

Topic - Digital Access as

Right to life(Polity -GS

PAPER 2)

Digital access to e-governance systems a part of fundamental right to life and liberty: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Inclusive and meaningful digital access to e-governance and welfare delivery systems is a part of the fundamental right to life and liberty, the Supreme Court held in a judgment on Wednesday.

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan, hearing a petition on how people with disability find it nearly impossible to complete the digital Know Your Customer (KYC) process, said that the state has an obligation to provide an inclusive digital ecosystem to the marginalised, underprivileged, vulnerable, disabled, and historically excluded sections of society.

Amid the "wave of digital progress" in India through Aadhaar, online service delivery platforms, and net banking – a crucial aspect often overlooked is whether this technology is truly inclusive and accessible to all, the court said.

"The right to digital access emerges as an intrinsic

component of the right to life and liberty, necessitating the state to proactively design and implement inclusive digital ecosystems to serve not only the privileged, but also the marginalised and those who have been historically excluded," said Justice Mahadevan, who authored the judgment.

The Bench also issued 20 directions to the government to improve the KYC processes, to make them more accessible.

The judgment was based on a petition filed by a group of acid attack survivors led by Pragna Prasad and others, and a separate plea by Amar Jain, who is visually disabled. They raised concerns about how disabled people, including acid attack victims, find it nearly impossible to successfully complete the digital KYC processes, which include visual tasks.

Justice Mahadevan said that facial trauma, disfigurement, and visual impairments makes it impos-



sible for acid attack survivors to even move their heads, blink, carry out visual instructions, and position their faces within the specified frames provided on the screen.

As a result, they are unable to establish their identity digitally or face prolonged delays to even open a bank account or access essential services and government welfare schemes.

Digital divide

The top court said that the unfriendly digital atmosphere has managed to further cripple these sections of the population rather than returning them

to mainstream society.

"In the contemporary era, access to essential services, governance, education, healthcare and economic opportunities is increasingly mediated through digital platforms. Right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution has to be reinterpreted in light of these technological realities," Justice Mahadevan pointed out.

Bridging the digital divide is no longer merely a matter of policy discretion but has become a constitutional imperative to ensure a life of dignity, autonomy, equal participation in public life, the Supreme Court noted.

"Digital divide characterised by unequal access to digital infrastructure, skills, contents continue to perpetrate systemic exclusion not only of persons with disabilities (PwD), but also large sections of the rural population, senior citizens, economically weaker communities and linguistic minorities," the top court highlighted.

Invoking the 'principle of substantive equality', the Supreme Court held that digital transformation must be both inclusive and equitable. "PwD encounters unique barriers in accessing online services due to a lack of accessible websites, applications and assisted technology," the judgment said.

Similarly, rural Indians face poor connectivity, and scarce content in regional languages, which effectively deny them meaningful access to e-governance and welfare measures.

"The state's obligation under Articles 21 [right to a dignified life], 14 [equality], 15 [right against discrimination], 38 [Directive Principles of State Policy] of the Constitution must encompass the responsibility to ensure that digital infrastructure, government portals, online learning platforms and financial technology are universally accessible and responsive to all vulnerable and marginalised sections," the court held.



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- ❑ Inclusive and **meaningful digital access to e-governance and welfare delivery systems** is a part of the fundamental right to life and liberty, the Supreme Court held in a judgment.
- ❑ the state has an obligation to **provide an inclusive digital ecosystem** to the marginalised, underprivileged, vulnerable, and disabled.
- ❑ Key highlights and implications include:
 - **Digital Access as a Fundamental Right:** The court's interpretation elevates **inclusive digital access to a non-negotiable constitutional guarantee**, on par with food, shelter, and healthcare.

-
- **State's Affirmative Duty:** It places a positive obligation on the **state to ensure digital infrastructure, services, and platforms** are **accessible to persons with disabilities (PwDs), rural populations**, elderly citizens, linguistic minorities, and others who are digitally marginalized.
 - **Substantive Equality in Technology:** **Invoking substantive equality** — which goes beyond formal equality — the court emphasizes that different needs require different accommodations, such as assistive technology, localized content, and inclusive design.
 - **Digital KYC Reform:** The court's directions to **improve KYC processes for accessibility** underscore how **even routine bureaucratic tasks**, when **digitized without inclusivity**, can become barriers to basic rights like opening a bank account or receiving welfare.
 - **The state's obligation under Articles 21 [right to a dignified life], 14 [equality], 15 [right against discrimination], 38 [Directive Principles of State Policy] of the Constitution must encompass the responsibility to ensure that digital infrastructure, government portals, online**
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learning platforms and financial technology are universally accessible and responsive to all vulnerable and marginalised sections,”

□

Which constitutional articles were invoked by the Supreme Court in relation to digital access and inclusion?

1. Article 14 – Right to Equality
2. Article 15 – Prohibition of Discrimination
3. Article 21 – Right to Life and Liberty
4. Article 38 – Directive Principles of State Policy

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: D

EXPECTED MAINS QS

GS Paper II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice

Q "Digital inclusion is now a constitutional mandate, not just a policy objective." In light of the recent Supreme Court judgment, critically examine the implications of recognizing digital access as a fundamental right under Article 21. (150 WORDS)

Q "The digital divide in India is not just technological, but also deeply socio-economic." Evaluate this statement with reference to the recent SC judgment and suggest policy measures to bridge this divide (150WORDS)

TOPIC - What is personality Rights ?? (Polity)

Anita Ratnam moves HC over infringement of personality rights

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Wednesday directed Meta Platforms Inc and Telegram FZ-LLC to take down all fake Facebook accounts and Telegram channels that had misused the photographs and videos of choreographer Anita R. Ratnam and used deep-fake audio clips of her voice to solicit monetary investments from individuals through fraudulent schemes.

Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy directed the two social media giants, based in the U.S. and the UAE, to initially pull down 11 fake Telegram channels and three Facebook accounts, which Ms. Ratnam had listed in her plaint, and then remove other such fake accounts too, as and when Ms. Ratnam reports them to Meta and Telegram.

The interim order was passed on a civil suit filed by the UNESCO award-winning choreographer over the infringement of her personality rights.

Her counsel, M.S. Bharath, told the court that his

client was a choreographer, performer, producer, speaker, mentor, arts entrepreneur, and the pioneer of Neo Bharatam, a unique dance form blending Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, and Yoga.

She began performing Bharatanatyam in the 1970s and, since then, has been engaged in a myriad of activities related to various art forms. Ms. Ratnam had set up her own dance theatre, curated various festivals, developed her own style, and made a significant contribution to the world of performing arts by producing and choreographing a large body of work, Mr. Bharath said. He further stated that the plaintiff had performed in more than 1,300 shows across 37 countries.

In such circumstances, Ms. Ratnam came to know about the misuse of her photographs and videos in fake social media accounts, in the last week of February this year. Subsequently, she issued public caution notices through newspapers on March 5, 2025, and also lodged complaints with the cyber-crime cell.



