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Institute Of Civil Services

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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"The best way to predict the future is to create it."  
— Peter Drucker



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## LIGHTEN THE POLLUTION BURDEN OF THERMAL POWER STATES

# Lighten the pollution burden of thermal power States

In its first updated Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in August 2022, India has committed to first, adopting a climate-friendly and cleaner path to economic development; second, reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030 from the 2005 level, and third, achieving about 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030 along with other six commitments. Currently, thermal power has the dominant share in India's electricity basket. Under the new regime, thermal power will also have a 50% share.

### An agent of emissions

Thermal power production results in a huge amount of carbon emission. The power producing States bear the burden of all this pollution to provide electricity to the consuming States. So, who should pay for the pollution burdens of thermal power plants? This article looks at thermal power production under the central sector and recommended compensation mechanisms for thermal power producing States.

India has a total installed capacity of 4,56,757 MW in which the central sector has 22.9% share, the State sector has 23.7% and the private sector, a 53.4% share. Out of the total electricity generation capacity from thermal power plants (2,37,268.91 MW), private sector power plants have a capacity of 85,899.095 MW (36.20%), the State sector has 75,991.905 MW (32.03%), and the central sector has the capacity of 75,377.91 MW (31.77%). Central sector power plants which are located in several States, have 31.77% of the total electricity generation capacity. NITI Aayog data show that India accounts for 20,794.36 kg of carbon emission from electricity generation.

According to the Ministry of Coal, Government of India (April 1, 2023), the total reserves of coal in India are 378.21 billion tonnes, of which Odisha alone accounts for 94.52 billion tonnes. Around 59.12% of the total energy supply in India is from coal. In India, around 73.08% (11,80,427.19 million units) and 1.48% (23,885.04 million units) of electricity are generated from coal, oil and natural gas, respectively, in 2022-23. Thus, the thermal power sector remains a major contributor to carbon emissions in India.

According to the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Maharashtra had the highest non-renewable electricity generation capacity (31,510.08 MegaWatt or MW), followed by Uttar Pradesh (26,729.374 MW) and Gujarat (26,073.41 MW) in 2022-23. Rajasthan had the highest renewable electricity generation capacity in India at 22,398.05 MW of installation capacity. Despite



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Thermal power producing States need to be well compensated for bearing the burden of pollution while supplying electricity to power consuming States

having the highest electricity generation capacity, some States consume more than their generation.

Thermal electricity generation by the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) also shows that the States producing the maximum electricity do not consume most of it – Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh only consume 40%, 38.43%, and 29.92%, respectively, of the electricity produced by NTPC in their respective State. Gujarat is the biggest consumer of NTPC produced electricity (4,612 MW) despite the State's meagre generation of 17.7 MW by the NTPC. Gujarat and Maharashtra purchase electricity from different States from what is produced by the central sector and in other sectors.

Thermal electricity-producing States bear a disproportionate pollution burden when compared to the consuming State. Data from the CEA show that Tripura has the highest (96.96%) share of thermal power in the total electricity generation capacity, followed by Bihar (95.57%), Chhattisgarh (94.35%), Jharkhand (92.69%), Delhi (87.96%), West Bengal (87.72%), and Uttar Pradesh (81.84%). Not all the electricity generated in the State is being utilised inside the State. Bihar sold 16,529.62 MW of electricity in 2022-23.

NITI Aayog data show that Chhattisgarh is the highest net seller of electricity among all Indian States with 535.29 MW in 2022-23, followed by Madhya Pradesh (379.19 MW), Himachal Pradesh (153.43 MW), Rajasthan (135.14 MW), Odisha (95.40 MW) and Meghalaya (55.22 MW). These are the States where the central sector produces more thermal electricity and sells to others. Gujarat is the highest importer of electricity (528.17 MW), followed by Haryana (212.63 MW), Maharashtra (187.50 MW), Delhi (162.97 MW), Punjab (160.82 MW), and Tamil Nadu (128.37 MW) in the year 2022-23.

