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23rd April 2025

Mains Manthan

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Prelims Saarthi

- Madhav National Park

Exploring India's potential in the Arctic region

Why in News?

- India's engagement with Arctic Region

Syllabus

- GS Paper 2 – International Relations

Exploring India's potential in the Arctic region

Global trade is swinging like a pendulum, with potential headwinds from the U.S. nudging each nation to start doubling down on alternate trade strategies. In such a scenario, partnerships around supply chains and trade routes are expanding based not only on the current fracturing of regional blocs, but also on climate change.

The frozen frontier of the Arctic serves as a canary in the coal mines for the impending climate catastrophe. It also serves as the source of great geopolitical leverage as sea levels continue to rise and new trade routes emerge. The Arctic reflects a critical energy source for the Global South in the years to come. While not recklessly exploiting the Arctic reserves, India should also get a say in the commercial opportunity for the unseen future.

The dying canary signals new trade routes

The September Arctic sea-ice is now shrinking at a rate of 12.2% per decade compared to its average extent during the period from 1981 to 2010 (NASA). This melting ice is also opening up access to a new trade route called the Northern Sea Route (NSR) in the Arctic, linking the Atlantic and the Pacific. This will exponentially transform global trade by shifting the flow of cargo and saving time and freight costs. The NSR is being hailed as the shortest route between Europe and Asia. India's long-term approach to exploring new mega ports and new routes – not just from an economic lens, but also from a strategic and geopolitical lens – makes the NSR crucial.

The number of Observers at the Arctic Council outnumbers the number of Arctic states. This indicates the growing recognition of the vulnerability of existing trade routes to geopolitical tensions.

India began its engagement with the Arctic early by signing the Svalbard Treaty in 1920 and is the only developing nation besides China that has an Arctic research base (Himadri). Last year, the Institute for Governance and Sustainable



Manash K. Neog

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Swati Sudhakaran

Senior Manager at Chase

While not recklessly exploiting the Arctic reserves, India should also get a say in the commercial opportunity for the unseen future

Development and the National Council of Applied Economic Research partnered to model how changes in the Arctic, specifically the loss of sea ice, could influence India's monsoon patterns and agricultural outputs.

But to begin a timely action plan for the NSR, India's Arctic policy released in 2022 needs to be streamlined towards achieving its goals. India will need shipbuilding muscle to sail through the NSR's turbulent waters. The 2025-26 Budget set up a \$3 billion Maritime Development Fund for the Shipping Ministry along with promoting shipbuilding clusters to increase the range, categories, and capacity of ships. Shipbuilding suited to Arctic requirements is key given that travel conditions would be quite harsh in the short-term. This means India needs to make adequate investments in ice-breaking fleets and other structural upgrades.

There is an urgent need for India to engage in multilateral dialogue on capacity building, training requisites, and knowledge sharing. Could 2025 to be the year of action?

This year, the Arctic Circle India Forum is taking place on May 3 and 4 in New Delhi. This should help contextualise the dialogue from an Asia- and India-focused lens. The forum should serve as an impetus to move the needle forward on India's well-thought-out Arctic policy with stakeholder consultations, the forging of partnerships, and perhaps the appointment of a 'polar ambassador' to present India's case internationally.

As international cargo shipment on the NSR increased exponentially from 41,000 tonnes in 2010 to almost 37.9 million tonnes in 2024, India also needs to be cognisant of studies surfacing, such as in the scientific journal *Nature Climate Change*, showing that global temperatures in 2024 breached the 1.5°C mark above pre-industrial levels. This suggests that even a single month or year at 1.5°C global warming may signify that Earth is entering a long-term breach of the vital Paris Agreement threshold. How close

to the sun should we fly so that we do not lose our commercial vantage point but also do not call for an expedited disaster in one of the most fragile ecosystems on the planet? This presents a pressing policy issue for India and echoes the need for like-minded allies.

