

Headlines

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - Page No.1 , GS 2

Presidential Reference - Page No.1 , GS 2

Syria - Page No.10 , Places in News

Manipur issue - Page No.10 , GS 2

Population and Poverty - Page No.11 , GS 1

Earth observation satellite - Page No.16 , GS 3

Trump rhetoric - Page No.17 , GS 2

Text and Context - None of the Above

Join me on Telegram :- Prashant Tiwari

Username:- UPSCwithPrashant

**UNION PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
PROGRAMME OF EXAMINATIONS/RECRUITMENT TESTS (RTs) -2026**

SL No.	Name of Examination	Date of Notification	Last Date for receipt of Applications	Date of commencement of Exam	Duration of Exam
1.	Reserved for UPSC RT/ Examination			10.01.2026 (Saturday)	2 Days
2.	Reserved for UPSC Examination			17.01.2026 (Saturday)	2 Days
3.	Combined Geo-Scientist (Preliminary) Examination, 2026	03.09.2025	23.09.2025	08.02.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
4.	Engineering Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2026	17.09.2025	07.10.2025	08.02.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
5.	CBI (DSP) LDCE	24.12.2025	13.01.2026	28.02.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAY
6.	CISF AC(EXE) LDCE-2026	03.12.2025	23.12.2025	08.03.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
7.	N.D.A. & N.A. Examination (I), 2026	10.12.2025	30.12.2025	12.04.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
8.	C.D.S. Examination (I), 2026				
9.	Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2026	14.01.2026	03.02.2026	24.05.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
10.	Indian Forest Service (Preliminary) Examination, 2026 through CS(P) Examination 2026				
11.	Reserved for UPSC RT/ Examination			06.06.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS
12.	I.E.S./I.S.S. Examination, 2026	11.02.2026	03.03.2026	19.06.2026 (Friday)	3 DAYS
13.	Combined Geo-Scientist (Main) Examination, 2026			20.06.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS
14.	Engineering Services (Main) Examination, 2026			21.06.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
15.	Reserved for UPSC RT/ Examination			04.07.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS
16.	Central Armed Police Forces (ACs) Examination, 2026	18.02.2026	10.03.2026	19.07.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
17.	Combined Medical Services Examination, 2026	11.03.2026	31.03.2026	02.08.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
18.	Reserved for UPSC Examination			08.08.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS
19.	Civil Services (Main) Examination, 2026			21.08.2026 (Friday)	5 DAYS
20.	N.D.A. & N.A. Examination (II), 2026	20.05.2026	09.06.2026	13.09.2026 (Sunday)	1 DAY
21.	C.D.S. Examination (II), 2026				
22.	Reserved for UPSC RT/ Examination			26.09.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS
23.	Reserved for UPSC RT/ Examination			10.10.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS
24.	Reserved for UPSC RT/ Examination			31.10.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS
25.	Indian Forest Service (Main) Examination, 2026			22.11.2026 (Sunday)	7 DAYS
26.	S.O./Steno (GD-B/GD-I) LDCE	16.09.2026	06.10.2026	12.12.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS
27.	Reserved for UPSC RT/ Examination			19.12.2026 (Saturday)	2 DAYS

Note: The dates of notification, commencement and duration of Examinations/ RTs are liable to alteration, if the circumstances so warrant.

T.N. CM slams Presidential Reference to top court on timeline to act on State Bills

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Strongly condemning a Presidential Reference to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution on the timeline imposed for Governors and the President to act on Bills, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday said it was a desperate attempt to weaken democratically elected State governments by placing them under the control of Governors serving as agents of the Centre.

President Droupadi Murmu, in a rare move, had sought the opinion of the Supreme Court through a Presidential Reference on Tuesday, on whether the court can “impose” timelines and prescribe the manner of conduct of Governors and the President while dealing

Question of clarity

President Droupadi Murmu has sought clarity from the Supreme Court on the ‘scope and contours’ of Article 142

Presidential Reference:

Article 143 of the Constitution empowers the President to seek advice from the Supreme Court on questions of law or fact, present or future, of public importance

The President has raised 14 questions, which include:

- Can SC impose timelines and dictate the manner of exercise of powers by Governors and the President under Article 200, 201, respectively?
- Can deemed consent to Bills be given through a judicial order?
- What are constitutional options before a Governor when a Bill is sent for his assent. Is he bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers?



with State Bills sent to them for assent or reserved for consideration. Broadly, the Reference asked if judicial orders can dictate by what time and how the President and Governors should function under Articles 200 and 201 of the Constitution.

Mr. Stalin dubbed the move as “an attempt to subvert the constitutional position” settled by the top court in the Tamil Nadu case against the Governor and other precedents.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 14

Page No. 1, GS 2

Question of clarity

President Droupadi Murmu has sought clarity from the Supreme Court on the 'scope and contours' of Article 142

Presidential Reference:
Article 143 of the Constitution empowers the President to seek advice from the Supreme Court on questions of law or fact, present or future, of public importance

The President has raised 14 questions, which include:

- Can SC impose timelines and dictate the manner of exercise of powers by Governors and the President under Article 200, 201, respectively?

- Can deemed consent to Bills be given through a judicial order?
- What are constitutional options before a Governor when a Bill is sent for his assent. Is he bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers?



- President Droupadi Murmu, in a rare move, had sought the opinion of the Supreme Court through a Presidential Reference on Tuesday, on whether the court can “impose” timelines and prescribe the manner of conduct of Governors and the President while dealing with State Bills sent to them for assent or reserved for consideration.
- Broadly, the Reference asked if judicial orders can dictate by what time and how the President and Governors should function under Articles 200 and 201 of the Constitution.
- The Constitution of India Article 143 authorises the president to seek the opinion of the Supreme Court
- Under the Constitution, the President may seek the Supreme Court's opinion on two types of matters.
- Any point of law or public fact that has arisen or is likely to arise
- Any pre-constitutional contract, agreement, covenant, engagement, or other similar instrument that gives rise to a dispute.

Fact

- In the first instance, the Supreme Court may or may not submit its opinion to the President, but in the second situation, it is obligated to do so.
- The Supreme Court's decision is advisory rather than binding in both cases. As a result, it does not bind the President; he or she is free to follow or disregard the opinion.
- The Supreme Court is under no obligation to provide an opinion. Rather, the Supreme Court may decline to provide an opinion under Article 143 in instances that it does not think suitable or susceptible to such exercise.
- It is also known as consultative jurisdiction.

'Trump rhetoric won't harm Apple's India manufacturing'

There is no alarm over the U.S. President's remarks "we don't want you building in India" to CEO Tim Cook, as manufacturing commitments for India and the U.S. are different, say officials here

Aroon Deep

NEW DELHI

Apple, Inc.'s existing and soon-to-be-opened infrastructure in India is sufficient to supply demand for iPhones in India and the United States, government sources said, adding that there was not much alarm in India over U.S. President Donald Trump's remarks to Apple CEO Tim Cook that he didn't "want you [Apple] building in India".

"You can build in India if you want to take care of India," Mr. Trump said in Qatar, describing a conversation he had with Mr. Cook, adding that Apple had already committed \$500 billion in investments into U.S. manufacturing.

As far as the assembly of



Bigger bite: Apple serves demand for phones and accessories via the Foxconn unit in Sriperumbudur among other facilities. REUTERS

iPhones is concerned, demand for both the U.S. and India in the ongoing quarter can be met with capacity from India, and this is infrastructure that is not practical to shift to a high labour-cost country like the U.S., least of all in short order, an official said.

The manufacturing commitments that Apple

has already made for the U.S. are for chips and other components which are not being made in India, the official added.

An Apple spokesperson declined to comment. The company has assured the Indian government that existing plans will not be impacted by Mr. Trump's remarks. Apple is serving

demand for its phones and accessories via the following units, both existing and being planned to open: Foxconn assembly unit in Sriperumbudur, Pegatron facility at Mahindra World City, he components manufacturing unit in Krishnagiri, and the new Foxconn facility in Tumkur.

Two of these units – in Tumkur and Krishnagiri – have had their construction completed, and production is likely to start soon. Further manufacturing commitments by the company in India beyond these facilities had not yet been made, an official said, adding that this was only likely to happen after there was more clarity on the bilateral trade agreement being negotiated between India and the U.S.

