Headlines

Operation Sindoor - Page No.8 , GS 2
Trumpeting claims - Page No.6 , GS 2
Restored faith - Page No.8 , GS 2
The road to safety - Page No.9 , GS 3
Justice B.R. Gavai - Page No.12 , GS 2
Birth rates - Page No.14 , GS 1
UPSC Chairman - Page No.14 , GS 2
Belt and Road initiative - Page No.16 , GS 3

Join me on Telegram :- Prashant Tiwari
Username:- UPSCwithPrashant

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”
— Oliver Goldsmith

Justice B.R. Gavai takes over as CJI for a six-month tenure

Page No. 12, GS 2

His time in office could see important hearings in the challenges to the Places of Worship Act and the Waqf (Amendment) Act; he has been part of many impactful decisions at the Supreme Court, including upholding of abrogation of Article 370

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai was sworn in by President Droupadi Murmu as the 52nd Chief Justice of India at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Wednesday.

He took his oath of office, pledging his commitment to uphold the Constitution and faithfully discharge duties, in Hindi.

Chief Justice Gavai acknowledged the applause with folded hands, shook hands with Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, Home Minister Amit Shah, other dignitaries and family members sitting in the foremost row, including his immediate predecessor, Justice Sanjiv Khanna.

The Chief Justice of India touched his mother's feet. Mr. Modi was also seen going up to the Chief Justice's mother to greet her.

Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts, both sitting and retired, were present at the ceremony.

Chief Justice Gavai has a tenure of over six months till November 23. He was elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court on May 24, 2019 from the Bombay High Court.

Justice Gavai is the first Buddhist Chief Justice of India. He was born on November 24, 1960 at Amravati. He joined the Bar on March 16, 1985. Justice Gavai's father, Ramakrishna Suryabhan Gavai, also known as 'Dadasaheb', was a former Governor of Bihar and a prominent Dalit leader. Known as a bold and decisive judge who speaks his mind, Chief Justice Gavai will have a tenure that may see important hearings in the challenges to the Places of Worship Act and the Waqf (Amendment) Act of 2025.

As a Supreme Court judge, he was part of many impactful decisions at the Supreme Court, including the upholding of abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and the striking down of the electoral bonds scheme.

He was part of a Constitution Bench which held that States have a right to sub-classify Scheduled Castes.

He headed the Bench which had ordered the release of Perarivalan, a convict in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

As a lawyer, he had practised independently in the Bombay High Court from 1987 to 1990. After 1990, he appeared mainly before the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court. He had practised in Constitutional and administrative law, and was standing counsel for the Municipal Corporation of Nagpur, Amravati Municipal Corporation and Amravati University.

He was elevated as Additional Judge of the Bombay High Court in 2003 and became a Permanent Judge in November 2005.

In high office: Justice B.R. Gavai takes oath as the 52nd Chief Justice of India during the swearing-in ceremony, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, next to President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday. PTI

Bench to hear pleas against Waqf law today

NEW DELHI
A Bench of Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih is scheduled to hear the challenge to the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, on Thursday. The case last came up before a three-judge Special Bench led by Chief Justice Gavai's predecessor, Justice Sanjiv Khanna, on May 5. Justice Khanna had at the time expressed reluctance to continue hearing the case, saying he had very little time till his retirement on May 13. The case was then posted on May 15.

Content.

- **Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai was sworn in by President Droupadi Murmu as the 52nd Chief Justice of India at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Wednesday.**

- **He took his oath of office, pledging his commitment to uphold the Constitution and faithfully discharge duties, in Hindi.**

- **Chief Justice Gavai has a tenure of over six months till November 23. He was elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court on May 24, 2019 from the Bombay High Court.**

- **Justice Gavai is the first Buddhist Chief Justice of India. He was born on November 24, 1960 at Amravati. He joined the Bar on March 16, 1985. Justice Gavai's father, Ramakrishna Suryabhan Gavai, also known as 'Dadasaheb', was a former Governor of Bihar and a prominent Dalit leader.**

Fact

- Article 124 (1) of the Constitution merely says, “There shall be a Supreme Court of India consisting of a Chief Justice of India.”
- Clause (2) of Article 124 of the Constitution says that every Judge of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President.
- Thus, in the absence of a constitutional provision, the procedure to appoint CJI relies on convention.

- The outgoing CJI recommends his successor a practice, which is strictly based on seniority.
- Seniority, however, is not defined by age, but by the number of years a judge has been serving in the top court of the country.

- The Central government has no role to play in the appointment of the CJI except for the Union Law Minister seeking the recommendation from the incumbent CJI, before sending it to the Prime Minister.

