

Today's Prelims Topics

Can Presidential Reference change a judgment?

Context

The Supreme Court has issued notices to the Centre and States on a Presidential Reference asking whether **courts can mandate the President or Governors to act within a fixed time on State Bills**, with detailed hearings set to begin in mid-August.

Background of the Case: SC's April 2025 Verdict Under Scrutiny

- The **Presidential Reference** under Article 143 follows the **Supreme Court's April 2025 judgment** in a case filed by the Tamil Nadu government.
- The Court held that **Governor R.N. Ravi's delay** in assenting to 10 re-passed State Bills was **illegal**.
- For the first time, the Court **imposed judicial timelines** on Governors and the President for processing State Bills.
- The current Reference seeks clarity on **whether courts can compel constitutional authorities** like the President and Governors to act within set time limits.

Article 143: Presidential Reference Power

- **Article 143(1)** of the Indian Constitution allows the **President to seek the Supreme Court's opinion** on legal or factual questions of **public importance**.
- Inspired by the **Government of India Act, 1935**, this provision has been used **at least 14 times** since Independence.
- The Court can **only answer the specific questions** referred and **cannot expand** beyond them.
- Article **145(3)** mandates such matters be heard by a **Constitution Bench of at least five judges**.
- The word "**may**" in Article 143 gives the **Court discretion to decline** answering a Reference.
- In the **Special Courts Bill case (1978)**, the Court clarified this discretion and emphasized it must **record reasons** for refusing.
- In **Dr. Ismail Faruqui v. Union of India (1994)**, the Court held that cases involving **expert or political matters** may be declined.
- Notable refusals include:
 - **Ayodhya dispute (1993)** – declined due to an **ongoing civil case**.
 - **Resettlement law in J&K (1982)** – law was enacted before Reference could be addressed.

Nature of SC's Advisory Opinions

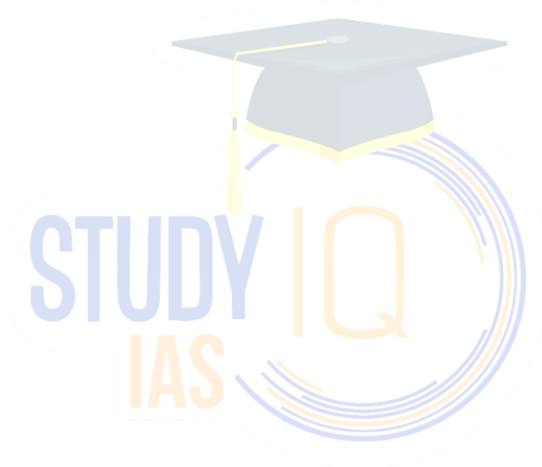
- Article **141** binds only "**law declared**" by the Court; advisory opinions are **not binding precedents**.
- In **St. Xavier's College v. State of Gujarat (1974)**, the Court said advisory opinions hold **persuasive value**.
- However, in **R.K. Garg v. Union of India (1981)**, reasoning from an advisory opinion was treated as **binding**.
- In the **Cauvery case (1991)**, advisory opinions were given "**due weight and respect**" but not made binding.
- Any opinion from the current Reference **cannot override** the April 2025 judgment but may **guide future cases** (e.g., Kerala, Punjab).

Scope to Modify April 2025 Verdict via Reference

- Past rulings clarify that **Article 143 cannot overturn** or review an **adjudicated judgment**.

- Only **review or curative petitions** can challenge settled decisions (Cauvery case).
- However, under Article 143(1), the Court **can clarify or restate** legal principles:
 - In the **Natural Resources Allocation case (2012)**, the Court refined legal reasoning without altering the core verdict.
 - In **1998**, a Reference helped refine the **collegium system** without invalidating the 1993 ruling.
- The present Reference may **clarify the scope** of the April ruling through broader constitutional interpretation, not reversal.

Source: [TheHindu](#)



Financial Inclusion Index

Context

The Reserve Bank of India has reported an improvement in the Financial Inclusion Index, which has risen to **67% in FY 2025**, up from **64.2% in FY 2024**.

