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## Prelims Exam Topics

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### JAPAN'S SHIFT IN ARMS EXPORT POLICY

#### Context

- Japan has removed its long-standing ban on exporting lethal weapons amid rising regional threats and global security demands.

#### Shift in the Policy

- **End of Export Restrictions:** Japan is allowing sale of advanced weapons like warships, missiles and fighter jets (earlier limited to non-lethal categories like rescue, transport, surveillance).
- **From Pacifism to Proactive Security:** Japan is moving to a more **proactive defence posture**, focusing on deterrence (earlier emphasis on **minimal military role** under pacifist constitution).
- **Case-by-Case Approval System:** Instead of blanket restrictions, exports will now be evaluated individually with approval by the National Security Council (earlier rigid categorical bans).
- **Partner Base:** Arms exports allowed to **select partner countries (≈17 nations with defence agreements)** to strengthen alliances (earlier highly restricted transfers).
- **Retention of Safeguards:** Japan will continue strict controls like **no exports to conflict zones and monitoring of usage**, though exceptions may be allowed for national security (earlier stricter non-negotiable bans).

#### Implications of this Shift

- **Strengthening Defence Industry:** Boosts domestic defence manufacturing by increasing production scale and reducing costs (e.g. firms like Mitsubishi Heavy Industries gaining export markets).
- **Enhanced Strategic Partnerships:** Deepens military cooperation with allies like **USA, Philippines, Australia, Europe**, contributing to collective security.
- **Regional Deterrence:** Aims to counter rising threats from **China and North Korea**, enhancing Indo-Pacific security balance.
- **Geopolitical Significance:** Reflects Japan's shift towards a more **assertive security role** in global affairs and reduced reliance on the US security umbrella.
- **Economic Opportunities:** Opens new markets for defence exports, creating growth in one of the **17 strategic sectors targeted by Japan**.

#### Concerns & Criticism:

- Faces opposition domestically and from China, with fears of **remilitarisation and violation of pacifist constitution**, potentially increasing regional tensions.

### NEW GENETIC INSIGHTS IN PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

#### Context:

- New research shows that only certain gene mutations cause peripheral neuropathy offering new treatment pathways.

### About Peripheral Neuropathy

- **Definition:** Peripheral neuropathy is a genetic disorder affecting peripheral nerves, leading to **muscle weakness, loss of sensation and structural deformities (e.g. high arches, curled toes)**.
- **Genetic Cause:** Mutations in **100+ genes including ARS genes** disrupt protein synthesis, affecting nerve function.
- **Two Gene Copies (Parental Inheritance):** Every individual inherits **two copies of each gene (one from mother and one from father)**, and the interaction between these two copies determines whether disease develops. **E.g.**
  - **Normal + Normal:** Both parental gene copies functional → proper protein production → no disease
  - **Normal + Null Mutation:** One gene inactive but other functional → enough protein produced → usually no disease
  - **Normal + Dominant-Negative Mutation:** Faulty gene from one parent produces harmful protein that interferes with normal gene → severe reduction in function → disease occurs
- **Dominant-Negative Effect:** Mutant protein not only fails to work but **blocks the healthy protein (forms defective pair/dimer)**, worsening the condition.
- **Why Nerves Are Vulnerable:** Long peripheral nerves require continuous protein supply over long distances, so even slight disruption leads to dysfunction.

#### Process of Protein Synthesis

- **Transcription:** DNA is copied into **mRNA carrying genetic instructions for protein formation**.
- **Translation:** mRNA is read by ribosomes to **assemble amino acids into proteins in correct sequence**.
- **Role of tRNA:** tRNA delivers specific amino acids and matches **codon–anticodon pairs** to ensure accuracy.
- **What Happens in Peripheral Neuropathy:** Faulty ARS proteins fail to properly link tRNA with amino acids, reducing the supply of amino acids for protein synthesis, leading to **defective or insufficient protein production in nerve cells**, ultimately causing nerve degeneration

#### How This Study Helps in Treatment

- **Targeting Mutant Gene Products:** Blocking **mutant mRNA or protein** can prevent interference with healthy proteins, restoring function.
- **Precision Medicine Approach:** Enables development of **mutation-specific therapies** rather than general treatments.
- **Experimental Models:** Yeast models help in **testing mutations and screening drugs efficiently**.
- **Better Disease Understanding:** Explains why only certain mutations cause disease, helping design targeted interventions.