Fact

- Apart from being an Indian citizen, the person must:
- Have been for at least five years a Judge of a High Court or of two or more such Courts in succession or
- Have been for at least ten years an advocate of a High Court or of two or more such Courts in succession, or
- Be, in the opinion of the President, a distinguished jurist.

- The Chief Justice of India and the other judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President under clause (2) of Article 124 of the Indian Constitution.
- Article 217: which deals with the appointment of High Court judges, says the President should consult the CJI, Governor, and Chief Justice of the High Court concerned.
- Further, the tenure of a CJI is until they attain the age of 65 years, while High Court judges retire at 62 years.

Fact

- A Judge of the Supreme Court shall not be removed from his office except by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting.
- With the address in the same session presented to the President for removal on one of the two grounds:
- Proved misbehaviour or incapacity.

- The more than two decades-old collegium system is followed in the appointment of judges, consisting of five senior most judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts.
- The term “collegium” is not mentioned in the constitution, which only speaks of consultation by the President.

Admissions Closing On 15th May 2025

Join Me:
Instagram:- tiwariprashant26
Twitter:- Prashantt26
Telegram:- UPSCwithPrashant
(Prashant Tiwari)

Prashant Tiwari

93,436 subscribers

t.me/UPSCwithPrashant

Link

1. The Hindu Playlist - https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aJ0idtpI

2. NCERT Playlist:- https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR5Q3pN6ivhc77yZ6HY9v7Ad

3. PIB Weekly:- https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR59OtRNhFu

Description

Page No. 14, GS 2

Former Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar is UPSC Chairman

Former Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar has been appointed Chairman of the UPSC, says a Union Personnel Ministry order. The post of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Chairman fell vacant after the completion of Preeti Sudan's tenure on April 29. Mr. Kumar's appointment was cleared by President Droupadi Murmu, said the order issued on Tuesday. A 1985-batch retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Kerala cadre, Mr. Kumar worked as Defence Secretary from August 23, 2019 to October 31, 2022, according to his service records. An UPSC Chairman is appointed for a term of six years or until attaining 65 years of age. PTI

Content.

- Former Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar has been appointed Chairman of the UPSC, says a Union Personnel Ministry order.
- The post of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Chairman fell vacant after the completion of Preeti Sudan's tenure on April 29.
- Mr. Kumar's appointment was cleared by President Droupadi Murmu, said the order issued on Tuesday.
- A 1985-batch retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Kerala cadre, Mr. Kumar worked as Defence Secretary from August 23, 2019 to October 31, 2022, according to his service records.
- An UPSC Chairman is appointed for a term of six years or until attaining 65 years of age.

Fact

- The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is a constitutional body.
- Part XIV of the Indian Constitution contains provisions relating to the composition, appointment and removal, powers and functions of its members under Articles 315 to 323.
- Appointment of Members: The Chairman and other members of the UPSC are appointed by the President of India.
- Office: Any member of the UPSC will hold office for a term of six years or until the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- Re-appointment: No person who has once held office as a member of a Public Service Commission shall be eligible for reappointment to his office.

- **Resignation: A member of the Union Public Service Commission may resign from his office by writing to the President of India.**
- **Removal/Suspension of Members: The Chairman or any other member of the Union Public Service Commission shall be removed from his office only by order of the President of India.**
- **The President may also suspend the Chairperson or any other Member before the completion of his office, in respect of which a reference is made to the Supreme Court.**
- **Removal: The Chairman or any other member of the UPSC may be removed if he:**
- **has been declared bankrupt.**
- **Engages in any paid employment outside the duties of the office during his term of office.**
- **is, in the opinion of the President, unfit to continue in office by reason of infirmity of mind or body.**

Fact

- Regulating the conditions of service: Power of the President of India in the case of UPSC:
- Determines the number of members of the Commission and their conditions of service.
- Makes provision for the number of employees of the Commission and their conditions of service.

- The UPSC submits an annual report of the work done by the Commission to the President of India.

Page No. 14, GS 1

Birth rates in Delhi, Kerala, and T.N. declining at twice the rate of national average: report

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The annual crude birth rates (live births per 1,000 people in the population) in Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Kerala are declining at twice the rate of the national average, showed data from the Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report, 2021, released by the Registrar- General of India last week.

The data showed that the all-India crude birth rate was 19.3 in 2021, dropping at a rate of 1.12% every year from 2016 to 2021. In comparison, in the same period, the birth rate in Tamil Nadu has been declining at a rate of 2.35% every year, Delhi's at a rate of 2.23% and Kerala's at 2.05%.

The data showed that the slowest rate of decline in birth rate was seen in States such as Rajasthan (0.48%), Bihar (0.86%), Chhattisgarh (0.98%), Jharkhand (0.98%), Assam (1.05%), Madhya Pradesh (1.05%), West Bengal (1.08%), and Uttar Pradesh (1.09%). The data further revealed that Uttarakhand was the only State which saw a rise in birth rate in this period.

