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HEAD OFFICE: 53/1, UPPER GROUND FLOOR, BADA BAZAR ROAD,
OLD RAJINDER NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110060



Topics Covered

- **Recounting Velpur's story in ending child labour**
- **Violent Crimes by juveniles have increased in India**
- **Why was Malta's golden passports scheme scrapped?**
- **Why C. Sankaran Nair's legacy cannot be compartmentalised**
- **India unlikely to ratify 'High Seas Treaty' at UN Ocean Conference**
- **Human oversight key to safe use of AI in healthcare**

Recounting Velpur's story in ending child labour

Syllabus :

GS-II (Governance, Policy Implementation): Role of local governance, MoUs, decentralised education reform.

GS-I (Society): Child labour as a socioeconomic problem.

GS-IV (Ethics): Case study on public service ethics, moral courage, community trustbuilding.

Recounting Velpur's story in ending child labour

Every year, June 12 is observed as World Day Against Child Labor (WDACL) under the auspices of the International Labour Organization (ILO). In an attempt to draw the attention of the world on the issue of child labour, the day brings together governments, employers and workers' organisations as well as civil society to work towards ending child labour. Though Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7 calls on the global community to take effective measures to end child labour in all its forms by 2025, we are far from achieving this.

Child labour is prevalent all over the world, robbing many children of their basic right to live with dignity, enjoy their childhood and attain their full development potential. Across the world, 160 million children are estimated to be involved in child labour – which is almost one among 10 children. The Africa, Asia and the Pacific regions together account for almost nine out of every 10 children being in child labour. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation for many underprivileged children, when their schools closed, and their parents lost their jobs/wages. Many children who dropped out of school, and who were forced to work to supplement their family income, have not returned to school.

The extent of child labour in India
India has a significant incidence of child labour. Census 2011 estimated that 43.53 lakh children in the age group of five to 14 were involved in child labour due to factors such as poverty, non-accessibility and illiteracy. Child labour is preferred in beedi, carpet-weaving and firework factories.

India enacted the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (CLPRA) in 1986, while the National Policy on Child Labour, 1987 sought to adopt a gradual and sequential approach with a focus on rehabilitation. Its action plan included strict enforcement of the CLPRA and implementation of the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) in areas where there is a high incidence of child labour. The CLPRA was replaced with the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, which prohibited the employment of children below 14 and had provisions for the prohibition on employment of adolescents (14-18 years) in scheduled hazardous occupations. The Right to Education now mandates that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group six to 14 years. Most drives against child labour have been



Asok Kumar G.
is a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, and is currently a senior faculty member in the Centre for Policy Research

effective but only for a short time. There are several instances of children who were engaged earlier in labour and who dropped out of school returning to their workplace. But there is a success story.

The Velpur model

Velpur Mandal (tehsil) of Nizamabad district in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana), was once notorious for child labour. But in a dramatic way it became a rare exception of shunning child labour due to the total control, the commitment and the involvement of the local community. In June 2001, a drive involving the community was started in Velpur to ensure that all children in the age group of five to 15 years went to school and that no child would be engaged as labour in any form. After a sustained campaign for about 100 days, Velpur was declared to be a "child labour free mandal", on October 2, 2001. Twenty-four years later, there is 100% retention in schools and no child labour in a mandal once notorious for it.

The campaign to identify and track every out-of-school child and enrol them in schools was initially led by a committed set of officials. But the fact is that there was large-scale resistance in the beginning. Canards were spread that the teams moving in villages were part of a nationwide racket to kidnap children and sell their organs such as kidneys and eyes. Hotels refused to serve even tea, with those in hotels making sarcastic remarks that all their servers had joined school.

But after persistent efforts and discussions with the people, the tide began to turn. People began to cooperate and even transformed it as their movement. Children who were seen in work places were sent to bridge schools under the NCLP. Public meetings emphasised the necessity of education and the need for children to go to school. In these meetings, children recognised their (former) employers who let them stop work and go to school.

