankton – algae.

This suggests the planet may be teeming with microbial life, the researchers said. They stressed, however, that they are not announcing the discovery of actual living organisms but rather a possible biosignature – an indicator of a biological process – and the findings should be viewed cautiously, with more observations needed.

Nonetheless, they



K2-18 b is 8.6 times as massive as Earth a. REUTERS

voiced excitement. These are the first hints of an alien world that is possibly inhabited, said astrophysicist Nikku Madhusudhan of the University of Cam-

bridge's Institute of Astronomy, lead author of the study published in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

"This is a transformational moment in the search for life beyond the solar system, where we have demonstrated that it is possible to detect biosignatures in potentially habitable planets with current facilities. We have entered the era of observational astrobiology," Mr. Madhusudhan said.

K2-18 b is 8.6 times as massive as Earth and has a diameter about 2.6 times as large as our planet.

Content.

The Webb Telescope

- **It is the world's premier space science observatory.**
- **It will solve mysteries in our solar system, look beyond distant worlds around other stars, and probe the mysterious structures and origins of our universe and our place in it.**
- **NASA's \$10 billion James Webb Telescope was developed with the assistance of the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency.**
- **The telescope launched on an Ariane 5 from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana.**

Mission:

- **It will be “a giant leap forward in the quest to understand the Universe and our origins”, as it will examine every phase of cosmic history: from the Big Bang to the formation of galaxies, stars, and planets to the evolution of our own Solar System.**

Content.

- **Initiation and collaboration:** The JWST project began in 1996 as a collaboration between NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA), and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA).
- **Successor to Hubble:** It has been conceived as the next-generation space telescope succeeding the Hubble Space Telescope, with a focus on infrared astronomy.
- **JWST is an international collaboration** between NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Canadian Space Agency which was launched in December 2021.
- **It is currently at a point in space known as the Sun-Earth L2 Lagrange point,** approximately 1.5 million km beyond Earth's orbit around the Sun.

Are Indian startups not scaling up on innovation?

Page No. 9, GS 3



Thillai Rajan

Professor and Head, Research Centre on Startups, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras



P.K. Jayadevan

Author, communications professional, and former journalist

PARLEY

Recently, while speaking at the Startup Mahakumbh in New Delhi, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said that startups were not innovating enough and were limiting themselves to grocery delivery. Are Indian startups not scaling up on innovation? Thillai Rajan and P.K. Jayadevan discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Ashokamithran T. Edited excerpts:

Do you agree with Piyush Goyal's remarks?

P.K. Jayadevan: I think it has started a debate and the timing of the debate is great. We can disagree on the substance of his statement and a lot of people have taken sides. But I think those add to the discourse and that is a positive sign.

Thillai Rajan: Startups thrive where the ecosystem helps them. Startups are engines of innovation, but are they innovating enough? That means, are they looking at commercialising science and technology-based innovation? If you consider innovation as a spectrum, people always consider science and technology as the highest order of innovation. I'm not saying that is right or wrong; I'm merely stating a fact. From that perspective, data shows that a healthy share of startups qualifies under the deep tech sector. So, there is adequate activity and interest among startups to venture into deep tech sectors.

But the question is, are they scaling up? The capital requirements of the deep tech startups are higher in the initial phase. No revenues come in during that phase, where the level of risk is very high. So, who can provide this amount of capital? The Startup India Seed Fund scheme gives about ₹50 lakh (for activities such as market entry, commercialisation, and scaling up), but that's not adequate; there has to be follow-up funding. Today, there is realisation that there has to be private sector capital provided after the initial government support.

How do venture capitalists define innovation for the purpose of funding?

P.KJ: In the early days, innovation meant just being able to order stuff online. Venture capital firms made large bets on the Indian consumer story and that was the era until 2017. We saw large companies come out of it, such as Flipkart. That was the e-commerce era. Now, we are seeing smaller funds going into deep tech, which are not nearly enough, but you could argue that venture capital is betting on the future. Now, venture capitalists will look at AI, block chain-based innovation, electric mobility, etc.



Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal at the Start-up Mahakumbh in New Delhi. ANI

TR: By innovation, we mean the benefits it will give to users. Are users going to benefit? Are they going to get a new experience from using this product? Will the consumer pay a premium for accessing the products and services? It is to assess the impact that it can create on people. In this regard, there are two points to be made. The first is to ask whether the innovation gives any competitive advantage that can be sustained over a long period of time. For example, a patent gives a competitive advantage. If that is not available, it will not attract investors' interest because the capital will not get returns. The second could be in terms of the market. It may be a great innovation, but unless it addresses a need in a growing market, there will not be many backers for it. So, these largely determine which innovations get commercialised and which ones do not.