## WAS THE US SEIZURE OF AN IRAN SHIP LEGAL?

### Context

- The legality of the U.S. seizure of an Iranian ship (Touska) depends on whether the situation is treated as **peacetime (ceasefire)** or **wartime (ongoing armed conflict)**, since different international legal regimes apply.

### More about the News:

- **U.S. Position (Wartime Interpretation):** The United States argues that the conflict with Iran remains an **active armed conflict** as a ceasefire is only a temporary pause; therefore, actions like naval blockade and seizure of vessels are justified (under Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC)).
- **Iran’s Position (Peacetime Interpretation):** Iran contends that the ceasefire is a peacetime condition, making U.S. actions like blockade and ship seizure, **an act of “piracy” or ceasefire breach**.

### International Law Framework (Peacetime vs Wartime)

Situation	Legal Framework / Doctrine	Explanation
Peacetime	<b>UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982)</b>	Ensures freedom of navigation on high seas and restricts use of force, meaning foreign navies cannot board or seize ships to enforce unilateral sanctions, making such actions a violation of maritime law.
	<b>UN Charter (Article 2(4))</b>	Prohibits threat or use of force against any state, allowing exceptions only in self-defence or with UN Security Council approval, thus restricting unilateral military actions.
Wartime	<b>San Remo Manual (1994 Naval Warfare Rules)</b>	Paragraphs 118 and 135 of the manual grant ‘belligerent’ warships the right to visit and search merchant vessels while providing provisions for the capture of enemy-flagged vessels.
	<b>Prize Law</b>	Allows capture and legal adjudication of enemy ships and cargo, enabling transfer of ownership through courts during wartime. It is though rarely used today.
	<b>US Naval Doctrine (Commander’s Handbook)</b>	Allows targeting and capture of enemy vessels beyond neutral waters, and if a ship resists or ignores warnings, it may be treated as a legitimate military target.
	<b>Geneva Convention Principles</b>	Mandates proportionality and precaution, requiring minimisation of civilian harm and ensuring military actions are necessary and not excessive.

### Way Forward

- **Clarifying Conflict Status:** Clearly define whether situations are **ceasefire or active conflict**, as legal ambiguity leads to misuse of both peacetime and wartime laws.
- **Developing Clear Maritime Norms:** Update and codify laws like **San Remo Manual** to address modern conflicts (hybrid warfare, blockades during ceasefires).
- **Enhancing Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:** Use international platforms like **ICJ and arbitration tribunals** for resolving maritime disputes instead of unilateral enforcement.

## RAILWAYS INTRODUCE CLOSED-DOOR NON-AC TRAINS TO BOOST SAFETY

### Context

- Indian Railways has introduced a **non-AC suburban train with automatic door-closing** features for trial in the **Mumbai Suburban Railway network, aiming to enhance safety & reduce fatalities.**
  - **Electric Multiple Unit:** An EMU is an electric train in which multiple coaches are powered by motors rather than by a single locomotive.
- **Manufacturing:** Built by Integral Coach Factory, Chennai, currently under trial.
- The **2025 Mumbra accident and 6,760 fall-related deaths (2014–2025)** exposed the risks of overcrowded open-door non-AC trains, while safer AC closed-door trains remain limited and costly.

### Features of the Non-AC Closed-Door EMUs

- **Safety:** Automatic sliding doors, anti-drag mechanism, and interlocking system (train won't move unless doors are closed).
- **Ventilation:** Louvred doors, roof-mounted ventilation units, and larger windows to address CO<sub>2</sub> rise.

**Convenience:** Vestibules for movement, passenger information system, emergency talk-back units, and alternate exit doors.