Under peer pressure, former employers also made a public announcement of writing off the balance amount (principal, the interest and penal interest) owed to them by the parents who took hand loans from them (the children were used as mortgage and as child labour till the amount was repaid). They even distributed school stationery to the children.

A study found that a total amount of about ₹35 lakh was written off – the price for a good cause. All sarpanchs signed a memorandum of understanding (as in the provisions of the Andhra Pradesh Compulsory Primary Education Rules, 1982), with the government (district education officer in the presence of the District Collector) to

ensure that all children in the five to 14 age group in their village were sent to school. The government in turn undertook to provide access, infrastructure and teachers. This was the first time that such an agreement had been signed between sarpanchs and the government. There is no child labour – an achievement that is very zealously guarded by the community. To cherish this proud achievement of being the first mandal in the State to be declared child labour free and to remind them of their commitment to sustain it, villagers erected boards in every village with the words, 'There is no child labour in our village'.

On October 8, 2021, as a part of the 'Azadi Ka Amruth Mahotsav', the VV. Giri National Labour Institute, (VVGNI) Noida, Uttar Pradesh (under the Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India) organised a programme in Nizamabad. The event was to celebrate 20 years of successful intervention "to eliminate child labour and the declaration of Velpur Mandal, as Child labour free". All sarpanchs, caste elders, zilla parishad members and people involved in the campaign were honoured for their role in sustaining it. The challenge made to the local media to identify at least one child who was not in school had no takers. A leading news magazine had an exclusive report on this event.

The Velpur story is well documented and has been appreciated by the ILO and the media. Velpur has been visited by many experts in the fields of education and child labour. The former President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and members of the National Human Rights Commission India sent letters of appreciation.

The Velpur model, where there was the complete participation of the community in sustaining the fight against child labour, is an integral part of all training programmes that are organised by the VVGNI. Made aware of its sustained success, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Textiles and Skill Development asked the then District Collector, who led this campaign, to make a presentation before it on November 24, 2022. The Parliamentary Standing Committee appreciated and acknowledged its success.

What is vital

This is a community-led success story that is testimony of the axiom that social issues can be successfully and sustainably addressed only if they metamorphose into a people's movement. It is a proud moment for this writer to have been associated with it. He was the Collector of Nizamabad district, when this drive against child labour was taken up in Velpur in 2001.





Key points from article

World Day Against Child Labour (WDACL) is observed every year on **June 12**, led by the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**. It aims to raise awareness and encourage global action against child labour.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8.7 urges the world to eliminate all forms of child labour by **2025**, but progress has been slow.



Global Situation:

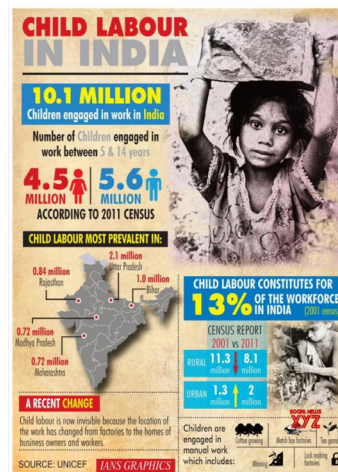
- Around **160 million** children worldwide are engaged in child labour — that's nearly **1 in 10**.
- **Africa, Asia, and the Pacific** account for 90% of these cases.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** worsened the problem: School closures.
Job losses among parents.
- Increased dropout rates and forced entry into labour.

India's Position:

- As per **Census 2011**, **43.53 lakh** children (ages 5–14) were engaged in child labour.
- Predominant industries include **beedi-making, carpet weaving, and firework factories**.
- Root causes: **Poverty, lack of education access, and illiteracy**.