Playing with ice and fire

With its vast Arctic coastline, extensive experience in Arctic navigation, and training of personnel, Russia is an obvious partner for India to explore the NSR. The decision to establish a working group on the NSR under the bilateral intergovernmental commission on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation was made during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's summit meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in July last year. Also, the Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor emerges as a potential bridge to the NSR ports such as Pevek, Tiksi, and Sabetta.

However, if India inclines towards the Russian bloc, then it would be implying support to Chinese efforts, such as the Polar Silk Road which China is building as a northern extension of its Belt and Road Initiative. Not only would the NSR help China bypass the Malacca Strait chokepoint completely, but it would also give it much more control over the Arctic route.

If India supports the Western bloc and partners with the U.S., it could lose its perceived potential stake in the massive resources that currently fall under Russian control in the area. The ideal but obviously challenging solution would be to find a way to work with both the U.S. and Russia. Other partners should include Japan and South Korea. Both countries share India's concerns about the growing cooperation between China and Russia in the Arctic and about their businesses losing out on Arctic opportunities to Chinese competitors. The trio should advocate the rectification of disparities within the Arctic Council and promote a more inclusive and equitable Council.



Key Takeaways from the Article

• Arctic Sea Ice and the Northern Sea Route (NSR):

- ♦ **Melting of Arctic Sea Ice:** The article emphasizes the accelerating shrinkage of Arctic sea ice which has opened up new shipping routes, most notably the **Northern Sea Route (NSR)**.
- ♦ **NSR as a Strategic Trade Route:** The NSR is presented as the **shortest maritime trade route between Europe and Asia**, significantly reducing transit times and freight costs, thus being crucial for India's long-term trade strategy



• India's Engagement with the Arctic:

- ♦ **Historical Context:** India has engaged with the Arctic since 1920 by signing the **Svalbard Treaty**, making it one of the few developing countries with an Arctic research base (**Himadri**).
- ♦ **Arctic Policy (2022)**
- ♦ **Arctic Council Members?**



• Economic Opportunities:

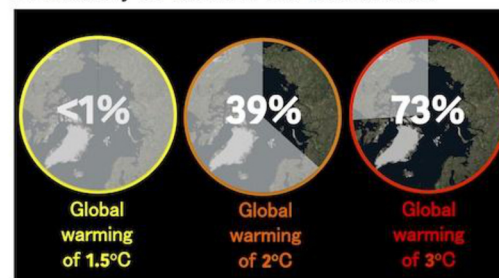
- ♦ **Trade and Shipbuilding:** India's maritime infrastructure must adapt, requiring **investments in ice-breaking vessels and shipbuilding**.
- ♦ The Fund? is an effort to meet these needs.
- ♦ **Investment in Arctic Navigation:** India must enhance its shipbuilding capabilities, particularly ships suitable for Arctic conditions. This aligns with India's larger vision of global maritime integration.



• Geopolitical Dynamics:

- ♦ **China-Russia Relations:** India faces the delicate task of balancing relations with **Russia (a key player in Arctic geopolitics)** and **China**, who is also expanding its presence in the Arctic.
- ♦ **Diplomatic Tensions:** India needs to avoid being drawn into either the Russian or Chinese bloc but should pursue partnerships with countries like Japan and South Korea that share India's concerns about China's dominance in the Arctic.

Probability of summer ice-free Arctic:

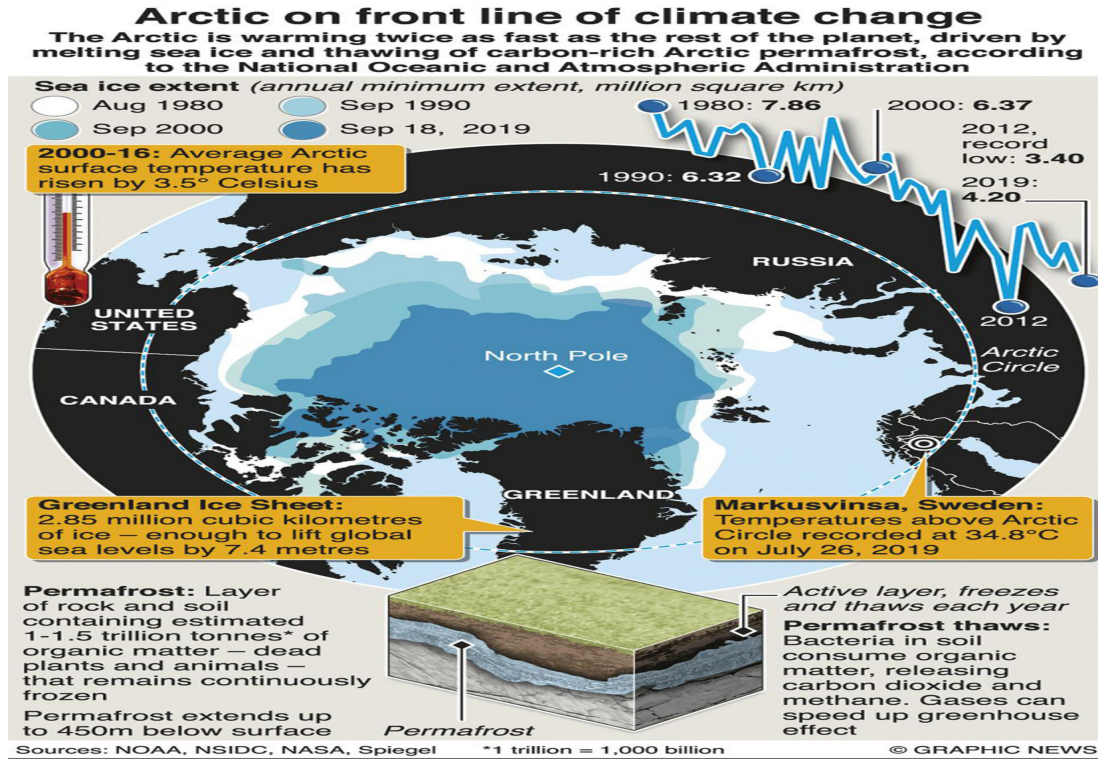


Source: Screen & Williamson 2017, Nature Climate Change

@polar_james

- **Environmental Responsibility:**

- ◆ **Sustainability in the Arctic:** India has to balance economic interests with environmental preservation.



- **Collaborations and Alliances:**

- ◆ **Bilateral Relations with Russia:** India's partnership with Russia for Arctic navigation and the NSR is highlighted, including the establishment of a working group to explore cooperation on Arctic trade.
- ◆ **Multilateral Cooperation:** The Arctic Circle India Forum (May 2025) is proposed as a key platform for India to further engage with stakeholders in the Arctic region, and India should strengthen its position in international climate dialogues.





Prelims PYQs (2015)

Q. The term 'IndARC', sometimes seen in the news, is the name of (2015)

- (a) An indigenously developed radar system inducted into Indian Defence
- (b) India's satellite to provide services to the countries of the Indian Ocean Rim
- (c) A scientific establishment set up by India in the Antarctic region
- (d) India's underwater observatory to scientifically study the Arctic region

Prelims PYQs (2019)

Q. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the deposits of 'methane hydrate'? (2019)

- 1. Global warming might trigger the release of methane gas from these deposits.
- 2. Large deposits of 'methane hydrate' are found in Arctic Tundra and under the sea floor.
- 3. Methane in the atmosphere oxidizes to carbon dioxide after a decade or two.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Mains PYQs (2015, 2018 & 2021)

Q. How do the melting of the Arctic ice and glaciers of the Antarctic differently affect the weather patterns and human activities on the Earth? Explain. (2021)

Q. Why is India taking keen in resources of Arctic region? (2018)

Q. What are the economic significances of the discovery of oil in Arctic Sea and its possible environmental consequences? (2015)

A reminder to the President and Governors

Why in News?