## PANEL ORDERS STUDY ON DEPENDENCE OF GRAZING COMMUNITIES ON FORESTS INSIDE NATIONAL PARKS

### Context

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL), chaired by Union Environment Minister, has directed the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to conduct a comprehensive study on the dependence of pastoralist and nomadic communities on forests within national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

### About the issue

- Pastoralist communities depend on forests within protected areas for grazing during seasonal migration of livestock.
- **SC-NBWL has tasked WII to:**
  - Assess the extent and nature of dependence
  - Examine legal frameworks and constraints
  - Study socio-economic and ecological dimensions
- **States in focus:** The study will focus on states like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Funding mechanism:** Funding is proposed through Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)
- **Key Communities Involved:**
  - Gujjars, Bakkarwals, Bhotia, Van Gujjars
  - Maldharis, Rabari, Raika
  - Dhangar, Gaddi, Changpa, Kuruba, among others

### Significance

- **Livelihood Security:** Pastoralism sustains millions through livestock-based products while utilising vast rangelands critical for rural economies.
- **Ecological Role:** Regulated grazing supports grassland health and biodiversity, aligning with global frameworks like the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
- **Policy Relevance:** It highlights the need to reconcile conservation goals with traditional rights through balanced, evidence-based policymaking.

### Challenges

- **Legal & Institutional Constraints:** Overlapping and unclear legal frameworks restrict pastoralists' grazing rights, creating conflicts between conservation laws and traditional livelihoods.
- **Seasonal Migration Issues:** Inter-state mobility of pastoralists leads to regulatory inconsistencies and weak institutional coordination.
- **Rangeland Degradation:** Declining pasture availability and livestock pressure accelerate ecological degradation and reduce carrying capacity.
- **Conservation Concerns:** Unregulated grazing may disturb habitats and intensify competition with native wildlife species.
- **Global Dimension:** Widespread degradation of rangelands globally highlights the urgency for sustainable management and policy intervention.

### Way forward

- **Institutionalising Access:** Establishing regulated grazing systems can balance livelihood needs with conservation priorities.
- **Legal Clarity:** Harmonised laws recognising customary rights can reduce conflicts and ensure sustainable resource use.
- **Sustainable Rangeland Management:** Scientific practices like rotational grazing can restore ecosystems while supporting pastoral economies.
- **Community Participation:** Inclusion of pastoralists enhances conservation outcomes through traditional ecological knowledge.
- **Evidence-Based Policy:** Data-driven policymaking can enable a balanced coexistence of biodiversity conservation and livelihoods.

## Mains Exam Topics

### INDIA MUST DRAW RED LINE ON US UNILATERAL SANCTIONS

**Context:**

- Increasing use of unilateral sanctions by the United States is impacting India’s economy through higher energy costs, disrupted trade and supply chains.

**Unilateral Actions of USA**

- **Sanctions on Energy Trade:** The U.S. imposed secondary sanctions targeting countries importing oil from Iran, Russia and Venezuela.
- **Penalty Tariffs and Economic Coercion:** The U.S. imposed additional tariffs and penalties (e.g. **25% penalty linked to Russian oil trade**) to pressure India into compliance with its geopolitical objectives.
  - **Impact:** India reduced Russian oil imports (from ~2 million bpd to ~1 million bpd temporarily, showing partial compliance).
- **Sanctions on Strategic Projects:** Threats of sanctions on projects like **Chabahar Port and INSTC** have constrained India’s connectivity and regional outreach.
  - **Impact:** Progress on projects like **Chabahar Port and INSTC** slowed due to fear of sanctions and policy uncertainty.
- **Financial & Currency Pressure:** The U.S. has warned of sanctions on countries adopting **non-dollar payment systems (e.g. BRICS arrangements)**, reinforcing global financial dominance.
- **Defence-Related Sanctions (CAATSA):** Under CAATSA, the U.S. threatened sanctions on countries purchasing defence equipment from Russia (e.g. India’s S-400 deal).
- **Policy Uncertainty (Waivers & Reversals):** Frequent use of waivers and sudden policy changes creates instability in global markets and uncertainty for countries like India.
  - **Impact:** resuming imports from Venezuela only when temporary waivers were granted.

