



OAS HUB



IDEAL FOR
UPSC, OPSC and Other
Competitive Examinations

English

DAILY CHRONICLE CURRENT AFFAIRS

NEWS CREDIT

PIB/ PTI/ News On Air/ The Hindu/ IANS/ Business Standard/ Times Of India/ Deccan Herald/ Hindustan Times/ BBC News/ Aljazeera/ Mirror.Uk/ Times Now/ Economic Times/ Financial Express/ Indian Express...

NEWS COVERED

Business News, financial news, economy news, company news, politics news, India news, breaking news, Indian economy, International News, Sports News, and many more topics...



Saturday, August 22, 2026



TABLE OF CONTENT

- **India's Arctic Strategy: Bridging the Gap Between Polar Ambitions, Scientific Capability and Geopolitical Interests:** *Arctic policy / Polar research / Strategic interests / Climate change / Maritime security (GS-II / GS-III)*
- **Supreme Court Upholds Hanging as Constitutional Mode of Execution, Reopening Debate on Dignity, Science and Capital Punishment:** *Death penalty / Article 21 / Right to dignity / Constitutional morality / Criminal justice (GS-II)*
- **Supreme Court Reviews Constitutional Status of Muslim Polygamy, Raising Questions on Equality, Personal Law and Uniform Civil Code:** *Personal laws / Article 14 / Gender equality / Uniform Civil Code / Constitutional rights (GS-II)*
- **BRICS Environment Ministers Challenge EU Carbon Border Measures, Highlighting Climate Finance, Trade Justice and Global South Concerns:** *Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism / Climate finance / Global South / WTO / Climate justice (GS-II / GS-III)*
- **India's Coconut Sector: From Traditional Plantation Agriculture to High-Value, Export-Oriented and Climate-Resilient Growth:** *Plantation agriculture / Agricultural diversification / Value addition / Exports / Climate resilience (GS-III)*

IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

India's Arctic Strategy: Bridging the Gap Between Polar Ambitions, Scientific Capability and Geopolitical Interests

Recent Developments:

- The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs** presented its **Fourteenth Report** titled "**India's Role and Presence in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions**" to the Lok Sabha.
- The Committee assessed India's scientific, diplomatic, strategic and institutional engagement with the polar regions and highlighted a widening gap between India's **Arctic ambitions and operational capabilities**.
- The report contains **29 recommendations across 19 themes**, focusing on polar diplomacy, research infrastructure, Arctic governance, shipping routes, climate security and India's strategic role.
- Key recommendations include appointing a **Polar Ambassador**, pursuing **full membership of the Arctic Council when reviewed**, increasing funding for polar research, and expediting an indigenous **Polar Research Vessel**.
- It also recommended updating the **Arctic Policy, 2022** by adding "**Geopolitics and Strategy**" as a guiding pillar, reflecting the Arctic's growing strategic relevance.

India's Arctic Engagement and Credentials:

Historical and Institutional Foundations:

- India's Arctic engagement traces back to the **1920 Svalbard Treaty**, which grants signatory states certain rights in the Svalbard archipelago under Norwegian sovereignty, including scientific and commercial access.
- India established **Himadri**, its permanent Arctic research station at **Ny-Ålesund (Svalbard)** in **2008**, marking a sustained scientific presence in the region.
- India became an **Observer State in the Arctic Council in 2013**, enabling participation in discussions but without decision-making rights reserved for Arctic States.
- Arctic research is coordinated primarily by the **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)** under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, covering climate science, atmospheric studies, glaciology, marine ecosystems and polar biology.
- The **PRITHVI programme**, through its **Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER)** component, supports India's long-term polar research across the Arctic, Antarctic, Himalaya and Southern Ocean.

Arctic Policy, 2022:

- India's **Arctic Policy (2022)** provides a structured framework for engagement, focusing on scientific research, environmental protection, economic cooperation, connectivity, human development and international collaboration.
- The policy reflects India's traditional **science-led and sustainability-oriented approach**, but evolving geopolitics now demands stronger integration of strategic considerations.
- The Parliamentary Committee therefore recommended explicitly incorporating "**Geopolitics and Strategy**" into the policy to address emerging challenges related to maritime routes, energy competition, critical minerals and infrastructure rivalry.

Why the Arctic Matters to India:

Climate Security and Monsoon Linkages:

- The Arctic is a key component of the **global climate system**, and rapid warming there has far-reaching impacts beyond polar regions.
- Emerging studies suggest possible **Arctic–Indian monsoon linkages**, where changes in sea ice, temperature gradients and atmospheric circulation may influence South Asian weather patterns.
- Since India depends heavily on the **Southwest Monsoon**, Arctic climate variability becomes relevant for agriculture, water security, disaster preparedness and long-term climate planning.
- Enhanced Arctic observation can significantly improve India's **climate modelling and monsoon forecasting capabilities**.

Sea-Level Rise and Coastal Vulnerability:

- Melting Arctic ice contributes to **global sea-level rise**, posing risks to coastal ecosystems and infrastructure worldwide.
- India's long coastline and dense coastal population make it vulnerable to **flooding, erosion, displacement and infrastructure damage**.
- Thus, Arctic change must be viewed as part of India's broader **national climate-security framework**, not just an environmental concern.

Critical Minerals and Energy Security:

- The Arctic holds significant reserves of **critical minerals and hydrocarbons**, though their extraction is constrained by environmental, technological and geopolitical challenges.
- Engagement with Arctic states can help India diversify its **critical mineral supply chains**, essential for renewable energy, electronics, batteries, pharmaceuticals and advanced manufacturing.
- However, such engagement must align with **environmental sustainability, international law and indigenous rights**.

Geopolitical and Maritime Significance:

Great-Power Competition:

- The Arctic is increasingly a zone of **strategic competition** involving Russia, the United States, China and other global actors.
- Russia dominates Arctic geography and infrastructure, while the United States maintains strong strategic interests through Alaska and NATO frameworks.
- China, despite lacking Arctic territory, identifies itself as a "**Near-Arctic State**" and has expanded its scientific, commercial and infrastructural presence.
- India's balanced relations with **Russia, the United States and Nordic countries** provide a strong diplomatic base for nuanced Arctic engagement.

Arctic Council and India's Position:

- The **Arctic Council** is the primary intergovernmental forum for Arctic governance, comprising eight Arctic States and several Observer countries.
- India currently holds **Observer status**, limiting its role in decision-making.
- The Parliamentary Committee recommended that India should aim for **full membership when the Council reviews its structure**, while strengthening bilateral ties with Arctic States.

- It also proposed a **quadrilateral platform among India, Japan, South Korea and Singapore** to enhance coordination among Asian Observer countries.

Northern Sea Route (NSR):

- The **Northern Sea Route**, running along Russia's Arctic coast, is becoming increasingly navigable due to declining sea ice.
- It offers a potential **shorter maritime link between Asia and Europe**, reducing dependence on traditional routes like the Suez Canal.
- India and Russia have explored cooperation on NSR development, and the Committee recommended accelerating feasibility studies and cargo expansion.
- However, India must carefully assess **seasonal constraints, insurance costs, ice navigation requirements, environmental risks and geopolitical uncertainties** before large-scale adoption.

Institutional and Capability Gaps:

Need for a Polar Ambassador:

- India currently lacks a dedicated high-level diplomatic mechanism for polar affairs.
- Responsibilities are fragmented across multiple ministries, leading to **coordination challenges and policy diffusion**.
- The Committee recommended appointing a **Polar Ambassador** to ensure unified leadership in Arctic and Antarctic diplomacy.
- This would enable a **whole-of-government approach**, integrating foreign policy, science, defence, shipping, energy and climate strategy.

