

# Headlines

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**“I measure the progress of a  
community by the degree of progress  
which women have achieved.”**



**— B. R. Ambedkar**



## *Homage to martyrs*



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Police personnel pay tribute on Sunday to martyrs at the Jallianwala Bagh memorial in Amritsar on the massacre anniversary. President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the nation would forever remember the victims of the 1919 massacre. AFP



## **Content.**

- **The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, also known as the Amritsar Massacre, took place on April 13, 1919, in Amritsar, Punjab.**
- **On this fateful day, British troops led by Colonel Reginald Dyer opened fire on a large crowd of unarmed Indian civilians gathered at Jallianwala Bagh, an enclosed public garden.**
- **The crowd had gathered to peacefully protest the arrest of two nationalist leaders and the imposition of the repressive Rowlatt Act.**
- **These people were protesting peacefully against the Rowlatt Act 1919.**
- **It gave the government enormous powers to repress political activities and allowed detention of political prisoners without trial for two years.**

## **Fact**

- **Background: Mahatma Gandhi wanted non-violent civil disobedience against such unjust laws, which would start with a hartal on 6th April 1919.**
- **In Punjab, on 9th April 1919, two nationalist leaders, Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal, were arrested by the British officials without any provocation except that they had addressed protest meetings, and taken to some unknown destination.**
- **This caused resentment among the Indian protestors who came out in thousands on 10th April to show their solidarity with their leaders.**
- **To curb any future protest, the government put martial law in place and law and order in Punjab was handed over to Brigadier-General Dyer.**



## **Fact**

- **Jallianwala Bagh became a key point in the history of India's struggle for independence and it is now an important monument in the country.**
- **The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy was one of the causes that led Mahatma Gandhi to begin organising his first large-scale and sustained nonviolent protest (satyagraha) campaign, the Non Cooperation Movement (1920-22).**
- **The Bengali poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore renounced the knighthood that he had received in 1915.**
- **The then government of India ordered an investigation of the incident (the Hunter Commission), which in 1920 censured Dyer for his actions and ordered him to resign from the military.**



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# DRDO tests laser weapon system that can disable missiles and drones

Page No. 12, GS 3

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Sunday announced the successful trial of the Mk-II(A) Laser-Directed Energy Weapon (DEW) system “mastering the technology of disabling missiles, drones and smaller projectiles”.

The success has put India in the exclusive club of nations which have the high-power Laser-DEW system, the DRDO said in a statement.

“Indigenously designed and developed Mk-II(A) DEW system was demonstrated in its entire spectrum of capability by engaging the fixed wing drones at long range,



A view of the Laser-Directed Energy Weapon system developed by the DRDO to shoot down aerial targets in Kurnool. ANI X

thwarting a multiple drone attack and destroying enemy surveillance sensors and antennae,” the statement said.

“The lightning speed of engagement, the precision and the lethality delivered at the target within few se-

conds made it the most potent counter drone system.”

“Cost of firing it for few seconds is equivalent to the cost of couple of litres of petrol. Therefore, it has the potential to be a long-term and low-cost alterna-

tive to defeat the target,” the DRDO said.

Detailing the functioning of the system, the statement said once detected by a radar or by its inbuilt Electro Optic (EO) system, laser-DEW can engage targets at the speed of light and use an intense laser beam to cut through the target, leading to structural failure or more impactful results if the warhead is targeted.

This type of cutting-edge weaponry has the potential to revolutionise the battlespace by reducing the reliance on expensive ammunition, while also lowering the risk of collateral damage, it stated. The trial was carried at the National Open Air Range, Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh.





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[#WATCH](#) | Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh: For the first time, India has showcased its capability to shoot down fixed-wing aircraft, missiles and swarm drones using a 30-kilowatt laser-based weapon system. India has joined list of selected countries, including the US, China, and Russia, that have shown such a capability



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# Undertake survey to assess MGNREGS effectiveness: panel

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development has recommended an independent survey to assess the effectiveness of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and its shortcomings.

This survey, the panel said, should focus on worker satisfaction, wage delays, participation trends, and financial irregularities within the scheme.

The panel's report was tabled on April 4, the concluding day of the Budget Session of Parliament. The panel, headed by Congress MP Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, has argued that such a survey should focus on the necessary policy reforms, and should be introduced based on the insights from the survey.