**Cost of Compliance vs Benefits of Non-Compliance**

Dimension	Cost of Compliance vs Benefit of Non-Compliance
<b>Energy Security</b>	Compliance forced India to stop importing cheaper Iranian/Venezuelan oil, increasing dependence on volatile markets, whereas non-compliance (as seen in Russian oil imports 2022–25) ensured access to discounted crude, saving billions and stabilising supply.
<b>Economic Impact</b>	Compliance led to higher energy bills, inflation, export decline (~7%) and currency pressure, while non-compliance would reduce costs, improve fiscal stability and protect growth prospects.
<b>Strategic Connectivity</b>	Compliance slowed projects like Chabahar Port and INSTC, increasing reliance on risky routes like Strait of Hormuz, whereas non-compliance would enable alternative corridors, reducing geopolitical vulnerability.
<b>Foreign Policy Autonomy</b>	Compliance constrained India’s decision-making and aligned it with U.S. interests, while non-compliance (e.g. S-400 deal despite CAATSA) strengthened strategic autonomy without necessarily triggering penalties.
<b>Global</b>	Compliance indirectly supports unilateralism and weakens multilateral order, whereas

<b>Positioning</b>	non-compliance allows India to emerge as a leader of the Global South resisting coercive economic measures.
<b>Long-term Energy Strategy</b>	Compliance disrupted diversification of energy sources and reserve-building, whereas non-compliance would enable stockpiling of cheaper oil and long-term energy resilience (as seen in China's strategy to increase strategic oil reserve despite sanctions).

India's experience shows that while compliance ensures short-term diplomatic balance, it imposes significant economic and strategic costs, whereas calibrated non-compliance can enhance energy security, autonomy and global leadership.

## SECURITY SHIFT AFTER PAHALGAM ATTACK

### Context:

- The 2025 Pahalgam terror attack targeting tourists marked a major shift in terrorism pattern, exposing gaps in security assumptions and forcing a systemic overhaul of the security grid in Jammu & Kashmir.

### Change in Terrorist Strategy

- **Shift from Urban to Remote Targets:** Terrorists moved away from cities to **remote tourist locations and high-altitude meadows**, exploiting less-guarded "soft targets".
- **Targeting Civilians & Tourism:** Instead of security forces, terrorists increasingly targeted **civilians (tourists)** to create psychological impact and damage the "normalcy narrative".
- **Use of Forest & Mountain Terrain:** Terror groups shifted bases to **dense forests and high ridges (Pir Panjal, Chenab Valley)** to evade detection and use terrain advantage.
- **Hybrid & Small Modules:** Adoption of **small, mobile and hybrid terrorist units** that infiltrate, hide and strike opportunistically, making detection difficult.
- **Cross-Regional Spread:** Expansion of activities from Kashmir Valley to **Jammu region (Doda, Kishtwar, Rajouri, Poonch)**, increasing operational complexity.

### Security Shift to Deal with Changing Threats

- **From Roads to Ridges:** Security strategy shifted from **road-based deployment to occupying high-altitude ridgelines and forests**, denying terrorists terrain advantage.
- **Expansion of Operating Bases:** Establishment of **40+ Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs)** in high-altitude zones to maintain continuous presence.
- **Technology Integration:** Increased use of **drones, facial recognition, surveillance systems and aerial monitoring** for real-time tracking of threats.
  - E.g. Adoption of **loitering munitions, kamikaze drones, network-centric communication and air defence systems**.
- **Human Firewall (Local Integration):** Creation of **Aadhaar-linked databases and QR identification for tourism workers (~50,000 people)** to monitor and prevent infiltration.
- **Intelligence-Led Operations:** Shift towards **precision, intelligence-driven operations** (e.g. Operation Mahadev eliminating Pahalgam attackers).
- **Specialised Training:** Security forces trained in **jungle warfare (with Greyhounds, Para SF)** and long-range patrols to counter forest-based terrorism.