Absence of a Polar Research Vessel:

- India does not yet possess an indigenous **ice-class Polar Research Vessel**, limiting its operational capacity in Arctic waters.
- Dependence on foreign or chartered vessels restricts **research continuity, flexibility and autonomy**.
- Although the Cabinet approved the project in **2014 (₹1,051 crore estimate)**, implementation has been delayed.
- The Committee urged expedited construction, along with interim leasing arrangements.
- China's **Xuelong icebreaker** demonstrates how early investment in infrastructure accelerates polar capability.

Funding and Human Resources:

- India's Arctic expenditure remains modest at around **₹17.53 crore (2024–25)**, indicating a mismatch between ambition and investment.
- The Committee recommended a **30% increase in funding** for polar programmes and expansion of scientific manpower in NCPOR.
- Additional investment is needed in **satellite systems, climate modelling, logistics, field stations and international collaboration**.

India's Antarctic Dimension:

Strengthening Southern Polar Presence:

- India operates two Antarctic research stations: **Maitri and Bharati**, supporting long-term scientific studies.

- The Committee recommended accelerating **Maitri-II**, as the existing station has outlived its operational lifespan.
- India continues to support Antarctica as a **peaceful, demilitarised and environmentally protected global commons** under the Antarctic Treaty System.
- Antarctic engagement also enhances India's credibility as a **responsible scientific and environmental stakeholder**.

Way Forward:

From Science to Strategic Polar Policy:

- India must evolve from a **purely scientific Arctic presence** to a comprehensive strategy integrating **science, diplomacy, security, trade, climate and resources**.
- A **Polar Ambassador mechanism** should coordinate inter-ministerial efforts and international engagement.
- The **Polar Research Vessel** project must be fast-tracked with interim solutions to avoid capability gaps.
- Arctic funding and manpower should be significantly enhanced, with stronger integration of Arctic data into **monsoon forecasting and climate risk systems**.
- India should deepen cooperation with **Nordic countries, Russia, the United States, Japan, South Korea and Singapore**, while maintaining strategic autonomy.
- A coherent **Indian Arctic narrative** should emphasise science, sustainability, rules-based governance, climate justice and responsible engagement.
- India must also recognise that Arctic governance is primarily shaped by **sovereign Arctic States under international law**, requiring a balanced and realistic approach.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Key Concepts:

- **Arctic Council:** Intergovernmental forum of eight Arctic States with Observer countries like India.
- **Himadri:** India's Arctic research station in Svalbard (2008).
- **Svalbard Treaty (1920):** Grants equal access rights under Norwegian sovereignty.
- **Observer Status:** Allows participation but no voting rights.
- **Northern Sea Route:** Emerging Arctic shipping corridor along Russia.
- **Polar Research Vessel:** Essential ice-class ship for Arctic scientific operations.
- **Quasi-Global Commons:** Concept highlighting Arctic's global environmental significance.

Mains-Ready Conclusion:

India's Arctic engagement is transitioning from a **narrow scientific initiative to a multidimensional strategic necessity**. However, a clear gap persists between ambition and capability. Strengthening institutions, funding, infrastructure and diplomacy will enable India to convert its scientific credibility into **meaningful polar influence grounded in sustainability, strategic autonomy and global cooperation**.

Supreme Court Upholds Hanging as Constitutional Mode of Execution, Reopening Debate on Dignity, Science and Capital Punishment

Recent Developments:

- On **18 August 2026**, the **Supreme Court of India** dismissed a petition challenging the constitutional validity of hanging as the prescribed method of execution for death sentences under **Articles 14 and 21**.
- A Bench comprising **Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta** held that the material placed before it was insufficient to establish that hanging is inherently unconstitutional or that alternative methods such as lethal injection are demonstrably more humane.
- The Court reaffirmed the precedent laid down in **Deena v. Union of India (1983)**, which had upheld hanging as a constitutionally valid method of execution when carried out in accordance with prescribed safeguards.
- However, the Court clarified that its ruling does not create a permanent constitutional closure. It explicitly stated that **future scientific, medical, or empirical evidence** could justify reconsideration of the issue.
- Importantly, the Court observed that the **Union Government is free to constitute an expert committee** to examine whether alternative methods of execution may better align with constitutional requirements of dignity and minimal suffering.

Statutory Framework of Hanging in India:

Present Legal Position:

- Under **Section 393(5) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS)**, a death sentence is to be executed by directing that the convict be **“hanged by the neck till he is dead.”**
- This provision is a continuation of the earlier **Section 354(5) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973**, reflecting legislative continuity in India’s criminal justice system.
- Thus, hanging remains the **sole statutory method of execution for civilian death sentences** in India.
- In contrast, **military law** permits alternative methods such as shooting, but the Supreme Court has consistently held that this does not violate Article 14, as armed forces personnel constitute a distinct class governed by a separate legal regime.

Nature of the Method:

- Judicial hanging in India is generally based on the **long-drop technique**, where the drop length is calculated based on the convict’s body weight and physical characteristics.
- The intended physiological effect is rapid unconsciousness through fracture-dislocation of the cervical vertebrae, leading to swift death.
- However, the effectiveness of this method depends heavily on **precision in calculation and execution**, and any error may result in prolonged suffering.
- Therefore, the constitutional issue is not merely the fact of death, but whether the method involves **avoidable pain, cruelty, or degradation**, which would violate Article 21.

Constitutional and Legal Dimensions:

Article 21 and Human Dignity:

- **Article 21** guarantees that no person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to a procedure established by law.
- Over time, the Supreme Court has expanded this provision to include substantive guarantees of **fairness, reasonableness, and human dignity**.

- Even a person sentenced to death retains certain minimal constitutional protections, particularly the right to be treated in a manner consistent with dignity.
- In **Deena v. Union of India (1983)**, the Court held that hanging does not violate Article 21, provided it is carried out in a regulated and non-arbitrary manner, based on the scientific understanding available at that time.

Gian Kaur and the Right to Die:

- In **Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab (1996)**, a Constitution Bench held that the **right to life under Article 21 does not include a right to die**.
- However, the Court acknowledged that dignity is an essential component of life and death, particularly in cases involving terminal illness and end-of-life care.
- Importantly, this case does not extend to recognising a right to choose death, but it reinforces that **dignity remains relevant even in the context of death**.
- The present issue is distinct: whether the State's chosen method of execution satisfies constitutional standards of dignity.

Article 14 and Non-Arbitrariness:

- The challenge also invoked **Article 14**, arguing that hanging is arbitrary and discriminatory when compared to alternative methods like shooting used in military law.
- The Supreme Court rejected this argument, holding that **military personnel and civilians form separate and distinct classes**, and differential treatment in execution methods does not automatically amount to discrimination.
- The Court reiterated that Article 14 prohibits arbitrariness, not classification per se, and the existing statutory framework does not meet the threshold of arbitrariness.

Supreme Court Jurisprudence on Death Penalty:

Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980):

- This landmark judgment upheld the constitutional validity of the death penalty but introduced the **"rarest of rare" doctrine**.
- The Court held that **life imprisonment is the rule, and death penalty is an exception**, to be imposed only in extraordinary circumstances.
- Courts must consider both **aggravating and mitigating factors**, ensuring that sentencing is individualized and proportionate.
- The judgment is central to capital punishment jurisprudence as it introduces **judicial restraint and constitutional proportionality**.