About the Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)

- The **FI-Index** is a **composite measure** designed to track the level of **financial inclusion** across India.
- Developed by the **Reserve Bank of India** in consultation with the **Government** and **sectoral regulators** (banking, insurance, pension, etc.).
- It covers **five key sectors**: **Banking, Investments, Insurance, Postal Services, and Pensions**.

Scoring System

- The index assigns a **score between 0 and 100**:
 - **0** indicates **complete financial exclusion**.
 - **100** represents **full financial inclusion**.
- The **FI-Index for FY 2025** stands at **67**, an improvement from **64.2 in FY 2024**.

Three Core Parameters

1. **Access (35%)**
 - Measures availability of financial services (e.g., bank branches, ATMs).
2. **Usage (45%)**
 - Captures the actual use of financial services (e.g., credit, savings, transactions).
3. **Quality (20%)**
 - Reflects **financial literacy, consumer protection, and service inequalities**.

Key Features

- Based on **97 indicators** covering diverse aspects of financial access and behavior.
- The **Quality parameter** is a **unique feature**, emphasizing the **depth and fairness** of inclusion.
- The index is **cumulative**, meaning it reflects **progress over time**, and **does not use a base year**.

Release Cycle

- The **FI-Index** is **published annually**, every **July**, by the **Reserve Bank of India**.

Source: [IndianExpress](https://www.indianexpress.com)

National Sports Governance Bill 2025

Context

The Government is preparing to introduce the **National Sports Governance Bill** during the upcoming **Monsoon Session of Parliament**.

Introduction: National Sports Governance Bill 2025

- The **Union Government** plans to introduce the **National Sports Governance Bill 2025** in the **Monsoon Session of Parliament**.
- The Bill aims to **reform the governance of sports bodies** across India.
- It focuses on:
 - **Regulatory transparency**
 - **Athlete-centric policies**
 - **Fair and timely dispute resolution**
 - **Streamlining functioning of National Sports Federations (NSFs)**, including the **BCCI**.
- Marks a shift in the Ministry's role from a **"controller" to a "facilitator"** for improving global competitiveness in Indian sports.
- Intends to **reduce legal disputes and bureaucratic hurdles** in the sports ecosystem.

Key Provisions of the Bill

- A **National Sports Board** will be established to:
 - Recognize or suspend **National Sports Federations (NSFs)**
 - Ensure compliance with **governance standards** and **athlete welfare norms**
 - Oversee **elections of sports bodies**
- The Board will include:
 - A **Chairperson**
 - Members appointed by the **Central Government**
- Functions as a **watchdog** for ethical governance and provides **administrative oversight** to NSFs.
- A **National Sports Tribunal** will be set up to address **sports-related legal disputes**.
- Key features:
 - Headed by a **Supreme Court judge**
 - Handles disputes regarding:
 - **Elections**
 - **Team selections**
 - **Internal administration** of NSFs
 - **Appeals** from the NST will be allowed **only before the Supreme Court**
- The NST **will not cover**:
 - Disputes during **Olympic, Asian, or Commonwealth Games**
 - Cases under **international sports federations**
 - **Anti-doping cases** (These remain under the **National Anti-Doping Agency – NADA**)

Source: [IndiaToday](https://www.indiatoday.in)

Paika Rebellion

Context

Former Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik **condemned the exclusion of the 1817 Paika Rebellion from NCERT's new Class VIII history textbook, calling it a "huge dishonour,"** while NCERT clarified it will be included in the upcoming second volume.

The Paikas: Odisha's Warrior Farmers

- The **Paikas** were traditional foot soldiers in Odisha, serving the **Gajapati kings** since the 16th century.
- In return for their military service, they were granted **hereditary rent-free lands** called *nish-kar jagirs*.
- British policies eroded these privileges, causing deep **resentment and unrest**.



British Betrayal and Fall of Khurda (1803–1806)

- In **1803**, British forces under **Colonel Harcourt** captured **Puri and Cuttack**.
- A deal was made with **Mukunda Deva II** of Khurda: ₹1 lakh and four *parganas* in exchange for cooperation.
- The British **partially fulfilled** the deal, giving ₹40,000 but **withholding land**.
- **Jayee Rajguru**, royal custodian, led 2,000 Paikas in protest but was arrested and **executed in 1806**.
- The British **dethroned the king**, demolished Barunei Fort, seized lands, and **exiled the king** to Puri.