- ♦ Roles and Powers of President and Governors in India

Syllabus

- ♦ GS Paper 2 – Indian Polity





A reminder to the President and Governors

The Supreme Court's judgment in *State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor of Tamil Nadu* (2025) lays down the correct constitutional position and is unassailable. However, some people have questioned the judgment. My answer to them is that the Constitution has created a parliamentary democracy.

A parliamentary system
As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar pointed out on November 4, 1948, "The Draft Constitution in recommending the Parliamentary system of Executive has preferred more responsibility to more stability." He amplified this position stating, "The American form of Government is called the Presidential system of Government. What the Draft Constitution proposes is the Parliamentary system... Under the Presidential system of America, the President is the Chief head of the Executive. The administration is vested in him. Under the Draft Constitution the President occupies the same position as the King under the English Constitution. He is the head of the State but not of the Executive. He represents the Nation but does not rule the Nation. He is the symbol of the nation. His place in the administration is that of a ceremonial device on a seal by which the nation's decisions are made known... The President of the Indian Union will be generally bound by the advice of his Ministers. He can do nothing contrary to their advice nor can he do anything without their advice."

This position stands affirmed in Article 52 of the Constitution which states that "there shall be a President of India" and in Article 153 which states that "there shall be a Governor for each State". Article 74 provides for "a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President" and Article 163 provides for "a Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister at the head to aid and advise the Governor".

In 1949, the draft Constitution



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Senior Advocate,
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India

The Supreme Court's judgment in *State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor of Tamil Nadu* lays down the correct constitutional position and is unassailable

had proposed to include Schedule IV, which was intended to serve as an Instrument of Instruction. However, this was deleted at the instance of the Drafting Committee. The deletion was protested by the members but justified by T. T. Krishnamachari who said, "It has now been felt that the matter should be left entirely to convention rather than be put into the body of the Constitution as Schedules, in the shape of Instrument of Instructions, and there is a fairly large volume of opinion which favours that idea." Dr. Ambedkar said, "So far as our Constitution is concerned, there is no functionary created by it who can see that these instruments of Instruction are carried out faithfully by the Governor. Secondly, the discretion which we are going to leave with the Governor under this Constitution is very meagre... He has to act on the advice of the Prime Minister in the matter of the selection of Members of the Cabinet".

Earlier, while discussing Article 52, the Constituent Assembly rejected the substitution proposed to draft Article 41 (now Article 52) proposed by K.T. Shah to the following effect: "The Chief Executive and Head of the State in the Union of India shall be called the President of India." Professor Shah justified this by saying that the President represented "sovereignty of the whole people and of the State as a whole." But Dr. Ambedkar opposed this saying, "Prof. K.T. Shah uses the word 'Chief Executive and the Head of the State'. I have no doubt... that what he means is to introduce the American presidential form of executive and not the Parliamentary form of executive... contained in this Draft Constitution. If my friend Prof. Shah were to turn to the report of the Union Constitution Committee, he will see that the Drafting Committee has followed the proposals set out in the report of that Committee. The report of that Committee says that while the President is to be the head of the

executive, he is to be guided by a Council of Ministers whose advice shall be binding upon him in all actions that he is supposed to take under the power given to him by the Constitution. He is not to be the absolute supreme head... and that is the Parliamentary form of government in the United States... We have not adopted that system."

The Constitutional Bench in *Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab* (1974) amplified this position, holding that the President is "...the Constitutional or formal head of the Union and he exercises his powers and functions conferred on him by or under the Constitution on the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers". This judgment was subsequently followed in another Constitutional Bench judgement in *Nabam Rebia v. Deputy Speaker* (2016).

A timely reminder

The President and the Governor are bound to exercise their executive power in accordance with the Constitution. Every power is coupled with the duty to exercise it for the intended purpose and within a reasonable period. If this is not done, the Writ Court has the duty to step in and require it to be so exercised.