- Apple, Inc.'s existing and soon-to-be-opened infrastructure in India is sufficient to supply demand for iPhones in India and the United States, government sources said, adding that there was not much alarm in India over U.S. President Donald Trump's remarks to Apple CEO Tim Cook that he didn't "want you [Apple] building in India".
- "You can build in India if you want to take care of India," Mr. Trump said in Qatar, describing a conversation he had with Mr. Cook, adding that Apple had already committed \$500 billion in investments into U.S. manufacturing.
- As far as the assembly of iPhones is concerned, demand for both the U.S. and India in the ongoing quarter can be met with capacity from India, and this is infrastructure that is not practical to shift to a high labour-cost country like the U.S., least of all in short order, an official said.
- The manufacturing commitments that Apple has already made for the U.S. are for chips and other components which are not being made in India, the official added.

- The company has assured the Indian government that existing plans will not be impacted by Mr. Trump's remarks.
- Apple is serving demand for its phones and accessories via the following units, both existing and being planned to open: Foxconn assembly unit in Sriperumbudur, Pegatron facility at Mahindra World City, he components manufacturing unit in Krishnagiri, and the new Foxconn facility in Tumkur.
- Two of these units — in Tumkur and Krishnagiri — have had their construction completed, and production is likely to start soon.
- Further manufacturing commitments by the company in India beyond these facilities had not yet been made, an official said, adding that this was only likely to happen after there was more clarity on the bilateral trade agreement being negotiated between India and the U.S.



UPSC IAS

PRELIMS TO INTERVIEW (P2I)

FOUNDATION

MAY EVENING BATCH

Price
₹33,999

Use Code
PRTLIVE



Prelims and
Mains Residential
Program



Full Refund
on Clearing
Prelims



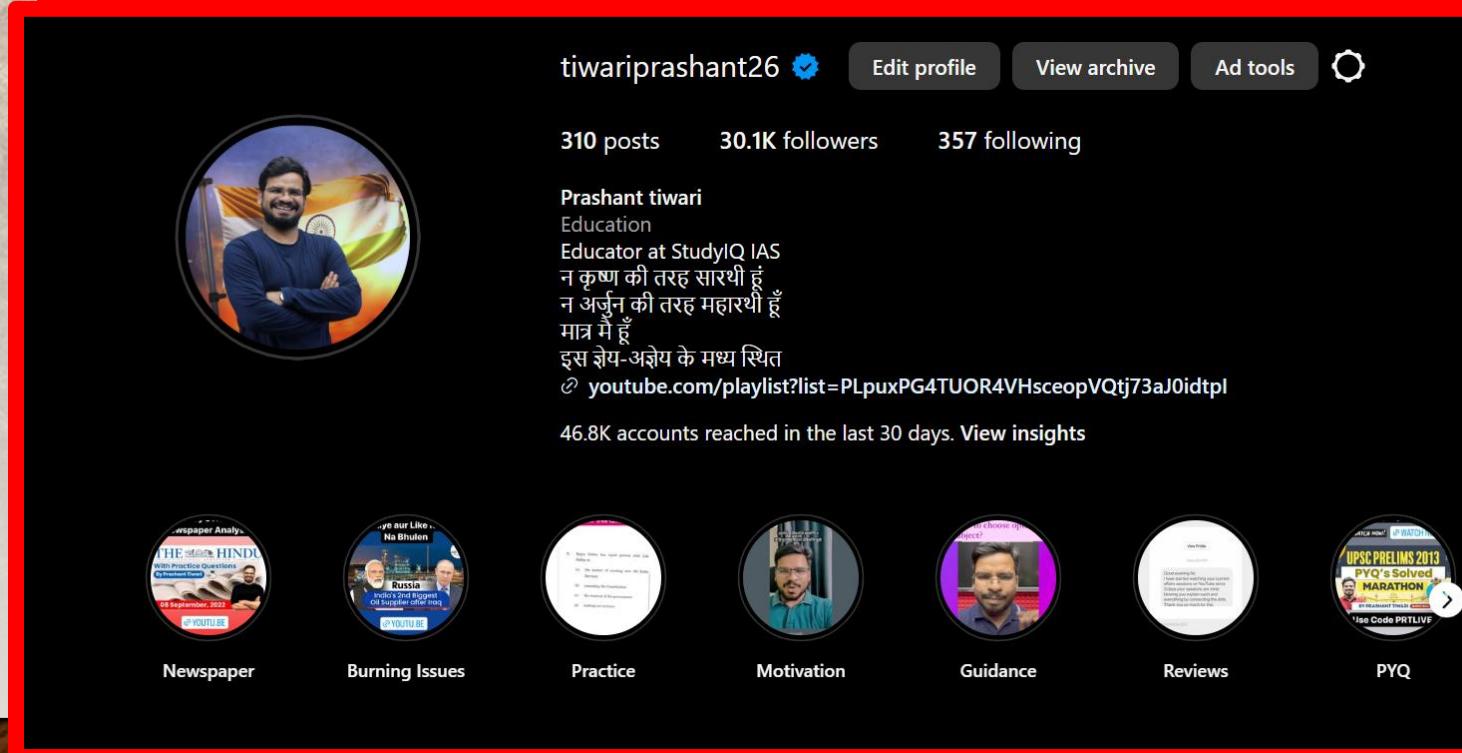
₹11,000 reward
to monthly top
performer



Interview
Guidance
Program

Batch Just Started

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



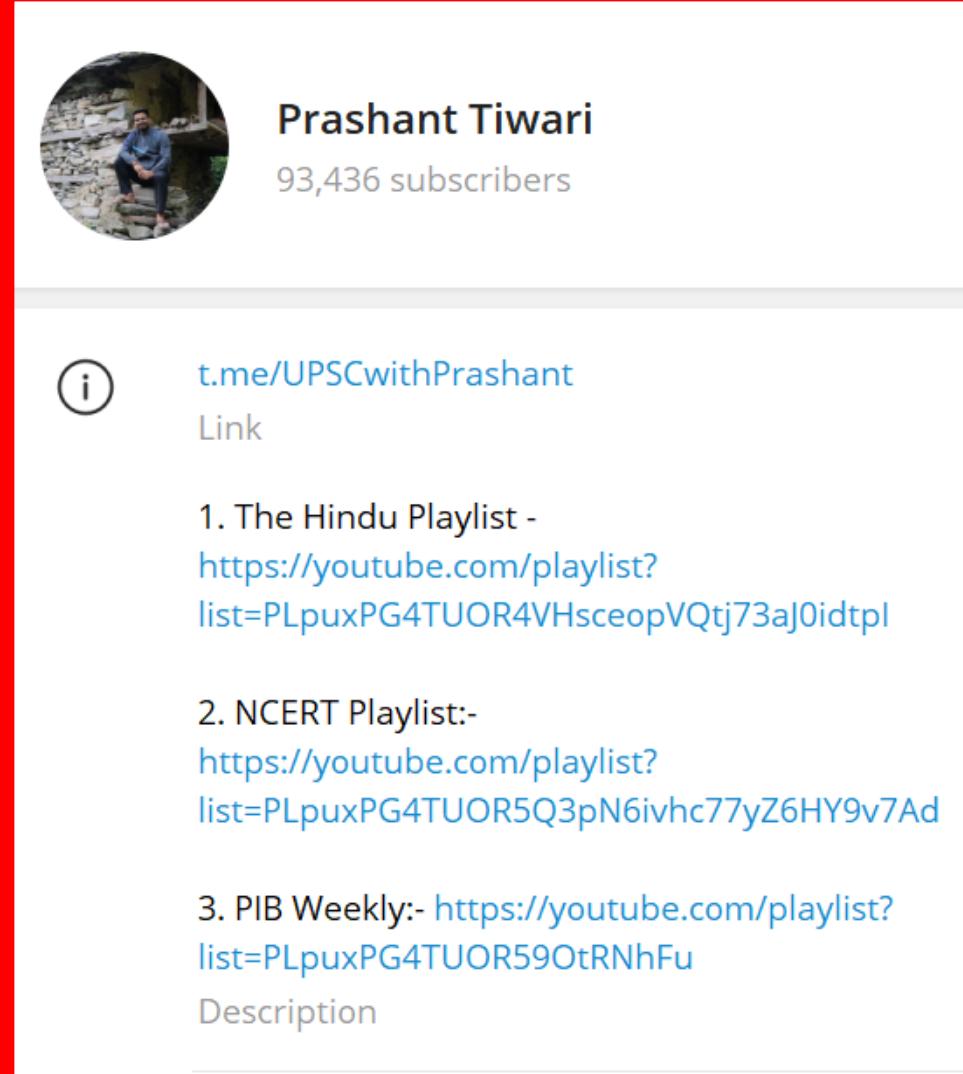
tiwariprashant26  Edit profile View archive Ad tools