□ **Personality rights** refer to the legal rights of an individual to control **the commercial use and protection of their identity**, including their name, image, likeness, voice, and other personal attributes. These rights are often divided into two key categories:

□ **1. Right to Privacy (Personal Aspect):**

- Protects an individual's right to be left alone and not have their identity or private life intruded upon without consent.
- Enshrined as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution (as held in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*, 2017).

□ **2. Right of Publicity (Commercial Aspect):**

- Gives individuals control over how their identity is used for commercial gain (e.g., in advertisements, movies, video games).
- Especially relevant for celebrities, sportspersons, and public figures who have a monetizable persona.
- Prevents unauthorized use of one's likeness or name for profit.

Examples of Personality Rights Issues:

- Using a celebrity's image in a product ad without their consent.
-

-
- **Making a film or web series based on a person's life without authorization.**
 - **Publishing a book or article revealing private facts about a person**
-

1. Which of the following best describes “Personality Rights”?

- A. The right of an individual to express their opinions freely.
- B. The right of an individual to control the use of their identity and image.
- C. The right of the state to regulate online content.
- D. The right of individuals to participate in public life.

Answer: B

2. In the context of Indian law, personality rights include which of the following?

1. Right to privacy
2. Right to publicity
3. Right to education
4. Right to be forgotten

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3 only

C. 2 and 4 only

D. 1, 3 and 4 only

Answer: A

TOPIC - Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) (GS PAPER 3 - ECONOMICS)

Fair, remunerative price for sugar cane increased

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Wednesday, has approved fair and remunerative price (FRP) of sugar cane for the sugar season of 2025-26 (October-September) at ₹355 a quintal. In the previous season, the amount was ₹340.

The price will be applicable for a basic sugar recovery rate of 10.25%. A decision to provide a premium of ₹3.46 a quintal for each 0.1% increase in recovery over and above 10.25% and a reduction by ₹3.46 a quintal for every 0.1% decrease in recovery was also taken in the meeting.

"However, the government with a view to protect interest of sugar cane farmers has also decided that there shall not be any de-



Alleviating hardship: There shall be no deduction in mills where recovery is below 9.5%.

duction in case of sugar mills where recovery is below 9.5%. Such farmers will get ₹329.05 a quintal in the ensuing sugar season 2025-26," Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vainshnav said.

The cost of production of sugar cane for the sugar season in 2025-26 is calculated at ₹173 a quintal.

About five crore farmers and around five lakh work-

ers employed in sugar mills are dependent on sugar cane farming and processing, apart from those employed in various ancillary activities including farm labour and transportation. "The FRP has been determined on the basis of recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) and after consultation with State governments and other stakeholders," Mr. Vaishnav added.

The Centre said in a release that in 2023-24, out of the dues payable of ₹1,11,782 crore, about ₹1,11,703 crore have been paid to farmers, as on April 28.

As much as 99.92% of the dues has been cleared, and in the current season, out of ₹97,270 crore payable, about ₹85,094 crore have been paid as on April 28, where 87% dues have been cleared.

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☐ Fair and
Remunerative
Price (FRP) is the
minimum price at
which the
government

mandates sugar mills to purchase sugarcane from farmers in India. It is a government-fixed price that ensures **sugarcane growers get a reasonable return** on their crop, balancing the interests of both **farmers and sugar mills.**

✓ **Key Features of FRP (Fair and Remunerative Price):**

1. **Announced by:**
 - The **Central Government** on the recommendation of the
-

Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

1. Applies to:

- **Sugarcane,** specifically. It is different from Minimum Support Price (MSP), which applies to several other crops.

1. Objective:

- To ensure **profitability to sugarcane farmers** while considering
-

the paying
capacity of
sugar mills
and sugar
prices in the
market.

Binding Nature:

- It is **statutorily binding** on sugar mills under the **Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966**.
- **Recovery-based pricing:**
 - FRP is linked to the **recovery rate of sugar from sugarcane** (i.e., how much sugar is extracted per kg of cane).

saurabh pandey current affairs

Feature	FRP (Fair and Remunerative Price)	MSP (Minimum Support Price)
Crop applicability	Only for sugarcane	For 23+ crops including wheat, rice, pulses
Statutory status	Binding on buyers (sugar mills)	Not legally binding (except in specific schemes)
Fixing authority	Central Govt. (on CACP recommendation)	Central Govt. (on CACP recommendation)
Payment timeline	Mills must pay within 14 days	Procurement usually done by government agencies

TOPIC - Shenzhou-19 (PRELIMS - SCIENCE & TECH)

Its latest launch last week lifted a trio of astronauts to the Tiangong space station, heralding the start of the Shenzhou-20 mission.

They have taken over from Shenzhou-19 crew Cai Xuzhe, Song Lingdong, and Wang Haoze, whose landing capsule touched down in the

The Shenzhou-19 crew have been working in space since October 2024, during which time they carried out experiments and set a new record for the longest-ever spacewalk

northern Inner Mongolia region on Wednesday.

Shortly after the landing, the Xinhua state news agency said the mission was a “complete success,” adding that the trio was in “good health.”

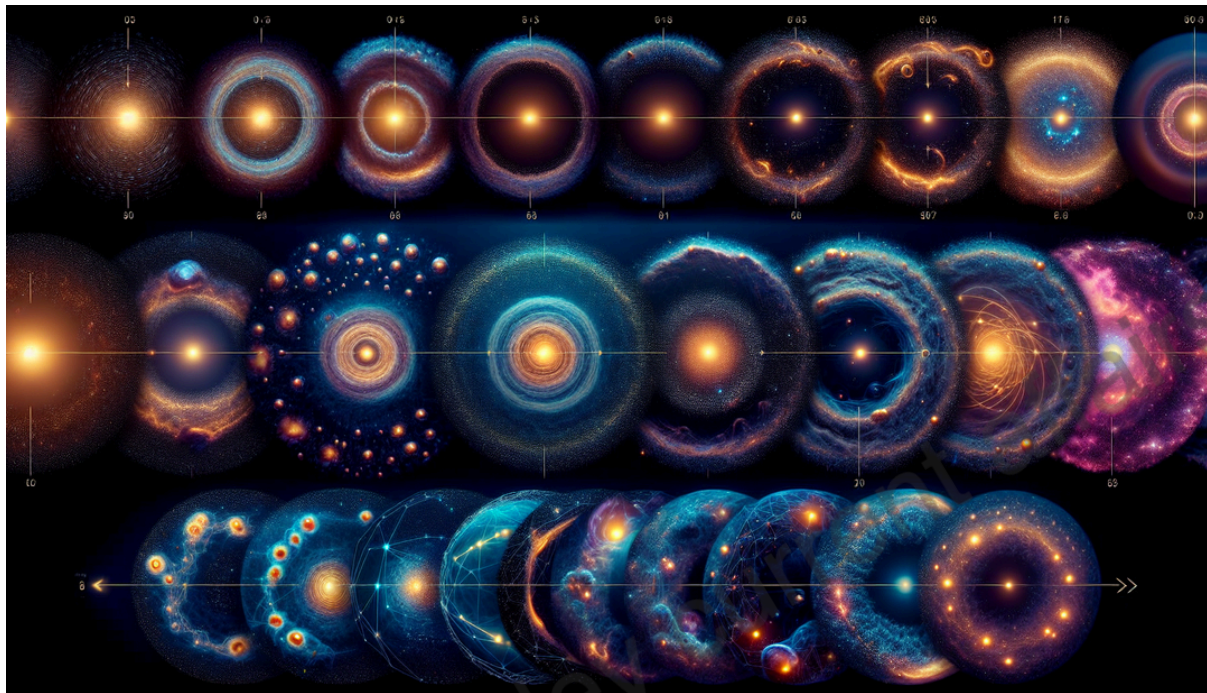
The Shenzhou-19 crew had worked on the space station since October 2024, where they carried out experiments and set a new record for the longest-ever spacewalk.