## **Equal opportunities**

The panel also said that despite the stated objective of the scheme to uplift marginalised communities, the participation of women workers and those from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes remained "inconsistent across districts".

"A district-wise study must be conducted to ensure that these communities receive equal work opportunities and benefits under the scheme, thereby



The panel pointed out that the scheme has been plagued by delays in wage payments.

fulfilling its intended goal of social and economic inclusion," the report said.

The panel also stressed the need to revamp the scheme, keeping in view the "changing times and emerging challenges". "This committee urges the Ministry to explore the options that could increase the number of guaranteed working days under MGNREGA to at least 150 days from the current 100 days," the report said.

The parliamentary panel also pointed out that the scheme has been plagued by chronic delays in wage payments, leading to uncertainty for the workers. It has recommended that the current compensation rate for delayed wages should be increased. The Committee strongly recommended that timely disbursement of these payments was essential to maintain trust in the scheme and ensure uninterrupted execution of work.

**Page No. 12, GS 2**



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- **MGNREGA is a social security scheme guaranteeing 100 days of work to any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.**
- **The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) is monitoring the entire implementation of this scheme in association with state governments.**
- **The wages are revised according to the Consumer Price Index-Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL).**
- **The act obligates the state to give rural households work on demand.**
- **The applicant becomes eligible for an unemployment allowance if such employment is not provided within 15 days of registration.**
- **The employment will be provided within a radius of 5 km. If it is >5 km, an extra wage will be paid.**
- **Under the act, priority shall be given to women, and at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested work.**



## **Content.**

- **Social Audit must be done by the Gram Sabha.**
- **100% of the unskilled labour cost and 75% of the material cost (including wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers) of the programme is borne by the Centre.**
- **Under the MGNREGS, wages of unskilled workers must be paid within 15 days; if there is a delay, the Centre has to compensate them.**
- **Section 27 of the MGNREGA empowers the Centre to give directions to the State for the effective implementation of the Act.**



# Urban consumers are worried about their income levels

The fact that incomes are stagnant while prices have increased suggests that city residents are struggling to meet expenses

## DATA POINT

### The Hindu Data Team

This March, while a significant share of urban consumers remained optimistic about job opportunities, many continued to be pessimistic about income levels. This suggests that although jobs are available in urban areas, income growth has stagnated. Notably, pessimism around income levels is even more pronounced in rural areas.

Moreover, a majority of urban consumers said that commodity prices have risen compared to a year ago and, as a result, their spending has increased. Coupled with stagnant incomes, this has led to a greater share of urban consumers feeling pessimistic about the overall economic situation of the country despite improved sentiment regarding employment.

Urban perceptions are drawn from a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) survey conducted between March 1 and 10, 2025, covering respondents from 19 major cities. Rural perceptions are based on the first edition of a separate RBI survey, which gathered responses from households in rural and semi-urban areas across the country in the same period.

**Chart 1** shows the share of urban respondents who said that their employment opportunities have increased compared to a year ago. In March, 35.5% of respondents had said that their employment scenario had improved compared to a year ago, maintaining almost the same level recorded in the last one year.

**Chart 2** shows the share of urban respondents who said that their income levels have increased compared to a year ago. Only 23.8% claimed that their income levels have increased compared to a year ago – close to 12% points less than those who said that the job outlook has improved.

The steady recovery in percep-

tions about income levels, since the pandemic-related peak pessimism, saw a reversal in March 2024. From that month, optimism about income levels started to dip again. This negative trend persisted into March 2025 as well, with fewer than one in four urban respondents reporting any improvement in their income levels.

Charts 1 and 2, when read together, suggest that while a decent number of jobs are available in urban areas, income levels remain largely stagnant, as noted earlier.

**Chart 3** presents the share of urban and rural respondents who reported a decline in their income compared to a year ago. Across all surveyed months, a consistently higher proportion of rural respondents expressed pessimism about their income levels compared to their urban counterparts. In March this year, 29.9% of rural respondents said that their income levels have declined compared to a year ago, higher than the 23.3% who said the same in urban areas.

**Chart 4** illustrates the share of urban respondents who said that commodity prices have increased over the past year. As of March, over 90% continued to report that prices were higher than a year ago.