Machhi Singh v. State of Punjab (1983):

- This case elaborated the principles laid down in Bachan Singh.
- It identified categories such as brutality, motive, and social impact of the crime as relevant factors in determining whether a case falls within the "rarest of rare" category.
- However, it reaffirmed that courts must still assess **individual circumstances, including the possibility of reform and rehabilitation**.

Deena v. Union of India (1983):

- The Court directly addressed the constitutionality of hanging under **Section 354(5) CrPC**.

- It held that hanging does not violate Article 21, based on the scientific and medical understanding available at the time.
- However, the Court also emphasised that the State cannot impose **cruel, degrading, or inhuman treatment**, even in execution of a lawful sentence.

The 2026 Supreme Court Decision:

Core Reasoning:

- The petition argued that hanging is outdated and violates constitutional guarantees of dignity, proposing lethal injection as a more humane alternative.
- The Court held that there is **no conclusive scientific evidence** demonstrating that lethal injection is less painful or more humane than hanging.
- It therefore found no basis to overturn the existing legal position or refer the matter to a larger Bench.
- The Court also rejected comparisons with military execution methods, reiterating the principle of **distinct legal classifications**.

Key Clarification:

- The Court did not declare hanging to be permanently valid in all circumstances.
- It explicitly acknowledged that **constitutional interpretation evolves with scientific and social developments**.
- If future evidence demonstrates that hanging causes unnecessary suffering or that alternatives are clearly superior, the issue may be reopened.

Law Commission and Alternative Methods:

187th Law Commission Report (2003):

- The Law Commission examined the method of execution rather than the existence of the death penalty itself.
- It recommended retaining hanging but introducing **lethal injection as an alternative option**.
- It also suggested procedural reforms, including giving convicts a right to be heard on the method of execution.
- Additionally, it recommended strengthening appellate safeguards in death penalty cases.

Legislative Position:

- Despite these recommendations, Parliament retained hanging in the **BNSS, 2023**.
- This reflects legislative continuity but also indicates that the issue remains open to **future reform based on constitutional and scientific developments**.

Key Concerns Surrounding Hanging:

Scientific Reliability:

- The effectiveness of hanging depends on precise calculation and execution.
- Errors can result in prolonged suffering, raising concerns under **Article 21's dignity requirement**.
- Since subjective experience cannot be directly measured, evaluation depends on **medical and forensic evidence**.

Human Dignity:

- Even condemned prisoners retain a minimal right to dignity.
- Execution must not amount to **torture, humiliation, or degrading treatment** beyond lawful punishment.
- This reflects the transformation of Article 21 into a **substantive right to dignity**.

Psychological Suffering:

- Death row prisoners often face prolonged mental anguish due to delays, uncertainty, and isolation.
- The Court has previously recognised that such conditions can themselves raise constitutional concerns.

Colonial Legacy:

- Hanging is a legacy of colonial criminal law.
- While historical origin alone does not make it unconstitutional, it raises questions about whether modern constitutional democracy should retain such practices without periodic review.

Alternatives:

- Alternatives such as **lethal injection, electrocution, gas chambers, and shooting** exist globally.
- However, each method must be evaluated on criteria of **pain, reliability, dignity, and risk of error**, rather than assumption of superiority.

Death Penalty as a Broader Constitutional Issue:***Irreversibility:***

- Capital punishment is irreversible, making wrongful conviction a critical constitutional concern.
- Once executed, judicial errors cannot be corrected, increasing the need for **stringent procedural safeguards**.

Arbitrariness:

- Sentencing inconsistencies remain a concern due to subjective judicial interpretation of aggravating and mitigating factors.
- The “rarest of rare” doctrine attempts to reduce arbitrariness but does not eliminate it entirely.

Proportionality and Morality:

- The State must ensure that capital punishment satisfies **proportionality, fairness, and constitutional morality**.
- The debate involves balancing **retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, and human dignity**.

Global Perspective:

- Many countries have abolished the death penalty, reflecting a global shift toward **human rights-based criminal justice systems**.
- However, countries like **Japan and Singapore** still retain hanging or similar methods.
- India continues to retain capital punishment but applies it sparingly under the **rarest of rare doctrine**.

Way Forward:

- India should consider establishing an **independent expert commission** to evaluate execution methods using scientific and medical evidence.
- Execution protocols must be designed to ensure **minimum suffering and maximum procedural fairness**.
- Periodic review of capital punishment practices is necessary in light of **evolving constitutional morality and scientific advancements**.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on **wrongful conviction safeguards, appellate review, and mental health considerations** in death penalty cases.

Conclusion:

The Supreme Court's 2026 judgment reaffirms the constitutional validity of hanging but does not close the door on future reconsideration. The ruling reflects a careful balance between **legislative authority, judicial precedent, and evolving constitutional values**. Ultimately, the debate is not only about the method of execution but about the deeper constitutional question of whether the State can impose death in a manner fully consistent with **human dignity, fairness, and constitutional morality**.

Supreme Court Reviews Constitutional Status of Muslim Polygamy, Raising Questions on Equality, Personal Law and Uniform Civil Code

Recent Developments:

- The **Supreme Court of India** has sought the Union Government's response to a fresh petition challenging the constitutional validity of **polygamy among Muslims**, bringing the relationship between personal law, gender equality and fundamental rights back into constitutional scrutiny. A Bench comprising **Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V. Mohana** issued notice on 31 July 2026 and tagged the matter with pending cases concerning Muslim personal law.
- The petition seeks abolition of polygamy among Muslims, recognition of such marriages as **void from inception**, and uniform application of the criminal law relating to bigamy.
- The petition also seeks compulsory registration of **Muslim marriages and divorces**, linking registration with greater legal protection and accountability.
- The controversy involves the constitutional relationship between **Articles 14, 15, 21 and 25**, the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, and the State's power to undertake **social reform**.
- The issue is significant for **GS Paper II** because it brings together fundamental rights, personal laws, gender justice, religious freedom, judicial review and the debate surrounding **Article 44 and the Uniform Civil Code**.

Understanding Polygamy:

Meaning and Forms:

- **Polygamy** refers to a marital arrangement in which a person has more than one spouse simultaneously.
- **Polygyny** refers to one man having multiple wives, whereas **polyandry** refers to one woman having multiple husbands.

- **Bigamy** specifically refers to contracting another marriage while an earlier legally valid marriage is still subsisting, although its criminal liability depends upon whether the subsequent marriage is legally void under the applicable law.
- The distinction between **polygamy and bigamy** is important because polygamy may be permitted under a personal law, whereas bigamy generally describes a second marriage prohibited by the applicable marriage law.

Prevalence in India:

- **NFHS-5 (2019–21)** recorded multiple-spouse marriages among different religious communities, demonstrating that polygamy is not exclusively associated with one religious group. The reported proportion was approximately **2.1% among Christians, 1.9% among Muslims and 1.3% among Hindus** in the relevant NFHS measure.
- The available data also indicate that prevalence varies across **States, communities and tribal populations**, making regional and socio-economic context important when interpreting the phenomenon.
- Therefore, constitutional policy should distinguish between the **legal status of a practice** and its actual prevalence in society.

Historical and Socio-Cultural Context:

Economic Factors:

- In traditional agrarian societies, larger households could sometimes provide additional labour for **agriculture, livestock management and domestic work**.
- Such economic arrangements were historically influenced by local production systems and cannot automatically justify continuation of the practice under contemporary constitutional standards.

Patriarchal and Lineage Considerations:

- **Patriarchal social structures**, preference for male heirs and concerns regarding continuation of family lineage historically contributed to plural marriages in some communities.
- In certain societies, infertility or absence of male children could become a social reason for subsequent marriage.