### No compensation

India's electricity and environmental regulatory structures do not compensate States that generate electricity from central sector thermal power plants. Therefore, net exporting States of central sector power producers bear the burden of all pollution, and net importing States enjoy clean electricity. Central sector thermal power is mainly produced in coal-rich States such as Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha. Even though coal-rich States produce the maximum thermal electricity, per capita electricity consumption remains substantially lower than other economically better-off States. Thus the coal-rich States face a new form of resource curse.

Under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme, although thermal

power-producing companies spend a small amount of funds to develop the periphery, this is far from compensating for environmental damage. The National Clean Energy and Environment Fund was created to promote renewable energy, and to assist States with cleaner technology.

Electricity is a Concurrent subject (Entry 38 of List III of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution), which allows both the central and State governments to legislate on electricity matters. States are constitutionally permitted to levy taxes on electricity consumption and sale, but not on its generation. Similarly, the central government does not impose any specific tax on electricity production.

In October 2023, the Ministry of Power issued a directive that prohibits State governments from levying additional taxes or duties on electricity generation, clarifying the constitutional boundaries. As a commodity, electricity is exempt from Goods and Services Tax (GST). Services related to electricity transmission or distribution by utilities are also GST-exempt. Therefore, the consuming States receive the electricity duty levied on electricity sales. The electricity-producing States do not get any tax revenue but only the burden of pollution.

### A formulation to pursue

Electricity produced and consumed within the State internalises all the benefits and costs. However, when the electricity is produced in one State and consumed in another, it creates a pure negative externality for the producing State. In such a situation, the States producing thermal power under the central sector should be compensated for all the electricity consumed by other States.

This can be done in two ways. States where central sector power plants are located can tax thermal power generation. Otherwise, the Union government can collect and transfer the generation tax to the producing State. The other mechanism would be a compensation mechanism through the Finance Commission of India. The last three Finance Commissions have recommended a formula to transfer funds to States under environmental and climate change concerns. This has been done through grants and horizontal devolution criteria. The Sixteenth Finance Commission should seriously consider India's international climate commitments and develop a fiscal road map to achieve those goals. Whatever the mechanism, thermal power-producing States under the central sector should be compensated adequately for carrying the burden of other States' electricity consumption.





- ❖ The article "Lighten the Pollution Burden of Thermal Power States" addresses the environmental and economic challenges faced by Indian states that host thermal power plants. These states bear the brunt of pollution from electricity generation, while the benefits of this energy are often enjoyed by other regions. The article advocates for compensation mechanisms to ensure a fair distribution of both the costs and benefits associated with thermal power production.

## Context

- ❖ **India's Climate Commitments:** In August 2022, India updated its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement, pledging to:
  - Adopt a climate-friendly and cleaner path to economic development.
  - Reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030 from 2005 levels.
  - Achieve approximately 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.
- ❖ **Current Energy Landscape:** Despite these commitments, thermal power remains dominant in India's energy mix, contributing significantly to carbon emissions.

### Background

**Thermal Power Production:** India's total installed electricity capacity is 456,757 MW, with thermal power plants accounting for 237,268.91 MW. The central sector contributes 31.77% of this capacity.

**Coal Reserves:** As of April 1, 2023, India had 378.21 billion tonnes of coal reserves, with Odisha alone accounting for 94.52 billion tonnes.

**Emission Statistics:** Thermal power production is a major contributor to carbon emissions, with significant environmental impacts on the states where these plants are located.

### MEANING

**Disparity in Burden and Benefit:** States hosting thermal power plants endure environmental degradation, while the electricity generated often serves other states. This raises questions about equitable distribution of environmental costs and economic benefits.

### IMPACT

**Environmental Degradation:** States like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha face significant pollution due to concentrated thermal power production.

**Economic Disparity:** Despite being power producers, these states often have lower per capita electricity consumption and do not receive adequate economic benefits from electricity sales.