They were initially scheduled to return



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- Shenzhou 19 . was a Chinese spaceflight to the Tiangong space station that was launched on 29 October 2024 and returned to Earth on 30 April 2025.
 - It carried three crew members on board a Shenzhou spacecraft.
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Topic - S8 TENSION (Science and technology)



S8 tension: cosmologists cannot agree on how clumpy universe is

Cosmologists have been mapping the spread of the universe powered by dark matter and dark energy that make up most of the cosmos as we see it. This matter coalesced with galaxies in the period after the Big Bang to form the clumpy distortions and structures discovered by scientists.

Prakash Chandra

Cosmology is in for exciting times, giving by the latest research that suggests the key to revealing the fundamental nature of the universe lies in finding out

Accepted theory has it that after the universe was explosively born in a 'Big Bang' in the void some 13.8 billion years ago, it expanded, engendering galaxies, star clusters, solar systems, and planets.

When scientists looked at the cosmic microwave background (CMB) – the radiation left over from the Big Bang itself – they saw an absolutely smooth glow across the sky. The early universe must have been remarkably uniform, they concluded, with only small variations in density of about one part in 100,000 when it was 380,000 years old.

Primordial fluctuations
How did matter in the universe get to be so lumpy today after starting out so evenly? The “lumps” we see in the universe arose from different chunks of matter like galaxies and dark matter – a hypothetical, invisible form of matter that doesn’t interact with light or electromagnetic radiation and which makes up a significant portion of the

Over the years, cosmologists have tried to map the overall spread of matter through the early universe. In the standard cosmological model, called the Lambda Cold Dark Matter (Λ CDM) model, dark matter and dark energy – the mysterious force that drives the expansion of the universe – comprise about 95% of the universe. The interplay between these components influences how the primordial fluctuations evolved into the large-scale structures that we

The value of 58 is calculated by studying various regions of the universe. Each region is defined by an astronomical length scale of approximately 26 million light years.

A higher value for S_0 indicates more clustering with a greater amount of

A problem arose when cosmoanalysts used different ways to measure the value of M and came up with different estimates. This lack of agreement has come to be called the "M tension" in astrophysics.

Astronomers have conducted galaxy surveys to determine the value of $\delta\theta$. One method involves measuring the distortion in the shape of galaxies as seen from the earth: an effect known as cosmic shear. These distortions occur when starlight passes through a galactic cluster and is bent and amplified by gravitational forces,

much like a magnifying glass does. Astronomers use this gravitational lensing to study indistinct epochs in the evolution of the universe. Cosmic-shear surveys help to map the diffusion of matter, including dark matter, in the universe so cosmologists can deduce the amplitude of matter fluctuations as quantified by δ .

The results of the latest such survey were recently published in the journal *Physics* by an international team of researchers from the University of Tokyo. They used the Hyper Suprime Cam (HSC)

"The Subaru HSC survey is one of the deepest wide area surveys of the sky," said S. Masi, a co-author of the study and professor of astrophysics at the Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics in Pune, wrote in an email. He added that the researchers probed matter's distribution using the gravitational lensing effect down to small scales.

In other words, the discrepancy in S8 has to do with the dark matter and dark energy that pervades the cosmos. While this reaffirms that all is well with the Λ CDM model, it does not dispel the 55 tension itself. Studies like this were based on gravitational lensing to determine the value of S8 to be 0.747, which does not

Astronomers have conducted galaxy surveys to determine the value of S_8 . One method involves measuring the distortion in the shape of galaxies: an effect known as cosmic shear. These distortions occur when starlight passes through a galactic cluster

agree with the higher value predicted by data from the CMB.

Cosmologists consider the CMB to be a better tool to look back in space and time. They have known for a long time that the surge of primordial matter in the CMB holds clues to the universe's origins in the form of "ripples" generated by the

These telltale galactic signatures were detected in 1992 by NASA's Cosmic Background Explorer satellite.

As Prof. Moore said, "One of the main difficulties in using deep surveys such as

Subaru HSC is our lack of understanding of how fast the galaxies in these surveys are actually receding from us, quantified by the redshift (increase in wavelength) of certain lines in their spectrum. As the millions of galaxies used in these analyses

are faint, one cannot analyse the spectrum of light of these galaxies to determine this redshift. This constitutes one of the major uncertainties that still remains unresolved before we start

A new view
Last year, data from the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument in Arizona in the US suggested that the push of dark

The possibility of dark energy getting weaker means that the pace of expansion of the universe will eventually slow down.

In any case, the task of updating the Λ CDM model will become easier when

The LSST will launch from the Vera C. Rubin Observatory being built in northern Chile, using its camera - the largest ever built - to peer back in space and time.

Who knows what answers this unparalleled wide-field astronomical survey of the universe, wider and deeper than all previous surveys combined, will provide to questions we can't even imagine now about the mysteries of the

(Prakash Chandra is a science writer, prakashchandra@gmail.com)



Big Bang Theory:

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- The universe began 13.8 billion years ago in a uniform state after the Big Bang.
 - Early universe was smooth, with only small density variations (~ 1 in 100,000).

Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB):

The Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) is the cooled remnant of the first light that could ever travel freely throughout the Universe. This 'fossil' radiation, the furthest that any telescope can see, was released soon after the Big Bang

- CMB is the leftover radiation from the Big Bang, which revealed a smooth glow.
- This uniformity suggested a lack of major structure in the early universe.

Primordial Fluctuations:

- Over time, small density fluctuations grew into large-scale structures like **galaxies, clusters, and filaments**.
- These clumps of matter formed due to **gravitational forces** acting on both **baryonic matter** (ordinary matter) and **dark matter**.

Dark Matter and Dark Energy:

-
- **Dark matter** (invisible matter that doesn't interact with light) and **dark energy** (mysterious force driving expansion) comprise 95% of the universe.
 - Their interplay influences how the universe evolved from a uniform state to its current clumpy structure.

Sigma 8 (S8):

- **S8** is a cosmological parameter used to measure **matter density fluctuations** over regions of about **26 million light-years**.
- A **high S8 value** indicates more matter clumping, while a **low value** suggests more uniformity.

S8 Tension:

- Different observational methods used to calculate S8 yield **conflicting estimates**.
- This discrepancy is called the “**S8 tension**”, posing a challenge to the standard **Λ CDM model** (Lambda Cold Dark Matter (CDM) model) of cosmology.

