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BEST FOR UPSC | UP PCS EXAM

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1. SC on AI-Generated Precedents in Courts

- **Context:** The Supreme Court (SC) set aside an NCLT order that relied on fictitious, AI-generated case law, establishing a "zero-tolerance" policy against unverified AI precedents.
- **Key Observations:** The Bench (Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe) warned that AI "hallucinations" subvert the rule of law and contaminate the lifeblood of judicial determination. It compared fake AI material to an invisible, insidious catastrophe like the "release of methyl isocyanate in the province of law."
- **Human Oversight & Collaboration:** While acknowledging AI's role in improving efficiency amidst high workloads, the SC mandated that meaningful human oversight must remain integral at every stage. It called for deeper Bar-Bench collaboration.
- **Institutional Steps:** The SC urged the Bar Council of India (BCI) to frame norms and highlighted that the process has begun with the publication of the *Draft Regulations for Use of Artificial Intelligence in Courts, 2026* for public consultation.



- **Key Definition:** *AI Hallucination* refers to a phenomenon where an Artificial Intelligence model generates false, fabricated, or non-existent data/precedents while presenting them as factual reality.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 141:** Declarations of law by the SC are binding on all courts. Relying on fake AI precedents directly undermines this constitutional framework.
- **Article 21 (Right to Fair Trial):** Adjudication based on fabricated data violates the principles of natural justice and the right to a fair, untainted trial.
- **Advocates Act, 1961:** Section 49 empowers the BCI to frame rules on professional misconduct. Submitting unverified AI data constitutes a breach of professional ethics.

Conclusion As technology integrates into jurisprudence, maintaining the integrity of decision-making is paramount. AI must strictly serve as an efficiency aid, not a replacement for rigorous human legal research and verification.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Governance, Constitution, Polity (Judiciary, Judicial Accountability, and Rule of Law).
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology (Challenges and ethical implications of Artificial Intelligence).
- **Key Takeaway:** Balancing technological innovation with ethical safeguards in public institutions.

2. Govt Proposes Stricter Legal Framework for VPN Providers

- **Context:** The Central Government is developing an expansive legal framework to regulate Virtual Private Network (VPN) providers to address concerns over users bypassing state-enforced content and app blocks.
- **Key Requirements:** The upcoming framework is expected to mandate that offshore VPN operators establish physical local offices in India and appoint dedicated compliance officials to liaise with the government and address grievances.
- **Regulatory Background:** This initiative follows the 2022 directives issued by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), which required VPN service providers to log and store extensive user data, including names, IP addresses, and contact details.
- **Need for New Rules:** The shift to a stricter statutory framework stems from an implicit acknowledgement that the 2022 administrative directives did not yield fully satisfactory compliance, with several global service providers choosing to pull their physical servers out of India instead.
- **Core Definition:** A *Virtual Private Network (VPN)* is a digital service that encrypts internet traffic and masks a user's true IP



address by routing their connection through secure servers located elsewhere, thereby facilitating online anonymity and circumventing geographical content restrictions.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Section 69A empowers the Central Government to issue directives to block public access to online information in the interest of national sovereignty, integrity, defense, and public order. Section 70B designates CERT-In as the national nodal agency for cyber security incident response.
- **Article 19 of the Constitution:** Regulations on VPNs intersect with the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression (Article 19(1)(a)) and the right to practice any profession or business (Article 19(1)(g)), subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) and 19(6) such as state security and public order.
- **Right to Privacy (Article 21):** As held in the *K.S. Puttaswamy* judgment, privacy is a fundamental right. Data retention mandates for VPNs face scrutiny regarding the proportionality test—balancing state security interests against individual user privacy.

Conclusion While state regulation of VPNs aims to curb cyber threats, digital cross-border crime, and the circumvention of lawful blocking orders, the policy framework must balance legitimate national security imperatives with individual digital privacy and the ease of doing business for global technology firms in India. **UPSC Relevance**

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; regulatory bodies (CERT-In); judicial interpretations of fundamental rights (Articles 19 and 21).
- **GS Paper III:** Cyber security, internal security challenges, and the role of media and social networking sites in internet governance.