310 posts 30.1K followers 357 following

Prashant tiwari
Educator at StudyIQ IAS
न कृष्ण की तरह सारथी हूँ
न अर्जुन की तरह महारथी हूँ
मात्र मैं हूँ
इस जेय-अज्ञेय के मध्य स्थित
youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aj0idtp1

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

Newspaper Burning Issues Practice Motivation Guidance Reviews PYQ



Prashant Tiwari
93,436 subscribers

 t.me/UPSCwithPrashant
Link

1. The Hindu Playlist -
[https://youtube.com/playlist?
list=PLpxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aj0idtp1](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aj0idtp1)
2. NCERT Playlist:-
[https://youtube.com/playlist?
list=PLpxPG4TUOR5Q3pN6ivhc77yZ6HY9v7Ad](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpxPG4TUOR5Q3pN6ivhc77yZ6HY9v7Ad)
3. PIB Weekly:- [https://youtube.com/playlist?
list=PLpxPG4TUOR59OtRNhFu](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpxPG4TUOR59OtRNhFu)
Description

ISRO set to launch earth observation satellite using PSLV rocket on Sunday

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is all geared up for its 101st launch with the PSLV-C61 / EOS-09 mission to be launched at 5.59 a.m. on Sunday from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The ISRO on Thursday said the PSLV was moved from the Payload Integration Facility to the Mobile Service Tower at the spaceport in Sriharikota for further integration.

EOS-09 is an earth observation satellite which is expected to boost India's surveillance capabilities in all-weather conditions. The satellite is equipped with C-band synthetic aperture radar enabling capturing of high-resolution images of earth's surface under all-weather con-



Collaboration on: Participants at a meet of the ISRO and JAXA in Bengaluru on May 13 and 14 for the Chandrayaan-5 mission. ISRO

ditions round the clock.

Chandrayaan-5 meet

The ISRO and the JAXA, the space agency of Japan, jointly conducted the third face-to-face Technical Interface Meeting (TIM-3), for the Chandrayaan-5/Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission at the ISRO Headquarters in Bengaluru on May 13 and 14.

The meeting was attended by senior officials, pro-

ject executives, and technical team members from the ISRO, JAXA, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), Japan.

“Following the legacy of Chandrayaan-1, Chandrayaan-2 (orbiter-based lunar exploration), Chandrayaan-3 (lander-rover based in-situ exploration) and the forthcoming Chandrayaan-4 (India’s first lunar sample return mission), the Chandrayaan-5/

LUPEX mission will be the fifth mission in the Chandrayaan series of lunar missions, in collaboration with JAXA, to study the lunar volatile materials, including lunar water, in the vicinity of a Permanently Shadowed Region in the lunar south pole,” ISRO said.

The mission will be launched by JAXA onboard its H3-24L launch vehicle, carrying the ISRO-made lunar lander, which will carry the MHI, Japan-made lunar rover. ISRO, apart from developing the lunar lander, is also responsible for developing a few scientific instruments for the mission. The scientific instruments for this mission would be contributed by ISRO, JAXA, ESA and NASA, all thematically connected with the exploration and in-situ analysis of the volatiles reserved in the lunar polar region.

Page No. 16, GS 3

Content.

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is all geared up for its 101st launch with the PSLV-C61 / EOS-09 mission to be launched at 5.59 a.m. on Sunday from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- The ISRO on Thursday said the PSLV was moved from the Payload Integration Facility to the Mobile Service Tower at the spaceport in Sriharikota for further integration.
- EOS-09 is an earth observation satellite which is expected to boost India's surveillance capabilities in all-weather conditions.
- The satellite is equipped with C-band synthetic aperture radar enabling capturing of high-resolution images of earth's surface under all-weather conditions round the clock.

Fact

- The ISRO and the JAXA, the space agency of Japan, jointly conducted the third face-to-face Technical Interface Meeting (TIM-3), for the Chandrayaan-5/Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission at the ISRO Headquarters in Bengaluru on May 13 and 14.
- The meeting was attended by senior officials, project executives, and technical team members from the ISRO, JAXA, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), Japan.
- “Following the legacy of Chandrayaan-1, Chandrayaan-2 (orbiter-based lunar exploration), Chandrayaan-3 (lander-rover based in-situ exploration) and the forthcoming Chandrayaan-4 (India’s first lunar sample return mission), the Chandrayaan-5/ LUPEX mission will be the fifth mission in the Chandrayaan series of lunar missions, in collaboration with JAXA, to study the lunar volatile materials, including lunar water, in the vicinity of a Permanently Shadowed Region in the lunar south pole,” ISRO said.

Fact

- The mission will be launched by JAXA onboard its H3-24L launch vehicle, carrying the ISRO-made lunar lander, which will carry the MHI, Japan-made lunar rover.
- ISRO, apart from developing the lunar lander, is also responsible for developing a few scientific instruments for the mission.
- The scientific instruments for this mission would be contributed by ISRO, JAXA, ESA and NASA, all thematically connected with the exploration and in-situ analysis of the volatiles reserved in the lunar polar region.

Put Pak. nuclear arsenal under IAEA watch: India

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh cites concerns over 'irresponsible' conduct of Pakistan, questions security of that country's nuclear weapons; in J&K, he underscores India's resolve to fight terrorism

Peerzada Ashiq

SRINAGAR

In his first visit to Jammu and Kashmir following the launch of Operation Sindoora, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday questioned the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and called for its supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), citing concerns over what he described as "irresponsible" conduct by the neighbouring country.

Addressing soldiers at the Badami Bagh Cantonment in Srinagar, Mr. Singh said, "We will never yield to nuclear blackmail. Pakistan's reckless nuclear threats have not deterred India's resolve to eliminate terrorism. I ask the global community: are nuclear



High morale: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh meeting troops at Badami Bagh Cantonment in Srinagar on Thursday. PTI

weapons safe in the hands of such an irresponsible and rogue nation? These weapons must come under IAEA supervision."

The Minister reaffirmed India's evolving stance on national security and counter-terrorism, crediting Prime Minister Narendra Modi with redefining

the country's policy framework. "Any attack on Indian soil is no longer viewed as an isolated act of violence – it is treated as an act of war," he said.

CONTINUED ON

» PAGE 14

RELATED REPORTS ON

» PAGES 15 & 16

Page No. 1, GS 2

Pakistan calls for probe into Indian nuclear 'black market'

Agence France-Presse

ISLAMABAD

Responding to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's remarks on its arsenal, Pakistan on Thursday called for an investigation into a nuclear "black market" in India. "The IAEA should be worried about the repeated illicit trafficking incidents involving radioactive material in India," Pakistan's Foreign Ministry claimed in a statement, adding that the incidents "suggest the existence of a black market inside India".

Content.

- On his first visit to Jammu and Kashmir following the launch of Operation Sindoora, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday questioned the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and called for its supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), citing concerns over what he described as "irresponsible" conduct by the neighbouring country.
- IAEA is an intergovernmental organisation that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.
- It was established in 1957 as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organisation within the UN, and governed by its own founding treaty - the Statute of the IAEA.
- It reports to both the UNGA and the UNSC and is headquartered at the UN Office at Vienna, Austria
- In 2005, it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work for a safe and peaceful world.
- The IAEA has 178 member states, India being one of the founding members of it.

Mandate:

- Encourage peaceful nuclear energy applications.
- Ensure nuclear materials are not misused for military purposes.
- Promote nuclear safety, security, and radiation protection standards.
- Provide technical support, training, and research in nuclear technology globally.

Missions:

- Peaceful Uses: Support peaceful nuclear energy development.
- Safeguards: Monitor and verify nuclear programs to prevent military use.
- Safety: Promote nuclear safety and radiation protection.