Q The Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) is important in cosmology because:

A. It marks the first time galaxies formed in the universe

B. It is evidence of the uniform temperature of stars across the

galaxy

C. It is leftover radiation from the Big Bang, providing clues about the early universe

D. It shows the gravitational wave spectrum from black holes

Answer: C

Q The “S8 tension” in cosmology refers to:

A. The discrepancy between observed and predicted values of universal expansion rate

B. The difference in measured values of matter clumping across different regions of the universe

C. The inconsistency between general relativity and quantum mechanics

D. The inability to detect gravitational waves from distant galaxies

Answer: B

Topic - The Global Landscape of Uncertainty: A Precursor to Disruption(IR -GS PAPER 2)

From a rules-based world to shambolic disorder

Even prior to the Trump interlude in the United States, there were enough signs that the world was witnessing uncertainty across many sectors. This was a heralding of problematic conditions in many areas of the globe, and policymakers, strategists and business leaders had begun to prepare for more difficult times ahead. Some did, however, hew to the view that new analytical tools and strategic methodologies which were in use would help mitigate the levels of uncertainty in the course of time.

Leader-led disruption

Notwithstanding this, the majority adhered to the view that the recent shifts in global hegemonies, the spate of disruptive technologies and also prevailing geopolitical tensions were certain to herald more disruption, accompanied by an increase in geopolitical tensions and economic tsunamis. The general consensus, hence, is that given the influence wielded by leaders such as Xi Jinping of China, Vladimir Putin of Russia, and Donald Trump in the U.S. – not excluding the role of leaders such as Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy, intent on disrupting the existing order – there is little hope of change for the better.

Few parallels, perhaps, exist for this state of affairs, at least in the recent period. Many also hew to the view that this is the beginning of a new phenomenon in the history of the world – one which has the potential to not only disrupt but also overturn the existing order. Such a situation, many also believe, would be very different from what had existed since the early 21st century, which was marked by considerable turbulence.

The U.S., which since 1945, had trumpeted the view that it is the fountainhead of democracy, is itself beginning to witness disruption of a kind that it has not seen in recent centuries. One consequence of this has been an escalation in tensions between the U.S. and several other countries. Most important, however, is that the situation is leading to what some experts estimate to be a 'cauldron of unexpected consequences'.

Today, the U.S. appears like a nation divided. Seen as a pillar of democratic stability, it is currently grappling with profound internal divisions. This, in turn, has had an adverse impact on its relations with countries across the globe. One reason for this is, no doubt, Mr. Trump's new tariff war – which demonstrates a profoundly transactional approach – the impact of which has been to turn the world upside down. This is having a highly unsettling effect on global trade. Already leading economists assess that the impact of tariffs has led to sharp decline in the growth potential of the U.S., and brought down its GDP.



M.K. Narayanan

is a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

Few parallels exist for the state of affairs, with some leaders intent on disrupting the existing world order

The U.S. President also seems not unwilling to shoot himself in the foot. Trumponomics now involves inflicting crippling wounds on world famous educational institutions such as Harvard and Columbia. It has targeted foreign students (who reportedly contribute over \$40 billion to the U.S. economy, and sustain over 4,00,000 American jobs). This again is likely to adversely impact the future of the U.S., and, incidentally, its intrinsic capabilities.

In Europe and West Asia

In the meantime, with Mr. Trump's ascendancy, Europe finds itself in a serious dilemma. Embroiled in a conflict with Russia over Ukraine for the past three years (which shows no signs of ending, despite recent peace efforts initiated by Mr. Trump), what Europe is now staring at is pronounced uncertainty about its future and that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The European Union is today a pale shadow of what it appeared to be only a few months back – Mr. Trump's recent diatribes about Europe's inability to defend itself is further adding to concerns about its future.

The situation in West Asia seems even bleaker. Israel's continuing offensive in the Gaza sector and beyond is amounting to a virtual pogrom (and with the U.S. and the West refusing to restrain Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu), the situation in the region is possibly the worst ever in recent decades. Further, Israel appears intent on redrawing the geography and the destiny of the region, and is actively seeking to achieve a larger geographical presence for itself, including seeking territories that had never previously been Israeli.

Elsewhere in West Asia, the situation appears to be only worsening. Even as Israel appears impervious to existing ceasefire agreements and is looking further afield to set up permanent positions in Syria, the administration there under its new leader, Ahmed al-Shara, appears to be on the brink of collapse, having disbanded the army and security services, purged the civil services of all Alawite elements, and abolished all political parties, thus, making it easier for Israel to establish its stranglehold over the region. Old feuds such as those between Ethiopia and Eritrea have meanwhile reemerged across North Africa. Türkiye is in turmoil with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan having created a tempest by arresting his principal political opponent before the elections. More problematic is that there are ominous signs that Israel, on the pretext that Iran is about to go nuclear, is contemplating a strike to destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities.

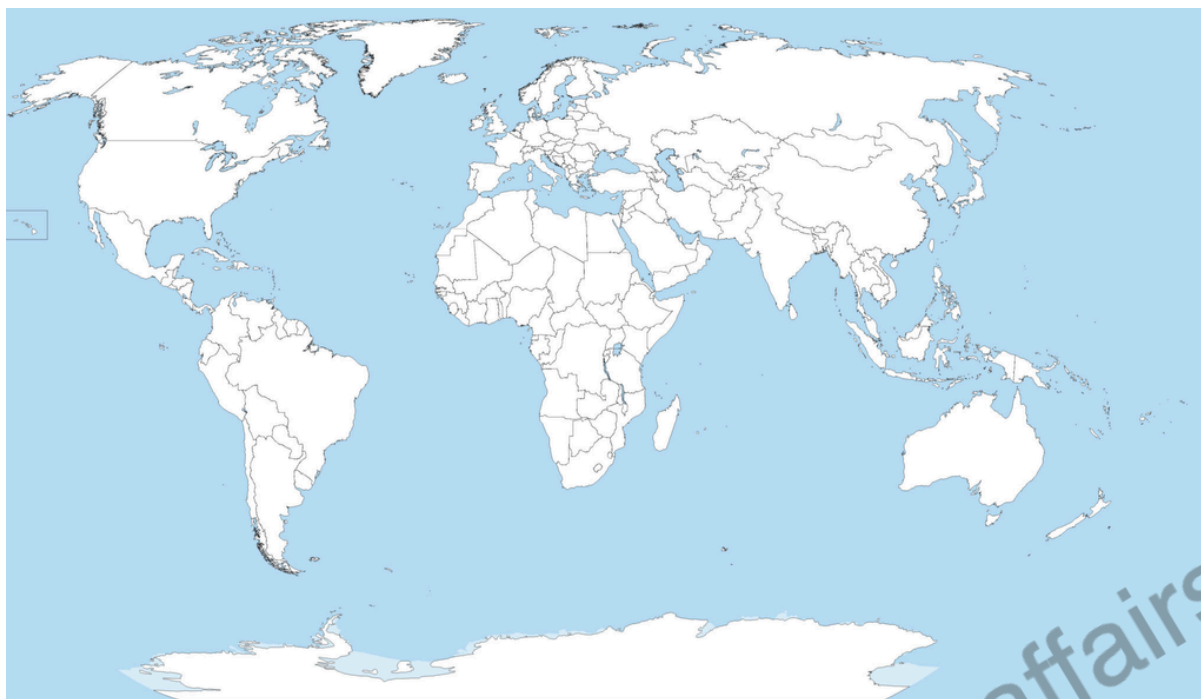
Meanwhile, the past few months have seen Islamic State (IS) affiliates moving out of the West Asian region, carrying out a series of attacks in

Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, pockets in North Africa and extending activities into Afghanistan. The revival of the IS is something that the world needs to worry about, as it could mark the revival of terrorist activities across many parts of the globe.