**CONSEQUENCES**

**Health Risks:** Increased pollution leads to health issues among local populations, including respiratory problems and other pollution-related diseases.

**Economic Costs:** Environmental degradation can lead to loss of biodiversity, reduced agricultural productivity, and increased healthcare costs.

**Way Forward**

- ❖ **Policy Reforms:** Implement mechanisms to compensate thermal power-producing states, such as:
  - **Generation Tax:** Allow states to levy taxes on thermal power generation, or have the central government collect and redistribute these taxes to the affected states.
  - **Finance Commission Grants:** The Finance Commission could allocate funds to these states, considering their environmental burdens and contributions to national energy security.
- ❖ **Promote Renewable Energy:** Encourage investment in cleaner energy sources to reduce reliance on thermal power and its associated environmental impacts.

**SOLVE MCQ**

**Q.1 With reference to India's climate commitments under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), consider the following statements:**

1. India aims to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030 from 2005 levels.
2. India has committed to achieving 50% of its cumulative electric power installed capacity from nonfossil fuel sources by 2030.
3. India has pledged to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2047 as part of its NDCs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| (a) 1 and 2 only | (c) 1 and 3 only |
| (b) 2 and 3 only | (d) 1, 2 and 3   |

**Answer:** (a) 1 and 2 only

**Explanation:**

- ❖ **Statement 1 is correct:** India has committed to reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030 from 2005 levels in its updated NDCs.
- ❖ **Statement 2 is correct:** India aims to achieve 50% of its cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.
- ❖ **Statement 3 is incorrect:** India has announced a net-zero target for 2070, not 2047, as part of its Long Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS), which complements its NDCs but is not an NDC itself.

## HOW DID A DDoS ATTACK CRIPPLE KAVERI 2.0?

# How did a DDoS attack cripple Kaveri 2.0?

What happened to Kaveri 2.0, the web-based portal which streamlines property registrations in Karnataka? How does a Distributed Denial of Service attack operate? How can a company or firm protect themselves against such kind of cyberattacks? Was the social media platform X also victim to a DDoS attack?

### EXPLAINER

**John Xavier**

#### The story so far:

In January, web-based portal Kaveri 2.0, which streamlines property registrations in Karnataka, faced sporadic, crippling server outages. On investigating the outage, the Revenue Department and E-Governance Department concluded that it was not due to "technical glitches" but a "motivated Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack" on Kaveri 2.0, which was launched in 2023 to reform land registration.

#### What happened after the attack?

Following the incident, K. A. Dayananda, Inspector General of Registrations and Commissioner of Stamps (IGR & CS) lodged a complaint with the cyber-crime police. The Cybercrime, Economic offences, Narcotics (CEN) police registered a case under the Information Technology Act, 2000, against the unidentified miscreants. "The Kaveri 2.0 faced some performance issues during December 2024. Upon analysis and inputs from the Centre for Smart Governance (CSG), it was found that these issues were caused by a malicious DDoS attack using automated tools or bots," the FIR said.

#### What is a DDoS attack?

A DDoS attack is a malicious attempt to disrupt the normal functioning of a targeted server, service, or network by overwhelming it with a flood of internet traffic. Unlike a Denial of Service (DoS) attack, which typically involves a single source, a DDoS attack leverages multiple compromised systems, often infected with malware, to generate the traffic. These compromised systems are collectively known as a botnet. Such attacks may be aimed at saturating the bandwidth of a particular site, exploiting weaknesses in the network protocol stack, or targeting specific weaknesses in



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applications or services. DDoS attacks can lead to service downtime, which render services unavailable, leading to a disruption or potential loss of revenue. While DDoS attacks do not directly steal data, they can be used as a distraction while other forms of cyberattack, such as data breaches, are executed. Organisations that fall victim to DDoS attacks may suffer reputational damage, as customers and partners question their ability to protect against cyber threats.