Role in Non-Proliferation:

- Oversees compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT).
- Conducts inspections and monitors nuclear facilities.
- Global Impact: Works extensively with developing nations to enhance nuclear technology for energy, medicine, and agriculture.

Should NOTA be included in all elections compulsorily?

When was NOTA first introduced? What is the Election Commission's position on NOTA?

Sanjay Kumar

The story so far:

Recently, the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) for including NOTA as an option compulsorily in every election, even if there is only one single candidate.

When was NOTA introduced?

NOTA or the 'None of the Above' option was introduced in Indian elections for the first time in 2013 on the PIL filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties which sought a mechanism to "recognise the right of a voter not to vote, but still the secrecy of his having not voted is not maintained in its implementation..."

Is NOTA relevant in Indian elections?

It is true that not many voters have opted for NOTA during the last national election and the other subsequent State-level

elections. However, not holding an election in a constituency because there is only one candidate, would mean denying voters the chance of expressing their opinion (through NOTA) against that single candidate who will anyhow get elected unopposed. The Election Commission (EC) has argued against NOTA stating that it has not brought in the desired results as not many voters have opted for NOTA in past elections. But one should not forget that NOTA is a way through which our electoral system can become more responsive to people.

What is the EC's argument?

The EC is completely opposed to the idea of making NOTA a compulsory option in all constituencies even if there is only one candidate contesting the election. The Election Commission presented data that in all the Lok Sabha elections held since 1971, there have been only six uncontested elections. Another data point

cited by the EC was that since 1952, there have been only nine cases of candidates getting elected unopposed. The EC's lawyer said that, "the chance of election being uncontested has become a rarity which is also proven by statistical data; hence Supreme Court should not even entertain such a PIL". They went on to argue that "treating NOTA as mandatorily contesting candidate in all direct uncontested elections does not find a place in the statutes and same would require legislative amendments in the provisions of Representation of the People Act 1951, and the conduct of Election Rules 1961".

Since it is such a rarity, the EC should not have its hands full. If the EC can conduct elections in such a large number of constituencies given its resources, holding elections in constituencies, with a NOTA option, even if there is only one candidate, should not amount to a lot of additional work.

Are NOTA voters a minority?

It is true that looking in terms of per cent only little more than 1% of voters, voted for NOTA in the three Lok Sabha elections (2014, 2019 and 2024) held since NOTA was introduced. But given the size of the electorate in one Parliamentary constituency, each having on an average about 25 lakh voters, even these numbers are not small. There are many State assembly elections where little more than 1% opted for NOTA over the last decade, the highest being in Bihar with 2.48% during the 2015 Assembly election, followed by Gujarat with 1.8% during the 2017 Assembly elections. If one looks at the NOTA votes over the years in different States, one sees that it was slightly higher in the very first election held in the State after NOTA was introduced but declined in subsequent elections, although the trend is not linear.

What next?

Some reforms are needed. One can be by fixing the minimum per cent of votes to be polled by the candidate as a benchmark for getting elected depending upon the size of the constituency. The other method could be by giving legitimacy to NOTA votes and voters, by making a provision for re-election if certain percentage of voters opt for NOTA in an election.

Sanjay Kumar is Professor and Co-director Lokniti-CSDS.

THE GIST

NOTA or the 'None of the Above' option was introduced in Indian elections for the first time in 2013.

The EC is completely opposed to the idea of making NOTA a compulsory option in all constituencies even if there is only one candidate contesting the election.

It is true that looking in terms of per cent only little more than 1% of voters, voted for NOTA in the three Lok Sabha elections (2014, 2019 and 2024) held since NOTA was introduced.

Content.

- NOTA or the ‘None of the Above’ option was introduced in Indian elections for the first time in 2013 on the PIL filed by the People’s Union for Civil Liberties which sought a mechanism to “recognise the right of a voter not to vote, but still the secrecy of his having not voted is not maintained in its implementation...”
- The EC is completely opposed to the idea of making NOTA a compulsory option in all constituencies even if there is only one candidate contesting the election.
- The Election Commission presented data that in all the Lok Sabha elections held since 1971, there have been only six uncontested elections.
- Another data point cited by the EC was that since 1952, there have been only nine cases of candidates getting elected unopposed.

Fact

- It is true that looking in terms of per cent only little more than 1% of voters, voted for NOTA in the three Lok Sabha elections (2014, 2019 and 2024) held since NOTA was introduced.
- But given the size of the electorate in one Parliamentary constituency, each having on an average about 25 lakh voters, even these numbers are not small.
- There are many State assembly elections where little more than 1% opted for NOTA over the last decade, the highest being in Bihar with 2.48% during the 2015 Assembly election, followed by Gujarat with 1.8% during the 2017 Assembly elections.

Is Bihar's high replacement rate a consequence of poverty?



Saswata Ghosh
Associate Professor at the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata



Prasenjit Bose
Economist and activist

PARLEY

According to the Sample Registration System report for 2021 released by the Registrar General of India on May 7, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), which is the average number of children that a woman is expected to have in her childbearing years, in India was 2.0 in 2021, the same as in 2020. While Delhi and West Bengal reported the lowest TFR of 1.4, Bihar reported the highest at 3.0. Is Bihar's high replacement rate a consequence of poverty? Saswata Ghosh and Prasenjit Bose discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Shiv Sahay Singh**. Edited excerpts:

What does a TFR rate of 3.0 mean for Bihar? Does it have any association with poverty?

Saswata Ghosh: The TFR has hovered around 3.0 for the last 6-7 years in Bihar. According to the Expert Committee on Population Projection, Bihar will achieve the replacement level of fertility (2.1) only in 2039. Bihar is the only laggard State in terms of the fertility transition.

Bihar's infant mortality rate has actually declined and stands at 27 per 1,000 live births from 42 in the past. Other indicators such as women's educational attainment have improved as well, but the State's TFR remains high. High TFR has some linkage with poverty. But poverty is not the only reason for it. In Bihar, there is a culture of high fertility. As per calculations made of unique level data of the National Family Health Survey of 2019-21, across the country, 67% of women said that the ideal number of children for them is two, whereas in Bihar, only 49.6% of women said so.

There are a number of government reports, including NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index, which state that poverty in Bihar is also declining. But despite the improvement in the poverty rate, the fertility rate in Bihar continues to be high.

Prasenjit Bose: These are complex socio-economic questions and the multi-dimensional poverty estimates themselves are far from perfect. I agree with Saswata that cultural factors have an important causality in determining fertility rates. But I would also like to add that there are other economic factors in terms of urbanisation, employment opportunities, and livelihood opportunities, which are not really captured by the MDP (multidimensional poverty) estimates. Therefore, I would not read much into this divergence between TFR and MDP. It could be over simplistic in understanding a complex



A woman with her children in Patna. RANJEET KUMAR

phenomenon. Ultimately both the estimates are moving in the same direction – poverty is coming down and so is the TFR.

The SRS figures make a distinction between urban and rural TFR. Across the country, the urban TFR is 1.6 and the rural TFR is 2.2. Is there a wide gap between the TFR in the urban areas of Bihar, which stands at 2.3, and in the rural areas, pegged at 3.1?

SG: If we see the gap between the TFR of rural areas and urban areas across the country, it is 0.6 percentage points, whereas in Bihar, the gap is 0.8 points. There isn't a big difference between 0.6 and 0.8. But what is startling is that the all-India urban TFR is 1.6, while in Bihar it is 2.3. That is puzzling. Why is the TFR so high in urban areas, where the affluent and educated sections of society live? Why is it above the replacement level of fertility?

The demographer Ansley J. Coale had said that human fertility behaviour is a 'calculus of conscious choice'. So if the fertility rate is higher than elsewhere, it is because of the conscious choice of the people. Even if the infant mortality rate has declined and there is higher use of contraception, if the fertility in urban areas continues to remain high, it is a conscious choice. Until and unless the people think that low fertility size is actually beneficial for them, the TFR will continue to be high in Bihar.

Do factors such as a preference for sons, the State being primarily an agricultural economy, and having a relatively small female workforce affect the TFR?

PB: Yes, significantly. In fact, poverty and lack of livelihood and income opportunities have a huge impact on cultural choices, including the number of children people have. Poor people



Poverty and lack of livelihood and income opportunities have a huge impact on cultural choices, including the number of children people have. Poor people tend to have a cultural preference not only for sons, but for more children. They want more labour, which will lead to more income.