Events in Asia

Pronounced indifference, meantime, by the world to events in parts of Asia have masked the reality of what is taking place in these regions. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are today facing a great deal of internal turmoil and tensions, and alongside this, have also come within the crosshairs of terrorist groups such as the IS and its affiliates. A fresh wave of terror attacks, not only within both these countries, but further afield, is also beginning to be seen. While some are a leftover from the past, such as al-Qaeda and the IS, many are being sponsored by new affiliates. All this is providing a beachhead for a new brand of terrorists. Quite a few new terror attacks have, hence, occurred across the region. The latest was an attack on tourists in Pahalgam, in Kashmir on April 22, in which 26 people were killed. While regions in Asia, to the north and west of India, seem caught up in a fresh wave of violence, the situation elsewhere in the region is again far from happy. Countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal situated to India's east, currently face internal turmoil of different kinds.

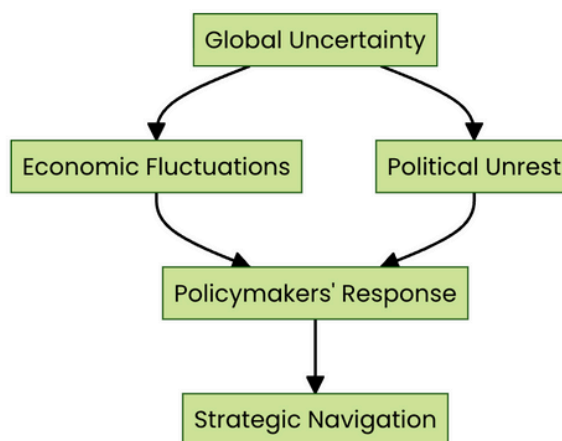
Further to India's east, the ubiquitous China-Taiwan problem remains unresolved, though it has not yet to come to the boil. China appears more intent at present on finding solutions for its economic woes, and on how best to outflank Mr. Trump in his current tariff offensive. Meanwhile, Southeast Asia is seeing fresh signs of a Chinese economic and peace offensive. As the U.S. takes a back seat in regard to political manoeuvres in Asia, what is evident is that China is exploiting this situation to its benefit. India may have reason to think that the recent accord/adjustments between India and China (at the border in Ladakh) marks a return to peaceful coexistence, but the reality would seem to be otherwise. China-India rivalry for the heart of Asia, hence, remains more intense than ever. Many other countries in the region, meantime, appear to be 'tilting' towards China. China is taking full advantage of this, and is intent on demonstrating its naval strength in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, going well beyond its 'nine-dash-line' by venturing into the South Pacific. It has also increased its presence and the numbers of its submarines in the Indian Ocean region. The Asian region, hence, remains wide open, needing India to be on its guard against any and all eventualities.



Introduction

- 🌍 The world is buzzing with uncertainty, even before the Trump era.
- were evident across various sectors, like a **A storm is gathering,"**
- **Policymakers and strategists were preparing for a rough ride**, hoping new tools could help navigate these **troubled waters**,

Conceptual Overview:



The Prelude to Disruption



Signs of Uncertainty: Tangible signs like economic fluctuations and political unrest were warning signals.



Role of Policymakers: They acted like captains steering through a storm, hoping for calmer waters.

Leader-Led Disruption





Influence of Global Leaders: Leaders like Xi Jinping, Putin, and Trump were pivotal, akin to a high-stakes chess game.




New Phenomenon of Disruption: Experts see a new era that could overturn the existing order, like a teetering house of cards.


The U.S. in Turmoil

 **Internal Divisions and Global Relations:** The U.S. faces profound internal divisions, affecting global relationships.


 **Impact of Trumponomics:** Tariff wars have disrupted global trade, likened to running a marathon with a boulder.

Europe and West Asia: A Dilemma


 **The Ukraine Conflict:** Europe is in a dilemma over the ongoing conflict with Russia, a tug-of-war with no clear winner.


 **Israel's Offensive:** West Asia faces instability due to Israel's actions in Gaza, creating a humanitarian crisis.

The Rise of Terrorism in West Asia


 **Islamic State's Resurgence:** The resurgence of the Islamic State is a chilling reminder of the global terrorism threat.

Events in Asia: A Ticking Time Bomb

 **Internal Turmoil in Afghanistan and Pakistan:** Both countries face internal struggles, like a pressure cooker ready to explode.

 **China-Taiwan Dilemma:** The unresolved issue is a delicate dance, with serious consequences for any misstep.

Conclusion

 The world is in flux, with uncertainty as the new norm.

Staying informed and prepared is crucial as we navigate these turbulent waters.

GS Paper 2 – International Relations & Polity

Q "The changing global power dynamics pose both strategic challenges and opportunities for India."

Discuss in the context of rising Chinese influence and U.S. internal instability. (150 words)

GS Paper 3 – Internal Security & Strategic Issues

Q "The resurgence of terrorist groups like ISIS and new affiliates is a growing threat to regional and global security." Comment with reference to recent developments in South Asia and Africa. (150 WORDS)

Topic - INDUS WATER TREATY SUSPENSION (IR)

The impact of suspending a water treaty

In a strong measure against Pakistan, after terrorists from The Resistance Front killed 26 tourists in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir, India's Cabinet Committee on Security decided that "the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) of 1960 will be held in abeyance with immediate effect, until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism". This implicitly means an end to the water treaty, signed in 1960. There is no exit clause and provision in the IWT for unilateral abrogation. Article XII (4) of the IWT states that the treaty "shall continue in force until terminated by a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two governments".

Many Indian analysts often argue that the provisions under Articles 60 and 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) can be used to revoke the treaty. India is not a party to the VCLT. Pakistan has signed but not ratified it. Invoking provisions under Article 62 of the VCLT on the IWT is convenient, but tough to argue. Suspending the IWT may also internationalise the water matter between the two hostile countries. Agnel Malik, the Minister of State for Law and Justice in Pakistan, told Reuters that there are three different legal options, including raising the issue at the World Bank, taking action at the Permanent Court of Arbitration or at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, alleging that India has violated the 1969 VCLT, or raising the issue at the UN Security Council.

Stopping the flow of water
India can now stop sharing water flow data with Pakistan, flush reservoirs, and there will be no hydro project design or operation-related restrictions on India. It can also hold water during the dry period and release it during the high monsoon, causing drought and floods in Pakistan. The western rivers – Indus, Jhelum and Chenab – are



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India may justify its position on suspending the Indus Water Treaty. But this could impact Delhi's relations with neighbouring countries

considered the backbone for Pakistan's agriculture, domestic consumption, and hydroelectricity production.