The President under Article 60 and the Governor under Article 159 are to take constitutional oaths and affirm to the best of their ability to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law" and "devote" themselves "to the service and well-being of the people of India or the State as the case may be". How then can the President or the Governor of any State defy the Constitution and act against the will of the people? While President Droupadi Murmu maintains the decorum of the office she holds, some Governors have conducted themselves so poorly as to defile the high constitutional positions they hold. The Supreme Court has therefore given a timely reminder to the President and the Governors to respect and adhere to the Constitution and act in the interest of the people.

Key Takeaways from the Article

• Constitutional Framework of India's Executive:

- ◆ The Indian Constitution establishes a **parliamentary system** of government, where the **President of India and Governors** are ceremonial heads of the state, and their executive powers are exercised on the advice of the Council of Ministers.
- ◆ (Articles 52, 153, 74, and 163 – Discuss)
- ◆ Model?

The LowGist		THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA	
Article	Description	1. The Presidential Framework	
52	Establishes the President of India as the ceremonial head, symbolizing unity and sovereignty.	• Article 52: Establishing the Office of the President	
53	Defines the powers and functions of the President, subject to the Council of Ministers.	2. Executive Authority	
54	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Articles 53-54: Vesting and Election of the President	
55	Specifies the manner of election of the Vice-President.	3. Presidential Election Procedures	
56	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Article 55: Presidential Election Procedures	
57	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	4. Qualifications and Conditions	
58	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Articles 56-57: Term and Re-eligibility	
59	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Articles 58-59: Eligibility and Office Conditions	
60	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	5. Inauguration and Impeachment	
61	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Articles 60-61: Oath and Impeachment Process	
62	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	6. Vice-Presidential Role	
63	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Articles 62-64: Vacancies and Election of Vice-President	
64	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	7. Vice-Presidential Duties	
65	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Articles 65-69: Acting as President and Terms of Office	
66	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	8. Election Procedures	
67	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Article 70: Discharge of Presidential Functions	
68	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	9. Election Matters	
69	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Article 71: Election-Related Provisions	
70	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	10. Presidential Clemency Powers	
71	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Article 72: Pardon and Commutations	
72	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	11. Executive Scope	
73	Specifies the manner of election of the President and the Vice-President.	• Article 73: Extent of Union Executive Power	





- **Constitutional Framework of India's Executive:**

- ◆ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, in his address during the **Constituent Assembly debates**, clarified that the President's role is to **symbolize** the nation and serve as the head of the State but **not the head of the executive**.
- ◆ The executive powers are vested in the **Council of Ministers**, led by the **Prime Minister** at the Centre and the **Chief Minister** at the State level.



- **Judicial Interpretation of Executive Powers:**

- ◆ The **Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974)** judgment clarified that the President exercises powers only **on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers**, affirming that the head of the state is not an **absolute authority**.
- ◆ **Nabam Rebia v. Deputy Speaker (2016)**



- **Role of the President and Governors:**

- ◆ **Article 60 and Article 159.**
- ◆ However, instances where Governors act in a manner **contrary to the spirit of the Constitution** that necessitate judicial intervention.
- ◆ The **Supreme Court** has provided a timely reminder to the President and Governors to adhere to the **Constitutional framework** and act in alignment with the **will of the people**.

GOVTS CAN'T BE AT GUV'S MERCY: T'GANA

► Telangana government seeks timeline for governors to respond on bills sent to them, complaining that governor Tamilisai Soundarajan (pic) was sitting for long on 10 bills passed by the assembly

► SC refers to Article 200 of the Constitution that says "provided that the governor may, **as soon as possible** after the presentation to him of the bill for assent, return the bill if it is not a

money bill together with a message requesting that the House or Houses will reconsider the bill..."

► Solicitor general Tushar Mehta protests, saying governor's office had informed SC that **no bills are pending**

► Telangana counsel presses for "general ruling" on delays by governors, saying, "The elected governments in states cannot be put at the governor's mercy"



- **The Tamil Nadu Case:**

- ◆ The **State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor of Tamil Nadu (2025)** judgment reaffirmed the correct constitutional position regarding the duties of the **Governor** and **President**, emphasizing that executive powers must be exercised within a **reasonable time frame** and for the **intended constitutional purpose**.
- ◆ The judgment underscores that **Governors** should not act unilaterally and must adhere to the advice of the **Council of Ministers**. Any failure to do so can lead to **judicial intervention**.