Religious and Customary Traditions:

- Personal laws and customary practices have historically regulated marriage and family relations among different communities.
- However, the mere existence of a practice within personal law does not necessarily establish that it constitutes an **essential religious practice** protected absolutely by Article 25.

Social Protection:

- In some historical societies, subsequent marriages were also associated with **economic security and social protection** for widows or vulnerable women.
- Such historical explanations must nevertheless be assessed against contemporary standards of **gender equality, autonomy and dignity**.

Constitutional Framework:

Article 14 — Equality Before Law:

- **Article 14** guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.
- A constitutional challenge to polygamy can therefore examine whether permitting one religious community to contract plural marriages while prohibiting the practice for others creates an **arbitrary or constitutionally impermissible classification**.
- The crucial question is whether differential treatment is supported by a constitutionally legitimate basis and whether it satisfies the applicable equality test.

Article 15 — Non-Discrimination:

- **Article 15** prohibits discrimination by the State on specified grounds, including sex and religion.
- A gender-justice challenge may argue that a legal regime permitting men to have multiple wives while not providing equivalent marital autonomy to women creates **sex-based inequality**.
- The relationship between personal law and Article 15 remains an important constitutional question because the jurisprudence concerning direct application of fundamental rights to uncodified personal law has historically been complex.

Article 21 — Dignity and Personal Autonomy:

- **Article 21** protects life and personal liberty and has been interpreted to encompass **human dignity, decisional autonomy and personal liberty**.
- Critics of polygamy argue that unequal marital arrangements can adversely affect women's **dignity, security, autonomy and family life**.
- The constitutional assessment therefore extends beyond the formal validity of marriage to its impact upon the rights and substantive equality of affected individuals.

Article 25 — Freedom of Religion:

- **Article 25** guarantees freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion, subject to **public order, morality, health and other provisions of Part III**.
- Article 25 also expressly permits the State to enact laws for **social welfare and reform**.
- Therefore, even where a practice has a religious or customary association, its constitutional protection is not absolute.
- The central question is whether polygamy constitutes an **essential religious practice** or merely a practice permitted within a particular personal-law framework.

Article 44 — Uniform Civil Code:

- **Article 44**, a Directive Principle of State Policy, directs the State to endeavour to secure a **Uniform Civil Code for citizens throughout India**.
- The polygamy debate directly intersects with this provision because a common marriage law could establish uniform rules concerning **monogamy, marriage registration, divorce and succession**.
- However, Article 44 is a **Directive Principle**, not an independently enforceable fundamental right, and its implementation must therefore be reconciled with fundamental rights and constitutional pluralism.

Existing Legal Framework:

Hindu Marriage Act, 1955:

- The **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955** establishes monogamy as a condition of a valid Hindu marriage.
- Section 17 makes a subsequent marriage during the subsistence of a valid earlier marriage subject to the criminal-law consequences relating to bigamy.
- The Act applies to **Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs** within its statutory scope.

Special Marriage Act, 1954:

- The **Special Marriage Act, 1954** provides a secular statutory framework for civil marriage irrespective of religious identity.
- Its conditions of marriage require that neither party have a living spouse, thereby establishing **monogamy** for marriages solemnised under the Act.

Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936:

- The **Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936** expressly penalises a Parsi who contracts another marriage during the lifetime of a spouse without lawful divorce, nullity or dissolution.

Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872:

- The statutory framework governing Christian marriages contains safeguards against solemnising a marriage where an existing marriage creates a legal impediment.
- Consequently, **monogamy is the general statutory norm** under the principal central marriage laws.

Bigamy Under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita:

Section 82 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:

- **Section 82 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023** criminalises marrying again during the lifetime of a husband or wife where the subsequent marriage is legally void because of the subsisting earlier marriage.
- The ordinary punishment under Section 82(1) is **imprisonment up to 7 years and fine**.
- Section 82(2) provides **imprisonment up to 10 years and fine** where the former marriage is concealed from the person with whom the subsequent marriage is contracted.
- Importantly, Section 82 does not independently make every second marriage criminal; the subsequent marriage must first be **void under the applicable marriage law**.
- This legal structure is central to the present controversy because Muslim Personal Law has historically recognised a Muslim man's capacity to contract multiple marriages, meaning the statutory ingredients of bigamy may not ordinarily be satisfied in such cases.

Muslim Personal Law:

- The **Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937** provides for the application of Muslim personal law to specified matters, including marriage and related family-law questions.
- Muslim personal law has historically permitted a Muslim man to have **up to four wives**, subject to the principles recognised within Islamic jurisprudence.
- However, permissibility under personal law does not by itself establish that the practice is an **essential religious practice protected by Article 25**.

- The Supreme Court has previously recognised that a practice being permitted by religious law does not necessarily make it constitutionally immune from regulation or social-reform legislation.

State-Level Developments:

Uttarakhand:

- The **Uniform Civil Code, Uttarakhand, 2024** establishes a common statutory framework concerning marriage and related civil matters and prohibits plural marriage within its applicable scope.
- The Code expressly excludes **Scheduled Tribes** and persons or groups whose customary rights are protected under Part XXI of the Constitution.
- Uttarakhand therefore represents an important contemporary example of **state-level experimentation with uniform family-law regulation**.

Assam:

- Assam has pursued legislative measures aimed at prohibiting polygamy, reflecting the State's stated objective of addressing plural marriage through statutory regulation.
- The proposed framework envisages stringent punishment, including imprisonment of up to **7 years**, with enhanced punishment in cases involving concealment of a previous marriage.
- The interaction between such legislation, **tribal customary practices and constitutional protections** remains an important federal and constitutional issue.

Goa:

- **Goa** has historically followed a relatively uniform civil-law framework derived from its Portuguese-era civil code.
- The Goan civil-law system has nevertheless contained historical exceptions and community-specific provisions, demonstrating that a common civil code does not automatically mean complete uniformity in every substantive rule.
- The Goa experience is therefore relevant to the UCC debate but should not be treated as a perfect model of complete legal uniformity.

Supreme Court Jurisprudence:

Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India, 1995:

- In **Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India, 1995**, the Supreme Court held that a Hindu husband cannot convert to Islam merely to contract another marriage while the first marriage remains legally valid.
- Such conversion does not automatically dissolve the existing Hindu marriage, and the subsequent marriage can attract criminal liability for bigamy.
- The judgment therefore prevents **religious conversion from being used as a device to circumvent an existing marriage law**.

Lily Thomas v. Union of India, 2000:

- In **Lily Thomas v. Union of India, 2000**, the Supreme Court reaffirmed the principle that a fraudulent conversion cannot be used to defeat the legal consequences of an existing marriage.
- The judgment reinforced the distinction between **genuine religious conversion and conversion undertaken merely to evade matrimonial obligations**.

Khursheed Ahmad Khan v. State of Uttar Pradesh, 2015:

- In **Khursheed Ahmad Khan v. State of Uttar Pradesh, 2015**, the Supreme Court observed that Muslim law permits plurality of marriages but also recognised that the practice may be **regulated by law** in appropriate circumstances.
- The judgment is particularly relevant because it indicates that permission under Muslim personal law does not necessarily prevent statutory regulation.

Abdul Khader v. K. Pechiammal, 2015:

- The Madras High Court observed that the Muslim personal law provision permitting multiple marriages does not make polygamy a mandatory religious obligation.
- It emphasised that a practice merely being **permitted by religion does not automatically become an essential religious practice** protected from social-welfare legislation.