This perception appears to have influenced spending behaviour. **Chart 5** shows the share of urban respondents who said that their spending has increased compared to the previous year. In March, over 80% reported higher spending levels compared to a year ago.

Charts 4 and 5 indicate that rising prices have led to higher spending. However, as **Chart 2** shows, income levels are stagnant. This suggests that many urban residents may be struggling to make ends meet despite retaining their jobs. This had an effect on the overall economic perception of urban residents. Only 34.7% of them said in March that the overall economic situation has improved this year, compared to last year. This is the lowest such share of respondents in over a year (**Chart 6**).

## Spending more, earning less

Data for the tables were sourced from the Reserve Bank of India's urban and rural consumer confidence surveys



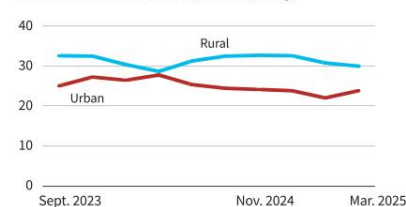
**Chart 1:** Share who said that their employment opportunities have increased compared to a year ago (urban)



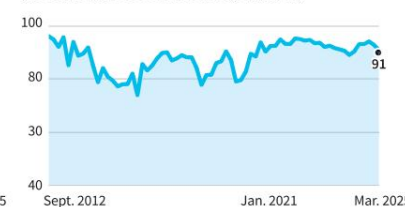
**Chart 2:** Share who said that their income levels have increased compared to a year ago (urban)



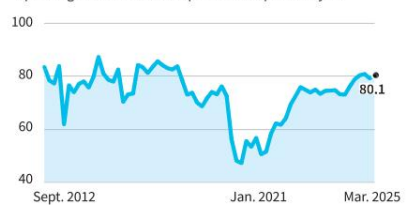
**Chart 3:** Share of urban/rural respondents who reported a decline in their income compared to a year ago



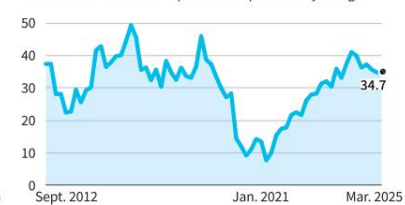
**Chart 4:** Share of respondents who said that commodity prices have increased over the past year (urban)



**Chart 5:** Share of urban respondents who said that their spending has increased compared to the previous year



**Chart 6:** Share of urban respondents who said that the economic situation has improved compared to a year ago





## **Content.**

- **This March, while a significant share of urban consumers remained optimistic about job opportunities, many continued to be pessimistic about income levels.**
- **This suggests that although jobs are available in urban areas, income growth has stagnated. Notably, pessimism around income levels is even more pronounced in rural areas.**
- **Moreover, a majority of urban consumers said that commodity prices have risen compared to a year ago and, as a result, their spending has increased.**
- **Coupled with stagnant incomes, this has led to a greater share of urban consumers feeling pessimistic about the overall economic situation of the country despite improved sentiment regarding employment.**



# Saving traditional varieties of seeds

**I**magine an India where every farmer grows the same handful of crops – wheat, rice, and a few vegetables – while thousands of traditional seed varieties disappear. This is not a distant future; it is happening now.

For centuries, India's seeds of traditional varieties have been the backbone for food security and a key component of the country's rich cultural heritage. While new hybrid varieties have held the promise of high yields, they have come with a cost – greater dependence on chemical fertilisers, water-dependant farming, increased vulnerability to climate shocks, and altered food quality and nutrient content. The irony? At a time when extreme weather events are threatening food production, we are sidelining the very varieties that can withstand droughts, floods, and replenish depleted soils.

## Structure of the food system

Even when we know their benefits, why are traditional varieties disappearing? The truth is: the problem is not just about seeds of traditional varieties; it is about how the entire food system is structured, creating issues that make it hard, if not impossible, for traditional seeds to survive. The first issue is of market demand and consumer preferences. Most Indian consumers unknowingly contribute to the loss of traditional seeds. Supermarkets, government food programmes, and households favour high-yielding rice and wheat, sidelining traditional, climate-resilient grains of millets, pulses and indigenous rice varieties. As there is no demand, farmers hesitate to grow these varieties.