The birth rates data from the SRS 2021 further revealed that the rate of decline was faster than the national average for 13 large States and Union Territories.

All southern States – Andhra Pradesh (1.26%), Telangana (1.67%), Karnataka (1.68%), Kerala, and Tamil Nadu – featured among these 13 large States and Union Territories.

The SRS is the largest demographic survey in the country, meant to provide annual estimates on fertility and mortality indicators such as birth rates and death rates.

Apart from the southern States, birth rates were seen declining faster than the national average for Maharashtra (1.57%), Gujarat (1.24%), Odisha (1.34%), Himachal Pradesh (1.29%), Haryana (1.21%), and J&K (1.47%), with Punjab's birth rate declining almost at the same rate as that of the national average.

Registered births

Corresponding to this data set in the SRS 2021 Statistical Report, the Civil Registration System 2021 dataset showed that some of the States seeing the slowest decline in birth rates are also reporting increasing number of registered births. The Vital Statistics Report based on CRS 2021 showed that the number of registered births were seeing a rise in about 11 States and Union Territories, which included Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, and Lakshadweep.

The SRS 2021 data on total fertility rate (TFR) and gross reproduction rate (GRR) too correspond to the birth rate data – showing that States such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh had a TFR and GRR higher than the national average.

The TFR measures average number of children expected to be born per woman during her entire span of reproductive period and GRR refers to the average number of daughters each woman has who survive to reproductive age and have children of their own.

Content.

- **The annual crude birth rates (live births per 1,000 people in the population) in Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Kerala are declining at twice the rate of the national average, showed data from the Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report, 2021, released by the Registrar- General of India last week.**

- **The SRS 2021 data on total fertility rate (TFR) and gross reproduction rate (GRR) too correspond to the birth rate data — showing that States such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh had a TFR and GRR higher than the national average.**

- **The TFR measures average number of children expected to be born per woman during her entire span of reproductive period and GRR refers to the average number of daughters each woman has who survive to reproductive age and have children of their own.**

- **The data showed that the all-India crude birth rate was 19.3 in 2021, dropping at a rate of 1.12% every year from 2016 to 2021. In comparison, in the same period, the birth rate in Tamil Nadu has been declining at a rate of 2.35% every year, Delhi's at a rate of 2.23% and Kerala's at 2.05%.**

- **The data showed that the slowest rate of decline in birth rate was seen in States such as Rajasthan (0.48%), Bihar (0.86%), Chhattisgarh (0.98%), Jharkhand (0.98%), Assam (1.05%), Madhya Pradesh (1.05%), West Bengal (1.08%), and Uttar Pradesh (1.09%). The data further revealed that Uttarakhand was the only State which saw a rise in birth rate in this period.**

- **The birth rates data from the SRS 2021 further revealed that the rate of decline was faster than the national average for 13 large States and Union Territories.**

- **All southern States — Andhra Pradesh (1.26%), Telangana (1.67%), Karnataka (1.68%), Kerala, and Tamil Nadu — featured among these 13 large States and Union Territories.**

Fact

- Apart from the southern States, birth rates were seen declining faster than the national average for Maharashtra (1.57%), Gujarat (1.24%), Odisha (1.34%), Himachal Pradesh (1.29%), Haryana (1.21%), and J&K (1.47%), with Punjab's birth rate declining almost at the same rate as that of the national average.

- The Vital Statistics Report based on CRS 2021 showed that the number of registered births were seeing a rise in about 11 States and Union Territories, which included Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, and Lakshadweep.

Page No. 16, GS 3

Colombia joins Belt and Road initiative as China courts Latin America to counter U.S.

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

Colombia formally agreed on Wednesday to join China's vast Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, as Beijing draws Latin America closer in a bid to counter the United States.

Latin America has emerged as a key battleground in U.S. President Donald Trump's confrontations with China, and the region is coming under pressure from Washington to choose a side.

China has surpassed the U.S. as the biggest trading partner of Brazil, Peru, Chile and other Latin American nations, and two-thirds of countries there have signed up to Chinese leader Xi Jinping's Belt and Road infrastructure drive.

The BRI is a central pillar of President Xi Jinping's bid to expand China's economic and political clout overseas. FILE PHOTO

On the sidelines of a major gathering of regional leaders in Beijing on Wednesday, Colombia became the latest country to join the global initiative.

Colombia's Foreign Ministry hailed the agreement as a "historic step that opens up new opportunities for investment, technological cooperation, and sustainable development for both countries".

And after a meeting with Colombian President Gustavo Petro, Mr. Xi urged the countries to take the opportunity of Colombia formally joining the "Belt and Road Initiative family" to enhance their cooperation.