3. CAG Audit of Delhi Power Discoms: Addressing Regulatory Assets

- **Audit Order:** The Delhi government has mandated a comprehensive Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit of three major private power distribution companies (discoms)—BRPL, BYPL, and TPDDL—marking the first such financial scrutiny since the privatisation of the power sector in 2002.
- **Accumulated Liabilities:** The core trigger for the audit is the accumulation of approximately ₹38,500 crore in unrecovered "Regulatory Assets" (RAs) over more than a decade, creating massive latent financial liabilities in the sector.
- **Breakdown of Dues:** The pending RAs are distributed among the discoms, with BRPL holding ₹19,174 crore, BYPL holding ₹12,333 crore, and TPDDL holding ₹7,046 crore, exacerbated by a prolonged freeze on consumer tariff hikes.
- **Legal and Regulatory Context:** The order follows a directive from the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL), which instructed the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) to initiate the liquidation of these pending regulatory assets within a three-month timeframe.



- **Discom Position:** A spokesperson for the BSES discoms stated that the matter regarding a CAG audit of private utilities remains sub-judice before higher courts, questioning the immediate implementation of the government executive order.
- **Governance Objective:** The state administration cites public interest, seeking transparency, accountability, and proper public scrutiny regarding how public funds, equity participation, and subsidy supports have been managed by private utilities.

Key Definitions

- **Regulatory Assets (RAs):** Deferred expenditures or revenue shortfalls realized by discoms (e.g., due to shifting fuel costs) that are permitted by regulators to be recovered from consumers through future tariff adjustments rather than immediate hikes.
- **Discoms:** Power Distribution Companies responsible for buying electricity from generating plants and delivering it directly to end consumers.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Article 148 to 151:** Governs the appointment, duties, and powers of the CAG. While CAG primarily audits public accounts, Section 20 of the CAG (DPC) Act, 1971, allows auditing of non-government bodies under specific public interest conditions.
- **Electricity Act, 2003:** The statutory framework establishing state regulatory commissions (like DERC) and appellate tribunals (APTEL) to regulate tariffs and adjudicate sectoral disputes.

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II (Accountability and Governance, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies) and GS Paper III (Infrastructure: Energy, Public-Private Partnership).

Conclusion: This development underscores the complex governance challenges in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models within essential infrastructure sectors. Balancing consumer welfare via stable tariffs while maintaining the fiscal viability of private utilities requires robust, transparent regulatory mechanisms and definitive legal precedents on the jurisdictional boundaries of public auditors over private entities.

4. Central Licensing Ambit Expanded: Stem Cell and Gene Therapies

- **Regulatory Expansion:** The Union Health Ministry has amended the Drugs Rules, 1945, bringing stem cell-derived products, gene therapeutic products, and xenografts under the direct purview of the Centrally Licensed Approving Authority (CLAA) framework to enhance central oversight.
- **Objective of Amendment:** The shift aims to ensure stringent regulatory scrutiny, standardize patient safety, and streamline the approval mechanism, ultimately facilitating a more predictable and quicker adoption path for cutting-edge medical technologies.
- **Dual Oversight Model:** Under the parent Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, biological products like vaccines, large-volume parenterals, and recombinant DNA (r-DNA) medicines are managed under a joint central-state regulatory mechanism, which this amendment now expands.

- **Focus on Indigenization:** The policy intervention comes at a crucial juncture when several domestic biomedical companies are developing cost-effective, indigenous immunotherapy treatments like CAR-T cell therapy to counter expensive patented global variants.
- **Targeted Medical Applications:** The specialized therapies under oversight target complex, rapidly evolving clinical segments, including advanced blood cancer treatments, congenital genetic disorders, and specialized cardiac interventions using bio-engineered tissues.

Key Definitions

- **Stem Cell-Derived Products:** Therapeutic biological materials derived from undifferentiated human cells capable of self-renewal and differentiating into specialized cell types for tissue regeneration.
- **Gene Therapy:** A medical field focusing on the genetic modification of living cells to produce a therapeutic effect or treat disease by repairing or replacing defective genes.
- **Xenografts:** Biological tissues or organ transplants derived from a non-human animal source (such as porcine heart valves) utilized for surgical implantation into human recipients.
- **CAR-T Cell Therapy:** Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell therapy, a specialized immunotherapy where a patient's T-cells are genetically engineered to target and destroy specific cancer cells.