The second issue is that unlike hybrid seeds that are mass-produced and sold commercially, traditional seeds rely on community exchange and local conservation. However, India lacks enough well-funded community seed banks to store and conserve these varieties.



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At a time when extreme weather events are threatening food production, we are sidelining the very varieties that can withstand droughts, floods, and replenish depleted soils

Third, India's agricultural policies have historically promoted high-yielding varieties, in a well-meaning attempt to prioritise food production and boost food security. However, this has inadvertently caused a trade-off in terms of biodiversity and nutritional quality. While initiatives such as the Odisha Millet Mission have attempted to change this, most government subsidies and procurement programmes are slow to catch up. Even agricultural research and development has focused more on increasing productivity of a few crops, rather than focusing on conserving and improving genetic diversity and enhancing climate resilience.

## Conservation efforts

While challenges persist, the fight to save India's traditional seed varieties is not lost. Many organisations have been leading the way in conserving and reviving indigenous varieties and neglected crops for over 30 years. For instance, MSSRF's Tribal Agrobiodiversity Centre in Jeypore, Odisha, recently held a national consultation, which brought together different stakeholders and fostered discussion on how to build climate resilient, sustainable, and inclusive seed systems. From this consultation, a road map started to emerge on the way forward.

No single solution will work to save India's seeds of traditional varieties and crops – recognising farmers' knowledge and rights, strengthening community seed bank networks, initiating alternative seed systems to support local crops and varieties, providing market incentives, and promoting policy changes are all actions that must go hand in hand.

For too long, India's research and development efforts have focused on improved/high-yield varieties that prioritise productivity over climate resilience. A shift is needed – one that funds participatory plant breeding programmes where

farmers work alongside scientists to share knowledge and develop improved traditional seeds.

Well-funded and easily reachable seed banks are critical to prevent seed losses for farmers. Governments must support the establishment of a network of regional conservation centres to prevent India from losing its genetic heritage forever.

Farmers will not grow crops that they cannot sell. The government must create support systems for processing and marketing and provide financial incentives for traditional crop cultivation, recognising their climate-resilient, environmental and nutrition benefits. Expanding Minimum Support Prices and procurement programmes for including these crops into school meals, hospitals, and ration shops can drive large-scale change.

Ultimately, the battle for traditional crops and varieties will be won in kitchens. Awareness campaigns and branding initiatives should highlight the health and environmental benefits of traditional crops. When consumers demand these such produce, the markets will respond, creating a cycle of production and consumption.

## Time for action

India stands at a turning point. Rising cost of farming inputs, climate change, depleting soil health, and unhealthy food consumption make it clear that we cannot afford to rely only on high-yield crop varieties and market preferred crops. The good news? We do not need to choose between food security and sustainability. By investing in seeds of traditional crops and varieties, India can create a sustainable food system that is not just productive but also resilient, nutritious, and aligned with its agricultural heritage. The time for piecemeal solutions is over. We need coordinated national efforts and alliances between diverse stakeholders to restore the balance in our food system.



- **Imagine an India where every farmer grows the same handful of crops — wheat, rice, and a few vegetables — while thousands of traditional seed varieties disappear. This is not a distant future; it is happening now.**
- **For centuries, India's seeds of traditional varieties have been the backbone for food security and a key component of the country's rich cultural heritage.**
- **While new hybrid varieties have held the promise of high yields, they have come with a cost — greater dependence on chemical fertilisers, water-dependant farming, increased vulnerability to climate shocks, and altered food quality and nutrient content.**
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# A Governor's conduct and a judgment of significance

Last week, in a judgment of wide-ranging significance, in *The State of Tamil Nadu vs The Governor of Tamil Nadu and Anr.*, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India, comprising Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan, reaffirmed the limits that bind gubernatorial authority. In doing so, the Court reminded us of a constitutional truth that ought to be self-evident: the Governor of a State is neither an appendage of the Union nor an independent power centre, but is constrained by legal norms and democratic principle.

## A need to respect democratic obligations

At the heart of the case was a seemingly simple but institutionally weighty question: what happens when a Governor fails to act on a Bill duly passed by the State's legislature? The answers from the Court not only helped validate a clutch of Bills passed by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly – each of which had languished without assent – but also contained in them a broader message. The office of the Governor, while significant, is not exempt from the obligations of representative democracy. To withhold assent indefinitely, without reason, subverts the constitutional order.