"From now on, Colombia will interact with the entire world on a footing of equality and freedom," Mr. Petro wrote.

Content.

- **Colombia formally agreed on Wednesday to join China's vast Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, as Beijing draws Latin America closer in a bid to counter the United States.**

- **Latin America has emerged as a key battleground in U.S. President Donald Trump's confrontations with China, and the region is coming under pressure from Washington to choose a side.**

- **China has surpassed the U.S. as the biggest trading partner of Brazil, Peru, Chile and other Latin American nations, and two-thirds of countries there have signed up to Chinese leader Xi Jinping's Belt and Road infrastructure drive.**

- **On the sidelines of a major gathering of regional leaders in Beijing on Wednesday, Colombia became the latest country to join the global initiative.**

ATLANTIC OCEAN
CARIBBEAN SEA
NICARAGUA
COSTA RICA
PANAMA
VENEZUELA
SURINAME
FRENCH GUIANA (FRANCE)
COLOMBIA
BOGOTÁ
GUYANA
ECUADOR
BRAZIL
PERU
PACIFIC OCEAN
© Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Overland route of Belt and Road Initiative
Maritime route of Belt and Road Initiative
NETHERLANDS
GERMANY
Rotterdam
Moscow
KAZAKHSTAN
Athens
Venice
ITALY
Istanbul
TURKEY
Beijing
Dalian
Xi'an
CHINA
IRAN
PAKISTAN
Gwadar
Suez
Canal
VIETNAM
Fuzhou
Kolkata
INDIA
Hanoi
DJIBOUTI
Colombo
SINGAPORE
KENYA
Lamu
Indian
Ocean
Jakarta
INDONESIA
Atlantic

Fact

- Initiated as 'One Belt One Road' in 2013, seeks to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks.
- Aim: Improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth.
- It comprises:
- Silk Road Economic Belt (A trans-continental passage)
- Maritime Silk Road (A sea route)
- It involves major investments in infrastructure projects such as ports, etc.

- Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership by G7 group
- India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), launched during India's G-20 Presidency
- International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Connecting India Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea.

The road to safety

India is at a crucial juncture in mobility transformation, where economic growth and urbanisation bring both opportunities and challenges to road safety. With one of the world's largest road networks, India also carries the burden of having among the highest number of road traffic fatalities globally. In 2022, India recorded 1.68 lakh road accident fatalities. This translates to approximately 12.2 deaths per 1 lakh population. To put this in perspective, Japan and the U.K. have road traffic death rates of 2.57 and 2.61, respectively.

The economic repercussions of this are equally alarming. Road crashes cost India an estimated 3% of its GDP annually. This hampers national development and underscores the urgency for effective road safety measures.

Right to life

The foundation of all road safety efforts must rest on a fundamental constitutional principle: the right to safe road travel is an essential component of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. Every citizen, whether a pedestrian, cyclist, or driver, has the right to move through public spaces without fear of injury or death. Recognising this right imposes a moral and legal duty on the state and society to treat road safety not as a privilege or technical matter, but as a human right and public good.

India's urban landscape is poised for significant transformation. By 2047, the urban population is expected to account for about 50% of the total population. This rapid urbanisation will be accompanied by a substantial rise in vehicle ownership. The growing urban and vehicular population necessitates people-centric interventions to ensure that streets remain safe, especially for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, the elderly, and public transport commuters.

At the heart of future-ready urban mobility lies the Safe System Approach, which places human vulnerability and error at the centre of road design. This philosophy acknowledges that people will make mistakes, but those mistakes should not result in fatalities or serious injuries. Prioritising pedestrian safety is fundamental under this approach. Urban streets must be redesigned with wider footpaths, dedicated cycling tracks, well-marked crossings, pedestrian refuge islands, reduced speed limits, and calming measures such as raised intersections. This system moves away from blaming individual road users and instead emphasises creating a forgiving and resilient road environment.

Alok Mittal

Senior Indian Police Service officer in Haryana

Sarika Panda

Road safety expert

Urban mobility must be reimagined to prioritise inclusivity and safety over speed

Recognising the urgency of the road safety crisis, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has launched a series of targeted initiatives. These include rectification of over 5,000 black spots on highways, mandatory road safety audits, and stricter safety norms such as airbags and anti-lock braking systems in vehicles. Electronic enforcement mechanisms such as speed cameras and CCTV surveillance have also been rolled out to improve compliance. In a major push to strengthen driver training, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari recently announced the setting up of driving training centres and vehicle fitness centres in every district. This bold initiative aims to ensure safer driving practices and reduce accidents caused by unskilled driving.