Statutory and Regulatory Framework

- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 & Drugs Rules, 1945:** The primary legislative framework regulating the import, manufacture, distribution, and sale of drugs and cosmetics in India.
- **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO):** Headed by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), it acts as the central hub of the CLAA framework to approve new drugs and clinical trials.
- **Constitutional Ambit:** Regulation of medical standards and drugs falls under the Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule, Entry 19), allowing both Central and State legislative interventions, though central licensing ensures uniform cross-border quality control.

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II (Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies; Government Policies and Interventions) and GS Paper III (Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications in Everyday Life, Biotechnology). **Conclusion:** Bringing advanced bio-therapeutics under centralized licensing bridges a critical regulatory gap in India's emerging deep-tech medical ecosystem. While central oversight mitigates safety risks and ethical concerns associated with genetic and cellular manipulation, the administrative machinery must ensure that enhanced scrutiny does not translate into bureaucratic bottlenecks, thereby balancing patient safety with clinical innovation.

5. Hasdeo Arand Environmental Clearance: Development vs. Conservation

- **Environmental Clearance:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has granted final Environmental Clearance (EC) for opencast coal mining in the Kente extension integrated coal block within Chhattisgarh's ecologically sensitive Hasdeo Arand forests.
- **Project Specifications:** Spanning over 1,760 hectares in Surguja district, the block features a projected annual production capacity of 9 million tonnes and was allocated to Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Ltd to fuel thermal power stations in Rajasthan.
- **Ecological Significance:** Often described as Central India's green lungs, the Hasdeo Arand region encompasses 1,502 square kilometers of contiguous Sal and teak forests, serving as a critical elephant corridor, habitat for nine Schedule-I wildlife species, and the primary catchment for the Hasdeo River, which feeds the Mahanadi.
- **Environmental Cost:** The project requires diverting 1,742.6 hectares of pristine forest land and felling approximately 4.48 lakh trees in a phased manner, directly bypassing a 2021 Wildlife Institute of India (WII) assessment that recommended declaring the area a "no-go zone" to prevent habitat fragmentation.
- **Socio-Economic Impact:** Local tribal communities have actively opposed the clearance due to large-scale deforestation; the project will displace 56 tribal families across multiple villages in Surguja's Udaipur tehsil, necessitating rehabilitation under state-approved relief frameworks.

Key Definitions

- **Environmental Clearance (EC):** A statutory mandate required from the central government under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, evaluating the ecological impact of industrial or infrastructure projects before execution.
- **Schedule-I Species:** Wildlife categories under the Wildlife (Protection) Act that are accorded the highest level of legal protection, carrying the most severe statutory penalties for hunting or habitat destruction.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Imposes a duty on every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023:** Regulates the diversion, de-reservation, or leasing of forest land for non-forest industrial purposes like mining.
- **Fifth Schedule of the Constitution:** Provides special protections to tribal lands; mining clearances in these scheduled areas heavily intersect with the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, regarding local Gram Sabha consultation.

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper III (Conservation, Environmental Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment, Energy Infrastructure) and GS Paper I (Geography: Resource Distribution).

Conclusion: The clearance of the Kente block highlights the structural governance dilemma of balancing core energy security with deep ecological preservation. Achieving sustainable development objectives requires rigorous compliance with institutional scientific assessments, transparent tribal rehabilitation, and the minimization of infrastructural fragmentation in biodiversity hotspots.

6. Trump's Quad Retreat: Opportunities for India, Japan, and Australia

- **US Strategic Shift:** The Trump administration's reluctance to convene a Quad summit, coupled with Washington's structural reversion from the Indo-Pacific Command back to a Pacific Command and a potential bilateral "G2" approach with China, has created deep strategic uncertainty across the region.
- **Middle-Power Leadership:** This apparent American retreat offers a critical window for the region's prominent middle powers—India, Japan, and Australia—to spearhead the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision, reducing collective dependence on external superpowers.
- **Japan's Evolving FOIP:** Commemorating a decade since Shinzo Abe conceptualized the FOIP, Tokyo's updated framework prioritizes economic infrastructure tailored for AI, resilient supply chains for critical minerals, and a proposed "FOIP Digital Corridor" covering submarine cables, Open RAN, and advanced optical networks.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India maintains that the Quad is not an "Asian NATO," resisting its transformation into a formal military alliance. This approach preserves New Delhi's strategic autonomy, allowing it to expand its security role in the Indian Ocean while avoiding direct entanglement in flashpoints like the Taiwan crisis.
- **Economic Integration Alternative:** To counter China's economic coercion, the commentary suggests that India could reconsider joining comprehensive trade frameworks like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), especially after its 2019 exit from RCEP, to integrate into the Indo-Pacific economic architecture.