Legal and Policy Framework in India

- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986**: First attempt at legal control.
- **National Policy on Child Labour, 1987**: Gradual approach with rehabilitation.
- **National Child Labour Project (NCLP)**: Set up bridge schools for rescued child workers.
- **Amendment Act, 2016**:
Complete ban on employment of children below 14.
Ban on adolescents (14–18) in hazardous occupations.
- **Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009**: Free & compulsory education for ages 6–14.





Velpur Mandal: A Model of Community-Led Change

Velpur Mandal, Nizamabad district (then Andhra Pradesh, now Telangana).

Once infamous for widespread child labour.

Start of the Movement:

Initiated in **June 2001** by committed government officials, led by then Collector **Asok Kumar G.**

Goal: Ensure **every child (5–15 years)** goes to school; **no child** engaged in labour.

After a **100-day campaign**, Velpur was declared “**Child Labour Free**” on **October 2, 2001**.

Resistance and Breakthrough

- Initial **resistance** from the public:
- Rumours about **organ trafficking** by officials. Businesses mocked the initiative; refused cooperation.

Turnaround:

- **Consistent engagement**, public meetings, trustbuilding.
- **Community slowly began owning the mission.**
- **Children themselves identified their past employers** in meetings.

Role of Employers and Community

Former employers:

Publicly **forgave all outstanding hand loans** (₹35 lakh total).

Gave **school supplies** to encourage education.

Sarpanchs (village heads) signed **MoUs with the govt.** under AP Compulsory Primary Education Rules (1982).

Guaranteed 100% school enrolment for 5–14 age group.

Govt provided **infrastructure, access, and teachers.**

Legacy and Impact

- Even **24 years later**, Velpur maintains:
- **100% school retention. Zero child labour.** Signboards in villages proudly declare: “There is no child labour in our village.”

Foundations of Social Change

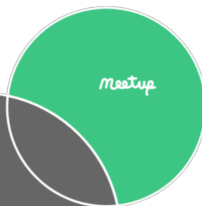
Legal Backing

Highlights the necessity of legal support and grassroots involvement for sustainable solutions.



Community Engagement

Involves active participation and collaboration within communities to drive change.



Behavioural Change

Emphasizes the importance of shifting societal behaviors for progress.



Administrative Efforts

Focuses on persistent and people-oriented administrative practices.



Social Change





Conclusion

The **Velpur Model** demonstrates that child labour is not just a legal or economic issue — it is a **social challenge** that needs **community ownership** and **collective responsibility**.

When a district administration works with the people, sustainable transformation becomes possible. The story of Velpur is not just about ending child labour — it's about empowering an entire generation through education and dignity.

Violent Crimes by juveniles have increased in India

Syllabus :

GS Paper 1 – Society

Violent crimes by juveniles have increased in India

In 2022, nearly half the juveniles apprehended in India were accused of violent offences

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy

Adolescence, a British mini-series released a few months ago, tells the chilling story of a 13-year-old boy, Jamie, who murders his classmate, Katie. It was critically acclaimed for its single-take format, powerful performances, seamless direction, and excellent storytelling.

More importantly, the series sparked conversations not just in the U.K. but worldwide about issues such as cyberbullying, involuntary celibate (incel) subculture, casual online misogyny, the behavioural shifts in adolescence, and the increasingly complex world that boys find themselves navigating today.

The series sought to examine why a young boy committed a violent crime. This is an important attempt as data shows that violent crimes by juveniles are rising across the world, including in India. Violent crimes include sexual offences such as rape, acts of physical violence such as murder, bodily injury or attempted murder, and other offences such as arson, dacoity, and robbery. Offences such as rash driving, causing death by negligence, forgery, cheating, trespassing, fraud, pickpocketing, thefts, and obscene acts in public places have been excluded from this analysis as they are all considered mostly non-violent in nature.

Chart 1 shows the share of youth apprehended for violent crimes out of all the youth apprehended for criminal offences in select countries between 2016 and 2020. Even in the brief period considered, the share of youth apprehended for violent crimes rose considerably. For instance, in the U.K., the share increased from 50% to 57% among juveniles.