Current Constitutional Questions:***Equality versus Personal Law:***

- The central constitutional tension lies between **individual equality and religiously differentiated personal laws**.
- A prohibition on polygamy could be defended as a measure promoting **gender justice and substantive equality**, while opponents may argue that reform must respect religious freedom and constitutional pluralism.
- The Court must therefore determine the appropriate constitutional standard for reviewing personal-law practices.

Essential Religious Practice Doctrine:

- The **Essential Religious Practices doctrine** asks whether a particular practice is fundamental or essential to the religion concerned.
- If a practice is not essential, its regulation may be easier to justify through laws concerning **social welfare, reform, morality and public order**.
- The doctrine itself remains controversial because courts may be required to determine questions involving religious doctrine and practice.

Gender Justice:

- Critics argue that polygyny creates an **asymmetrical marital structure** because Muslim men may contract multiple marriages while Muslim women do not enjoy a corresponding right to multiple husbands.
- The debate consequently concerns **substantive equality**, rather than merely formal equality between religious communities.
- A gender-justice approach must also consider economic dependency, maintenance, inheritance, child welfare and access to effective legal remedies.

Personal Autonomy:

- A constitutional evaluation must balance women's protection against exploitation with the broader principle of **individual autonomy in intimate and family relationships**.
- The State therefore needs to demonstrate that restrictions are directed towards a legitimate constitutional objective and are appropriately designed to protect vulnerable persons.

Arguments in Favour of Prohibition:

Gender Equality:

- Prohibition can promote **equal marital status** by establishing a common monogamous standard for all citizens.
- It can reduce the structural inequality created when one gender is legally permitted a marital option unavailable to the other.

Protection of Women:

- Critics associate plural marriages with potential **emotional distress, economic insecurity, neglect and intra-family conflict**, particularly where household resources are limited.
- Regulation may strengthen women's bargaining power and legal protection within marriage.

Child Welfare:

- Multiple households can create challenges concerning **financial allocation, maintenance, inheritance and parental responsibilities**.
- A uniform framework could establish clearer legal duties towards spouses and children.

Constitutional Reform:

- Prohibition may be viewed as part of the broader constitutional project of **social reform and gender justice**.
- It could also advance the objective underlying **Article 44**, although Article 44 itself does not mandate immediate implementation of a UCC.

Arguments Requiring Caution:

Religious Freedom:

- A prohibition must be carefully designed so that it does not unnecessarily interfere with **freedom of conscience and religious practice**.
- Article 25 expressly permits reasonable regulation and social reform, but constitutional adjudication must still identify the precise scope of protected religious activity.

Tribal and Customary Rights:

- India contains diverse customary marriage practices among tribal communities.
- A uniform prohibition must account for **Fifth and Sixth Schedule contexts, customary law and Article 371-related protections** wherever applicable.

Legislative Competence:

- Marriage and divorce fall within **Concurrent List, Entry 5**, allowing both Parliament and State Legislatures to legislate subject to constitutional limitations and the rules governing repugnancy.
- State-level experiments therefore raise questions concerning **federalism, legislative competence and harmonisation of family laws**.

Implementation:

- Legal prohibition alone may not eliminate the social practice.
- Effective reform requires **marriage registration, legal awareness, accessible family courts, economic empowerment and effective enforcement mechanisms.**

Way Forward:***Evidence-Based Reform:***

- Parliament should consider comprehensive empirical evidence on the **prevalence, socio-economic consequences and gender impact** of polygamy before adopting nationwide reform.
- Policymaking should distinguish between isolated instances, customary practices and legally recognised plural marriage.

Strengthening Marriage Registration:

- **Compulsory registration of all marriages** can substantially improve legal certainty concerning marital status, maintenance, inheritance and matrimonial rights.
- Registration can also make fraudulent second marriages easier to detect and prosecute.

Gender-Sensitive Personal Law Reform:

- Reform should focus on **equality, dignity, autonomy and protection from exploitation** rather than targeting any religious community.
- Consultations with affected women, religious scholars, legal experts and civil-society organisations can improve legitimacy and implementation.

Balanced Constitutional Approach:

- The Supreme Court should reconcile **Articles 14, 15, 21 and 25** through a rights-based framework that protects both individual dignity and legitimate religious freedom.
- Any eventual prohibition should be supported by clear legislative standards, reasonable classification and effective safeguards against discriminatory enforcement.

Value Addition for UPSC:***Constitutional Provisions:***

- **Article 14:** Equality before law and equal protection of laws.
- **Article 15:** Prohibition of discrimination on specified grounds, including religion and sex.
- **Article 21:** Protection of life, personal liberty, dignity and decisional autonomy.
- **Article 25:** Freedom of conscience and freedom to profess, practise and propagate religion, subject to constitutional limitations.
- **Article 44:** Directive to endeavour to secure a **Uniform Civil Code.**
- **Concurrent List, Entry 5:** Marriage and divorce fall within the concurrent legislative domain.

Important Cases:

- **Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India, 1995:** Conversion cannot be used to circumvent an existing marriage and contract another valid marriage.
- **Lily Thomas v. Union of India, 2000:** Fraudulent conversion does not dissolve an existing marriage or immunise a subsequent marriage from bigamy law.
- **Khursheed Ahmad Khan v. State of Uttar Pradesh, 2015:** Muslim law permits plurality of marriages, but such practices may be regulated by law.
- **Abdul Khader v. K. Pechiammal, 2015:** A practice merely permitted by religion does not automatically become an essential religious practice.

Contemporary Judicial Context:

- The **2026 Supreme Court proceedings** are significant because the Court is examining the interaction between Muslim personal law, constitutional equality and the criminal-law framework governing bigamy.
- A related constitutional challenge concerning the **Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937** is also pending before the Supreme Court, involving questions under **Articles 13, 14, 15 and 21**.
- The **2026 Madhya Pradesh High Court decision** illustrates the continuing importance of the distinction between a second marriage that is legally void and a plural marriage recognised under the applicable personal law.

BRICS Environment Ministers Challenge EU Carbon Border Measures, Highlighting Climate Finance, Trade Justice and Global South Concerns

Recent Developments:

- On **18 August 2026**, the **12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting** was held in New Delhi under India's 2026 BRICS Chairship, with Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change **Bhupender Yadav** leading the meeting. The meeting adopted a **Joint Ministerial Statement** and outcome documents focused on climate action, sustainability, knowledge sharing and environmental cooperation.
- BRICS Environment Ministers described the **European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** as a **unilateral, punitive, discriminatory and protectionist trade measure**, arguing that carbon-linked border measures can disproportionately affect developing economies.
- The BRICS position reflects a wider **Global South concern** that climate policies adopted by advanced economies should not become disguised restrictions on international trade or shift the burden of decarbonisation onto developing countries.
- The ministers also called for enhanced **climate finance for developing countries**, including greater support for adaptation through **grants and concessional finance**.
- The issue is particularly significant for India because **steel and other carbon-intensive industries** face increased compliance and competitiveness pressures in the European market after the CBAM entered its definitive phase in 2026.

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism:

Meaning and Objective:

- The **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** is an **European Union climate policy instrument** designed to place a carbon-related cost on certain carbon-intensive goods imported into the EU.
- Its stated objective is to prevent **carbon leakage**, under which production may shift from jurisdictions with stringent climate regulations to jurisdictions with relatively weaker carbon constraints.
- CBAM attempts to ensure that imported products bear a carbon cost broadly comparable to that faced by EU producers under the **EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS)**.
- The EU therefore presents CBAM as a climate measure intended to maintain the competitiveness of cleaner European production and encourage **decarbonisation of global supply chains**.