#### What happened to Kaveri 2.0?

The Kaveri 2.0 portal experienced performance issues in December 2024 and January 2025. Fake accounts were created, and entries were made into the database using these accounts, overwhelming the system. The attack involved 62 email accounts originating from 14 IP addresses, highlighting the

distributed nature of the assault. In January 2025, a similar attack occurred, with extremely high traffic observed from citizen-side users for Encumbrance Certificate (EC) searches, which was eight times more than usual. At one point, the portal received 6.2 lakh requests in just two hours from malicious users using random keywords to perform searches. This surge in traffic crippled the portal, reducing the number of registrations.

#### How can such attacks be mitigated?

To protect against DDoS attacks, organisations implement advanced traffic filtering mechanisms to distinguish between legitimate and malicious traffic. Monitoring tools can help identify unusual traffic patterns and take pre-emptive actions. Enforcing rate limiting can control the number of requests a user can make in a given time

frame, preventing the system from being overwhelmed. Bot detection technologies, such as CAPTCHA challenges and behavioural analysis, can identify and block automated tools or bots. Additionally, robust authentication mechanisms and regular security audits can strengthen the security of online services and prevent unauthorised access. Organisations can also work closely with cybersecurity agencies to help investigate attacks and identify perpetrators. They can share information and collaborate on mitigation strategies to prevent future attacks. This will include having a dedicated team to monitor and respond to security incidents. For the user, knowing about the risks of phishing and other social engineering attacks can help prevent account compromises.

#### What next for Kaveri 2.0?

The cyberattack crippled the Kaveri 2.0 portal, and registrations fell significantly on February 1 and 4. While the portal was restored on February 5, the DDoS attack should serve as a wake-up call for organisations, particularly government agencies, to prioritise cybersecurity and implement robust mitigation strategies.

#### What are other major DDoS attacks?

There are several such attacks, but most recently Elon Musk-owned X was targeted in August 2024. Mr. Musk reported that the platform experienced a massive DDoS attack, which caused delays and disruptions. This attack occurred just before his scheduled conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump, highlighting the vulnerability of even high-profile platforms to cyber threats.

In another occasion, in 2015, Microsoft-owned code repository GitHub was targeted by a China-based botnet. The attack specifically aimed two GitHub projects that provided tools to circumvent Chinese censorship. The attack involved injecting malicious JavaScript code into the browsers of visitors to Baidu, China's most popular search engine, and other sites using Baidu's analytics services.

### THE GIST

A DDoS attack is a malicious attempt to disrupt the normal functioning of a targeted server, service, or network by overwhelming it with a flood of internet traffic.

Following the incident, K. A. Dayananda, Inspector General of Registrations and Commissioner of Stamps (IGR & CS) lodged a complaint with the cyber-crime police.

The cyberattack crippled the Kaveri 2.0 portal, and registrations fell significantly on February 1 and 4. While the portal was restored on February 5, the DDoS attack should serve as a wake-up call for organisations, particularly government agencies, to prioritise cybersecurity.

## Context & Background

- ❖ Karnataka's Kaveri 2.0 portal, launched in 2023 for property registrations, suffered major disruptions in January 2025 due to a DDoS attack.
- ❖ The attack overwhelmed servers with fake accounts and excessive search requests, bringing transactions to a halt.

## What is DDoS Attack?

- ❖ A DDoS attack floods a system with traffic from multiple sources, disrupting normal operations.
- ❖ Unlike a regular DoS attack (single source), DDoS uses a botnet (infected systems) to overload the target.



### Impact on Kaveri 2.0

- ❖ 6.2 lakh requests in 2 hours crashed the system.
- ❖ Registrations plummeted on Feb 1 & 4, recovering only on Feb 5.
- ❖ 14 IP addresses & 62 fake email accounts were traced as part of the attack.

### Budgeting for a gender-inclusive Viksit Bharat

#### ❖ How to Prevent DDoS Attack?

- Traffic Filtering – Distinguish between real & malicious users.
- Rate Limiting – Restrict excessive requests from one source.
- Bot Detection – Use CAPTCHAs & behavioral analysis.
- Blackholing – Divert bad traffic to a null route.
- Regular Security Audits – Identify & fix vulnerabilities.