Key Definitions

- **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue):** An informal strategic forum comprising India, Japan, Australia, and the United States, maintained by semi-regular summits, information exchanges, and joint military exercises.
- **G2 Concept:** A hypothetical strategic and economic arrangement where the global order is managed primarily through bilateral cooperation and negotiation between the world's two largest superpowers, the United States and China.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foreign policy doctrine wherein a nation maintains its independence of choice and action in international relations, refusing to enter binding military alliances that restrict national interest.

Constitutional and International Frameworks

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Instructs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** The international legal regime defining the rights and responsibilities of nations regarding their use of the world's oceans, establishing guidelines for maritime businesses and natural resource management.

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II (Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests, Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests).

Conclusion: The evolving dynamic within the Quad forces a recalibration from a security-centric alliance underwritten by the US to a more diversified, multi-polar cooperation framework led by regional middle powers. For India, leveraging Japan's digital infrastructure initiatives and exploring high-standard economic integration like the CPTPP will be critical to sustaining a rules-based, open maritime order in the Indo-Pacific.

7. Regulatory Oversight: Government Intervention in WhatsApp's Username Feature

- **Government Directive:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has issued a notice directing Meta-owned WhatsApp to halt the rollout of its upcoming username feature, demanding a detailed structural explanation within a three-day window.
- **Proposed Feature Functionality:** The update allows users to create a unique identifier to connect with others without disclosing their primary registered mobile numbers, a privacy-centric mechanism currently utilized by competing platforms like Telegram and Signal.
- **State Law Enforcement Concerns:** The government maintains that hiding phone numbers could materially escalate instances of financial fraud, phishing, identity theft, and sophisticated "digital arrest" scams, rendering tracing highly complex for law enforcement agencies.
- **Impersonation Vulnerabilities:** A primary security risk highlighted by state officials is the potential spoofing of public authorities, institutional handles, and government departments by bad actors reserving deceptive or closely resembling usernames.
- **Platform Security Safeguards:** In its defense, WhatsApp states it has preemptively blocked the registration of high-profile names, celebrities, and official entities, omitted any public searchable username directory, and introduced an optional numeric pin key to restrict unsolicited contact.



Key Definitions

- **Spoofing:** A malicious practice where a cybercriminal masquerades as a known or trusted source, entity, or authority to gain unauthorized access, steal data, or perpetrate financial fraud.
- **Digital Arrest Scam:** A form of cyber-fraud where victims are deceived into believing they are under legal custody or investigation by law enforcement agencies via video or voice calls, forcing them into transferring large sums of money.
- **Phishing:** A cyber-attack methodology using deceptive communications to trick individuals into revealing sensitive personal data, financial credentials, or access passwords.

Statutory and Legal Provisions

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Section 69A empowers the Central Government to issue directions for blocking public access to information or features in the interest of national sovereignty, integrity, defense, security of the State, or public order.
- **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:** Governs due diligence requirements for social media intermediaries, mandating proactive mechanisms to prevent identity misrepresentation and fraud.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** While the feature enhances data minimization by shielding phone numbers, it creates a regulatory tug-of-war between user privacy rights and state security or traceability mandates.

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II (Government Policies and Interventions) and GS Paper III (Cyber Security, Role of Social Networking Sites in Internal Security Challenges). **Conclusion:** The regulatory impasse over WhatsApp's username rollout underscores the ongoing policy friction between maximizing individual data privacy and ensuring state law enforcement traceability. Resolving such structural challenges requires robust intermediary guidelines that combine end-to-end data minimization with verifiable institutional safeguards to prevent bad actors from exploiting platform anonymity.