Causes of Growing Resentment

- **Loss of jagirs** and royal support left Paikas economically vulnerable.
- British **land revenue reforms** displaced Odia landowners, favoring **absentee Bengali landlords**.
- Introduction of **silver rupee taxation** burdened tribals and poor peasants.
- British control over **salt trade** (since 1814) worsened rural distress, especially in hilly regions.

The Paika Rebellion of 1817

- In **March 1817**, about **400 Kondhs** from Ghumusar joined forces with Paikas.
- Led by **Bakshi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar**, ex-commander of Khurda, the rebels launched an armed uprising.
- Key events:
 - Attacked **Banpur police station**
 - Burned **government buildings**
 - **Looted treasuries** and **killed British officials**
- The rebellion spread across Odisha but was eventually **crushed by the British**.
- **Jagabandhu evaded capture** for years and **surrendered in 1825** under negotiated terms.

Legacy and Modern Political Significance

- The **Paika Rebellion** is seen as a symbol of **Odia pride and resistance**.
- In **2017**, Odisha demanded it be recognised as **India's first war of independence** (decades before 1857).
- The **Centre did not grant** this recognition, but acknowledged it as a **major early uprising**.
- **PM Modi** honoured Paika descendants in 2017.
- **President Ram Nath Kovind** laid the foundation for a **Paika Memorial** in 2019.
- In 2021, the **Union Culture Minister** confirmed its inclusion in **Class VIII textbooks**.

Source: [IndianExpress](https://www.indianexpress.com)

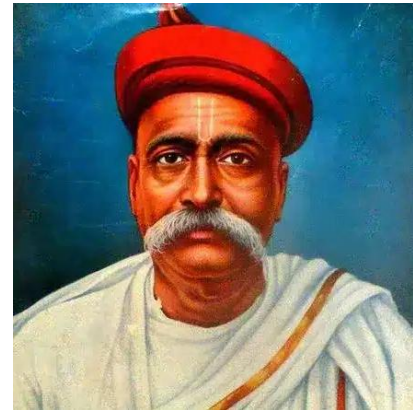
Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Context

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla paid **tribute to Lokmanya Tilak on his birth anniversary at Parliament's Central Hall.**

About Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak

- **Full Name:** Born as **Keshav Gangadhar Tilak**; later known as **Lokmanya Tilak** ("revered by the people").
- A leading **nationalist, freedom fighter, social reformer, and political thinker** of the Indian independence movement.
- Famously declared: "**Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it.**"



Political Contributions & Role in Freedom Movement

- Regarded as a **radical nationalist** and termed by the British as the "**Father of Indian Unrest.**"
- Joined the **Indian National Congress** in **1890**. Co-founded the **All India Home Rule League** (1916–18) with **Annie Besant** and **G.S. Khaparde**.
 - Tilak's League operated in **Maharashtra, Central Provinces, Karnataka, and Berar.**
 - Besant's League covered the **rest of India.**
- Advocated for **self-rule** and mass political awareness.
- Played a key role in the **Lucknow Pact (1916)** with **Mohammad Ali Jinnah**, promoting **Hindu-Muslim unity.**

Journalism and Literary Works

- Founded the newspapers "**Kesari**" (Marathi) and "**Maratha**" (English) to spread nationalist ideas.
- Authored:
 - "**The Arctic Home in the Vedas**" – a theory proposing Arctic origins of the Vedas.
 - "**Shrimad Bhagavad Gita Rahasya**" – a nationalist interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita, written during imprisonment (1908–1914).

Educationist and Institution Builder

- Believed deeply in the power of **modern education.**
- Co-founded the **Deccan Education Society** in Pune (1884).
- Helped establish the **New English School** and **Fergusson College.**
- Worked as a **mathematics teacher** at Fergusson College.