### Conclusion

- ❖ The Kaveri 2.0 attack highlights cybersecurity gaps, especially in government digital services.
- ❖ Stronger defenses, proactive monitoring, & collaboration with cyber agencies are crucial to prevent future attacks.

### SOLVE MCQ

#### Q.2 Consider the following statements regarding the Kaveri 2.0 Portal:

1. It is an online platform developed by the Indian Air Force to facilitate pilot training and aircraft maintenance.
2. The portal aims to streamline property registration and land records management in Karnataka.
3. It is developed under the Digital India initiative to enhance transparency and efficiency in land-related services.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer:** (b) 2 and 3 only

#### **Explanation:**

- ❖ The Kaveri 2.0 Portal is an online property registration and land records management system launched in Karnataka.
- ❖ It is not related to the Indian Air Force (Statement 1 is incorrect).
- ❖ The portal is part of the Digital India initiative, ensuring efficiency and transparency in property transactions (Statement 3 is correct).







## WHAT IS THE ARAVALI SAFARI PARK PROJECT?

# What is the Aravali safari park project?

Across how many villages is the proposed project going to be spread across? Why have several retired Indian Forest Service officers written a letter to the Prime Minister urging him to scrap the project?

**Ashok Kumar**

### The story so far:

**T**he Haryana government's ambitious 3,858 hectare Aravali safari park project spread across Gurugram and Nuh – which was one of the poll promises of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party last year – is envisaged to be the world's largest safari park. However, the project has faced stiff opposition ever since it was first mooted.

### What is the project?

As per the tender invited by the Haryana Tourism Department, the proposed Aravali safari park will have animal cages, guest houses, hotels, restaurants, auditoriums, an animal hospital, children's parks, botanical gardens, aquariums, cable cars, a tunnel walk with exhibits, an open-air theatre and eateries. The project has now been transferred to

the forest department and an expert committee has been set up to oversee it. Of the total 3,858 hectares proposed in the tender, 2,574 will be spread across 11 villages in Gurugram and the remaining 1,284 in Nuh, across its seven villages.

### Why is there opposition?

The hills in the southern districts of Gurugram and Nuh are a part of Aravali, the oldest fold mountain range in the world. It runs diagonally across Rajasthan extending from Champaner in Gujarat in the southwest to near Delhi in the northeast for about 690 km. It is ecologically significant as it combats desertification by checking the spread of the Thar Desert towards eastern Rajasthan, and performs the role of an aquifer with its highly fractured and weathered quality rocks allowing water to percolate and recharge the groundwater. It is also a rich habitat to a wide spectrum

of wildlife and plant species.

A group of 37 retired Indian Forest Service officers have written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking to scrap the project arguing that the project's aim is to simply increase tourist footfall and not conserve the mountain range. The "primary purpose of any intervention in an eco-sensitive area should be 'conservation and restoration' and not destruction", the letter said. The increased footfall, vehicular traffic and construction will disturb aquifers under the Aravali hills which are critical reserves for the water-starved districts of Gurugram and Nuh (the groundwater level in the two districts has been categorised as "over-exploited" by the Central Ground Water Board). Additionally, the location of the project falls under the category of "forest", which is protected under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. Besides, Haryana

has very low forest cover of 3.6%, and therefore, the State needs rewilding of natural forests and not destructive safari projects, the letter said.