### Limits of Adaptation

- **Terrain Challenges:** Dense forests and rugged mountains still provide **natural cover for infiltration and evasion**, limiting surveillance effectiveness.
- **Intelligence Gaps:** Human intelligence remains weak in remote areas, making it difficult to track small, mobile terrorist units.
- **Weather & Technology Constraints:** Drones and sensors are affected by **harsh weather and terrain conditions**, reducing reliability.
- **Infiltration Continuity:** Continued cross-border infiltration ensures **persistent threat despite improved security measures**.
- **Privacy & Sustainability Concerns:** Extensive surveillance systems raise **privacy issues and long-term sustainability challenges**.

### Way Forward

- **Advanced Surveillance Systems:** Deploy **all-weather satellites, AI-based monitoring and integrated sensor networks** for continuous tracking.
- **Integrated Security Grid:** Enhance coordination between **Army, police, intelligence agencies and technology platforms**.
- **Capacity Building:** Continue training in **jungle warfare, drone operations and modern combat techniques**.
- **Counter-Infiltration Measures:** Strengthen border management and **LoC surveillance to prevent entry of terrorist modules**.

The Pahalgam attack marked a turning point, pushing security forces towards a **technology-driven, intelligence-led and terrain-focused strategy**, but sustained adaptation and innovation are essential to counter evolving terrorist tactics.

## STRENGTHENING INDIA'S FOOD PROCESSING ECOSYSTEM

### Context

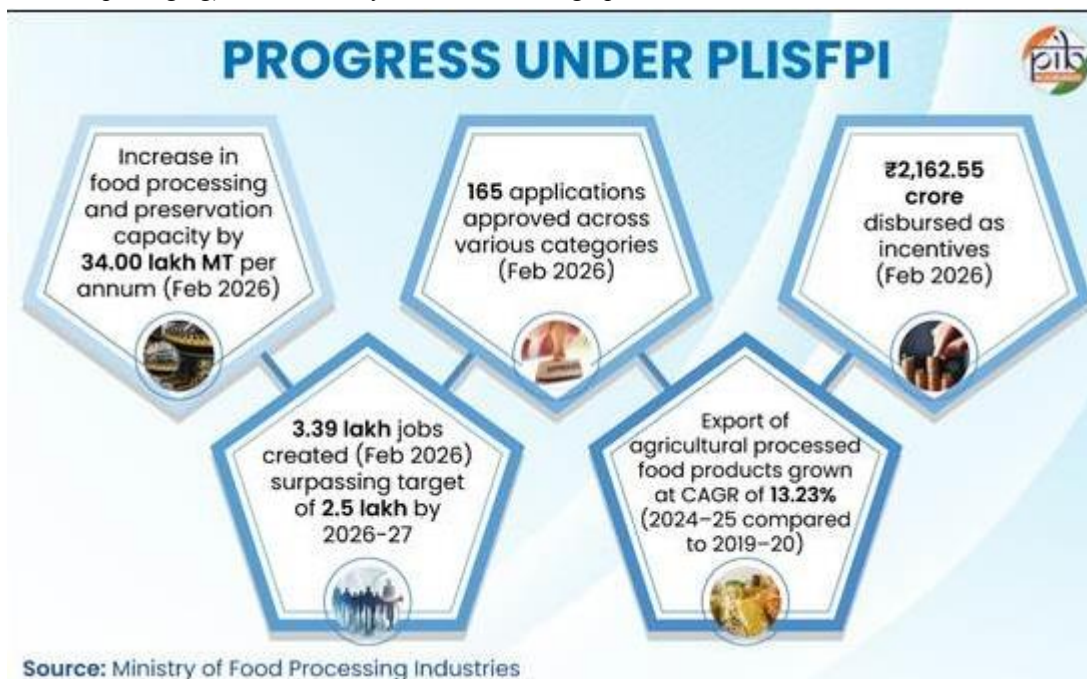
The **Ministry of Food Processing Industries** has reported that the **Production-Linked Incentive Scheme (PLISFPI)** has significantly outperformed its targets, creating **3.39 lakh jobs against a goal of 2.5 lakh by 2026**.