Social Reformer

- Supported **women's education, eradication of untouchability, and opposed child marriage.**
- Used **religion and tradition** to awaken **nationalist consciousness.**

Lal-Bal-Pal Triumvirate

- Formed a powerful nationalist trio with:
 - **Lala Lajpat Rai**
 - **Bipin Chandra Pal**
- Together, they were known as the **Lal-Bal-Pal** group, instrumental in the **Swadeshi Movement** and **Extremist phase of INC.**

Imprisonment

- Imprisoned **multiple times** for sedition.
- Longest jail term: **1908–1914**, during which he authored "**Gita Rahasya.**"

Source: [PIB](#)

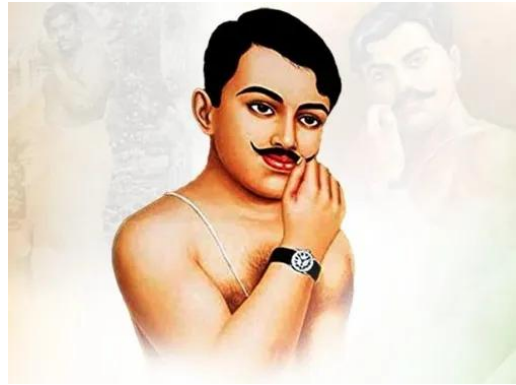
Chandra Shekhar Azad

Context

PM Modi paid tribute to **Chandra Shekhar Azad** on his birth anniversary, praising his courage and legacy.

About Chandrashekhar Azad

- Born as **Chandra Shekhar Tiwari** on **July 23, 1906**, in **Bhavra**, Madhya Pradesh.
- Joined **Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement** at the age of **15**.
- After arrest during protests, he told the court his name was "**Azad**" (meaning 'Free') — a name he kept for life.
- **Disillusionment with Gandhi**: Became disillusioned after Gandhi **suspended the Non-Cooperation Movement** in 1922 following the **Chauri Chaura incident**.
- Joined the **Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)**, later helping transform it into the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)** in **1928**.
- Worked closely with **Bhagat Singh** and other revolutionaries to promote armed struggle against British rule.
- **Major Revolutionary Activities**:
 - **Kakori Train Robbery** (1926)
 - **Attempt to blow up Viceroy's train** (1926)
 - **Killing of British officer Saunders in Lahore** (1928), to avenge **Lala Lajpat Rai's death**
- **Symbol of Youth Resistance**: Known for his **fearless leadership, strategic brilliance**, and status as a **youth icon**.
- **Death**: On **February 27, 1931**, during an encounter in **Alfred Park, Allahabad**, he was surrounded by British police. Refusing to be captured, **he shot himself with his last bullet**.
- **Legacy**: Azad remains a symbol of **bravery, sacrifice, and patriotism**, inspiring generations of Indians.



Source: [PIB](#)

Rajendra Chola I

Context

The Ministry of Culture will celebrate the birth anniversary of the Chola emperor, Rajendra Chola I, with the **Aadi Thiruvathirai Festival** in Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Tamil Nadu.

Rajendra Chola I (r. 1014–1044 CE)

- Extended Chola control over **Sri Lanka**, the **Maldives**, and parts of **Southeast Asia**.
- Famous for his **naval expedition to the Srivijaya Empire (modern Indonesia/Malaysia)** in 1025 CE, demonstrating India's early naval strength.
- **Battle of Maski (1019-1020 CE)**: A significant victory over the **Western Chalukya ruler Jayasimha II**.
- Established a new capital named **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** after his victorious campaign to the **Ganga region**.
 - **Ganges Expedition (c. 1022 CE)**: This was a monumental overland campaign to North India, culminating in the defeat of the **Pala king Mahipala**.
- Built the majestic **Brihadisvara Temple** at Gangaikonda Cholapuram, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Aadi Thiruvathirai Festival

- The **Aadi Thiruvathirai** (also known as **Aadi Pooram** or **Aadi Pirappu** depending on region and context) is a **Tamil Shaivite festival** observed in the **Tamil month of Aadi (July–August)**.
- It celebrates **Lord Shiva in his cosmic dancer form—Nataraja**.
- Rituals involve **Abhishekam (sacred bathing)**, **Alangaram (decoration)**, and **special pujas**.
- This was cherished and promoted by the Cholas and brought to life through the devotional hymns of the 63 Nayanmars, the revered saint-poets of Tamil Shaivism.

Source: [PIB](#)

Samudra Prachet

Context

"Samudra Prachet" was officially launched in Goa on July 23, 2025.