### What are the laws protecting Aravali?

Of the approximately 80,000 hectare Aravali hill area in Haryana, a majority is protected under various laws and by orders of the Supreme Court and NGT. "The most widespread protection to the Aravalis comes from the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), 1900. The Special Sections 4 and 5 of the Act restrict the breaking of land and hence deforestation in hills for non-agricultural use....Recently around 24,000 hectares has been notified as Protected Forest under the Indian Forest Act, as a proposed offset to forest land diversion in the Nicobar islands.... Similarly, the T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad judgment (1996) extends legal protection to forests as per dictionary meaning – which should cover the remaining Aravali areas that are not notified as forest....the Regional Plan-2021 for the National Capital Region also offers crucial protection, designating the Aravalis and forest areas as 'Natural Conservation Zone' and restricting the maximum construction limit to 0.5%," said Gurugram-based forest analyst Chetan Agarwal. Mr. Agarwal suggested that instead of a safari park, the government should declare a national park or sanctuary in the Aravalis.

## THE GIST

▼ The proposed Aravali safari park will have animal cages, guest houses, hotels, restaurants, auditoriums, an animal hospital, children parks, botanical gardens, aquariums, cable cars, a tunnel walk with exhibits, an open-air theatre and eateries.

▼ The hills in the southern districts of Gurugram and Nuh are a part of Aravali, the oldest fold mountain range in the world.

▼ A group of 37 retired Indian Forest Service officers have written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking to scrap the project arguing that the project's aim is to simply increase tourist footfall and not conserve the mountain range.

## Overview

- ❖ The Haryana government plans to develop the world's largest safari park across 3,858 hectares in Gurugram (11 villages) and Nuh (7 villages). The park will include animal enclosures, hotels, restaurants, aquariums, cable cars, open-air theatres, and more.

## Impact & Consequences

- **Ecological Impact:** The Aravalis prevent desertification and recharge groundwater. Increased tourism, traffic, and construction could damage this fragile ecosystem.
- **Legal & Environmental Concerns:** The area is protected under Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and Punjab Land Preservation Act, 1900. Haryana has only 3.6% forest cover, and conservationists stress rewilding over commercialization.
- **Water Crisis:** Gurugram and Nuh have over-exploited groundwater levels, and the project may worsen water scarcity.
- **Expert Objection:** 37 retired IFS officers urged PM Modi to scrap the project, arguing it prioritizes tourism over conservation.

## Way Forward

- ❖ Instead of a safari, experts suggest **declaring the area a national park** to ensure **long-term conservation and restoration**. A thorough **environmental impact study** and **stakeholder dialogue** are crucial before proceeding.





## CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY: THE ORIGINS AND NUANCES OF THE CONCEPT

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# Constitutional morality: the origins and nuances of the concept

Constitutional morality is a civic culture of respect for constitutional forms and offices, along with the vigilant application of public reason, self-restraint and critique. It requires citizens to understand that the constitution's rules are sacred

Saai Sudharsan Sathiyamoorthy

In the recent past, our constitutional courts have embraced the polysemous concept of "constitutional morality" as a tool to interpret and as a test to adjudicate upon the constitutional validity of statutes. Today, it is seen by some as a bulwark to keep a check on the volatility that is attached to public morality, and to others, as a "dangerous weapon". In its judgments in *Navtej Singh Johar versus Union of India* (2018) and *Joseph Shine versus UOI* (2018), the Supreme Court reinvigorated the ancient concept to frame it as an ideal of justice and a "guide (to) the law."

As such, it is not a surprise that constitutional morality and its meaning(s) have become the cynosure of debates on some of the most pressing issues of our time – the rights of sexual minorities, women's entry into temples, the limits of free speech, and the balance between national security and civil liberties. However, amidst these swirling debates of ownership, it is worth revisiting the origins of this evocative but elusive phrase. British classicist George Grote's original conceptualisation of the phrase offers a nuanced and constructive path forward for popular political engagement.