Sectors Covered:

- The definitive CBAM regime currently covers six major sectors: **cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen**.
- These sectors were selected because their production involves significant greenhouse-gas emissions and they face comparatively high risks of **carbon leakage**.
- The mechanism therefore has direct relevance for India's **iron and steel, aluminium and fertiliser industries**, particularly firms integrated into EU supply chains.

Implementation Timeline:

- The **transitional phase** operated from **1 October 2023 to 31 December 2025**, during which importers primarily had to report embedded emissions without purchasing and surrendering CBAM certificates.
- The **definitive regime began on 1 January 2026**, making CBAM a substantive carbon-cost mechanism rather than merely a reporting system.
- Under the definitive regime, authorised importers declare embedded emissions and surrender the corresponding **CBAM certificates**.
- The certificate price is linked to the price of allowances under the **EU ETS**, thereby connecting the carbon cost of imported products with the EU's domestic carbon-pricing framework.
- Importers can deduct an amount corresponding to a **carbon price already paid in the country of production**, subject to the applicable CBAM rules.

Why CBAM Matters for India:

Export Competitiveness:

- India is a major exporter of **iron and steel products** to the European Union, making the sector particularly exposed to CBAM-related compliance costs.
- India's steel production generally has a **higher carbon intensity** than comparable EU production, partly because of the country's greater dependence on coal-intensive production routes.
- Consequently, Indian exporters with higher embedded emissions can face a larger carbon-related cost when accessing the EU market.

Evidence from Indian Steel Exports:

- A **June 2026 study in Nature Climate Change** examined firm-level Indian steel exports during the CBAM reporting phase and found that high-emission firms experienced significant declines in EU-bound export quantities and revenues, while relatively low-emission firms maintained their export levels.

- The study found that high-emission firms experienced approximately **5% additional declines in monthly export quantities and 9% declines in monthly revenues** relative to lower-emission firms during the reporting period.
- The findings indicate that CBAM may not simply reduce India's aggregate exports but may **reallocate EU-bound trade from more carbon-intensive producers towards relatively cleaner producers**.
- This creates both a challenge and an opportunity for India: inefficient producers may lose competitiveness, while firms investing in **green steel, renewable electricity and low-carbon production technologies** may gain market access advantages.

BRICS Position on CBAM:

Trade and Climate Justice:

- BRICS countries have objected to CBAM because they view unilateral carbon-linked trade measures as potentially creating **new barriers to international trade**.
- Developing economies argue that climate responsibility should not be transformed into unilateral trade restrictions imposed by advanced economies.
- The dispute reflects a broader tension between **environmental protection and the principle of non-discriminatory international trade**.
- BRICS' position is therefore connected with the principle of **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)** under the international climate regime.

WTO Concerns:

- CBAM raises questions regarding compatibility between **climate policy and World Trade Organization principles**, particularly non-discrimination and the treatment of imported and domestic products.
- The EU argues that CBAM is designed to establish equivalent carbon costs rather than discriminate against foreign producers.
- Developing countries, however, can contend that differences in historical emissions, development levels, production technologies and access to climate finance make a uniform carbon-related border measure potentially inequitable.
- The issue demonstrates the increasing overlap between **trade policy and climate policy**, sometimes described as the emergence of **green protectionism**.

Climate Finance and BRICS:

Adaptation Finance:

- BRICS has emphasised that developing countries require greater **climate finance** to implement mitigation and adaptation measures.
- **Adaptation finance** supports measures that enable societies and infrastructure to withstand climate impacts, including **climate-resilient infrastructure, disaster preparedness, water security and agricultural resilience**.
- BRICS has called for greater financial support for developing countries, including **grants and concessional finance**, which impose easier repayment conditions than conventional market-based loans.

Why Grants and Concessional Finance Matter:

- Developing countries often face **high debt burdens, limited fiscal space and high borrowing costs**, which restrict their ability to finance climate adaptation.

- Excessive dependence on loans can increase indebtedness while climate-related disasters simultaneously reduce fiscal capacity.
- **Grant-based and highly concessional climate finance** can therefore reduce the risk of creating additional debt burdens for vulnerable developing economies.
- This position is consistent with the broader developing-country demand for **accessible, predictable, adequate and affordable climate finance**.

CBAM and the Principle of Equity:

Historical Responsibility:

- Developed countries have historically contributed a disproportionately large share of accumulated greenhouse-gas emissions, while developing countries continue to face significant development and poverty-reduction requirements.
- Developing countries therefore argue that climate policy should recognise **historical responsibility and differentiated capabilities**.
- India has consistently emphasised that climate action must preserve the **developmental space** of developing countries.

Technology and Green Transition:

- CBAM can nevertheless create incentives for Indian industries to accelerate **industrial decarbonisation**.
- Cleaner production technologies can reduce both domestic emissions and the carbon cost associated with exports to the EU.
- The transition requires access to **green technologies, affordable finance, renewable energy, carbon accounting systems and skilled manpower**.
- Thus, the appropriate Indian response should combine diplomatic engagement with accelerated domestic industrial transformation.

India's Response and Policy Options:

Domestic Decarbonisation:

- India should accelerate the transition towards **low-carbon industrial production**, particularly in steel, aluminium, cement and fertiliser manufacturing.
- Expansion of renewable electricity, energy efficiency, green hydrogen and low-carbon production technologies can reduce the emissions intensity of Indian exports.
- The **National Green Hydrogen Mission** can contribute to decarbonising hard-to-abate sectors, particularly where hydrogen can substitute for fossil-fuel-intensive industrial processes.

Carbon Accounting:

- Indian exporters require reliable systems for measuring, reporting and verifying **embedded carbon emissions**.
- Strengthening domestic **Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV)** systems can improve the credibility of Indian emissions data before international regulators.
- Accurate emissions accounting can also prevent Indian firms from being disadvantaged by the use of conservative default emissions values.

Diplomatic Engagement:

- India should continue engaging with the EU to seek **transparent methodologies, recognition of domestic carbon-reduction efforts and avoidance of double carbon pricing.**
- BRICS can provide a platform for coordinating developing-country positions on **carbon border measures, climate finance and technology transfer.**
- India should simultaneously engage through the **WTO and UN climate framework** to ensure that climate-related trade measures remain consistent with multilateral principles.

Broader Significance for Global Climate Governance:

From Climate Cooperation to Climate-Linked Trade:

- CBAM demonstrates that climate policy is increasingly influencing **international trade, industrial competitiveness and global supply chains.**
- Countries can no longer treat climate negotiations and trade negotiations as completely separate policy domains.
- Carbon intensity is gradually becoming a factor in determining **market access and export competitiveness.**

Green Protectionism versus Genuine Decarbonisation:

- A major policy challenge is distinguishing between legitimate environmental regulation and **green protectionism.**
- Climate measures should ideally reduce global emissions rather than merely shift production and trade patterns.
- Effective global climate governance therefore requires **transparency, equity, technology transfer, adequate finance and multilateral consultation.**

BRICS as a Global South Platform:

- BRICS provides an important platform for developing and emerging economies to coordinate positions on **climate finance, sustainable development and global economic governance.**
- The grouping currently comprises **11 members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Iran and Indonesia.**
- Indonesia became a full BRICS member in **2025**, completing the latest major expansion of the grouping.
- The expanded membership strengthens BRICS' representation across **Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America**, thereby increasing its potential role in articulating Global South positions.

