

## Today's Prelims Topics

### Pradhan Mantri Ujjwal Yojana (PMUY)

#### Context

The **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** completed **9 years** on **May 1, 2025**, marking a major step in providing clean cooking fuel to poor households across India.

#### About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

- Launched by the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG)**.
- Aims to provide **clean cooking fuel (LPG)** to **rural and deprived households**.
  - Reduce deaths caused by the use of unclean cooking fuels.
  - Prevent respiratory illnesses in children due to indoor air pollution.
- **Financial support of ₹1600** per LPG connection to **BPL households**.
- Under **Ujjwala 2.0**, beneficiaries also get:
  - A **free refill**,
  - A **hotplate**, and
  - A **deposit-free LPG connection**.
- Free LPG connection to eligible families.

#### Categories of eligible households:

- Households listed in the SECC 2011 list.
- Households belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) or Scheduled Tribes (ST).
- Beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural).
- Beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY).
- Forest Dwellers.
- Most Backward Classes (MBC).
- Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes.
- People residing in river islands or islands.

#### Phases of Implementation

##### Phase I (2016–2020):

- Launched on **May 1, 2016**.
- Target: Release of **8 crore LPG connections** by March 2020.
- Result: **LPG coverage rose from 62% to 99.8%** by April 2021.

##### Ujjwala 2.0 (2021 onwards):

- Announced in **Union Budget 2021–22**.
- Initial goal: **1 crore additional LPG connections** by March 2022.
- Achieved in **January 2022**.
- Later, an extra **60 lakh connections** were approved.
- By **December 31, 2022**, **1.6 crore connections** were released under Ujjwala 2.0.

Source: [PIB](#)

## CROPIC Initiative

### Context

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is set to launch **CROPIC**, an initiative to collect crop data through field photos and analyze it using **AI-based models**.

### About CROPIC Initiative

- **CROPIC** stands for **Collection of Real-Time Observations & Photo of Crops**.
- It is launched under the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**.
- Aims to monitor **crop health and stress** and **automate crop loss assessment** using **AI and computer vision**.
- **Photos captured 4–5 times** during a crop's life cycle to assess health and detect mid-season losses.
- Uses **computer vision and photo-analytic models** to analyze images.
- Initial rollout for **Kharif 2025** and **Rabi 2025–26** seasons.
- Photos will be **crowd-sourced directly from farmers** via the **CROPIC mobile app**, developed by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Also used by officials during **insurance claim verification** under PMFBY.
- A **cloud-based AI platform** will analyze images to extract data like:
  - **Crop type**
  - **Growth stage**
  - **Damage and its extent**
- A **web-based dashboard** will be used for data visualization and decision-making.
- To be implemented in **at least 50 districts per season**, across diverse **agro-climatic zones**.
- Will focus on **three major notified crops** (covered under insurance) in each district.
- The initiative will be financed through the **Fund for Innovation and Technology (FIAT)** under PMFBY.

Source: [IndianExpress](#)

## Global Gender Gap Report

### Context

Recently, the Global Gender Gap Index 2025 was released by WEF.

### Global Gender Gap Index Report 2025

- Published by the **World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
- **India ranks 131st out of 148 countries**, slipping two places from 129th in 2024.
- **Parity Score: 64.1%**, placing India among the **lowest in South Asia**.

### India's Performance by Dimension

#### Economic Participation and Opportunity

- **Score increased by 0.9 percentage points to 40.7%.**
- **Female earned income parity** improved from **28.6% to 29.9%**.
- **Labour force participation** remains stagnant at **45.9%**.

#### Educational Attainment

- Achieved near parity with a score of **97.1%**.
- Driven by improved **female literacy** and **higher tertiary enrolment**.

#### Health and Survival

- Improved parity in **sex ratio at birth** and **healthy life expectancy**.
- Overall decline in life expectancy offsets meaningful gains.

#### Political Empowerment

- **Parliamentary representation of women** fell to **13.8%** (from 14.7%).
- **Women in ministerial roles** dropped to **5.6%** (from 6.5%).
- Marks the **second year of decline**; far from **2019 peak of 30%**.