**Back to the roots**

For Grote, whose *A History of Greece* was

as much a reflection of the Victorian passion for –and self-identification with – ancient Greece as it was an attempt to champion Athenian democracy from the condescension of its critics such as the Scotsman John Gillies and William Mitford, the democracy at Athens was "one of the most important and prolific events in all Grecian history" and the result of a "rare and difficult sentiment which we may term a constitutional morality." This rare and difficult sentiment was "a paramount reverence for the forms of the constitution". This involves adherence to both the form and procedure of the constitution to resolve disputes that arise, with the actions of citizens being only subject to the rule of law, unrestrained by the "censure of those very authorities as to all their public acts." Grote claimed that eloquently drafted rules and procedures were insufficient to ensure the longevity of a constitution. It required the instillation of "constitutional morality" – a civic culture of respect for constitutional forms and offices, along with the vigilant application of public reason, self-restraint and critique.

Pertinently, it requires the creation of confidence in citizens that the constitution's rules are sacred even to those with different political views, even during heated political debates.

It is this civic culture that Dr. Ambedkar spoke of during his famous invocation of the concept in his speech

"The Draft Constitution", delivered on November 4, 1948. Dr. Ambedkar believed that democracy in India would have to learn the ideal of constitutional morality, as it was not a "natural sentiment" to a polity and had to be "established and diffused" so as to ensure a free and peaceable democracy.

However, Dr. Ambedkar, who had mainly invoked Grote to stress on the necessity of providing for even minor administrative details in the Constitution, knew that the birth of such constitutional morality was a rarity in history. He knew that it was "perfectly possible to pervert the Constitution, without changing its form by merely changing the form of the administration and to make it inconsistent and opposed to the spirit of the Constitution."

For him, self-restraint was a prerequisite for preserving freedom under a properly constituted government.

### Commitment with critique

This interpretation of constitutional morality emphasises on the fact that adherence to the Constitution must be non-transactional and that it cannot be based on an expectation that it would result in outcomes that reflect the value judgments or beliefs of a particular group of citizens. In other words, it demands the acceptance of a result that is vastly different from what these citizens had envisioned. The framework's genius lies

in how it navigates between competing imperatives. It demands respect for constitutional forms while enabling critique of their operation. It requires following established processes while allowing those processes to be questioned and reformed.

Most crucially, it sees the Constitution not as demanding blind devotion but as a framework for managing differences through agreed-upon procedures. This is in stark contrast to the ideal of Jürgen Habermas' constitutional patriotism, which designates political allegiance as solidarity born of the norms and values of the constitution. While the former stresses on the liberalising effect of moderate cultural nationalism, the latter often pushes forward a form of singular-identity democracy purportedly constructed on the principles espoused in the constitution.

Constitutional morality's emphasis on process is especially important given the present rhetoric. It shows how we can maintain constitutional commitment without descending into fundamentalism. It points toward a more mature constitutionalism that balances reverence and reform, stability and change. One should not forget the fact that the founding fathers also saw the promulgation of the constitution as allegiance to constitutional form.

Saai Sudharsan Sathiyamoorthy is advocate, Madras High Court.

## Context & Background

- ❖ Coined by George Grote, it signifies reverence for constitutional forms to uphold democracy.
- ❖ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized its necessity in India to prevent constitutional subversion while ensuring a free and fair democracy.

### Meaning & Nuances

- **Adherence to Constitutional Norms** – Following legal structures and procedures.
- **Public Reason & Critique** – Encouraging rational discourse over populist morality.
- **Self-Restraint** – Preventing the misuse of power.
- **Protection of Rights** – Ensuring laws align with justice and equality.

### Impact & Consequences

- **Navtej Singh Johar (2018)** – Decriminalized homosexuality, asserting rights over societal morality.
- **Joseph Shine (2018)** – Decriminalized adultery, upholding individual dignity and autonomy.

### Way Forward

- Balance between constitutional commitment and reform.
- Ensure constitutional morality guides governance, not transient public opinion.







### SOLVE MCQ

**Q.3 With reference to "Constitutional Morality," consider the following statements:**

1. It refers to adherence to the principles of the Constitution, even if they conflict with popular opinion or traditions.
2. The concept was highlighted by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar during the Constituent Assembly Debates.
3. It mandates that all constitutional provisions must be interpreted strictly based on their literal meaning.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer:** (a) 1 and 2 only

**Explanation:**

- ❖ Constitutional Morality refers to the commitment to uphold constitutional values like justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, even when they go against social norms or popular will.
- ❖ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized the importance of constitutional morality in ensuring democracy's survival.
- ❖ It does not imply a strict literal interpretation of the Constitution but rather a progressive, purposive approach to uphold its fundamental values.