What has been the result of the Startup India push? Has it borne fruit?

TR: The emphasis on a startup policy is possibly the most wide-reaching policy focus of independent India. The facts speak for themselves. First, there are at least 20 Ministries of the Central government which have a dedicated policy or a programme targeted at startups. Second, we can also be proud of the numbers: there are about 1,65,000-1,70,000 startups, if we go by the numbers of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. This indicates that startup policies have been able to encourage many people to start ventures. Third, the capital that has flown in is not only restricted to equity; we are also seeing significant amount of debt capital going into startups. Getting banks to invest in startups is really something. That shows that the startup focus is here to stay and is going to play an integral role in India's ambition of becoming



Every sector has been opened up to engage with startups. But the process has to be made smoother. There is a lot of bureaucracy, which makes life difficult. In addition to its intentions, if the government has appropriate implementation measures, many startups will find it a lot easier to operate.

THILLAI RAJAN

a developed country. Apart from the Centre, large States too have startup policies.

PKJ: Yeah, absolutely. Everyone wants to start a company these days, which is a huge shift in mindset compared to earlier.

But if you compare India to the U.S., you will find that the U.S. shifted manufacturing to China when it had trouble with Japan. China was where it could find cheaper labour. China saw that as an opportunity to create employment, grow its own market, and also learn from American companies. It built its own telecom networks, micro-satellites, etc. China had a very nationalistic view of technology. Because it's a closed ecosystem, it always wanted to be more self-reliant with respect to technology. So, the ecosystem matured much faster. China's consumption economy also grew in a big way. About \$12,000-15,000 per capita GDP is really good for a digital economy. We are still around \$3,500. We don't have that kind of money to spend. We have cash-rich companies but they hesitate to invest, which is not the case in other ecosystems. That's where we are lagging. The India consumption story has to move forward. For that we need some enabling criteria.

Are you speaking about some sort of an import substitution for capital?

PKJ: Not necessarily. If the market is promising, capital will come from anywhere in the world. But yes, there is a need for more Indian home-grown venture capital firms.

What prevents startups from going up the value chain or becoming bigger?

TR: There is a natural selection process that works in the economy. But the issue is whether we should give small amounts to a large number of startups or large amounts to a small number of startups. In India, by and large, the government has been trying to give small amounts to a very large number of companies. Most of the major support that the government has provided has also been used by larger

companies. The quantum of support needed has to be substantially higher. The risk capital available is very low and much of it flows from external markets, primarily the U.S. Till we are able to find domestic capital, a good amount of support needs to be provided so that we can find a few winners.

Do you think governments in India have not started taking startups seriously?

TR: No, of course they have. Every sector has been opened up to engage with startups. But the whole process has to be made smoother. There is a lot of bureaucracy, which makes life difficult. In addition to its intentions, if the government has appropriate implementation measures, many startups will find it a lot easier to operate.

India is a very unequal country. The upper middle class in urban areas want quick deliveries, domestic helps, electricians, etc. But the first wave of tech in India saw more broad-based growth. Have startups benefited only a few?

PKJ: The difference with the IT services business was that it was labour-intensive and it worked out at that point in time because of outsourcing. But were we building the foundational products? No. And did we get there? We did. Thanks to venture capital, we had Freshworks, the first Indian software product company to go to the NASDAQ and list. It changed the game. Now there are many startups that were launched by those groomed in Freshworks. Once we have successful startups, founders and others will similarly spread out and build more.

TR: The first wave of entrepreneurship was more unidimensional. Much of it was IT, software. But today, there is an emphasis on all sectors.

For every Aether, there is a Byju's. What do startups have to do to make sure they become an Aether?

TR: They should continue to be innovative because this is a competitive marketplace. One cannot rest on the laurels of the past.

PKJ: I would say set a very high bar of corporate governance and innovation.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

Content.

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Coaching centres warned against misleading students

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the declaration of results of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) and the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), under the Union Consumer Affairs Ministry, on Thursday warned coaching centres not to use misleading advertisements.

The CCPA, in a statement, directed coaching centres to adhere to the “Guidelines for the Prevention of Misleading Advertisements in the Coaching Sector” issued by the Ministry in 2024 and the Consumer Protection Act.

The panel said representations by coaching centres should be accurate, clear, and free from misleading claims or concealment of important information from consumers. They “should avoid making assurances of guaranteed success. Coaching centres must clearly disclose key details in their advertisements, including the student’s name, rank, course type, and whether the course was paid. Disclaimers must be prominently displayed in the same font size as other important information to en-



The Ministry urged the centres to stick to the guidelines issued by it in 2024. R.V. MOORTHY

sure consumers are not misled,” it said.