An impact on the flow of water to Pakistan may further intensify inter-provincial water disputes in the country. Punjab and Sindh have a long history of water fights. Currently, they are arguing over a plan to construct six canals, particularly the Cholistan Canal, to irrigate the deserted Cholistan region in Punjab. Amid protests in Sindh, the federal government of Pakistan decided to halt the contentious canal projects.

To materialise its political decision on the IWT, India requires major infrastructure projects. Under the IWT, India is permitted to store up to 3.60 million acre-feet (MAF) of water, develop 1.34 million acres of irrigation land in J&K and Ladakh, and construct run-of-the-river dams on the western rivers. However, India has a storage capacity of only around 1 MAF and has developed irrigation for about 0.64 million acres. On the eastern rivers – Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi – India utilises more than 90% of its 33 MAF allocated waters, supported by major projects such as the Bhakra, Pong, and Ranjit Sagar dam.

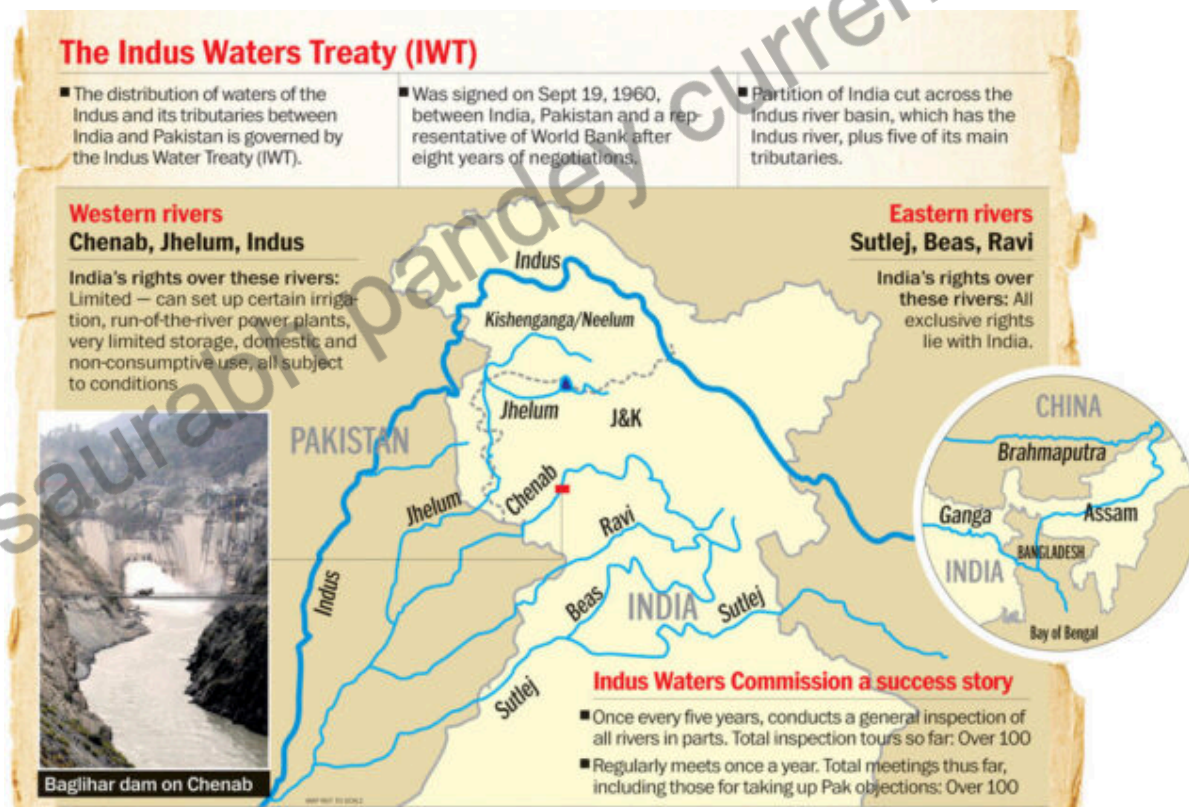
India's hydroelectric projects on the western rivers, such as the Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project, Ratle Dam, Salal Dam, Nimoo Bazgo, and Baglihar Dam, aim to harness the water resources of the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers to generate electricity, utilising India's allocated share of water under the IWT. These projects have varying storage capacities, with Kishanganga at 18.35 million cubic meters, Ratle Dam at 78.71 million cubic meters, Salal Dam at 285 million cubic meters, and Baglihar Dam at 475 million cubic meters. Upcoming and planned projects such as the Ratle Dam, Kiru Dam, and Pakal Dul Dam will further tap into the Chenab River and its tributaries. However, India's ability to capture and utilise the

water flowing into Pakistan is limited by the capacity of these projects. India lacks massive storage infrastructure to hold back large volumes of water during high-flow periods.

While India has launched short, medium-term, and long-term plans to maximise its water share and reduce flows into Pakistan, most western river projects remain run-of-the-river with minimal storage. Given the challenging Himalayan terrain and bureaucratic delays, building the required infrastructure to harness the treaty entitlements could take a decade or longer.

Conclusion

India may justify its position on suspending the IWT. However, if its steps on the IWT do not politically and diplomatically satisfy other neighbouring countries, the suspension may impact New Delhi's relations with them. For instance, the upper riparian to many Indian rivers, China, may cite the suspension of the IWT in its favour to not renew Memorandum of Understanding on water data sharing or sharing information of hydrostructures on the rivers flowing into India from Tibet. India's MoU on data sharing with China on the Sutlej and Brahmaputra rivers have expired and, as India's Ministry of Water Resources website says, is under the process of renewal. Notably, during the Doklam crisis in 2017, China did not share hydro data with India, but shared it with Bangladesh. Second, as India and Bangladesh have agreed to renew the Ganga Water Treaty, set to expire in 2026, India's decision on the IWT may cast a shadow over it. Currently, India and Bangladesh do not share very close relations. India's water decisions may even prompt a section of the Nepali population to caution the government on water related and other agreements with New Delhi. A few commentators from Sri Lanka too are talking about "treading" carefully while signing agreements with India.



Context and Decision

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- **Following a terrorist attack in Pahalgam (J&K) that killed 26 tourists, India's Cabinet Committee on Security decided to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan.**
 - **The suspension is meant as a response to Pakistan's continued support for cross-border terrorism.**
 - **The IWT, signed in 1960, does not have a unilateral exit clause; termination requires a ratified treaty between both countries.**
 - **The IWT was signed in 1960,** primarily to resolve water disputes between India and Pakistan after the partition. It allocated the waters of the Indus River system, which includes **the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers, to Pakistan,** while India retained **control over the eastern rivers: Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi.** This treaty was hailed as a significant achievement in conflict resolution
 - **Key Provisions of the Treaty**
 - The treaty includes provisions that allow India to utilize the waters of the eastern rivers while granting Pakistan rights to the western rivers. However, **it lacks an exit clause, meaning that unilateral abrogation is not straightforward. Article XII (4) states that the**
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treaty remains in force until a duly ratified treaty is concluded between the two governments.