Initially numbering 12, the contested Bills trace their origins to as far as 2020, with two enacted under the previous regime in the State. Among them were Bills that sought to supplant the Governor's power to appoint Vice-Chancellors to public universities – proposals that emanated out of a long-standing skirmish between the Raj Bhavan and the elected government over institutional control.

For years, the Governor took no discernible action. When the State government moved the Supreme Court in November 2023, he promptly referred two of the Bills to the President for her consideration. The Legislative Assembly, in turn, convened a special session to reenact the remaining 10 Bills. But when these were sent to the Governor, he swiftly passed them on to the President. Since then, the President assented to only one, rejected seven outright, and left two pending.

It was this sequence of events which formed the basis for the State government's case in the Court. The Governor, through his conduct, the State claimed, had undermined the people's will. His prolonged inaction, and ultimately delayed referral, therefore, demanded judicial scrutiny.

India's federal design rests on a delicate balance. The Constitution carefully demarcates legislative authority between the Union and the States. Article 245 prescribes the territorial jurisdiction of each, allowing Parliament to legislate for the entire country or any part thereof, while State legislatures are confined to their respective territories.

The scope of legislative powers is categorised into three distinct lists outlined in the



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The top court has reiterated a constitutional truth – that the Governor of a State is constrained by legal norms and democratic principle

Constitution's Seventh Schedule. The Union enjoys exclusive authority over items in List I, while subjects in List III allow for legislation by both the Union and State governments. Matters in List II, on the other hand, remain under the sole legislative domain of the States. However, in the event of conflict with a parliamentary law, primacy is given to the Union legislation.

In this scheme, the Governor, though appointed by the President, functions as the constitutional head of the State. Barring specific instances where the Constitution expressly permits discretion, he is bound to act on the advice of the State's Council of Ministers.

## A reading of Article 200

It is in this context that Article 200 of the Constitution, which deals with how a Governor ought to assent to a Bill, assumed significance before the Court. Much of the dispute turned on its interpretation. On a plain reading of Article 200, the Governor may: grant assent; withhold assent (and return the Bill to the Assembly for reconsideration), or reserve the Bill for the President's consideration.

The Union of India, in their response to Tamil Nadu's petition, contended that the first proviso to Article 200 provided the Governor an independent, fourth course of action: he could simply withhold his assent to a Bill, without referring it back to the Assembly. In other words, he could perform a pocket-veto.

But this argument had expressly been rejected by the Court in *State of Punjab vs Principal Secretary to the Governor of Punjab* (2023). There, it found that the proviso to Article 200 contains no independent power. Once an ordinary Bill is passed by the Assembly, the Governor has only one of three options available: to either assent to it, or reserve it for the President's consideration, or withhold the assent, in which case, the Governor must also refer it back to the Assembly for reconsideration.

It was also the Union's case that in deciding whether to reserve a Bill for the President's assent, the Governor could exercise an autonomous discretion. That is, he had the independent ability to decide what course of action to follow. In answering this argument, the Court harked to the debates in the Constituent Assembly. It noted that the draft version of Article 200 (then Article 175) had explicitly stated that the Governor "may, in his discretion" reserve a Bill for the consideration of the President. This phrase was consciously omitted in the adopted version. Its removal, the Court held, was deliberate, aimed at ensuring that the Governor's role was constrained by the advice of the elected executive.

Indeed, the Court identified only three narrow circumstances in which the Governor could act without ministerial counsel: first, where the second proviso to Article 200 applied, that is

where a Bill derogated from a High Court's powers; second, where a Bill fell within a class for which presidential assent was explicitly mandated, such as under Article 31C where a law was sought to be protected from judicial review; and third, where a Bill so fundamentally undermined constitutional values.

This conclusion came with an important caveat. Even where a Governor exercises discretion, the action is still amenable to judicial review. Relying on its earlier judgment in *Rameshwar Prasad vs Union of India* (2006), the Court found that while Article 361 grants personal immunity to Governors, it does not insulate their actions from legal scrutiny. Consider the alternative: a Governor may simply paralyse the legislative process by sitting over Bills for years on end, all the while hiding behind the cloak of gubernatorial immunity, choking, in the process, the entire governance of a State.