To meet the massive financial requirements of road safety improvements, innovative funding models must be explored. One such approach could be a nationwide mandate for all automobile manufacturers to channel their entire Corporate Social Responsibility funds towards road safety initiatives for the next 20-25 years. This investment, executed in collaboration with the Indian government, could support black spot elimination, public awareness campaigns, emergency trauma care, driver training, and road safety research. As primary stakeholders in the mobility ecosystem, auto-makers bear a shared responsibility for making Indian roads safer, and this long-term commitment can become a cornerstone of India's Vision Zero ambitions.

Road safety strategy

The four Es of road safety – engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency care – remain the cornerstone of an integrated road safety strategy. While enforcement and emergency care are gaining ground, there is an urgent need to strengthen infrastructure design and user education to prevent accidents before they occur.

Importantly, the World Bank Report 2020 outlines a strategic framework for enhancing road safety in India. It emphasises the need for substantial investment, estimating that an additional $109 billion over the next decade is required to achieve a 50% reduction in road crash fatalities. The report highlights that this investment will yield enormous social and economic returns by saving lives, reducing injuries, and improving mobility efficiency.

The iRAP Four States Report and other global analyses further confirm that investments in road safety deliver high returns. For every rupee spent on proven safety interventions, India can save up to four rupees in avoided crash costs, lives saved, and productivity gains.

India's roads must also become kinder to the most vulnerable users – pedestrians, cyclists, and children. Roads are not just conduits for vehicles but shared public spaces that reflect our civic values. Urban mobility must be reimagined to prioritise inclusivity and safety over speed. As we envision Viksit Bharat 2047, the path ahead must be paved with accountability and data-driven policy. Road safety is not a luxury; it is a prerequisite for sustainable and equitable development.

Page No. 9, GS 3

Content.

- India is at a crucial juncture in mobility transformation, where economic growth and urbanisation bring both opportunities and challenges to road safety.

- With one of the world’s largest road networks, India also carries the burden of having among the highest number of road traffic fatalities globally. In 2022, India recorded 1.68 lakh road accident fatalities.

- This translates to approximately 12.2 deaths per 1 lakh population. To put this in perspective, Japan and the U.K. have road traffic death rates of 2.57 and 2.61, respectively.

- The economic repercussions of this are equally alarming. Road crashes cost India an estimated 3% of its GDP annually. This hampers national development and underscores the urgency for effective road safety measures.

Fact

- The foundation of all road safety efforts must rest on a fundamental constitutional principle: the right to safe road travel is an essential component of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

- Every citizen, whether a pedestrian, cyclist, or driver, has the right to move through public spaces without fear of injury or death.

- Recognising this right imposes a moral and legal duty on the state and society to treat road safety not as a privilege or technical matter, but as a human right and public good.

- India’s urban landscape is poised for significant transformation. By 2047, the urban population is expected to account for about 50% of the total population.

Fact

- This rapid urbanisation will be accompanied by a substantial rise in vehicle ownership.
- The growing urban and vehicular population necessitates people-centric interventions to ensure that streets remain safe, especially for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, the elderly, and public transport commuters.
- At the heart of future-ready urban mobility lies the Safe System Approach, which places human vulnerability and error at the centre of road design.
- This philosophy acknowledges that people will make mistakes, but those mistakes should not result in fatalities or serious injuries

Fact

- Recognising the urgency of the road safety crisis, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has launched a series of targeted initiatives.
- These include rectification of over 5,000 black spots on highways, mandatory road safety audits, and stricter safety norms such as airbags and anti-lock braking systems in vehicles.
- Electronic enforcement mechanisms such as speed cameras and CCTV surveillance have also been rolled out to improve compliance.
- In a major push to strengthen driver training, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari recently announced the setting up of driving training centres and vehicle fitness centres in every district.
- This bold initiative aims to ensure safer driving practices and reduce accidents caused by unskilled driving.

- **The four Es of road safety — engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency care — remain the cornerstone of an integrated road safety strategy.**

- **While enforcement and emergency care are gaining ground, there is an urgent need to strengthen infrastructure design and user education to prevent accidents before they occur.**

- **Importantly, the World Bank Report 2020 outlines a strategic framework for enhancing road safety in India.**

- **It emphasises the need for substantial investment, estimating that an additional $109 billion over the next decade is required to achieve a 50% reduction in road crash fatalities.**

- **The report highlights that this investment will yield enormous social and economic returns by saving lives, reducing injuries, and improving mobility efficiency.**