□ **Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties**

□ Some Indian analysts argue that **Articles 60 and 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) could be invoked to revoke the IWT.**

However, **India is not a party to the VCLT**, and Pakistan has signed but not ratified it. This complicates the legal landscape surrounding the treaty

□ **Implications for Pakistan**

□ India can **stop sharing water flow data, flush reservoirs**, and **hold back water** during dry seasons.

□ This could cause **droughts and floods** in Pakistan, significantly impacting agriculture and electricity production.

□ The move may **exacerbate existing inter-provincial water disputes** within Pakistan, particularly between **Punjab and Sindh**

□ **India's Infrastructure and Limitations**

□ Though the IWT allows India to store 3.6 MAF of water and irrigate 1.34 million acres, India currently uses **only about 1 MAF** and **0.642 million acres**.

□ India utilises over **90% of its share of eastern rivers** (Sutlej, Beas, Ravi), but lacks storage capacity on western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab).

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- Key hydro projects: **Kishanganga, Ratle, Salal, Nimoo Bazgo, Baglihar**, with additional projects underway
 - **Regional and International Repercussions**
 - **Relations with China**
 - India's suspension of the IWT may have repercussions beyond Pakistan. **China, as an upper riparian state, could leverage this situation** to its advantage, potentially affecting water-sharing agreements between India and China.
 - **Implications for Bangladesh and Nepal**
 - India's water decisions may also impact its relationships with Bangladesh and Nepal. **As India and Bangladesh prepare to renew the Ganga Water Treaty**, the suspension of the IWT could cast a shadow over these negotiations. Similarly, **Nepal may reconsider its agreements with India in light of these developments.**
 - **Conclusion**
 - India's decision to suspend the IWT is a significant move that could reshape the geopolitical landscape of South Asia. While India may justify its actions as a response to terrorism, the long-term implications for regional relations and water security are complex and potentially fraught with challenges.

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GS Paper 3 – Internal Security & Strategic Issues

Q "India's infrastructure limitations constrain its ability to fully utilise its water entitlements under the Indus Waters Treaty." Discuss with examples of existing and upcoming hydro projects. (150 WORDS)

Q Analyze how water-sharing disputes, both domestic and international, can escalate regional instability. Refer to inter-provincial tensions in Pakistan and the India-China-Bangladesh context.(150 WORDS)

Q "Weaponization of water in geopolitics is a double-edged sword." In light of India's IWT suspension, critically assess the strategic pros and cons of using water as a tool of statecraft. (150 WORDS)

TOPIC - ALAWITES

Alawites are an Arab ethnoreligious group who live primarily in the Levant region in West Asia

Syria's Alawites facing 'eviction from homes at gunpoint' under new regime

For more than 50 years, the Assad, who belong to the Alawite minority, crushed any opposition from Syria's Sunni Muslims, who make up over 70% of the population; they now accuse supporters of Ahmed al-Sharaa, who once ran an al-Qaeda affiliate, of abusing them as payback

Reuters
DAMASCUS

Early one evening in late January, 12 masked men stormed the Damascus home of Um Hassan's family, pointed AK-47 assault rifles in their faces and ordered them to leave.

When they presented ownership documents, the men arrested Um Hassan's oldest brother and said they could only have him back once they had moved out. The family surrendered the house 24 hours later and packed him up, battered and bruised, from the local General Security Service headquarters, said Um Hassan, giving only her nickname for fear of reprisals.

Her family is part of Syria's minority Alawite community, an offshoot of the Shia faith and the sect of former strongman Bashar al-Assad. Their story is not unique. Since Syria's President Ahmed al-Sharaa seized power in December, hundreds of Alawites have been forced from their private homes in Damascus by the security forces, according to Syrian officials, Alawite leaders, human rights groups and 12 accounts who spoke to Reuters.

"We're definitely not talking about independent incidents. We are talking about hundreds, if not thousands, of cases of evictions," said Bassem Alab



Under control: Security forces of the new Syrian government secure the area around a group of Alawite protesters in the Mazzah district in Damascus. (11 PHOTO)

mad, executive director of human rights group Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ).

The mass evictions of Alawites from privately owned homes have not been previously reported.

For more than 50 years, Assad and his father before him crushed any opposition from Syria's Sunni Muslims, who make up more than 70% of the population. Alawites took many of the top positions in government and the military and ran big businesses.

They now accuse supporters of Mr. Sharaa, who once ran an al-Qaeda affiliate, of systematically abusing them as payback.

Hundreds killed
In March, hundreds of Alawites were killed in Syria's western coastal region and

sectarian violence spread to Damascus in apparent retribution for a deadly ambush on Syria's new security forces by armed Assad loyalists.

Two government officials said thousands of people had been kicked out of homes in Damascus since Assad was toppled by Mr. Sharaa's rebel force, with the majority being Alawites.

The officials said most resided in government housing associated with the military and ran big businesses.

They now accuse supporters of Mr. Sharaa, who once ran an al-Qaeda affiliate, of systematically abusing them as payback.

Mr. Sharaa has vowed to pursue inclusive policies to unite a country shattered

those pigs", referring to Alawites. Muslims consider pigs unclean and impure and calling someone a pig is highly offensive.

Committees formed
According to three senior GSS officials, the new authorities have established two committees to manage properties belonging to individuals perceived to be connected to the previous regime. One committee is responsible for confiscations, the other addresses complaints, the people said.

Reuters was unable to determine to what extent Mr. Sharaa was aware of how homeowners were being evicted, or whether his office had oversight of the committees.

They were created as Mr. Sharaa's forces closed in on Damascus in December and were modeled on a similar entity known as the "War Spots Committee" in his former stronghold Idlib, the GSS sources said.

On April 16, STJ filed a complaint with the Damascus Suburban Directorate, calling for an end to "sectarian-motivated" property violations and the return of looted properties.

The newly created GSS deployed by Mr. Sharaa seems to be an extension of the security force that ruled Idlib province, said Syria expert Joshua Landis, head of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

The GSS now seems to be the Police, FBI, CIA and national guard, all rolled into one, he said. Um Hassan said the men gave her 24 hours' grace to leave, because of her son's dependence on a wheelchair. She appealed to numerous government bodies to keep her home, and received some assurances.

The next day, the men returned and gave her two minutes to leave.