In any event, in this case, the Court found that there was no discretion available to the Governor. Having chosen to withhold assent, he could not plausibly have then referred the Bills to the President, on their being re-presented to him. There was no trace of executive advice backing his decisions nor were his acts grounded in any identifiable, let alone defensible, constitutional rationale. Having found the Governor's actions unconstitutional, the Court could no doubt have considered issuing what the law describes as a writ of mandamus, compelling him to grant his assent to the Bills. But given the substantial time that had lapsed and given that previous Court decisions had been overlooked, the Court chose the ostensibly extreme option. With a view to achieving complete justice – a power available to it under Article 142 – it declared that these 10 Bills would be deemed to have been assented to on the date when they were re-presented to the Governor.

Some might see this as judicial overreach, but issuing a mandamus might well have been rather more unworkable. Should the Court's orders be breached, it cannot plausibly hold the Governor in contempt. Therefore, the ultimate direction must be seen as a logical *sequitur* to the Court's findings: on the Bills being passed anew by the State Assembly, and on the Council of Ministers recommending their assent, the Governor was left with no discretion in the matter.

## The larger message

The significance of the judgment for the specific Bills, which were at stake, is plain to see. But the verdict also carries with it a larger message. It upholds a fact intrinsic to our Republic: that the Governor, though appointed by the Union government, functions on the aid and advice of the State executive; the office is meant to serve not as a source of political disputes, but as a constitutional sentinel, upholding the values of representative democracy.

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- **Last week, in a judgment of wide-ranging significance, in *The State of Tamil Nadu vs The Governor of Tamil Nadu and Anr.*, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India, comprising Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan, reaffirmed the limits that bind gubernatorial authority.**
- **Initially numbering 12, the contested Bills trace their origins to as far as 2020, with two enacted under the previous regime in the State.**
- **Among them were Bills that sought to supplant the Governor's power to appoint Vice-Chancellors to public universities — proposals that emanated out of a long-standing skirmish between the Raj Bhavan and the elected government over institutional control.**
- **When the State government moved the Supreme Court in November 2023, he promptly referred two of the Bills to the President for her consideration. The Legislative Assembly, in turn, convened a special session to reenact the remaining 10 Bills. But when these were sent to the Governor, he swiftly passed them on to the President. Since then, the President assented to only one, rejected seven outright, and left two pending.**



- **India's federal design rests on a delicate balance. The Constitution carefully demarcates legislative authority between the Union and the States. Article 245 prescribes the territorial jurisdiction of each, allowing Parliament to legislate for the entire country or any part thereof, while State legislatures are confined to their respective territories.**
- **The scope of legislative powers is categorised into three distinct lists outlined in the Constitution's Seventh Schedule. The Union enjoys exclusive authority over items in List I, while subjects in List III allow for legislation by both the Union and State governments. Matters in List II, on the other hand, remain under the sole legislative domain of the States. However, in the event of conflict with a parliamentary law, primacy is given to the Union legislation.**
- **In this scheme, the Governor, though appointed by the President, functions as the constitutional head of the State. Barring specific instances where the Constitution expressly permits discretion, he is bound to act on the advice of the State's Council of Ministers.**



- It is in this context that Article 200 of the Constitution, which deals with how a Governor ought to assent to a Bill, assumed significance before the Court. Much of the dispute turned on its interpretation. On a plain reading of Article 200, the Governor may: grant assent; withhold assent (and return the Bill to the Assembly for reconsideration), or reserve the Bill for the President's consideration.
- The Union of India, in their response to Tamil Nadu's petition, contended that the first proviso to Article 200 provided the Governor an independent, fourth course of action: he could simply withhold his assent to a Bill, without referring it back to the Assembly. In other words, he could perform a pocket-veto.
- But this argument had expressly been rejected by the Court in *State of Punjab vs Principal Secretary to the Governor of Punjab* (2023). There, it found that the proviso to Article 200 contains no independent power. Once an ordinary Bill is passed by the Assembly, the Governor has only one of three options available: to either assent to it, or reserve it for the President's consideration, or withhold the assent, in which case, the Governor must also refer it back to the Assembly for reconsideration.







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