Court's prescription

SC observed that Governor is "playing with fire" by holding back crucial Bills

■ Governor cannot sit on Bills claiming the House passed them in an invalid session convened after adjourning sine die without prorogation

■ Speaker is within jurisdiction in adjourning the House sine die

■ Any attempt to cast doubt on the session of the Legislature is fraught with grave perils to democracy

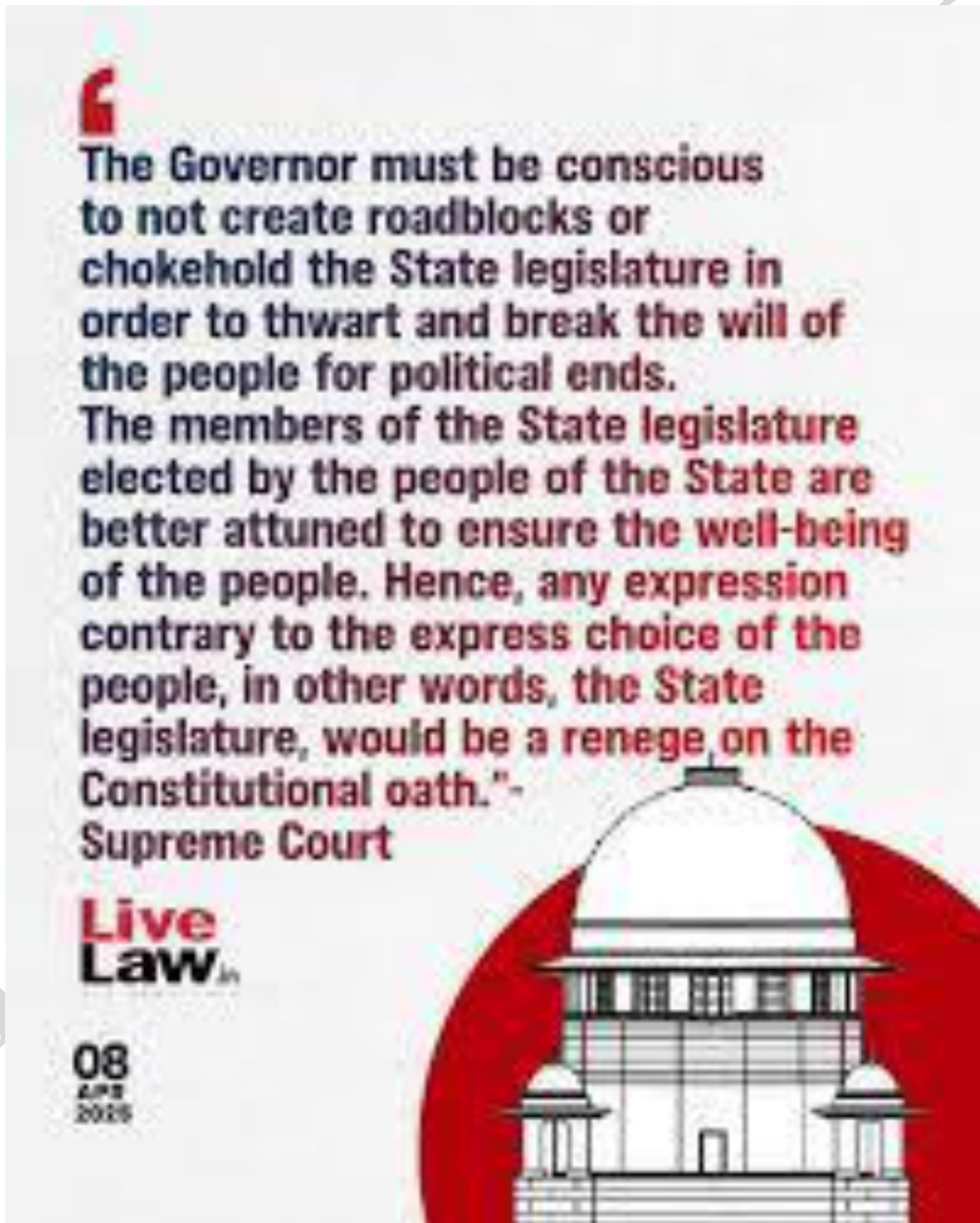
The Governor, as an appointee of the President, is a titular head of the State
SUPREME COURT BENCH