About it

- **2nd and final** of two indigenous **Pollution Control Vessels (PCVs)**.
- **Indigenous Content:** 72%
- **Features & Capabilities:** Equipped with:
 - **Two side-sweeping arms** for oil spill collection while underway
 - **Advanced radar** to detect oil slicks
 - **Pollution response equipment** to handle oil across the full viscosity spectrum
 - **Onboard systems** for pumping in contaminated water, analysing/separating pollutants, and **storing recovered oil**

Source: [PIB](#)



News In Short

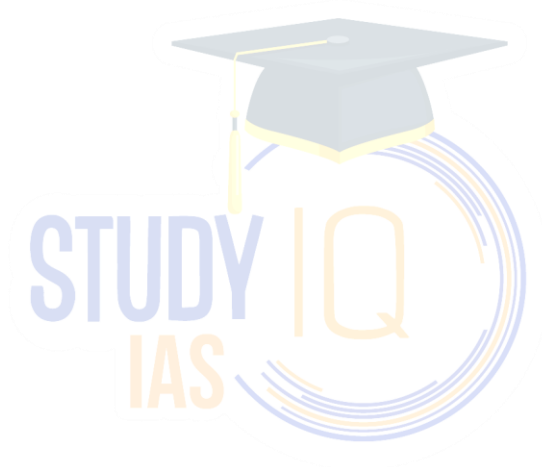
Skills Accelerator initiative

News? Recently, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has launched the Skills Accelerator Initiative.

About it

- Launched in collaboration with **MSDE & World Economic Forum (WEF)**.
- **Aim:** To close these gaps through inclusive upskilling and reskilling (in areas like **AI, robotics, and energy—aligning education with industry needs**), mobilizing investment in lifelong learning, and fostering government-industry collaboration (2 out of 4 co-chairs from the private sector).

Source: [PIB](#)



Editorial Summary

The

Context

India's dependence on imports of critical minerals and lack of processing capacity necessitate strategic reforms

Importance of Critical Minerals

- **Strategic for Clean Energy Transition:** Essential for solar panels, wind turbines, EV batteries, and green hydrogen technologies.
 - Enable India's energy security and net-zero ambitions.
- **Backbone of Advanced Manufacturing:** Crucial for semiconductors, electronics, robotics, defense equipment, and aerospace.
- **Enabler of Digital and Technological Sovereignty:** Support AI, data centers, satellites, telecom, and high-tech industries.
- **Supply Chain Resilience and National Security:** Reduce dependence on politically sensitive supply chains, especially China's.
- **Economic Growth Driver:** Unlocks potential for value addition, job creation, and industrial diversification.
- **Geopolitical Leverage:** Aligns with India's role in global supply chain coalitions (e.g., Quad, G20, Mineral Security Partnership).

Challenges in India

- **Complete Import Dependence for Key Minerals:** 100% dependent on imports for lithium, cobalt, rare earths, nickel, and silicon.
- **Underdeveloped Domestic Resource Base:** Exploration still in early stages; mining potential untapped or ecologically constrained.
- **Midstream Processing Bottlenecks:** Limited refining and conversion capacity (e.g., battery-grade lithium or cobalt), leading to reliance on China.
- **Auction Failures and Low Private Participation:** High capital costs, technical expertise shortages, and weak investor confidence have led to several annulled mineral block auctions.
- **Vulnerable Supply Chains:** China's dominance (e.g., 90% of rare earth refining) and export restrictions impact India's manufacturing and EV sectors.
- **Social Resistance:** Several critical mineral reserves lie in tribal or ecologically sensitive areas where inadequate ESG compliance has led to delays, protests and legal challenges.

Solutions and Way Forward

- **Strengthen the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM):** Focus on seamless execution, clear accountability, and measurable outcomes.
- **Accelerate Domestic Exploration:** Expedite GSI-led surveys and simplify clearances for strategic reserves.
- **Use PLI-like Incentives:** Encourage private players to set up midstream facilities for value-added processing.
- **Strengthen Global Partnerships:** Expand bilateral collaborations (e.g., Australia, Argentina) and deepen involvement in MSP, Quad.
- **Implement ESG Frameworks:** Mandatory third-party audits, environmental safeguards, and community benefit-sharing models.

Source: [Indian Express](#)