PRASENJIT BOSE

SG: Women are getting educated more and more. Several programmes in this regard are being implemented by the State government. Many of these women are first-generation learners. But they have low employability and their exposure to the outside world is limited. They have lower bargaining power and autonomy in the family, and social mobility. In our study, based on a primary survey of 2,250 women in six districts in Bihar, we found that women in the reproductive age group of 15-49 years were not allowed to directly interact with ASHA workers. These interactions were restricted by their mother-in-laws.

We have empirical evidence now that certain States in the north have a high fertility rate while the fertility rate is declining in the south. Where does this lead us to, particularly in the political context, with the question of delimitation looming large?

PB: I don't think that this problem should be discussed only in the context of Bihar, but also other States in what we call the Hindi heartland – Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. These States now account for a disproportionately large share of the country's overall population. We have a system of representative democracy where 'one person, one vote, one value' is a basic principle. As the delimitation debate opens up, which is likely to happen only after the next Census, we will come across a hugely disproportionate size of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies across the north and the south. We will come across parliamentary constituencies in States with a high TFR with a disproportionately large number of people (25 lakh to 30 lakh voters) being represented by a single MP, whereas the case will be different in States where the TFR is already low or is showing a falling trend. The question is whether they (the States with low/declining TFR) are going to pay the price for bringing down the TFR rate. Will they get rewarded or punished for social and economic progress and policy successes? Because the allocation of resources by the Finance Commission is based on the population size. The onus is on policymakers to bring about some course correction and bring in a convergent trend. If the divergent trend (between States with a high TFR and low TFR) continues, we are looking at a disaster which could pose serious questions for our democracy.



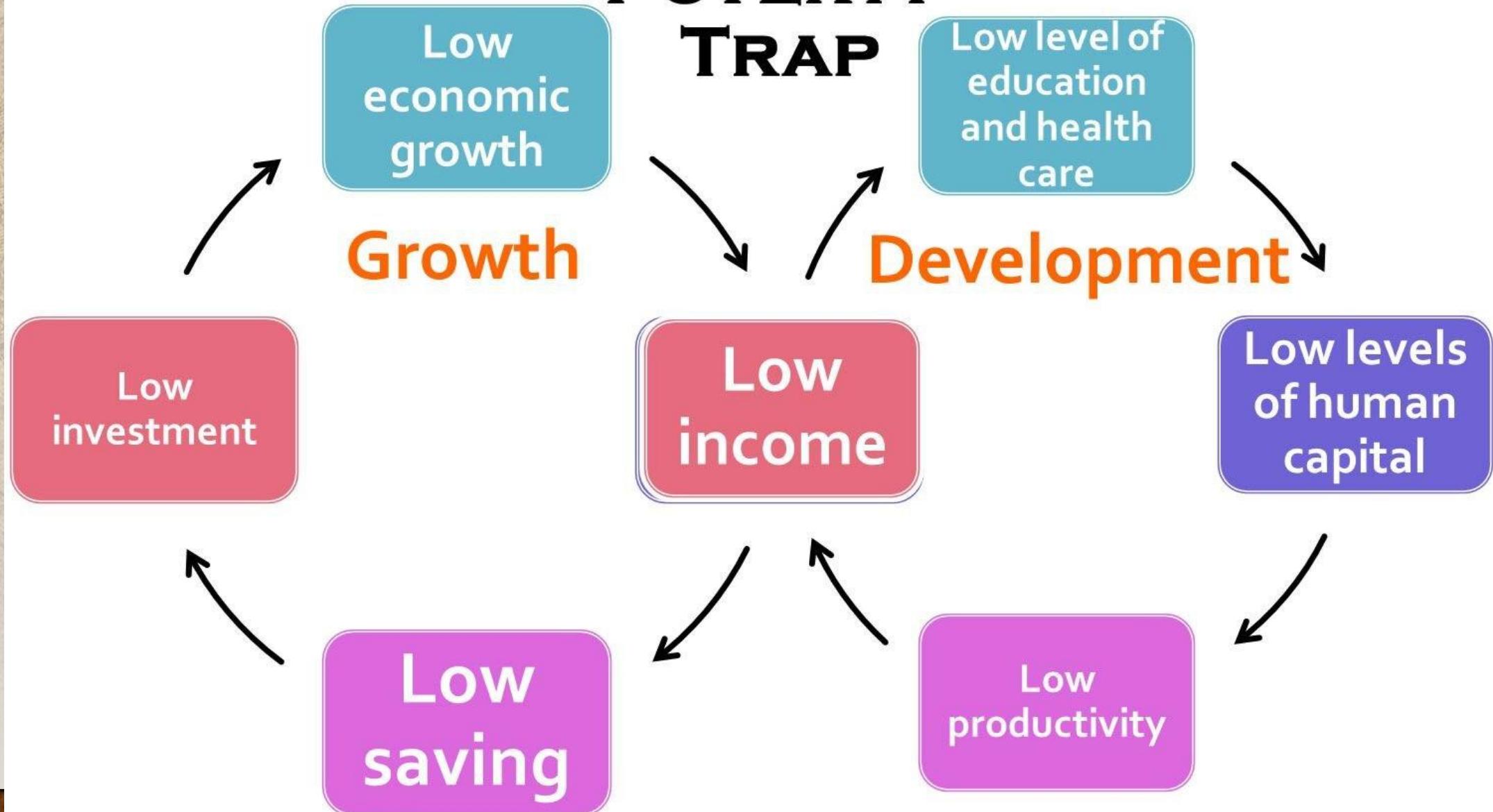
To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

Page No. 9, GS I

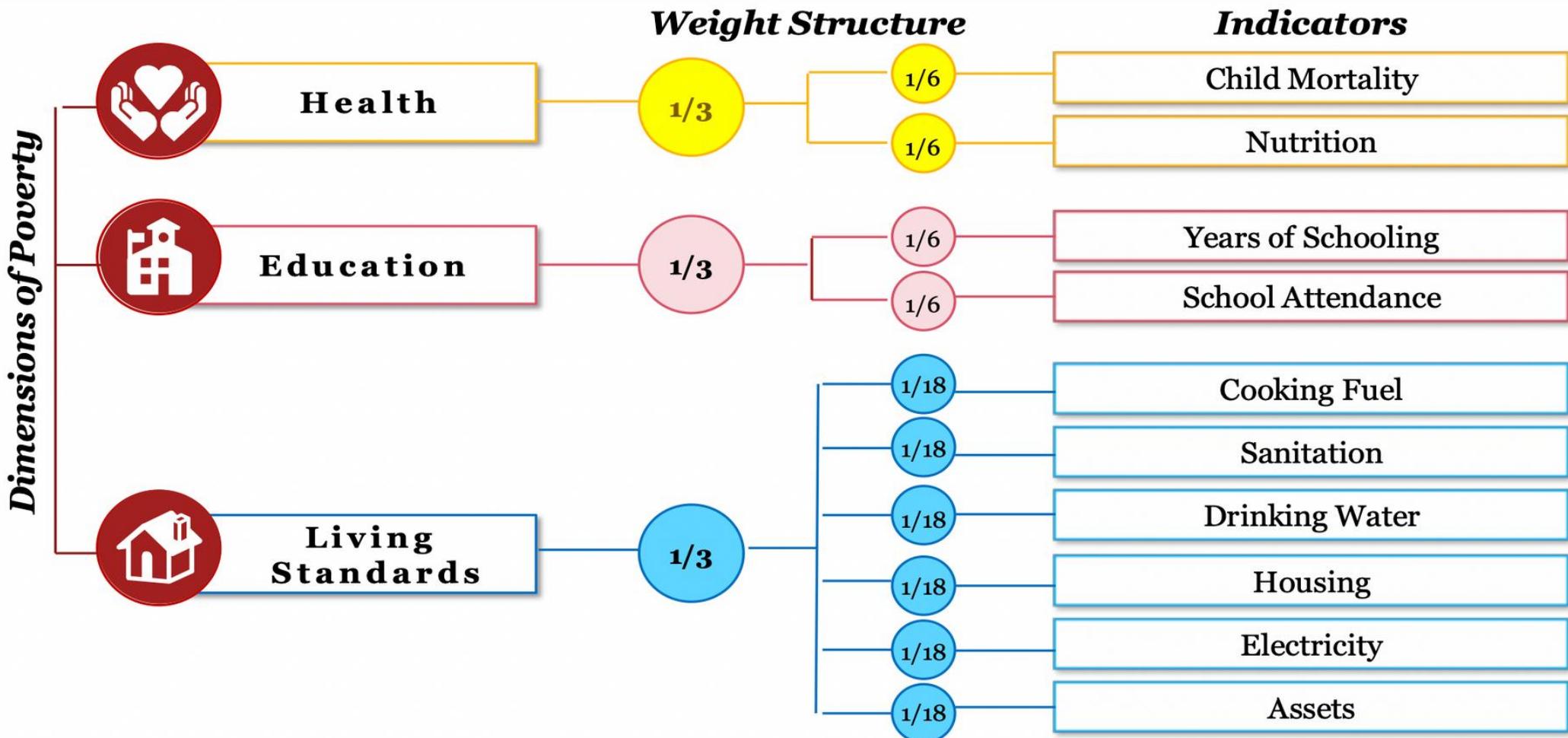
Content.