- **Accountability of Governors:**

- ◆ The Supreme Court's ruling highlights the **responsibility of Governors** to not only act in accordance with constitutional provisions but also to **act within a reasonable period** and **in the interest of the people**.
- ◆ Governors who delay their duties or defy constitutional mandates are seen as undermining the **democratic processes** and violating their oath.





Madhav National Park

- ◆ Location: ?
- ◆ Hills: ?
- ◆ Designation: ?
- ◆ National Park in: ?
- ◆ Fauna: ?

With big cat count rising, M.P. to develop buffer zones around its 9 tiger reserves

The Hindu Bureau

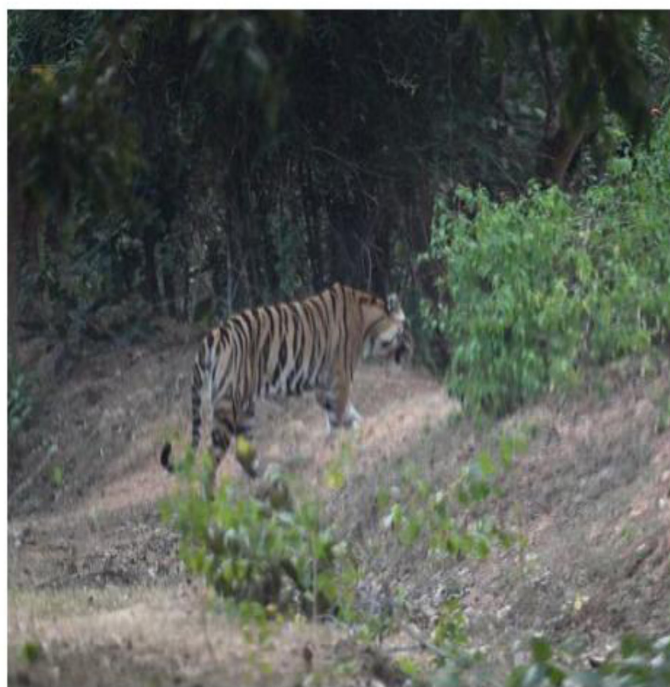
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday approved a scheme for developing buffer zones in the State's nine tiger reserves, the government said.

The approval for the new scheme, 'Development of Buffer Zones in Tiger Reserves', with a total outlay of ₹145 crore for the financial years 2025-26 and 2027-28, was given at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav.

As part of the scheme, chain-link fencing will be installed in the ecologically sensitive buffer areas, apart from developing grasslands and water resources.

"Key activities under the



Tracing the pug marks: A big cat spotted near the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. The tiger population in Madhya Pradesh has increased from 526 to 785 over the past four years. FILE PHOTO

scheme will include the installation of chain-link fencing in ecologically sensitive buffer areas, implementation of wildlife pro-

tection and fire safety measures, development of grasslands and water sources, health monitoring and treatment of wild ani-

mals, and skill development training programmes for local communities," the State government said in a statement.

Conservation efforts

Inaugurated on March 10, Madhav National Park became the ninth tiger reserve in the State, the highest among all States. Three tigers, including two females, were introduced to the park in 2023 as part of the tiger reintroduction project in the State.

"Notably, the tiger population in buffer zones surrounding Madhya Pradesh's nine tiger reserves has increased from 526 to 785 over the past four years, underlining the importance of continued conservation efforts," the government said.