8. West Asia Crisis: Escalating Tensions in the Strait of Hormuz

- **Strait of Hormuz Standoff:** Iran has warned that any United States military interference or air asset deployment within the Strait of Hormuz will trigger an immediate, decisive counter-response, severely threatening international maritime trade routes.
- **Navigation Mandate:** The Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, which coordinates Iran's armed forces, has mandated that all commercial tankers and merchant vessels must strictly adhere to maritime transit routes designated by Tehran or face direct interception.
- **Geopolitical Trigger:** This escalation occurs amidst volatile regional instability following the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in recent military airstrikes, prompting extensive state funeral arrangements across Tehran, Qom, and Mashhad.
- **Diplomatic Standstill:** Ongoing indirect diplomatic negotiations in Doha, brokered by Qatar to formulate a sustainable peace memorandum, have entered a temporary recess due to the political transition and hardening rhetorical posturing from both sides.

- **Targeted Rhetoric:** Tensions are further exacerbated by statements from Israeli defense leadership regarding the strategic vulnerability of Iran's succeeding leadership structure, drawing sharp warnings from Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi against any perceived miscalculation.

Key Definitions

- **Choke Point:** A strategic, narrow geographical passageway (typically a strait) that connects major maritime bodies and controls vital global trade, energy supply lines, or naval traffic.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A doctrine wherein a state retains independent decision-making capabilities regarding its core security, foreign policy, and diplomatic alignments without external coercion.

International Legal and Statutory Framework

- **UNCLOS (1982):** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea regulates the legal regime of straits used for international navigation. Part III governs the right of "transit passage" for commercial shipping, a framework frequently contested by littoral states under national security exemptions.
- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member state, a provision routinely cited by regional actors to justify retaliatory military posturing.



Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II (Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests). **Conclusion:** The escalating friction over the Strait of Hormuz underscores the persistent vulnerability of critical maritime choke points to regional geopolitical shocks. For a major energy importer like India, sustained instability in West Asia poses immediate risks to energy security, maritime trade channels, and diaspora safety, necessitating balanced diplomatic engagements and diversified strategic energy corridors.

9. Skyroot to Launch Vikram-1: India's First Private Orbital Rocket

- **Milestone Launch:** Bengaluru-based space startup Skyroot Aerospace has announced the upcoming maiden test flight of Vikram-1, which will mark India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket launch.
- **Launch Window:** The orbital rocket is scheduled to lift off from the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota within a specified regulatory window between 12 July and 4 August.
- **Payload and Capacity:** Vikram-1 is specifically engineered to carry small satellites into Low Earth Orbit (LEO), catering directly to the rapidly growing global demand for dedicated, low-cost small satellite launch services.
- **Evolution of Private Space Sector:** This launch succeeds the company's previous historic milestone in November 2022, when Skyroot successfully launched Vikram-S, India's first privately developed sub-orbital rocket under the 'Prarambh' mission.

- **Policy Enablement:** The breakthrough is a direct outcome of structural space sector reforms initiated by the Union Government, which transitioned ISRO from a sole executor to a primary enabler for private space launch vehicles.

Key Definitions

- **Orbital Rocket:** A launch vehicle configured with sufficient speed and propulsion to place a payload into a stable, continuous orbit around the Earth, requiring significantly higher velocity than a sub-orbital rocket.
- **Low Earth Orbit (LEO):** An orbital altitude relatively close to the Earth's surface, typically spanning between 160 kilometers and 2,000 kilometers, commonly utilized for remote sensing, communication, and scientific satellites.
- **Sub-orbital Flight:** A spaceflight where the rocket reaches outer space but its trajectory intersects the atmosphere or surface of the sustaining body, preventing it from completing a full orbital revolution.



Statutory and Policy Framework

- **Indian Space Policy, 2023:** The institutional policy framework that formalizes and enhances the participation of Non-Government Entities (NGEs) across the entire value chain of the space economy.
- **IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre):** A single-window, autonomous nodal agency under the Department of Space (DoS) tasked with promoting, authorizing, and supervising private space activities and infrastructure sharing.
- **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL):** The commercial arm of ISRO responsible for aggregating user requirements, commercializing space technologies, and interfacing with private sector launch providers.