Way Forward:

For India:

- India should pursue a **dual strategy of negotiation and decarbonisation**, challenging discriminatory trade barriers while simultaneously improving the carbon efficiency of domestic industries.
- The government should support vulnerable exporters through **green finance, technological modernisation, renewable-energy access and carbon-accounting capacity.**
- Indian industries should treat CBAM not merely as a trade barrier but also as a signal of the emerging global shift towards **carbon-conscious production and trade.**

For BRICS:

- BRICS should develop common technical positions on **carbon accounting, carbon border measures and climate finance** while avoiding fragmentation of the global climate regime.
- The grouping can promote cooperation in **green technologies, renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure and sustainable industrialisation**.
- BRICS should advocate greater availability of **grant-based and concessional climate finance** for developing countries while strengthening cooperation with multilateral institutions.

For the Global Climate Regime:

- Climate-linked trade measures should remain consistent with **multilateralism, transparency, equity and international trade rules**.
- Developed countries should complement climate-related trade policies with greater **finance, technology transfer and capacity building** for developing countries.
- Climate policy should ultimately encourage **global emissions reduction**, rather than transferring production, emissions and economic burdens from one jurisdiction to another.

Value Addition for UPSC:***Key Concepts:***

- **Carbon Leakage:** The relocation of carbon-intensive production to jurisdictions with weaker climate regulations, potentially increasing global emissions.
- **Carbon Pricing:** Assigning an economic cost to greenhouse-gas emissions to encourage producers and consumers to reduce emissions.
- **CBAM:** A border mechanism through which the EU imposes a carbon-related cost on selected carbon-intensive imports.
- **Climate Adaptation:** Measures that reduce vulnerability and improve resilience to actual or expected climate impacts.
- **Concessional Finance:** Financing provided on terms more favourable than ordinary market-based lending, such as lower interest rates or longer repayment periods.
- **Green Protectionism:** The use of environmental objectives or standards in ways that may function as discriminatory barriers against foreign producers.

Important Facts:

- **CBAM definitive regime:** Began on **1 January 2026**.
- **CBAM sectors:** Cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen.
- **Transitional phase:** October 2023–December 2025.
- **12th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting:** New Delhi, **18 August 2026**.
- **Nature Climate Change finding:** High-emission Indian steel exporters experienced significantly greater declines in EU-bound quantities and revenues than lower-emission firms during the CBAM reporting phase.
- **BRICS membership:** **11 countries**, representing a major grouping of emerging and developing economies.

India's Coconut Sector: From Traditional Plantation Agriculture to High-Value, Export-Oriented and Climate-Resilient Growth

Recent Developments:

- The **Union Budget 2026–27** announced a **Coconut Promotion Scheme** to raise coconut production and productivity, particularly through replacement of old and non-productive palms with improved planting material. The initiative forms part of a broader **₹350 crore allocation for high-value agriculture**, covering coconut, cashew and cocoa.
- According to a **19 April 2026 PIB backgrounder**, India ranked **second globally in coconut production according to FAOSTAT 2024**, while the sector supported the livelihoods of around **30 million people, including nearly 10 million farmers**.
- Government data indicate strong regional specialisation: **Kerala has the largest area under coconut cultivation, Tamil Nadu leads in production**, while **Andhra Pradesh records the highest productivity**, followed by West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.
- Coconut exports have increasingly moved beyond traditional copra and coconut oil towards **value-added products**, creating opportunities for higher farmer incomes and export diversification.
- The sector is therefore shifting from a predominantly **traditional plantation activity towards an integrated horticultural, processing and export-oriented value chain**.

Coconut: Basic Characteristics and Geographical Requirements:

Botanical Features:

- Coconut is scientifically known as **Cocos nucifera** and belongs to the family **Arecaceae**, making it a **monocotyledonous palm** and an important perennial plantation crop.
- It is popularly called "**Kalpavriksha**" or "**Tree of Life**" because its fruit, husk, shell, leaves, wood and other components have diverse food, industrial and household applications.
- Coconut is generally associated with the **Indo-Pacific region**, with Southeast Asia considered an important centre of its origin and diversification.

Climatic and Soil Requirements:

- Coconut requires a **warm, humid tropical climate**, with optimal growth generally occurring around **25°C–30°C** and adequate moisture throughout the year.
- The crop performs well under **well-distributed rainfall**, although irrigation becomes important where rainfall is inadequate or seasonally concentrated.
- Coconut grows effectively in **well-drained sandy loam, alluvial, lateritic and coastal soils**, making it particularly suited to tropical coastal landscapes.
- Its extensive root system and perennial nature also make **soil moisture management, drainage and salinity management** important for sustained productivity.

Economic and Livelihood Significance:

Production and Regional Importance:

- India has a major position in the global coconut economy, although the precise international ranking varies according to the **dataset and reference year**.
- A recent PIB backgrounder citing **FAOSTAT 2024** places India **second globally in coconut production and third in global cultivation area**, demonstrating high productivity relative to its cultivated area.

- A separate March 2026 Government release reported India as the **world's largest producer**, contributing **30.37% of global production**, illustrating why the source and statistical year should be mentioned when quoting India's global ranking.
- India produced around **21.3 billion coconuts annually** according to recent Government data, highlighting the scale of the sector.
- Coconut cultivation is concentrated particularly in **Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh**, while other coastal and tropical states also contribute significantly.

Livelihood and Value-Chain Importance:

- The coconut sector supports around **30 million livelihoods**, including approximately **10 million farmers**, making it important for rural employment and income security.
- Coconut generates value through **tender coconut, copra, coconut oil, coconut water, desiccated coconut, coconut milk, coconut flour, coir, shell-based products and activated carbon**.
- The crop therefore has significant potential for **farm-level processing, rural entrepreneurship, women's employment and agro-processing-based income diversification**.
- Coconut cultivation can also support **intercropping and multi-tier farming systems**, allowing farmers to generate additional income from the same land.

Export and Value-Addition Potential:

From Raw Commodity to Processed Products:

- India's coconut economy has considerable potential to move from commodity exports towards **high-value processed and branded products**.
- Products such as **virgin coconut oil, coconut milk, coconut water, desiccated coconut, coconut flour, coir products and activated carbon** can generate higher value than raw nuts.
- Processing can reduce post-harvest losses, stabilise farmer incomes and increase the share of the final consumer price retained within the domestic value chain.
- Government data indicate that Indian coconut exports already have a significant international market, with exports valued at around **US\$513 million in 2024–25**.

Export Competitiveness:

- India can strengthen its position in global markets through **quality certification, traceability, branding, packaging and diversification of export destinations**.
- Compliance with international **food-safety, phytosanitary and residue standards** is essential for expanding high-value exports.
- Greater processing capacity can enable India to compete in premium segments rather than relying predominantly on bulk commodity exports.

Government Initiatives:

Coconut Promotion Scheme:

- The **Coconut Promotion Scheme**, announced in **Union Budget 2026–27**, seeks to increase coconut production and productivity through interventions such as replacing old and unproductive palms with improved planting material.
- The scheme is particularly relevant because **ageing plantations** can reduce productivity and make farmers more vulnerable to pests, diseases and climate variability.

Coconut Development Board:

- The **Coconut Development Board**, established in **1981** under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, provides institutional support for the integrated development of coconut cultivation and related industries.
- Its interventions cover areas such as **production, productivity improvement, planting material, processing, marketing, farmer training and technological development.**

Quality Planting Material:

- The Government supports the establishment of **coconut seed gardens and nurseries** to improve the availability of genuine and high-quality planting material.
- **Nursery accreditation and rating** can help farmers distinguish reliable planting material from inferior or unverified sources.
- Improved varieties developed by **ICAR–Central Plantation Crops Research Institute** include high-yielding, stress-tolerant and disease-tolerant cultivars suited to different agro-ecological conditions.