- According to the Sample Registration System report for 2021 released by the Registrar General of India on May 7, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), which is the average number of children that a woman is expected to have in her childbearing years, in India was 2.0 in 2021, the same as in 2020. While Delhi and West Bengal reported the lowest TFR of 1.4, Bihar reported the highest at 3.0.
- Bihar's infant mortality rate has actually declined and stands at 27 per 1,000 live births from 42 in the past. Other indicators such as women's educational attainment have improved as well, but the State's TFR remains high.
- Poverty and lack of livelihood and income opportunities have a huge impact on cultural choices, including the number of children people have. Poor people tend to have a cultural preference not only for sons, but for more children. They want more labour, which will lead to more income.

POVERTY TRAP



Global MPI: Dimensions, Indicators & Weights



(Based on Global MPI Reports)

Critically examine whether a growing population is the cause of poverty OR poverty is the mains cause of population increase in India	2015
An essential condition to eradicate poverty is to liberate the poor from the process of deprivation.” Substantiate this statement with suitable examples.	2016
Despite the implementation of various programmes for eradication of poverty by the government in India, poverty is still existing’. Explain by giving reasons	2019
COVID-19 pandemic accelerated class inequalities and poverty in India. Comment.	2020
Why did human development fail to keep pace with economic development in India?	2023

The paradox of the approach to the Manipur issue

As the stalemated conflict in Manipur completes two years, the veritable wait for the Godot of political settlement continues to remain elusive. Despite unleashing a trail of devastation, the loss of over 250 lives and an unfolding human tragedy which compelled thousands of internally displaced persons to live in sub-human makeshift relief centres for over two years, Manipur's violence has not secured a high-order-of-national-priority. This is gallingly evident as Prime Minister Narendra Modi maintains his stoic refusal to visit the State and offer a definitive road map to break the impasse. This compares starkly with the topmost-priority accorded by him to the Pahalgam terror strike on April 22, which led to the curtailment of his official visit to Saudi Arabia and the announcement of policy measures.

The very short military stand-off between India and Pakistan and the swift response made eminent sense given the overwhelming and dominant mood of the nation that something decisive had to be done not only to decimate terrorist infrastructure across the Line of Control, but also penalise Pakistan for its alleged sponsorship of cross-border terrorism. As the stand-off and the terms of the understanding/ceasefire likely to be agreed upon by the two nuclear powers continue to take centre-stage, it is highly unlikely that Manipur's continuing human tragedy and political impasse will get the serious attention it deserves.

The approach to the northeast

What explains this paradox? And in what way does this follow a broader pattern of New Delhi's engagement with Manipur, and, by extension, Northeast India?

A clue lies in making a long-term assessment of New Delhi's approach to the Northeast, and for that matter Manipur, which is underscored by its obsession with national security and regime consolidation. Unlike Kashmir, which is the focus in a series of triangular conflicts with Pakistan and China, Manipur's case does not present an imminent threat to India's national security despite concerted efforts over the past two years to make this as such. Although both of India's adversaries were involved in the training of armed independentist groups such as the Naga National Council and its progeny, the NSCN-IM, the Mizo National Front, the United Liberation Front of Assam, and the United National Liberation Front, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, their support to these groups remains remote and diminished.

However, because the policy mandarins in Delhi best understand the language of national security, concerted attempts had been made by certain quarters of valley-based civil society groups and self-professed national security experts to squarely blame Manipur's violence on 'lungi-clad' Kuki armed militants across the India-Myanmar border. A case in point is the failed attempt to amplify this threat by the then



Kham Khan Suan Hausing

is a Professor and former Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad. He is also an Honorary Senior Fellow, Centre for Multilevel Federalism, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi

Chief Minister's office in mid-September 2024 by invoking credible 'intelligent inputs' which forewarned imminent crossover and attack by over '900 Kuki militants' based in Myanmar with the capabilities to launch rocket launchers against Meitei villages. On hindsight, this security bluster was a half-clever ploy to whip up a majoritarian sense of insecurity and used that as a pretext to prepare the grounds for a series of offensive strikes against Kuki-Zomi-Hmar villages beyond the 'buffer zone' on the pretext of combing operations.

Interestingly, the protagonists of national security remain conspicuously muted on the more serious threat posed by the large-scale mobilisation of valley-based insurgent groups, or VBGs and their foot soldiers in the wake of this violence since May 3, 2023. One immediate consequence of this is the outsourcing of law and order to these groups on the pretext that the State fails to protect villages which remained exposed to transgressions and offensive attacks across the buffer zone. This zone, ideated and enforced by the Indian paramilitary forces after Home Minister Amit Shah visited the State towards the end of May 2023, lies in the foothills and marks the point of territorial and demographic separation between the Meiteis and Kuki-Zomi-Hmars.

Such a problematic stance on a national security issue has also effectively neutralised the security gains obtained by India since it successfully flushed out VBGs from their safe havens in the valley areas in Operation All-Clear (2004). Instead of prioritising substantive security issues such as an upscaling of intelligence-gathering capabilities, counterinsurgency skills, modernisation and professionalisation of the Indian Army and police, the Indian security policy continues to be stuck in a time-warp of political optics.

The case of fencing as an obsolete outlook
The unusual zeal with which New Delhi pushes the agenda of revoking the free movement regime and spending over ₹31,000 crore for fencing the 1,643 kilometre India-Myanmar border, including the 398 kilometre-long Manipur-Myanmar border, is clearly an instance of an obsolete security overdrive. While this may simultaneously cater to the perceived sense of insecurity whipped up by majoritarian groups based in the valley and eminently suit the pork-barrel brand of politics with promissory collateral benefits to contractors and brokers, the lines of divide are clearly apparent as the Naga, and Mizo, among others, have registered their staunch opposition. Unless such a policy framework is tailored to win the hearts and the minds of transborder people – which seems to be the case here – it is neither likely to augment India's national security nor promote India's neighbourhood first policy via the Act East policy across the India-Myanmar border and beyond.

Unfortunately, a longitudinal assessment of

India's national security policy framework across political regimes demonstrates that it is driven more by political optics in ways which help consolidate political regimes, rather than being hard-wired in upskilling security infrastructure. This explains why beyond the public spectacle of holding piecemeal arms surrender events, no sincere effort is made to recover sophisticated arms (numbering over 6,000) and ammunition (numbering over 5,000,000) given away to armed groups since the outbreak of violence.

Notwithstanding this, barely around 4,000 of the 6,020 arms snatched away from the State armories have so far been deposited in response to the State government's call. Interestingly, 894 of these were deposited in response to two deadlines – announced by Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, on February 28, which was extended to March 6, 2025.

The self-congratulatory and nonchalant way in which voluntary arms surrender was pressed for political optics became evident on February 27, a day before the first deadline, when a cavalcade of the Arambai Tengkol, an armed militia accused of perpetrating atrocities against several Kuki-Zomi-Hmar villages, marched across the streets and surrendered 246 weapons at a police station in Imphal. Even though many of these so-called surrendered arms are country-made guns, there is neither a persistent follow-up action after the second deadline passed on March 6, nor any serious attempt to nab and prosecute defaulting individuals under the Arms Act.