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper III (Science and Technology- Awareness in the fields of Space; Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology). **Conclusion:** The upcoming launch of Vikram-1 represents a mature transition for the Indian space ecosystem, moving from state-dominated infrastructure to a vibrant public-private partnership model. By fostering high-tech non-government entities, India positions itself to capture a larger share of the global commercial space market, transforming local engineering startups into globally competitive aerospace manufacturing hubs.

10. National Rollout of VB-G RAM G Scheme: Revamping Rural Employment

- **Nationwide Launch:** The Union Government has formally rolled out the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission Grameen (VB-G RAM G) scheme from Mukkavaripalli village in Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh, marking a historic transition in India's rural welfare architecture.

- **Repeal of MGNREGA:** Enacted through the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, this new statutory framework completely repeals and replaces the historic Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, effective from July 1, 2026.
- **Enhanced Employment Cap:** The scheme raises the statutory guarantee of unskilled wage employment from the previous 100 days to 125 days per financial year for every eligible rural household, directly bolstering rural income security and purchasing power.
- **Structural Funding Shift:** Moving away from MGNREGA's demand-driven funding model, the new framework introduces a system of "normative allocation" where the Centre fixes spending caps in advance via a 60:40 fiscal sharing ratio for general states and 90:10 for Himalayan and Northeastern states.
- **Agricultural Peak Provision:** To prevent rural farm labor shortages during crucial cropping cycles, the Act empowers State Governments to notify a mandatory pause of up to 60 days during peak sowing and harvesting seasons, during which scheme works are temporarily suspended.
- **Asset Infrastructure Verticals:** Asset creation is explicitly integrated across four priority verticals: water security, core rural infrastructure, livelihood infrastructure, and climate-resilience works, all aggregated into a digital platform called the Viksit Bharat National Rural Infrastructure Stack.



Key Definitions

- **Normative Allocation:** A budgetary mechanism where central funds are pre-allocated to states based on objective composite parameters and indices, rather than releasing funds dynamically based on real-time grassroots labor demand.
- **Viksit Gram Panchayat Plan:** A decentralized, spatially integrated local development blueprint prepared by Gram Panchayats that lists target works before merging them into national geospatial monitoring infrastructure like PM Gati Shakti.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Article 41 (DPSP):** Directs the State to ensure the right to work, to education, and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, and disablement within its economic capacity.
- **Article 243G (Eleventh Schedule):** Empowers Gram Panchayats to plan and implement schemes for economic development and social justice, placing them at the center of the VB-G RAM G delivery framework.
- **VB-G RAM G Act, 2025:** The primary enabling legislation governing mandatory biometric verification, geo-tagged monitoring, weekly wage disbursement, and statutory unemployment allowances if work is not allotted within 15 days of demand.

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II (Government Policies and Interventions for Development, Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections), GS Paper III (Employment, Growth, and Sustainable Development). **Conclusion:** The transition from MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G signifies a structural shift from a pure social safety net to an asset-driven, fiscally disciplined rural development model. While the enhanced 125-day cap and standardized base wage boost rural livelihoods, the success

of this supply-capped model depends on the capacity of Gram Panchayats to execute asset creation without creating bureaucratic delays or leaving marginalized labor underserved.

11. Right to Personal Liberty and the Dilution of Bail under UAPA

- **Extended Pre-Trial Detention:** The ongoing incarceration of accused individuals for nearly six years without trial in the 2020 Delhi Riots cases highlights a critical institutional challenge regarding the limits of prolonged pre-trial detention under stringent anti-terror laws.
- **Judicial Conflict on Delay:** Recent Supreme Court decisions reveal an internal divergence, with one Bench ruling that extended trial delays cannot create an absolute right to bail and must be weighed against the gravity of the offense, while another Bench criticized this stance for violating established personal liberty precedents.
- **Overriding Constitutional Safeguards:** While the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) imposes strict statutory barriers to bail, prior landmark jurisprudence establishes that statutory restrictions cannot override the constitutional and human right to personal liberty in cases of inordinate trial delay.
- **The "Process as Punishment" Dilemma:** Invoking the gravity of an offense—which remains a mere state allegation during the bail stage—to justify indefinite incarceration creates a dangerous sliding scale, effectively turning the judicial process into a punitive tool before any guilt is legally proven.
- **Judicial Inconsistency:** Pronounced inconsistencies across Trial Courts and High Courts in granting bail under identical timelines and underlying facts weaken the predictability of the legal system, undermining the rule of law and rendering fundamental rights vulnerable.