## MELA AND MELEE, PEOPLE'S SAFETY SHOULD BE PRIORITISED OVER FOOTFALL AT MAHA KUMBH

### Mela and melee

People's safety should be prioritised  
over footfall at Maha Kumbh

**T**he Maha Kumbh Mela that is ongoing in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, has showcased the gaping maw between the Centre's and the State's plans for such a large event and what they believe are sufficient resources to conduct it. Ahead of the mela, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and their cabinet colleagues had touted the special arrangements made for the mela, including a surveillance system equipped with artificial intelligence to track crowds, water filters to keep the rivers clean, a makeshift town replete with hospitals and special-purpose trains and buses. But they have not sufficed. There have been numerous reports of people being frustrated at the venue and during journeys to and from there. The mela's under-management, simmering just below the surface, was transformed to outright mismanagement by the deaths of people in a crowd crush on January 29. The confused response by the Indian Railways to another crush at the New Delhi railway station, on February 15, indicated the Centre's unwillingness to countenance the disaster, on the back of an expense of ₹7,500 crore for the mela and its various hi-tech preparations. Such preparations, however, cannot make up for changes that need to be made over time, such as redeveloping a local railway station.

Officials were reluctant to confirm that people had died even as local hospitals were confirming deaths. In one particularly unfair statement, a Deputy Commissioner of Police (Railways) blamed "unnecessary" rush at the New Delhi railway station for the "catastrophe". The consensus among fire safety experts worldwide is that such events occur when there is external cause for a group to panic, whether lacking the money to buy another ticket should they miss a train or suffering injuries due to unsafe pedestrian conditions. A preliminary probe revealed that the Railways had sold 2,600 additional tickets, and an announcement at the station of the arrival of a different train rendered this confused mass of passengers to attempt to reach the wrong platform. The Railways has now said that special trains for the mela will depart from one fixed platform at the station. Such interventions that are already well known to experts – including clear, multilingual communications, restricted ticketing, and proactive crowd control – could have mitigated the tragedy. Many less prominent gathering places still lack attention *vis-à-vis* public safety. Both the Centre and States should eliminate these risks, post-haste, if the Centre's plans to increase footfall at places of worship are not to lead to more catastrophe. While encouraging spiritual tourism, the hype around hosting 45 crore people at the Maha Kumbh Mela, absurdly impossible as it sounds, should be toned down so as not to feed a political frenzy. The governments must be careful that the cost of fulfilling political aspirations is not paid for in terms of human lives.

#### Context

- ❖ The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, expected 400 million devotees.
- ❖ Government invested ₹7,500 crore in AI surveillance, water filtration, makeshift hospitals, and transport.





### Incidents

- **Jan 29, 2025:** 30+ dead in a stampede during the ritual bath.
- **Feb 15, 2025:** 18 dead at New Delhi Railway Station due to overcrowding and confusion over train platforms.

### Key Issues

- **Overcrowding:** Inadequate infrastructure for the massive turnout.
- **Poor Crowd Management:** AI monitoring failed to prevent chaos.
- **Communication Failure:** Unclear announcements led to panic.

### Impact

- Loss of lives, injuries, and diminished trust in authorities.
- Political implications over mismanagement despite huge spending.

### Lessons & Way Forward

**Better Infrastructure:** Expand railways, roads, and crowd capacity.

**Clear Communication:** Multi-language announcements, real-time updates.

**Strict Regulation:** Limit ticket sales, stagger attendance.

### Conclusion

- ❖ The hype over record footfall should not overshadow safety. A balance between spiritual tourism and public security is critical to avoid future disasters.