The pattern is the same in India too. Last month, a 13-year-old boy in Hubli, Karnataka, was taken in-

to custody for stabbing his 15-year-old friend following an argument over chips. In another incident last month, police in Chennai arrested 12 people – seven of them minors – for the alleged rape and sexual assault of a 13-year-old girl.

While the total number of juveniles in conflict with the law declined from 37,402 in 2017 to 33,261 in 2022 in India, the share of those apprehended for violent offences steadily increased (**Chart 2**). In 2016, of all the juveniles apprehended, 32.5% were caught for committing violent crimes. By 2022, this figure had risen to 49.5%. This means that half the juveniles who were in conflict with the law were apprehended for violent offences.

A State-wise breakdown of violent crimes committed by juveniles in India shows that Madhya Pradesh accounted for 21.8% of all such cases between 2017 and 2022, followed by Maharashtra with 18% (**Chart 3**). Rajasthan (9.6%), Chhattisgarh (8.4%), and Tamil Nadu (5.8%) ranked third, fourth, and fifth, respectively. Delhi stood out. Despite its relatively small size, the capital accounted for 6.8% of all violent crimes committed by juveniles in the country, possibly due to better policing and reporting of such cases.

Regarding the proportion of violent crimes among all juvenile offences within each State, Jharkhand had the highest share (67%) in the 2017 to 2022 period. In Tripura, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, over 60% of the juvenile offences can be classified as violent in the same period. **Map 4** shows the proportion of violent crimes among all juvenile offences within each State.

Chart 3 and **Map 4**, when read together, show that many central and eastern States are hotspots for violent juvenile crimes, with Madhya Pradesh being the most affected. Odisha, however, remains an exception in the region, with only 10% of all juvenile crimes being violent in nature.



The data for the charts were sourced from NCRB, Statistics Canada, U.S. Department of Justice, and Office of National Statistics. Only IPC crimes have been considered

Many central and eastern States in India are hotspots for violent juvenile crimes, with Madhya Pradesh being the most affected

Chart 1: The % of juveniles apprehended for violent crimes out of all the juveniles apprehended in select nations (2016-2020)

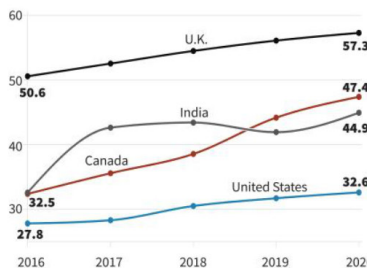
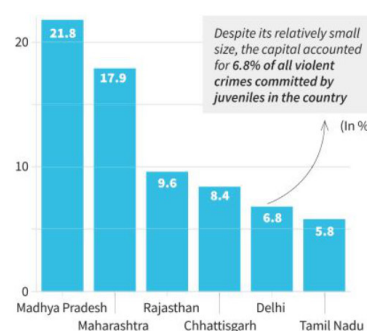
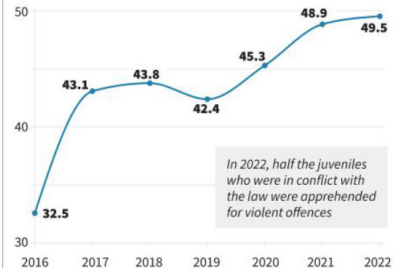


Chart 3: State-wise breakdown of violent crimes committed by juveniles in India (2017-2022). Only top States are depicted



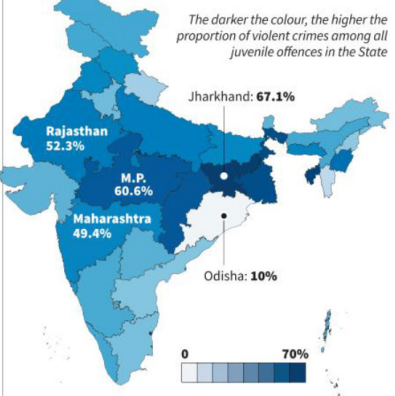
A State-wise breakdown of violent crimes committed by juveniles in India shows that Madhya Pradesh accounted for 21.8% of all such cases, followed by Maharashtra with 18%