The panel said it had issued notices to a few institutes regarding guaranteed placement, selection, assurance of rank in JEE or NEET, violation of consumer rights, misleading advertisement, and unfair trade practices, including promised services not being provided, failing to refund fees despite cancellation of admission, and partial refund of fees.

The panel said such practices violated various sections of the Consumer Protection Act and the 2024 guidelines. “The guidelines were framed to enhance transparency and fairness in the sector, helping students and their families make informed decisions based on accurate and truthful information,” it added.

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- **The CCPA, in a statement, directed coaching centres to adhere to the “Guidelines for the Prevention of Misleading Advertisements in the Coaching Sector” issued by the Ministry in 2024 and the Consumer Protection Act.**
- **CCPA is the regulatory body established under Section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), 2019, it regulates matters related to consumer rights violations and unfair trade practices.**
- **The act empowers the CCPA to prevent false or misleading advertisements and ensure consumer rights are protected.**
- **It operates under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.**

Content.

Section 21 of CPA Act:

- **Section 21 of CPA, 2019 grants the CCPA the power to issue directions and penalties against false or misleading advertisements. It provides definition of Misleading Advertisement, Powers of the CCPA and Penalties (imprisonment of up to 2 years and a fine of up to Rs. 10 lakh).**

Benefits to Consumers:

- **Informed Consumers: CCPA empowers informed consumer decisions by deterring deceptive marketing.**
- **Transparent Ads: CCPA interventions promote truthful advertising practices.**
- **Trustworthy Claims: CCPA discourages misleading claims, boosting consumer trust.**
- **Fair Competition: It ensures competition based on product merit, not deceptive claims.**

Prisons plagued by lack of medical, mental health professionals: report

Page No. 14, GS 2

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

With a national average occupancy rate of more than 131%, Indian jails face extreme overcrowding and are battling multiple health challenges, according to the recently released India Justice Report 2025.

The report highlights the fact that India's prison inmate population is projected to reach 6.8 lakh by 2030, even though prison capacity is only likely to grow to 5.15 lakh.

The capacity shortage is not restricted to space alone, but extends to health staff.

There are only 25 psychologists for the entire nation's prisoners, at a time when the recorded number of prisoners with mental illnesses has jumped from 4,470 in 2012 to 9,084 in 2022. Yet, the response



Upward trend: The prison inmate population of India is projected to reach 6.8 lakh by 2030. AP

remains largely absent, the report says.

43% vacancy

Prisons also record a 43% vacancy among medical officers. The report, titled "The State of Public Health in India's Prisons: India Justice Report 2025 – Findings on Gaps in Staffing & Medical Care", explains that the model prison manual (2016) benchmarks

the prisoner-doctor ratio at 300 prisoners to one doctor. "India's national average far exceeds that, standing at 775 prisoners per doctor," says the report.

It also highlights the non-availability of health data on prisoners entering jail with a disability, and those who acquire a disability within the prison.

Overcrowding could also be a root cause of the

spread of several communicable diseases, the report says. In the decade between 2012 and 2022, there have been worrisome upward shifts in prison populations in several areas.

As of 2022, no State or Union Territory met the benchmark of one psychologist or psychiatrist per 500 inmates. At that time, there were only 69 sanctioned posts for psychologists and psychiatrists across India's 1,330 prisons and 5.7 lakh inmates, but not even half of these positions were filled.

"The data record the presence of only 25 or one for every 22,929 prisoners. Twenty-five States/Union Territories make no provision for a psychologist or psychiatrist within their cohort of correctional staff," said Valay Singh, the lead author of the India Justice Report.

Content.

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Fact

- **The India Justice Report (IJR) 2025 is India's first and only comprehensive quantitative index which uses government data to rank the capacity of 'pillars' of the formal justice system.**
- **First published in 2019, with the support of Tata Trusts, it continues to track improvements and persisting deficits in each state's structural and financial capacity to deliver justice based on quantitative measurements of budgets, human resources, infrastructure, workload, and diversity across police, judiciary, prisons, legal aid, and Human Rights Commissions for all 36 states and UTs.**
- **The IJR is a collaborative effort undertaken in partnership with DAKSH, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Common Cause, Centre for Social Justice, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and TISS-Prayas.**



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PRELIMS TO INTERVIEW (P2I)

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Education

Educator at StudyIQ IAS

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न अर्जुन की तरह महारथी हूँ

मात्र मैं हूँ

इस ज्ञेय-अज्ञेय के मध्य स्थित

youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aJ0idtpl

46.8K accounts reached in the last 30 days. [View insights](#)



Newspaper



Burning Issues



Practice



Motivation



Guidance



Reviews



PYQ



Thank You!