### Factsheet

- **Economic Contribution:** The Gross Value Added (GVA) of the sector rose from ₹1.34 lakh crore in 2014-15 to ₹2.24 lakh crore in 2023-24.
- **Export Growth:** The share of processed food in total agricultural exports increased from 13.7% to 20.4% over the last decade.
- **Capacity Expansion:** Processing and preservation capacity has increased by 34 lakh MT per annum as of February 2026.
- **Investment Mobilization:** Beneficiaries under the PLI scheme have reported private investments amounting to ₹9,207 crore.
- **Global Footprint:** Cumulative export sales of PLISFPI beneficiaries reached ₹89,053.44 crore between April 2021 and September 2025.

### Opportunities in the Indian FPI

- **Raw Material Abundance:** India is the world's second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables, providing a massive resource base for processing hubs.
- **Growing Consumer Base:** Rapid urbanization and changing lifestyles have spiked demand for **Ready-to-Eat (RTE) and Ready-to-Cook (RTC) segments.**
- **Global Health Trends:** The rising global interest in millets and organic products provides India a niche market to export traditional and innovative superfoods.
- **Supply Chain Integration:** There is a vast opportunity to integrate Indian MSMEs into global value chains, particularly in segments like marine products and mozzarella cheese.
- **Technological Adoption:** Transitioning to advanced food preservation technologies (like IQF or Retort packaging) can drastically reduce India's high post-harvest losses.



#### Initiatives taken:

- **PLISFPI (2021-2027):** A ₹10,900 crore scheme incentivizing incremental sales and supporting global branding of Indian food products.
- **PLISMBP:** A dedicated ₹800 crore sub-component carved out to promote millet-based products and value addition.
- **MSME Integration:** Approved 69 MSMEs and 40 contract manufacturing units under the PLI framework to foster inclusive growth.
- **Branding Support:** The government reimburses 50% of branding and marketing expenses abroad to help Indian brands go global.

#### Challenges

- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Inadequate cold chain facilities and last-mile connectivity still result in significant perishable wastage.

- **Standardization Issues:** Meeting stringent international phytosanitary and quality standards remains a hurdle for many small-scale processors.
- **Fragmented Supply Chain:** The presence of multiple intermediaries between the farm gate and the processor often increases costs and reduces efficiency.
- **Limited MSME Credit:** Despite government support, many small units struggle with high capital costs for upgrading to advanced technology.
- **Low Processing Level:** Currently, India processes only a small fraction of its total produce compared to developed nations, indicating an under-utilized capacity.

### Way Ahead

- **Incentivizing Ancillaries:** Moving toward PLI 2.0 to support ancillary industries like specialized chemicals, gases, and packaging materials.
- **R&D and Innovation:** Strengthening the focus on Category II products (Organic/Innovative) to capture high-value health-conscious markets.
- **Digitization of Logistics:** Implementing real-time monitoring of food project progress via web-based MIS to ensure timely execution.
- **Aggressive Global Branding:** Utilizing the Category III incentives to establish Indian Food as a premium, safe, and sustainable global brand.
- **Skill Development:** Training the rural workforce to operate advanced production lines, ensuring that the 3.39 lakh jobs created are high-skill and sustainable.

## KSHATRIYAISATION IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

### Context

Rising celebration of warrior icons like Maharaja Suheldev, Ahilyabai Holkar, Rani Velu Nachiyar, Rani Durgavati among others are being highlighted in public discourse to emphasise regional and martial histories.

### What is the Issue?

- **Identity construction:** Diverse caste groups are being portrayed as part of a unified Kshatriya (warrior) tradition, linking past roles to present identity.
- **Narrative building:** These celebrations reinterpret history as resistance against foreign rulers, strengthening cultural-national narratives.
- **Colonial-era mobilisation:** Organisations like Akhil Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahasabha institutionalised claims of Kshatriya status.
- **Caste assertion movements:** Groups such as Marathas, Jats, Yadavs, Nairs, Thevars, etc., historically asserted martial and landholding identities to elevate social status

### Conceptual framework

- **Sanskritization:** Proposed by **M. N. Srinivas**, it refers to the process where lower castes imitate the rituals, customs, and lifestyles of higher castes to gain social mobility and improved status within the hierarchy.
- **Kshatriyaisation:** Explained by **Hermann Kulke**, it denotes a top-down process in which ruling elites or dominant groups promote a warrior (Kshatriya) identity to legitimise their political authority and expand social influence.