Key Definitions

- **Pre-Trial Incarceration:** The detention of an accused individual in judicial or police custody prior to the final disposal of the criminal trial and a formal judgment of conviction or acquittal.
- **Sliding Scale Jurisprudence:** A variable legal approach where the protection of fundamental rights expands or contracts contextually based on the perceived severity or nature of the state's criminal allegations.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Guarantees the protection of life and personal liberty, which the Supreme Court has repeatedly held includes the right to a speedy trial and protection against indefinite detention without trial.
- **Section 43D(5) of UAPA, 1967:** Creates a stringent statutory bar on bail if the court, on a perusal of the case diary or report, is of the opinion that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation against the person is prima facie true.
- **K.A. Najeeb v. Union of India (2021):** A landmark Supreme Court precedent affirming that constitutional courts can grant bail to an accused under UAPA if the violation of Article 21 due to prolonged delay overrides the statutory restrictions of Section 43D(5).

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II (Indian Constitution- Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure; Judicial Review, Role of Judiciary, Fundamental Rights).

Conclusion: Resolving the systemic impasse over bail under special legislations like UAPA is vital to maintaining the equilibrium between national security mandates and democratic freedoms. The judiciary must establish a uniform, clear standard on pre-trial timelines to ensure that stringent statutory mechanisms do not compromise the foundational rule of law or weaken constitutional protections for individual liberty.

12. Chargesheet in Sarla Bhat Case: Milestone in Legacy Terror Investigations

- **Breakthrough After 36 Years:** The State Investigation Agency (SIA) of Jammu and Kashmir has filed a comprehensive 737-page chargesheet in the 1990 abduction and murder case of 27-year-old nurse Sarla Bhat, marking a major turning point in prosecuting historical insurgent crimes.
- **Mastermind Named:** The investigation names banned Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief Yasin Malik as the primary mastermind who orchestrated the conspiracy, along with four operatives, three of whom are now deceased.
- **Targeted Violence Campaign:** The chargesheet establishes that the murder was not an isolated criminal act but a part of a deliberate, organized campaign of targeted killings by the JKLF designed to instill mass terror and trigger the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community.
- **End to Institutional Delay:** Investigations were stalled for decades due to a pervasive atmosphere of fear, witness intimidation, and subsequent political developments, including a unilateral ceasefire in 1994 that kept multiple legacy cases against separatist leaders in abeyance.
- **Decisive Legal Precedent:** Compiled using forensic, ballistic, and electronic evidence, the chargesheet sets an unambiguous precedent that lapse of time can never serve as a legal shield or statutory immunity for acts of terrorism.



Key Definitions

- **Legacy Terror Crimes:** Unresolved historical acts of terrorism and insurgent violence from earlier decades whose prosecution was disrupted by institutional breakdown, conflict, or active threat environments.
- **Proclamation Proceedings:** A statutory judicial process under the criminal procedure code used to declare an absconding accused a fugitive from justice, enabling the attachment of property and specialized trial processes.

Statutory and Constitutional Provisions

- **Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), 1987:** The primary specialized anti-terror legislation invoked in this case, under which the accused face trial for planning, abetting, and executing acts of terror.
- **Ranbir Penal Code (RPC):** The erstwhile penal framework of Jammu and Kashmir applicable at the time of the offense in 1990, specifically Sections 302 (murder), 364 (abduction), and 120B (criminal conspiracy).
- **Article 21 of the Constitution:** Guarantees the right to life and fair justice, ensuring that the state remains constitutionally obligated to investigate grave violations and deliver justice to victims, irrespective of temporal delays.

Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II (Statutory, Regulatory and Quasi-judicial Bodies; Rule of Law) and GS Paper III (Linkages between State and Non-State Actors, Internal Security Challenges in Jammu and Kashmir).

Conclusion: The filing of the chargesheet in the Sarla Bhat case signifies a systemic shift toward absolute legal accountability for legacy insurgent violence. By dismantling old structural barriers to prosecution, the criminal justice system reinforces the principle that accountability for human rights violations and acts of terrorism is not bound by a statute of limitations, thereby strengthening transitional justice and security management in the region.