Restored faith

The Pollachi verdict brings closure to the rape survivors

Justice, if not unduly delayed, restores public faith in due process and the criminal justice system. The recent verdict in the Pollachi sexual assault case, where a Coimbatore Mahila Court convicted all nine accused and sentenced them to life imprisonment for the remainder of their natural lives, is a significant step in this regard. More so, because the entire case originated from a single plea for help from a young victim, which helped expose the involvement of multiple tentacles of a body of criminals. In February 2019, a 19-year-old college student reported to the Pollachi East police that four men had sexually assaulted her in a car near Pollachi 12 days earlier. The ensuing investigation revealed this complaint to be just the tip of the iceberg. As in the Prajwal Revanna case in Karnataka, the seizure of digital devices unveiled the full scope of the atrocities. Since 2016, a group of young men had been systematically preying on vulnerable young women, from disadvantaged groups, filming the assaults, and using these videos for further exploitation. The sheer depravity uncovered shocked the State's collective conscience. Public outrage intensified with the exposure of the accused's political connections. One was identified as the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) Pollachi town students' wing secretary (later expelled), while another, involved in an assault on the survivor's brother, held a local secretary position in Amma Peravai, an AIADMK-affiliated youth organisation. Faced with mounting public pressure, the State government initially transferred the investigation to the Crime Branch-CID and subsequently to the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Mahila Court Judge R. Nandhini Devi also directed the State government to provide a total compensation of ₹85 lakh to the survivors. The judge concurred with the prosecution's argument that the perpetrators had exploited their financial resources, physical power, political influence, and the incriminating videos to silence the survivors and perpetrate repeated assaults. She emphasised that she was clear that the judgment should "reflect the public abhorrence of the crime". As elections approach, politicians must resist the temptation to politicise this judgment, which not only delivered satisfactory justice but also challenged the misuse of political and financial clout. To foster a genuine feeling of security, the government must now assure its citizens an environment free from exploitation.

Page No. 8, GS 2

Content.

- Justice, if not unduly delayed, restores public faith in due process and the criminal justice system.

- The recent verdict in the Pollachi sexual assault case, where a Coimbatore Mahila Court convicted all nine accused and sentenced them to life imprisonment for the remainder of their natural lives, is a significant step in this regard.

- More so, because the entire case originated from a single plea for help from a young victim, which helped expose the involvement of multiple tentacles of a body of criminals.

- In February 2019, a 19-year-old college student reported to the Pollachi East police that four men had sexually assaulted her in a car near Pollachi 12 days earlier. The ensuing investigation revealed this complaint to be just the tip of the iceberg.

- As in the Prajwal Revanna case in Karnataka, the seizure of digital devices unveiled the full scope of the atrocities.
- Since 2016, a group of young men had been systematically preying on vulnerable young women, from disadvantaged groups, filming the assaults, and using these videos for further exploitation.
- The sheer depravity uncovered shocked the State's collective conscience. Public outrage intensified with the exposure of the accused's political connections.
- Mahila Court Judge R. Nandhini Devi also directed the State government to provide a total compensation of ₹85 lakh to the survivors.
- The judge concurred with the prosecution's argument that the perpetrators had exploited their financial resources, physical power, political influence, and the incriminating videos to silence the survivors and perpetrate repeated assaults.

Trumpeting claims

Donald Trump's exaggerated claims undermine India's Kashmir policy

For the fifth time in as many days the U.S. President has claimed credit for bringing India and Pakistan back from "nuclear conflict" by mediating the May 10 ceasefire agreement, a claim that is puzzling and problematic. The claim of mediation has been rebutted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), unofficially and more formally several times, with officials giving a timeline of how the talks had been held "directly" between the Directors General of Military Operation (DGMO) on a hotline, after the Pakistani DGMO proposed a stop to hostilities three days after Operation Sindoor began, and India acceded to the request. The government has said that Pakistan's request came after it received a jolt over India's strikes on Pakistani bases. It has also said that like many countries, the U.S. was engaged with the situation, and officials including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval had kept them apprised of India's position. Mr. Trump's assertions, backed by his administration, have been a cause for obvious outrage in Delhi, as they violate India's "long-stated" principle of not accepting third-party mediation on bilateral issues. His other comments, including an offer to mediate to resolve the Kashmir dispute and the equivalence he draws between India and Pakistan, also go against India's previously well-respected policies against the internationalisation of an "internal issue" and the hyphenation with Pakistan. Moreover, the MEA spokesperson has categorically denied that any trade-related issues were discussed between Indian and U.S. interlocutors, even as Mr. Trump has repeated that he had prevailed on India and Pakistan to put aside their "nuclear missiles" by threatening to stop trade with them if they did not, and promising to enhance trade ties if they did. That Mr. Trump has not once referred to India's core concerns on terrorism, appeared to swallow the Pakistani narrative on a "nuclear war", and even suggested a "dinner" between Mr. Modi and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, trivialises the serious nature of the rupture between Delhi and Islamabad.