- **Imitation Theory:** **B. R. Ambedkar** argued that caste identities evolve through the “infection of imitation,” where communities emulate dominant groups to enhance their social standing.
- **Power-centric caste:** **Andre Beteille** emphasised that in modern India, caste hierarchies are increasingly shaped by political power, economic status, and social influence rather than purely ritual or religious factors.

### Significance

- **Social mobility:** Assertion of Kshatriya identity enables communities to symbolically elevate their status, gain dignity, and challenge their historically lower position in the caste hierarchy.
- **Political mobilisation:** As highlighted by Christophe Jaffrelot, such identity construction helps consolidate communities into cohesive political groups, strengthening vote-bank politics.
- **Cultural integration:** Incorporating regional warrior histories into a broader national narrative fosters a sense of shared heritage and collective identity across diverse communities.

### Challenges

- **Reinforces hierarchy:** Instead of dismantling caste inequalities, such processes may repackage and perpetuate hierarchical distinctions in new symbolic forms.
- **Selective history:** Emphasis on martial achievements can lead to partial or distorted interpretations of history, ignoring social, cultural, and economic complexities.
- **Inter-caste tensions:** Competing claims by different groups for Kshatriya status may intensify rivalries and social conflicts.
- **Political misuse:** Historical figures and identities may be strategically used to influence electoral outcomes rather than promote genuine historical understanding.

### Contemporary relevance

- **Strategic identity politics:** Promotion of warrior identities among communities like Marathas, Jats, and Yadavs reflects deliberate efforts to mobilise these groups for political support.
- **Link to nationalism:** These narratives connect caste pride with broader cultural-national ideologies, reinforcing a unified yet hierarchical identity framework.
- **Dynamic caste system:** The evolving reinterpretation of caste identities demonstrates that caste remains fluid and continues to adapt to changing political and social contexts.

### Way forward

- **Balanced historiography:** Promote fact-based, inclusive history writing to avoid distortions.
- **Egalitarian approach:** Shift focus from hierarchical status to constitutional values of equality.
- **Limit politicisation:** Ensure historical figures are not excessively used for political agendas.
- **Inclusive development:** Address socio-economic concerns of communities rather than relying solely on symbolic identity assertion.

### Conclusion

While Kshatriyaisation fosters pride and mobilisation, it also risks reinforcing caste hierarchies and politicising history. There is a need for a nuanced approach to reconcile identity, history, and democratic values.

## VIOLATIONS OF MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

### Context

Over 700 civil society members, including activists, former bureaucrats, and academics, have written to the Election Commission of India alleging violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by the Prime Minister during his national address on women's reservation (April 18, 2026)

### What is the Issue?

- **Alleged MCC violation:** The PM's address is claimed to be "electioneering" in nature during the enforcement of MCC.
- **Use of official machinery:** Government platforms and mass media were allegedly used, giving undue advantage to the ruling party.
- **Demand for inquiry:** Petitioners have sought:
  - Investigation into the content and timing of the address
  - Removal of the speech from official platforms (if violation is established)
- **Alternative demand:** If prior EC approval was taken, equal airtime should be provided to other political parties to ensure fairness.

### About the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

- **Definition:** A set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India to regulate conduct of political parties and candidates during elections.
- **Nature:** Not legally enforceable but derives authority from the EC's constitutional mandate under **Article 324**.
- **Key provisions:**
  - No misuse of official machinery for campaigning
  - No announcements that may influence voters
  - Ensuring level playing field among parties

### Significance

- **Ensures free and fair elections:** MCC prevents ruling parties from exploiting state resources, maintaining electoral integrity.
- **Level playing field:** Restricts unfair advantages, ensuring equal opportunity for all political actors.
- **Public trust in democracy:** Upholds credibility of electoral processes and institutions.
- **Accountability of executive:** Places checks on those in power during elections.