An incremental approach such as this may be the key to gradually stabilising law and order. However, the easy and abundant availability of arms and ammunition in the hands of armed groups in the State is likely to perpetuate the ethnic security dilemma even as there is no sustained and credible security guarantee from the State. The reluctant imposition of President's Rule on February 13, 2025 as a convenient escape route to an imminent and inglorious fall of the Bharatiya Janata Party government, after an open revolt within its ranks, and the change of political guard in the State seems to have signalled a subtle, yet stern, message to armed groups across the divide that violence is not going to be tolerated.

Looking ahead

A halting, yet incremental return to normalcy may, however, impel serious political engagements with rival stakeholders in ways that simultaneously accommodate legitimate demands and promote trust and legitimacy to state institutions. As rival parties respectively commemorated May 3 as 'separation day' and a 'day of remembrance and reflection' to push their divergent political agendas, breaking the political impasse and stabilising law and order require substantive policy reorientations that transcend political optics and regime consolidation.

Page No. 8, GS 2

Content.

- The unusual zeal with which New Delhi pushes the agenda of revoking the free movement regime and spending over ₹31,000 crore for fencing the 1,643 kilometre India-Myanmar border, including the 398 kilometre-long Manipur-Myanmar border, is clearly an instance of an obsolete security overdrive.
- An incremental approach such as this may be the key to gradually stabilising law and order. However, the easy and abundant availability of arms and ammunition in the hands of armed groups in the State is likely to perpetuate the ethnic security dilemma even as there is no sustained and credible security guarantee from the State.
- A halting, yet incremental return to normalcy may, however, impel serious political engagements with rival stakeholders in ways that simultaneously accommodate legitimate demands and promote trust and legitimacy to state institutions.

New beginning

Syria should dismantle armed groups and adopt inclusive constitution

Until six months ago, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani was a specially designated global terrorist, with a \$10 million bounty fixed on his head by the U.S. government. A native of Syria's Golan Heights and a former member of al-Qaeda in Iraq, one of the group's most brutal branches, Jolani founded Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda's Syria affiliate, in 2012, during the early stages of the civil war. Thirteen years later, on May 14, Jolani – now known as Ahmed al-Sharaa – met with U.S. President Donald Trump in Riyadh. Mr. Trump, who earlier in the week lifted America's decades-long sanctions on Syria, praised Mr. Sharaa, saying he was "a tough guy. Strong past... Fighter". The meeting was a diplomatic victory for Mr. Sharaa, whose Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) captured Damascus in December 2024 by toppling the secular dictatorship of President Bashar al-Assad. Mr. Sharaa met Qatar's Emir in Doha in April, seeking support for his fledgling Islamist regime. He enjoys the strong backing of Türkiye. He was welcomed by French President Emmanuel Macron earlier this month at the Élysée Palace in Paris. And in Riyadh, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman played a key role in facilitating his meeting with Mr. Trump. With regional and international recognition, Ahmed al-Sharaa appears poised to shape Syria's present and future.

The lifting of American sanctions opens the door for Syria to join the global economic mainstream and attract foreign investments. Mr. Sharaa has already invited American companies to invest in Syria's oil and gas. Money could flow from wealthy Arab monarchies to war-torn Syria for reconstruction and other business opportunities. But one question remains: what kind of Syria are Mr. Sharaa and his fellow Islamists planning to build? Mr. Sharaa has promised to uphold the rule of law, respect women's rights and protect religious and ethnic minorities. Yet, ever since the HTS captured power, Syria has seen instances of targeted violence against minority communities. In March, hundreds of Alawites, the sect to which ousted President Assad belongs, were killed by Islamist gunmen in the coastal Latakia region. Sectarian tensions remain high in central Syria, where targeted killings and abductions are frequently reported. In recent weeks, Syria's Druze minority has come under sustained attacks, with community leaders describing the violence as a "genocidal campaign". The Kurds in the northeast have called for a decentralised, democratic Syria, firmly opposing the HTS's centralised style of governance. The removal of sanctions and international recognition present a historic opportunity for Mr. Sharaa to steer Syria toward recovery and prosperity. But to that end, he must first stabilise the country internally, dismantle extremist armed groups and adopt an inclusive constitution that guarantees the rights of all citizens. If not, Syria risks following the path of Libya or Afghanistan.

Page No. 8

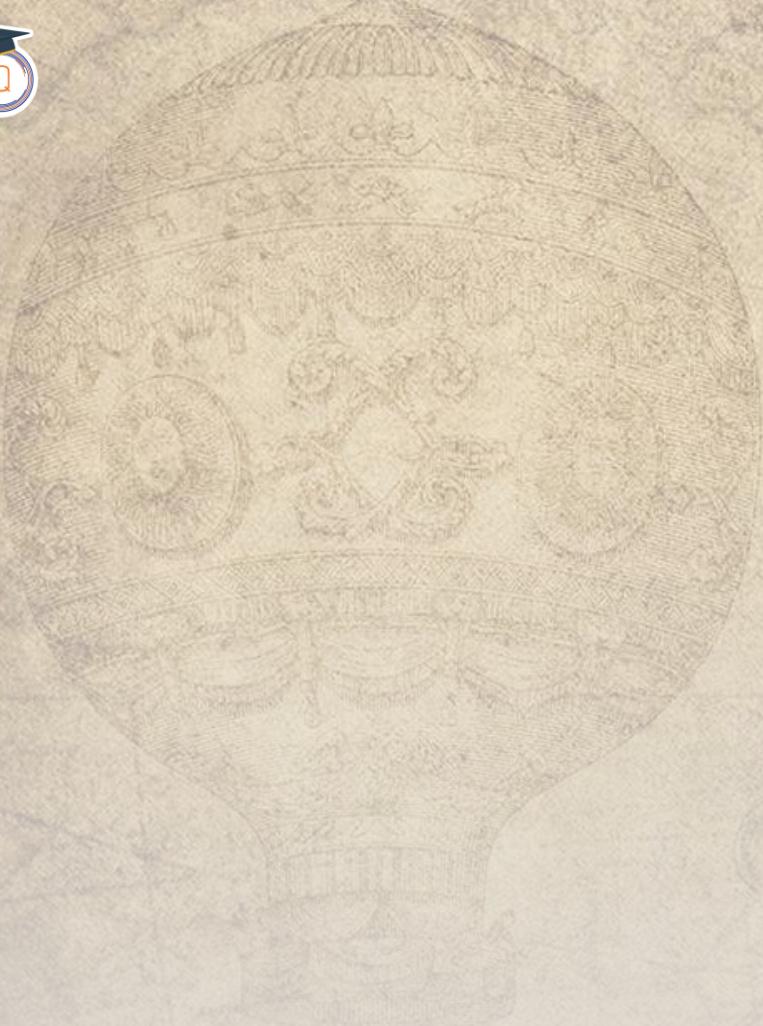


Content.

- Until six months ago, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani was a specially designated global terrorist, with a \$10 million bounty fixed on his head by the U.S. government.
- A native of Syria's Golan Heights and a former member of al-Qaeda in Iraq, one of the group's most brutal branches, Jolani founded Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda's Syria affiliate, in 2012, during the early stages of the civil war.
- Thirteen years later, on May 14, Jolani — now known as Ahmed al-Sharaa — met with U.S. President Donald Trump in Riyadh.
- The meeting was a diplomatic victory for Mr. Sharaa, whose Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) captured Damascus in December 2024 by toppling the secular dictatorship of President Bashar al-Assad.

Fact

- The lifting of American sanctions opens the door for Syria to join the global economic mainstream and attract foreign investments. Mr. Sharaa has already invited American companies to invest in Syria's oil and gas.
- Money could flow from wealthy Arab monarchies to war-torn Syria for reconstruction and other business opportunities.
- The removal of sanctions and international recognition present a historic opportunity for Mr. Sharaa to steer Syria toward recovery and prosperity.
- But to that end, he must first stabilise the country internally, dismantle extremist armed groups and adopt an inclusive constitution that guarantees the rights of all citizens. If not, Syria risks following the path of Libya or Afghanistan.