#### Regional Comparison (South Asia)

- **Bangladesh**: Best performer, ranks **24th** globally.
- **Nepal (125), Bhutan (119), Sri Lanka (130)** – all ahead of India.
- Only **Maldives (138)** and **Pakistan (148)** rank lower than India.
- **Top 5 Countries**:
  1. Iceland (1st for 16th year)
  2. Finland
  3. Norway
  4. United Kingdom
  5. New Zealand
- **Global gender gap closed to 68.8%**, strongest progress since the pandemic.
- At the current rate, **full parity will take 123 years**.
- **Women make up 41.2% of the workforce** but hold only **28.8% of leadership roles**.

**Global Gender Gap Index:**

The **Global Gender Gap Index** evaluates countries based on gender-based disparities across **four** key areas:

- Economic Participation and Opportunity**
- Educational Attainment**
- Health and Survival**
- Political Empowerment**

This index measures how wide or narrow the gender gaps are in these dimensions and monitors each country's progress toward achieving gender equality over time.

**What is World Economic Forum?**

- The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** is an **international non-governmental organization** focused on **Public-Private Cooperation**.
- **Founded:** January 1971 by **Klaus Schwab**, a German engineer and economist.
- **Purpose:** Brings together leaders from politics, business, culture, and civil society to **shape global, regional, and industry agendas**.
- The WEF **does not hold any independent decision-making power**.
- **Headquarters:** Cologny, Geneva, Switzerland.

**Reports Published by the World Economic Forum (WEF)**

- Global Competitiveness Report
- Global Information Technology Report
- Global Gender Gap Report
- Global Risks Report
- Global Travel and Tourism Report
- Financial Development Report
- Global Enabling Trade Report

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)

## Rare Earth Elements (REEs)

### Context

India is working to bolster its domestic mining and refining capabilities of REEs.

### What are REEs?

- They are a group of 17 chemically similar metallic elements in the periodic table.
- They are rare because they are found in low concentrations and mixed with other minerals.

### SEVENTEEN RARE EARTH ELEMENTS

Rare earth name	Discovery year	Atomic name & number	Light/heavy REE	Critical/ Uncritical
Yttrium	1788	Y-39	Heavy	Critical
Cerium	1803	Ce-58	Light	Excessive
Lanthanum	1839	La-57	Light	Uncritical
Erbium	1842	Er-68	Heavy	Critical
Terbium	1843	Tb-65	Heavy	Critical
Ytterbium	1878	Yb-70	Heavy	Excessive
Holmium	1878	Ho-67	Heavy	Excessive
Scandium	1879	Sc-21	Heavy	Critical
Samarium	1879	Sm-62	Light	Uncritical
Thulium	1879	Tm-69	Heavy	Excessive
Praseodymium	1885	Pr-59	Light	Uncritical
Neodymium	1885	Nd-60	Light	Critical
Dysprosium	1886	Dy-66	Heavy	Critical
Europium	1886	Eu-63	Heavy	Critical
Gadolinium	1886	Gd-64	Heavy	Uncritical
Lutetium	1907	Lu-71	Heavy	Excessive
Promethium	1947	Pm-61		

Source: Author



- **Characteristics:** High density, high melting point, high conductivity, and high thermal conductance.
  - Do not occur in a free state. They are found in mineral oxide ores.
- **Usage:**
  - **Electronics:** In smartphones (neodymium), laptops, flat-panel displays, and headphones.
  - **Clean Energy (such as dysprosium, yttrium, and cerium):** In wind turbines, electric vehicles (EVs), and solar panels.
  - **Defence Sector:** Used in precision-guided missiles, radar systems, sonar, and jet engines.
  - **Medical Technology:** Enable advanced imaging tools in radiation-based cancer treatments, such as MRI and PET scanners.
  - **Industrial Use:** Petroleum refining, high-grade glass polishing, and production of strong, corrosion-resistant metal alloys.
- **Distribution:**
  - **China** produces roughly **60% of the world's supply** and processes almost 90%.
    - Other major producers are **Myanmar, Australia, USA, Russia and Malaysia.**
  - **India** is **almost 100% import dependent** for most rare earths, although it holds around 6% of the world's rare earth reserves.

Source: [Indian Express](#)



## News in Short

### Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR)

**News?** During his Keynote Address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on May 31, 2025, U.S. Secretary Hegseth endorsed PIPIR and announced two marquee projects under this initiative.

#### About PIPIR

- **Established in:** May 2024
- **Comprises of:** 14-nation from Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic partners.
- **Aim:** To bolster collective resiliency in defense manufacturing, logistics, and supply chains.
- **Led by:** U.S. Department of Defense.