New Delhi must also analyse what lies behind Mr. Trump's obvious shift from the camaraderie on display with Mr. Modi just months ago. Are the comments explained as simply "Trump being Trump", or is he sending a more considered message on U.S. policy for the region? The extent of the China-Pakistan political and military cooperation may also have caused some alarm in the U.S. India must make it clear that its battle against cross-border terrorism from Pakistan cannot be brushed aside by any country, especially if it is one of India's closest partners, and co-founder of the Quad. The U.S. President's statements have not just challenged India's narrative or policy principles but also questioned New Delhi's credibility, and some tough messaging will be required to clear the air convincingly on the issue.

Page No. 8, GS 2

Content.

- For the fifth time in as many days the U.S. President has claimed credit for bringing India and Pakistan back from “nuclear conflict” by mediating the May 10 ceasefire agreement, a claim that is puzzling and problematic.

- The claim of mediation has been rebutted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), unofficially and more formally several times, with officials giving a timeline of how the talks had been held “directly” between the Directors General of Military Operation (DGMO) on a hotline, after the Pakistani DGMO proposed a stop to hostilities three days after Operation Sindoor began, and India acceded to the request.

- The government has said that Pakistan’s request came after it received a jolt over India’s strikes on Pakistani bases.

- Mr. Trump’s assertions, backed by his administration, have been a cause for obvious outrage in Delhi, as they violate India’s “long-stated” principle of not accepting third-party mediation on bilateral issues.

- Are the comments explained as simply “Trump being Trump”, or is he sending a more considered message on U.S. policy for the region? The extent of the China-Pakistan political and military cooperation may also have caused some alarm in the U.S.

- India must make it clear that its battle against cross-border terrorism from Pakistan cannot be brushed aside by any country, especially if it is one of India’s closest partners, and co-founder of the Quad.

- The U.S. President’s statements have not just challenged India’s narrative or policy principles but also questioned New Delhi’s credibility, and some tough messaging will be required to clear the air convincingly on the issue.

Operation Sindoor — a reshaping of confrontation

Page No. 8, GS 2

The recent India-Pakistan standoff presents a significant shift in the evolution of modern day warfare. It signifies a transformation in India's military engagement that transcends a traditional understanding of how wars are fought in South Asia and beyond. Operation Sindoor can no longer be seen as a bilateral dispute between the two countries but as an important example of how wars are fought globally, highlighting how technological innovation, strategic calculus, and information manipulation have fundamentally reshaped how military confrontation happens.

Drone warfare is the most revolutionary feature of this war. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is a sharp departure from traditional operating strategies, as emphasised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his recent speech. In contrast to traditional air combat, which was based on costly and manned fighter jets, contemporary drone warfare is a case of deployment of asymmetric technology. Operation Sindoor has also demonstrated that conventional military force is now not about standalone and expensive platforms, but the capability to introduce swarms of inexpensive, expendable reconnaissance and strike vehicles in order to deluge the enemy.

Harsh V. Pant

is Vice President, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

Ankit K.

is an Assistant Professor of Security Studies at the Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Drones in the matrix

India's reported interception of Pakistan's attempted drone intrusion that reportedly involved between 300 to 400 Songar drones (Turkish-made) across 36 locations demonstrates the scale of this technological revolution. This approach has transformed aerial warfare from a high-stakes, high-risk engagement to a more calculated, probabilistic domain. The SkyStriker Kamekazi drones that India used, allowed India to probe defensive capabilities, gather intelligence about Pakistan's air defence system, and conduct precision strikes with minimal human risk and collateral damage. The proliferation of drone technologies in all modern conflicts underscores a normalisation of aerial warfare capabilities that was unimaginable just a decade ago.

Air defence has moved from fixed, hardware-oriented methods to layered, dynamic networks of defence. India's multi-layered air defence – that is composed of indigenous systems such as Akash and Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missiles (QRSAM) together with imported state-of-the-art systems such as Russia's S-400 and the Barak-8 (jointly developed by Israel and India) – is an example of the new strategic philosophy of a layered defence approach, as emphasized in a press release by Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai, the present Director General of Military Operations. India's Akashteer system, that digitally merges radar information for real-time decision-making, is an evolutionary step in defensive capabilities. No longer are missile systems a concern but the development of an adaptive, smart defence network that is able to process and neutralise several simultaneous threats.

> The most important lesson is that contemporary warfare is now multi-dimensional

Information, deterrence and doctrine

Information warfare has emerged as perhaps the most sophisticated battlefield in the turn of the event. The confrontation has also exposed how disinformation has transformed itself from a mere propaganda tool to a strategic weapon at an unprecedented scale. Pakistan's information operations demonstrated a nuanced approach to psychological warfare, leveraging digital platforms to create alternative narratives and manipulate international and domestic perceptions, and attempting to fracture India's morale. By circulating doctored videos, fabricated claims and strategically crafted social media content, it was evident that countries can now wage psychological operations that extend far beyond traditional propaganda mechanisms.