Minimum Support Price:

- **Copra**, the dried kernel of coconut, is among the **22 mandated agricultural crops** covered under the Minimum Support Price framework.
- MSP support can provide a degree of price protection to coconut farmers during periods of market volatility.

Major Challenges:***Production and Plantation Constraints:***

- **Ageing and declining plantations** reduce productivity and require systematic rejuvenation and replanting.
- **Root wilt disease, pests and other diseases** can substantially affect palm health and farmer incomes.
- Coconut cultivation remains relatively **labour-intensive**, while mechanisation is constrained by plantation structure, terrain and small landholdings.
- Climate variability, including **drought, excessive rainfall, cyclones, salinity and changing temperature patterns**, can affect productivity and plantation health.

Market and Value-Chain Constraints:

- Farmers remain vulnerable to **price fluctuations** because coconut products are influenced by domestic demand, international prices and competition from other vegetable oils.
- Limited local processing capacity can force farmers to sell relatively low-value raw products rather than processed commodities.
- Weak **post-harvest infrastructure, cold-chain facilities, storage, grading and packaging** can restrict value realisation.
- Small and fragmented holdings can limit farmers' ability to make independent investments in mechanisation and processing.

Way Forward:***Productivity and Climate Resilience:***

- India should accelerate the adoption of **high-yielding, disease-resistant and climate-resilient planting material** developed through agricultural research.

- Systematic **rejuvenation and replanting of ageing plantations** should be integrated with extension services and accessible institutional finance.
- **Integrated pest and disease management** should combine surveillance, resistant varieties, biological methods and improved plantation practices.
- Water-efficient irrigation, soil-moisture conservation and appropriate drainage should be promoted to improve **climate resilience**.

Diversified Farming:

- Coconut farmers should be encouraged to adopt **multi-tier and integrated farming systems** involving compatible intercroops and livestock components.
- Such systems can increase **income per unit of land**, reduce dependence on a single commodity and improve resource-use efficiency.
- Coconut-based agroforestry can also contribute to **soil conservation, biodiversity and microclimatic regulation** when appropriately designed.

Processing and Rural Industrialisation:

- Greater emphasis should be placed on **farm-gate processing, producer organisations, cooperatives and rural micro-enterprises**.
- Coconut-producing regions can develop integrated **coconut value chains** covering harvesting, processing, packaging, branding and marketing.
- The **One District One Product** approach and food-processing initiatives can be leveraged to build region-specific coconut brands and enterprises.

Export Strategy:

- India should move towards **premium, processed and branded coconut products** rather than relying mainly on raw commodity exports.
- Export competitiveness should be strengthened through **quality standards, traceability, certification, branding and market diversification**.
- Greater emphasis on research, product innovation and international consumer preferences can help Indian producers enter higher-value markets.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Best Institute for OAS/IAS

Key Concepts:

- **Kalpavriksha:** Traditional description of coconut reflecting its multipurpose economic and cultural utility.
- **Plantation Crop:** A perennial commercial crop cultivated systematically over relatively large areas for sustained economic returns.
- **Value Addition:** Increasing the economic value of an agricultural commodity through processing, packaging, branding or transformation into higher-value products.
- **Integrated Farming System:** Combining crops, livestock, horticulture or other compatible activities to improve farm-resource utilisation and income.
- **Agro-processing:** Conversion of agricultural commodities into processed or semi-processed products with greater economic value.
- **Climate-Resilient Agriculture:** Agricultural practices and technologies designed to maintain productivity while reducing vulnerability to climate variability and extreme events.

Important Facts:

- **Coconut scientific name:** *Cocos nucifera*.
- **Family:** Arecaceae.
- **Plant type:** Perennial monocotyledonous palm.
- **Major producing regions:** Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Livelihood dependence:** Around **30 million people**, including nearly **10 million farmers**.
- **Global ranking:** **Second in production according to FAOSTAT 2024**, as cited by PIB.
- **Coconut Promotion Scheme:** Announced in **Union Budget 2026–27**.
- **Coconut Development Board:** Established in **1981**.
- **World Coconut Day:** Observed annually on **2 September** to commemorate the establishment of the **Asian and Pacific Coconut Community**. India is a founding member of the organisation.



QUESTIONS

1. With reference to India's engagement in the Arctic region, consider the following statements:

- (1) India was among the original signatories of the 1920 Svalbard Treaty as part of the British Dominion.
- (2) India maintains a permanent scientific presence in the Arctic through its 'Himadri' research station situated in Ny-Ålesund.
- (3) India is currently the only developing nation to possess a permanent research station in the Arctic region.
- (4) The Svalbard Treaty entitles signatory nations to undertake commercial activities and permits visa-free entry to the Svalbard archipelago.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

2. Consider the following statements -

Statement 1: Providing shooting as a mode of execution under military law while retaining hanging exclusively for civilians under Section 393(5) of the BNSS does not violate Article 14 of the Constitution.

Statement 2: The fundamental right to equality under Article 14 permits reasonable classification based on intelligible differentia, and armed forces personnel constitute a distinct class governed by a separate legal regime.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (A) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct and Statement 2 is the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (B) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct but Statement 2 is not the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (C) Statement 1 is correct but Statement 2 is incorrect.
- (D) Statement 1 is incorrect but Statement 2 is correct.

3. Consider the following constitutional provisions and statutory frameworks:

- (1) Article 14 (Equality before law)
- (2) Article 15 (Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex or religion)
- (3) Article 21 (Right to life, personal liberty, and human dignity)
- (4) Article 25 (Freedom of conscience and fundamental right to practice religion)
- (5) Article 44 (Directive Principle regarding Uniform Civil Code)

How many of the above constitutional provisions are directly engaged when auditing the legal validity of religiously differentiated personal laws permitting polygamy?

- (A) Only two

- (B) Only three
- (C) Only four
- (D) All five

4. Consider the following statements:

Statement 1: Developing economies strongly advocate for grant-based and highly concessional climate adaptation finance rather than market-rate loans from developed countries.

Statement 2: Excessive reliance on debt-creating climate finance increases the fiscal vulnerability of developing nations, particularly when climate disasters simultaneously impair their repayment capacity.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (A) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct and Statement 2 is the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (B) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct but Statement 2 is not the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (C) Statement 1 is correct but Statement 2 is incorrect.
- (D) Statement 1 is incorrect but Statement 2 is correct.

5. Consider the following soil types:

- (1) Sandy loam soil
- (2) Alluvial soil
- (3) Laterite soil
- (4) Coastal saline soil
- (5) Black cotton soil (Regur)

How many of the above soil types are well-suited for coconut cultivation under ideal tropical conditions?

- (A) Only two
- (B) Only three
- (C) Only four
- (D) All five

ANSWER KEY

1 – Answer (B), 2 – Answer (A), 3 – Answer (D), 4 – Answer (A), 5 – Answer (C)



OAS HUB

DAILY CHRONICLE CURRENT AFFAIRS

In today's fast-changing world, staying updated with current affairs is essential for both academic success and professional growth. Awareness of national and international events not only broadens general knowledge but also sharpens critical and analytical thinking skills. It enables individuals to form well-informed opinions, which are crucial for competitive examinations, group discussions, interviews, and impactful essay writing.

Being well-informed reflects adaptability, awareness, and intellectual curiosity—qualities that are highly valued in a competitive environment. A strong grasp of contemporary issues enhances confidence, widens perspective, and prepares individuals to tackle real-world challenges effectively, ultimately opening the door to better opportunities and long-term personal and career advancement.

-  oashub19  oashub19
 OASHUB22  oashub19@gmail.com
 M5/17, Acharya Vihar Bhubaneswar 751022