**Source:** <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Jun/02/2003730341/-1/-1/1/FACT-SHEET-PARTNERSHIP-FOR-INDO-PACIFIC-INDUSTRIAL-RESILIENCE.PDF>

### Mettur Dam



**News?** Mettur Dam water was released for delta irrigation to support Kuruvai (a short-term paddy crop season) cultivation.

#### About it

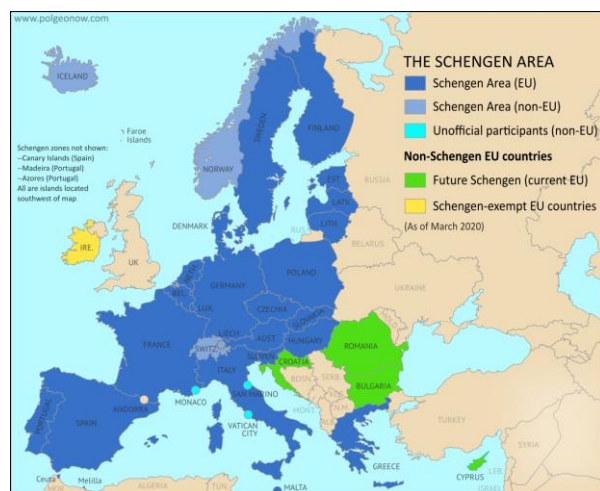
- **One of India's largest dams**, constructed in 1934.
- **Location:** Mettur, Salem district, Tamil Nadu.
- **Built across:** A gorge where the **Kaveri River** enters the plains.
- **Type:** Masonry gravity dam.

**Source:** [TheHindu](#)



## Places in News

### Schengen Zone



**News?** A former French Embassy staffer in India duped visa applicants of up to ₹45 lakh each; CBI filed a case and Interpol issued its first **Silver Notice** against him.

#### About it

- The **Schengen Zone** is named after **Schengen**, a small village in **Luxembourg**, near the borders of **France and Germany**.
- The **Schengen Agreement** was signed in **1985** by **five of the six founding EU members** (Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands– excluding Italy).
- It operates as a **single jurisdiction** for international travel with a **common visa policy**.
- Today, the zone includes **29 European countries**.
  - **Croatia** (EU member since 2013) joined the Schengen Zone in **2023**.
  - **Romania and Bulgaria**, are the newest to join the Schengen zone on **31 March 2024**.

Source: [TheHindu](https://www.thehindu.com)



## Editorial Summary

### Concerns about Judicial Accountability and Independence

#### Context

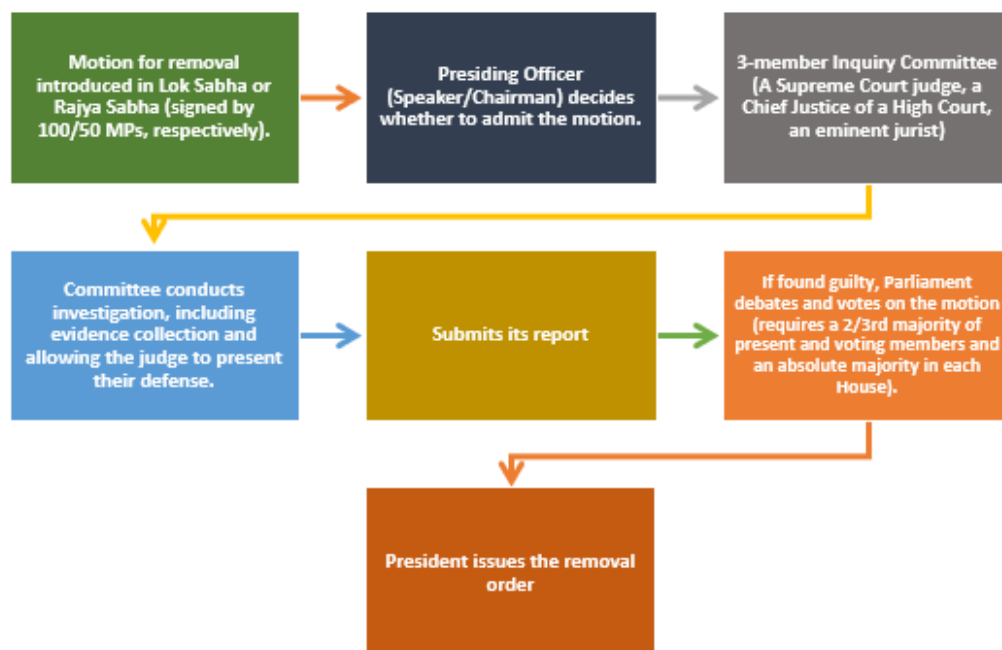
Justice Yashwant Varma case (discovery of burnt currency from his residence) has sparked concerns about judicial accountability and independence.