The parallels with the modern wars such as the Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine wars are quite evident. Both conflicts illustrate how modern warfare has transcended physical boundaries, transforming information spaces into multiple theatres of engagement. The ability to control narratives, manipulate international attention and create strategic ambiguity has become as crucial as traditional military capabilities. This represents a fundamental shift from kinetic warfare to a more nuanced form of conflict where perception management can be as decisive as military action.

Technological independence has become an imperative strategic necessity. India's show of indigenous platforms such as the Akash missile system and its current work on Project Kusha (a missile project) reflect a larger worldwide trend towards technological independence. It is not just a question of military prowess but also an all-encompassing strategy of minimising foreign dependency, generating economic opportunities through exports of defence products, and asserting technological credibility at the international level.

India's strategic deterrence approach has seen a qualitative transformation. The standoff with Pakistan has shown a sophisticated style of escalation management, where India has signalled strategic capabilities without necessitating full-scale war. This calibrated response model permitted the firm projection of military intent while leaving space for diplomatic flexibility and communication. It was a nuanced departure from traditional models of binary military engagement, where conflicts were normally framed as either total war or total peace.

There seems a visible shift in India's military warfighting doctrine, signalling a departure from its historically defensive posture to a more proactive, precision-oriented strategic approach. Perhaps the most evident and strategic shift after India's enunciation of its nuclear doctrine can be sensed in the Prime Minister's address on May 12. This doctrinal shift can be characterised by three critical elements.

First, the capacity to respond quickly to provocations with accurately measured force; second, the development of a comprehensive and layered defence and offence capability that combines indigenous technologies with cutting-edge imported systems; and third, an advanced escalation control posture that makes precision projection of military power possible without precipitating all-out war. This was reiterated in the May 12 speech by explaining how war has created 'new normal' in the 'new age warfare' for India.

Joint operations by the forces

Of note is a transformation in joint operations by the Indian armed forces, reflected in unprecedented levels of inter-service coordination that cut across the conventional organisational silos. The Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) became the operational spine, synchronising action by the Indian Army, the Indian Navy, and the Indian Air Force in real time. It fulfilled inter-service integration from a theoretical concept and transformed it into an operational reality. Internal and external intelligence agencies delivered a unified support that facilitated strategic decision-making and precision targeting.

But the democratisation of warfare technologies also poses challenges and opportunities for India. With cutting-edge technologies becoming more accessible, Pakistan is also now capable of creating asymmetric warfare capabilities that can successfully counter the conventional military power of India. This transformation calls for a complete overhaul of military strategy, intelligence gathering, and defence planning. The most important lesson from this confrontation may be the realisation that contemporary warfare is inherently multi-dimensional. Victory is no longer measured in terms of territorial conquest or brute military power, but in terms of the capacity to combine technological, informational and psychological methods in an operational model.

- **The recent India-Pakistan standoff presents a significant shift in the evolution of modern day warfare.**

- **It signifies a transformation in India's military engagement that transcends a traditional understanding of how wars are fought in South Asia and beyond.**

- **Operation Sindoor can no longer be seen as a bilateral dispute between the two countries but as an important example of how wars are fought globally, highlighting how technological innovation, strategic calculus, and information manipulation have fundamentally reshaped how military confrontation happens.**

- **Drone warfare is the most revolutionary feature of this war. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) is a sharp departure from traditional operating strategies, as emphasised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his recent speech.**

- **In contrast to traditional air combat, which was based on costly and manned fighter jets, contemporary drone warfare is a case of deployment of asymmetric technology.**

Fact

- India’s reported interception of Pakistan’s attempted drone intrusion that reportedly involved between 300 to 400 Songar drones (Turkish-made) across 36 locations demonstrates the scale of this technological revolution.

- Air defence has moved from fixed, hardware-oriented methods to layered, dynamic networks of defence. India’s multi-layered air defence — that is composed of indigenous systems such as Akash and Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missiles (QRSAM) together with imported state-of-the-art systems such as Russia’s S-400 and the Barak-8 (jointly developed by Israel and India)

- Information warfare has emerged as perhaps the most sophisticated battlefield in the turn of the event. The confrontation has also exposed how disinformation has transformed itself from a mere propaganda tool to a strategic weapon at an unprecedented scale.

Admissions Closing On 15th May 2025

Join Me:
Instagram:- tiwariprashant26
Twitter:- Prashantt26
Telegram:- UPSCwithPrashant
(Prashant Tiwari)

Prashant Tiwari

93,436 subscribers

t.me/UPSCwithPrashant

Link

1. The Hindu Playlist - https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aJ0idtpI

2. NCERT Playlist:- https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR5Q3pN6ivhc77yZ6HY9v7Ad

3. PIB Weekly:- https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpuxPG4TUOR59OtRNhFu

Description

Thank You!