UPSC IAS

PRELIMS TO INTERVIEW (P2I)

FOUNDATION

MAY EVENING BATCH

Price
₹33,999

Use Code
PRTLIVE



Prelims and
Mains Residential
Program



Full Refund
on Clearing
Prelims



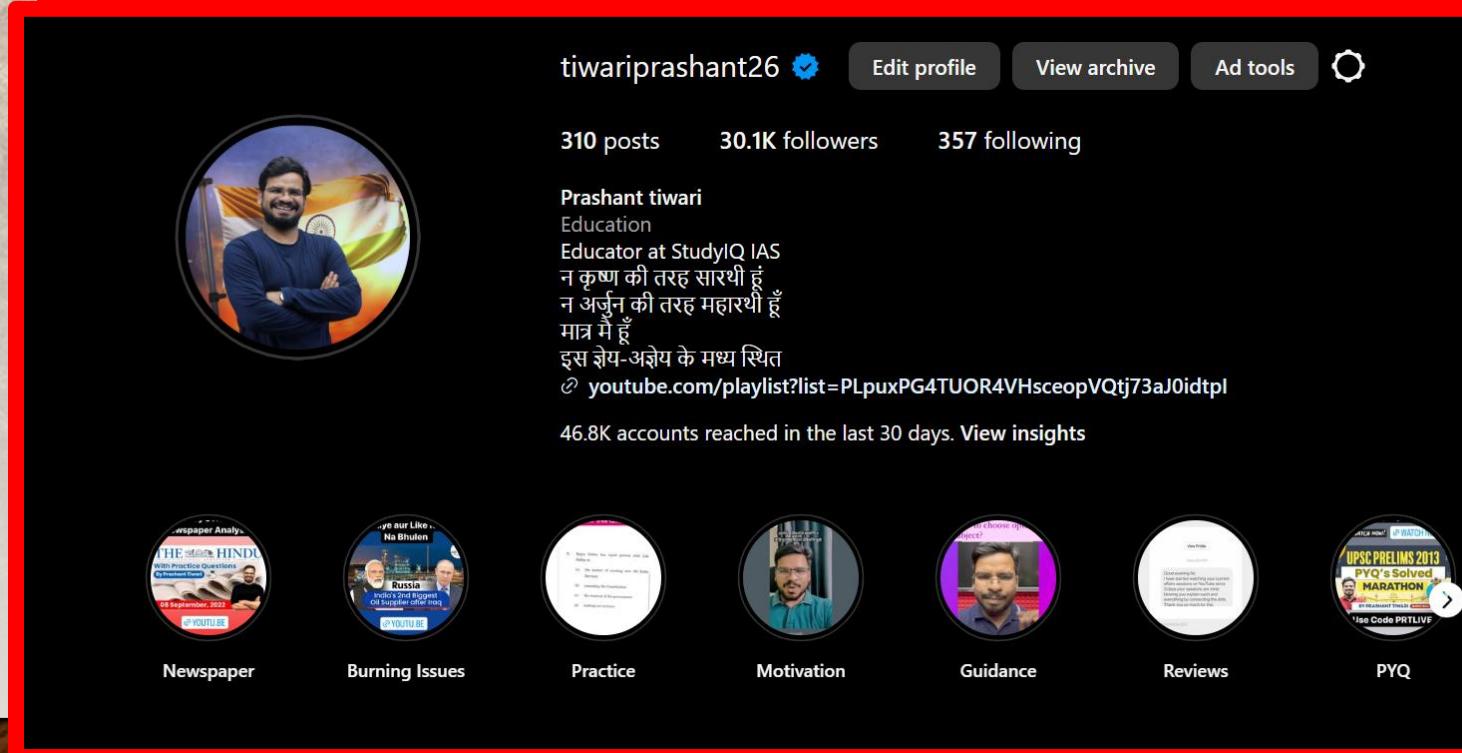
₹11,000 reward
to monthly top
performer



Interview
Guidance
Program

Batch Just Started

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



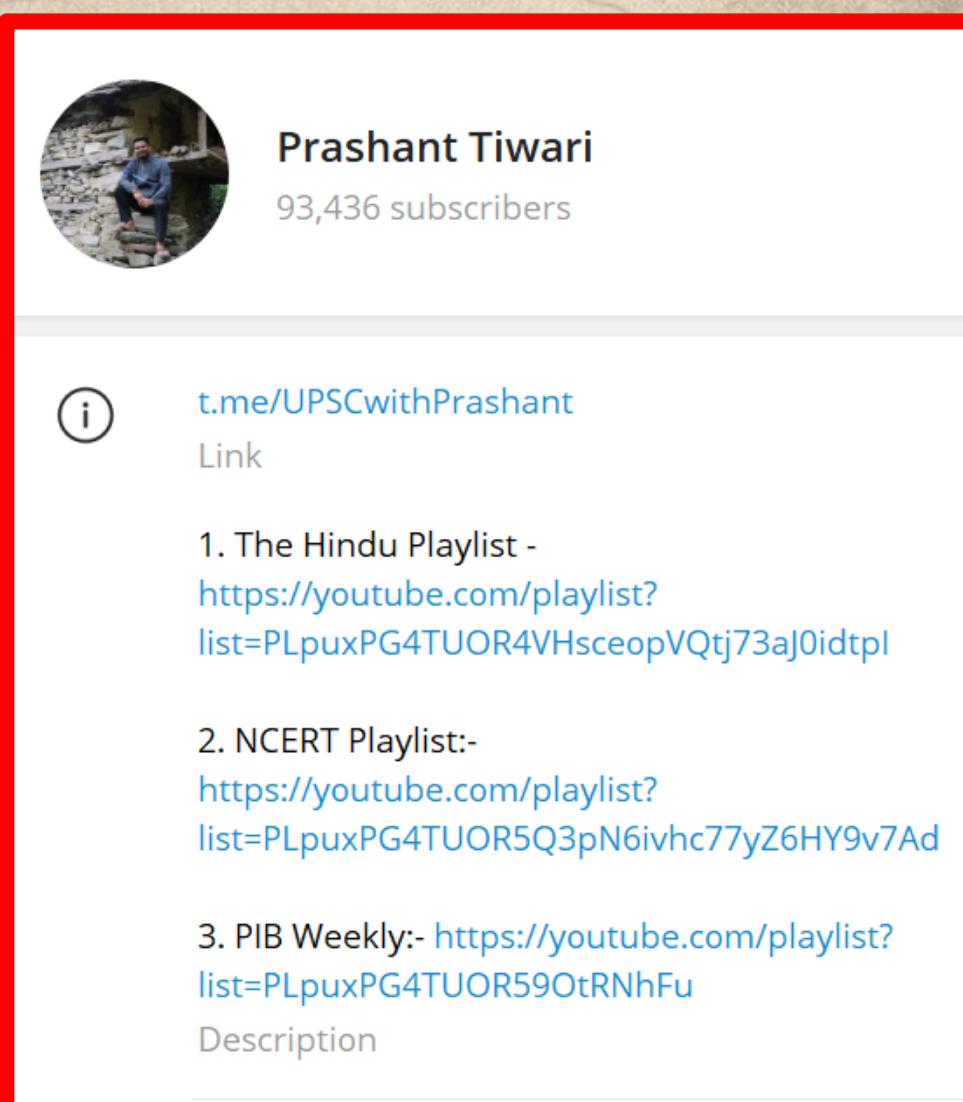
tiwariprashant26  Edit profile View archive Ad tools

310 posts 30.1K followers 357 following

Prashant tiwari
Educator at StudyIQ IAS
न कृष्ण की तरह सारथी हूँ
न अर्जुन की तरह महारथी हूँ
मात्र मैं हूँ
इस जेय-अज्ञेय के मध्य स्थित
youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aj0idtp1

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

Newspaper Burning Issues Practice Motivation Guidance Reviews PYQ



Prashant Tiwari
93,436 subscribers

 t.me/UPSCwithPrashant
Link

1. The Hindu Playlist -
[https://youtube.com/playlist?
list=PLpxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aj0idtp1](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpxPG4TUOR4VHsceopVQtj73aj0idtp1)
2. NCERT Playlist:-
[https://youtube.com/playlist?
list=PLpxPG4TUOR5Q3pN6ivhc77yZ6HY9v7Ad](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpxPG4TUOR5Q3pN6ivhc77yZ6HY9v7Ad)
3. PIB Weekly:- [https://youtube.com/playlist?
list=PLpxPG4TUOR59OtRNhFu](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpxPG4TUOR59OtRNhFu)
Description



— Thank You! —