### Challenges

- **Non-statutory nature:** MCC lacks legal backing, limiting enforceability and punitive action.
- **Ambiguity in interpretation:** Determining what constitutes "electioneering" or "official duty" can be subjective.
- **Delayed enforcement:** Investigations and actions may not be timely, reducing deterrence.
- **Technological/media expansion:** Use of digital and mass media complicates monitoring of violations.
- **Perception of bias:** Allegations against EC's neutrality can affect institutional credibility.

## Way Forward

- **Strengthening legal backing:** Consider giving statutory status to MCC provisions for stronger enforcement.
- **Clear guidelines:** Define boundaries between governance communication and political campaigning.
- **Equal media access:** Institutionalise mechanisms for equitable airtime during election periods.
- **Timely action:** Ensure swift inquiry and transparent decision-making by the EC.
- **Use of technology:** Enhance monitoring of digital and broadcast media for violations.

## PRIVILEGE NOTICE AND PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES IN INDIA

### Context

A privilege notice has reportedly been moved against the Prime Minister, alleging breach of parliamentary privilege after remarks made following the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026.

### About Privilege Notice

- **Definition:** A Privilege Notice (or motion) is a formal mechanism used by an MP to raise a complaint regarding violation of parliamentary privileges or the dignity of the House.
- **Purpose:** It seeks action against members or outsiders for acts such as misleading the House, concealing facts, or making derogatory remarks.

### Procedure and Rules

- **Governing Rules:**
  - **Lok Sabha:** Rule 222
  - **Rajya Sabha:** Rule 187
- **Initial Scrutiny:**
  - The Speaker of Lok Sabha or Chairman of Rajya Sabha examines the notice and decides whether to admit it.
- **Leave of the House:**
  - Once admitted, the member must seek permission of the House; approval is granted if there is no objection or if at least 25 members support it.
- **Timing:**
  - Typically raised after Question Hour, though urgent matters may be taken up immediately.
- **The House may either:**
  - Take up the matter for discussion directly, or
  - Refer it to the Committee of Privileges for detailed examination.
- The final authority to decide rests with the House.

### Committee of Privileges

- **Nature:** A standing committee with quasi-judicial functions.
- **Composition:**
  - **Lok Sabha:** 15 members nominated by the Speaker
  - **Rajya Sabha:** 10 members nominated by the Chairman

- **Functions:**
  - Investigates alleged breaches
  - Determines facts and recommends action
- **Principle of Natural Justice:**
  - The accused is given an opportunity to present their defence.

### What are Parliamentary Privileges?

- **Definition:** Special rights and immunities enjoyed by Parliament, its members, and committees to ensure independent functioning.
- **Coverage:** Extends to the Attorney General of India, but not to the President (who has separate protections under Article 361)
- **Objective:** To enable Parliament to perform its functions effectively without external interference.

### Types of Privileges

- **Collective Privileges:**
  - Powers of the House (e.g., regulating proceedings, punishing for contempt, excluding outsiders).
- **Individual Privileges:**
  - Rights of MPs (Eg: freedom of speech in Parliament, immunity from arrest in civil cases).

### Sources of Parliamentary Privileges

- **Constitutional Basis:**
  - Articles 105 & 122 (Parliament)
  - Articles 194 & 212 (State Legislatures)
- **Legal Basis:**
  - Article 105(3) allows Parliament to define privileges by law, though no comprehensive law exists yet.
- **Statutory Provision:**
  - The Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 provides limited immunity from arrest in civil cases during parliamentary sessions.

### Judicial Position on Parliamentary Privileges

- **Keshav Singh Case:**
  - Held that legislative privileges are subject to Fundamental Rights
  - Conflicts must be resolved through harmonious interpretation
- **Searchlight Case (Sharma case):**
  - Freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) does not automatically override parliamentary privileges
  - However, Article 21 (life and personal liberty) remains applicable