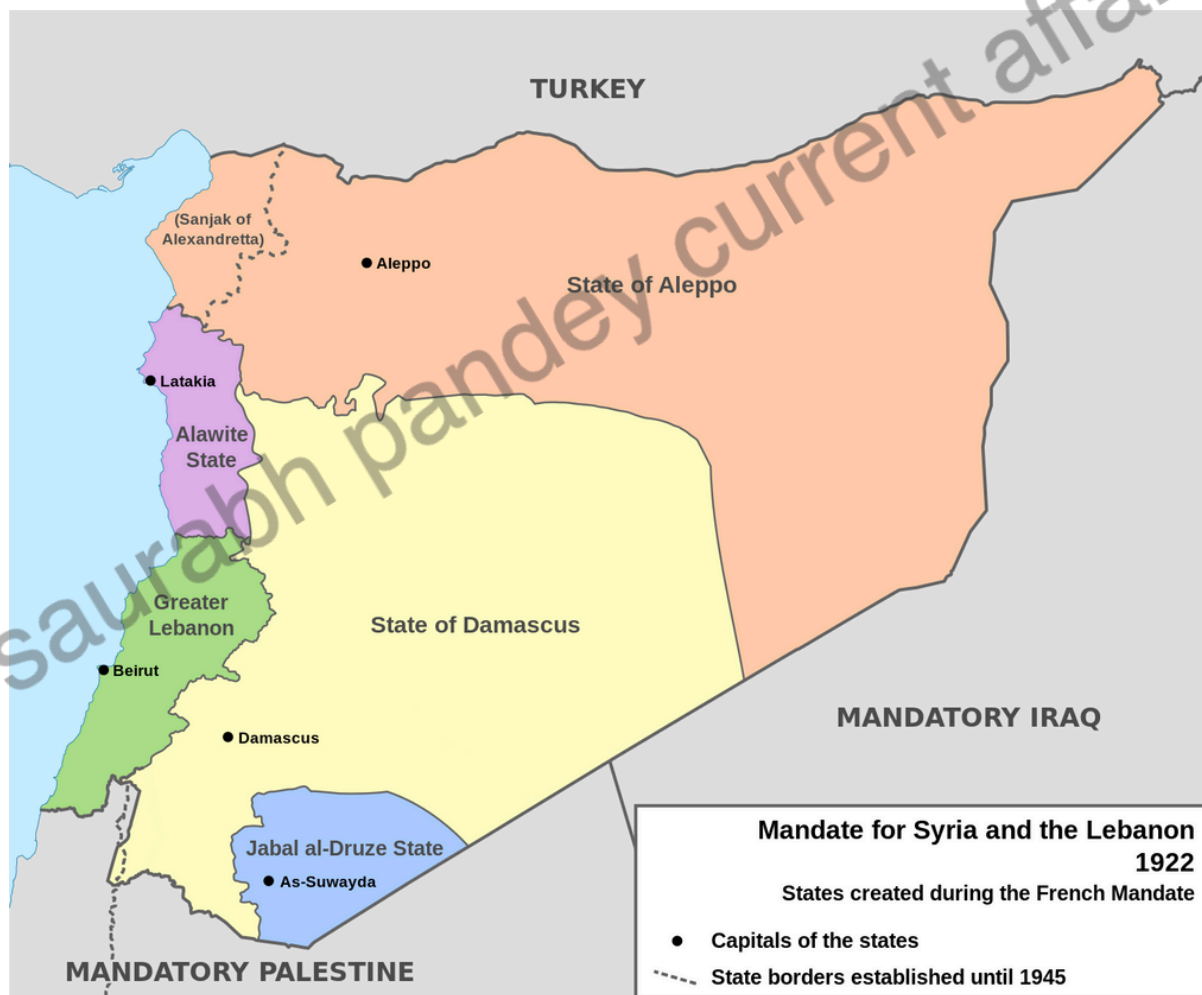
"We have been living in this house for more than 22 years. We cannot afford to rent elsewhere," said Um Hassan.

On February 12, the Damascus governor called on citizens who say property has been unjustly confiscated to submit complaints at directorates.

An official, who declined to be named, confirmed a pattern: armed individuals evicted people without a court order, prevented them from taking their belongings, and then moved in. The majority of confiscations targeted low- to middle-income Syrians who had lost their jobs and lacked the resources to pay their way out of the situation, the sources said.

Another official in another Damascus directorate said the evictions happened overnight without due process.

"It's chaotic, but there is a method to the madness, which is to terrify people and to let the whole world know that Alawites are no longer in power," said Landis.



Topic - BUZKASHI

Hold the reins



Afghan horse riders compete in buzkashi at a field in Khash district of Badakhshan Province on Tuesday. Buzkashi is a traditional sport where horse-mounted players try to score by placing a goat carcass in a designated goal. AFP

Buzkashi is the most favored sport of Afghanistan. It is a traditional sport in which horse-mounted players attempt to place a goat or calf carcass in a goal.

Topic -Is natural hydrogen the fuel of the future? (GS PAPER 3)



What is Hydrogen?

Hydrogen is the simplest and most abundant element in the universe. It's a clean fuel that, when burned, produces only water as a byproduct

- ◆ **What is Natural Hydrogen?**

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- **Natural hydrogen, also known as geologic or white hydrogen, occurs naturally in the Earth's subsurface.**
 - **It forms through geological processes like serpentinisation, radiolysis, and organic decomposition at depth.**

Geological Processes Producing Hydrogen

Natural hydrogen is produced through several geological processes. Here are the main players:

Serpentinisation

This process occurs when water interacts with iron-containing rocks, leading to the production of hydrogen gas. It's like nature's own little chemistry experiment!

Radiolysis of Water

In certain geological settings, radioactive rocks can break down water molecules, releasing hydrogen. It's a fascinating process that showcases the complexity of our planet.

Organic Matter Decomposition

Deep underground, organic matter can decompose and release hydrogen. This process is a bit like nature's

recycling program, turning old materials into new energy sources.

Why Was It Previously Overlooked?

- Historically, hydrogen has been produced using **polluting and expensive methods** (from natural gas or electrolysis).
- Natural hydrogen was considered **nonviable** due to **lack of exploration frameworks**, unclear economics, and **scattered deposits**.

Global Potential and Recent Discoveries

- USGS models suggest **tens of trillions of metric tonnes** of hydrogen could exist globally.
 - Even if **only 2%** of these are commercially viable, they could meet **200 years of global hydrogen demand**.
 - Notable discoveries include:
 - **France's Lorraine and Moselle regions** (92 million tonnes worth ~\$92 billion)
 - Seeps catalogued in **Australia, U.S., Spain, Albania, Canada**, etc.
 - ♦ **India's Potential**
 - **India has favourable geological formations, including:**
-

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- **Basaltic terrains, ophiolite complexes in Andaman and Himalayas**
 - **Cratons like Dharwar and Singhbhum**
 - **Sedimentary basins like Vindhyan, Gondwana, Cuddapah**
 - **Hot spring zones indicating hydrothermal activity**
 - **Exploration is at a nascent stage, but potential is promising.**

Challenges Ahead

- Despite the promise, challenges include:
 - **Uncertainty about commercial viability**
 - **Scattered reserves**
 - **Lack of mature exploration and regulatory frameworks**

Conclusion

Natural hydrogen could very well be the fuel of the future. With its potential to meet global energy demands sustainably, it's time we start paying attention to this untapped resource. As exploration efforts ramp up, we may soon find ourselves on the brink of a hydrogen revolution.

GS Paper 3 – Environment, Energy & Science and Technology

Q Discuss the potential of natural hydrogen as a sustainable energy source. What challenges must be addressed before it becomes commercially viable?

(250 words)

Q **"Natural hydrogen can be a game-changer in India's clean energy transition." Critically evaluate this statement in the context of India's geological potential and current energy needs.*

(250 words)

♦ GS Paper 1 – Geography

1. **Identify and explain the geological conditions favorable for the formation of natural hydrogen. Highlight the potential zones for its occurrence in India.**

(250 words)

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