#### Actions Taken Against Justice Varma

- An in-house inquiry committee was set up by the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- Judicial work was withdrawn; he was transferred to the Allahabad High Court (but not assigned a roster).
- The inquiry found serious misconduct and the CJI recommended impeachment.
- No FIR was registered, and criminal proceedings have not begun yet.

#### Relevant Constitutional and Legal Provisions

### JUDGES (INQUIRY) ACT, 1968



#### Points To Remember

- Applies to the **judges of the Supreme Court** (including the Chief Justice of India) and the **High Courts** (including Chief Justice).
- The motion for removal must be signed by: At least 100 members of the Lok Sabha or At least 50 members of the Rajya Sabha.
- **Article 124(4) & 217:** Judges can be removed by impeachment for proven misbehaviour/incapacity.
- **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968:** Lays down the process of investigation and impeachment.
- **K. Veeraswami case (1991):** Before registering an FIR or launching any investigation against a sitting judge of the High Court or Supreme Court, the police must first obtain the prior consent of the President of India — **after consulting the Chief Justice of India (CJI)**.
- **BNS 2023 (Sections 173-176):** Mandates police to preserve crime scene evidence and register FIR in cognizable offences.

### Loopholes in the Inquiry Process

- No FIR filed despite strong evidence — the burnt currency was not preserved.
- Police did not seal the crime scene, violating BNS rules.
- The **in-house inquiry has no statutory power** — it cannot initiate criminal proceedings.
- Lack of transparency in sharing the report with the public and Parliament.

### Concerns About Judicial Accountability

- **Opaque In-House Mechanisms:** The *in-house inquiry* system lacks statutory backing. It is not transparent, doesn't allow public access, and has no enforceability beyond internal discipline.
- **No Independent Oversight Body:** Complaints against judges are routed through MPs or the Chief Justice. There's no *external or citizen-accessible* mechanism like a Judicial Ombudsman or Council.
- **Difficult Removal Process:** Impeachment under Articles 124(4) and 217 is so politically complex that **no judge has ever been removed** despite serious allegations.
- **No Mandatory Asset Disclosure or Audit:** Though judges submit voluntary asset disclosures, these are **not audited or enforced**—undermining public trust in financial probity.
- **Lack of Disciplinary Action in Misconduct Cases:** In several instances (e.g., Justice Soumitra Sen, Justice P.D. Dinakaran), even after proven misconduct, either no action was taken or judges resigned to escape removal.

### Concerns About Judicial Independence

- **Executive Interference:** Through appointments, transfers, or post-retirement benefits, the executive can **exert subtle pressure** on judges—especially in sensitive cases.
- **Collegium System's Lack of Transparency:** Though it protects against executive overreach, the collegium operates without formal criteria, records, or reasons—raising concerns over fairness and merit.
- **Media & Political Pressure:** Sensational media trials and political narratives can **influence or intimidate** judges in high-profile cases.
- **No Protection from Malicious Prosecution:** In the absence of proper safeguards, there's fear that judges could be **targeted for their decisions**, especially in politically sensitive matters.
- **Frequent Transfers Without Reason:** Judges have been transferred mid-tenure (e.g., Justice Muralidhar case) allegedly for their rulings—threatening decisional autonomy.

### What Needs to Be Done

- Establish a **National Judicial Council** (with 5 Judges + CJI as chairman) to handle misconduct independently (recommended by the Law Commission of India in its 195th Report).
- Amend the **Veeraswami ruling** to allow time-bound CJI responses to FIR requests.
- Strengthen **crime-scene protection laws** — even judges shouldn't be above evidence rules.
- Make **judicial asset declarations public and verifiable**.
- Impose **fixed timelines** for Parliament to act on impeachment reports

Source: [Indian Express: Best of Both Sides](#)