Chart 2: The % of juveniles apprehended for violent offences out of all the juveniles apprehended in India (2016-2022)



In 2022, half the juveniles who were in conflict with the law were apprehended for violent offences

Map 4: The proportion of violent crimes among all juvenile offences within each State (2017-2022)



The darker the colour, the higher the proportion of violent crimes among all juvenile offences in the State





Key points from the article

In 2022, **49.5%** of juveniles apprehended in India were for **violent crimes** — a **steep rise** from **32.5% in 2016**.

This rise comes **despite a fall in the total number** of juveniles in conflict with the law (from **37,402 in 2017 to 33,261 in 2022**).

Violent Crimes

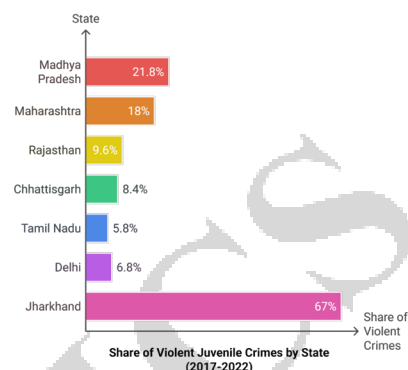
Includes : **Rape, Murder, Attempt to murder, Bodily harm, Dacoity, Robbery**

Excluded: **Rash driving, Forgery, Theft, Fraud, Cheating, Pickpocketing, Obscene acts**

Increasing exposure to **online toxicity, cyberbullying, and misogynistic content** are being examined as possible drivers.

Indicates need for: **Better juvenile mental health support Stronger preventive interventions** **Balanced approach in juvenile justice system**

Why was Malta's golden passports scheme scrapped?



Why was Malta's golden passports scheme scrapped?

Syllabus :

GS-II: Polity and International Relations Interplay between **national sovereignty** and **supranational institutions** (like EU).

Principles of **citizenship, federalism, and integration**.

GS-III: Internal Security Golden passports' link to **money laundering** and **global financial crime**.

Why was Malta's 'golden passports' scheme scrapped?

Does the 'citizenship by investment' scheme commodify EU citizenship?

Garimella Subramaniam

The story so far:

In late April, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) struck down Malta's 'golden passports' scheme — a 2020 scheme which authorises the naturalisation of foreigners in the country, and consequently the European Union, in return for hefty financial investments in the country. Brussels had launched infringement proceedings against Malta, as it persisted with its own scheme, blocking access only to Russians and Belarusians consequent to Russia's war against Ukraine.

What are CBIs and RBIs?

Citizenship by investment (CBI), known as golden passports, and residency by investment (RBI), or golden visas, enable third country nationals to live and work in host countries in exchange for financial investments. The European Parliament

and the Commission have called for both forms of mobility to be abolished in view of the inherent risks to security, such as money laundering, organised crime, tax evasion and corruption. Between 2013 and 2019, about 1,32,000 persons had obtained entry into the EU through CBI and RBI schemes, generating financial inflows of over €20 billion, as per a 2022 European Parliament Research Service report. The risks from CBI and RBI have been highlighted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Financial Action Task Force. Principal among the beneficiaries of such migration are nationals from China, Russia and West Asia.

Why is the EU against the scheme?

Within the 27-member bloc, the acquisition or loss of nationality falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of each country. That said, the historic 1992 Maastricht Treaty inaugurated common

EU citizenship. That is to say, nationals of an EU state are simultaneously common EU citizens. Therefore, the matter of the grant or rejection of nationality must accord with EU law.

The European Commission contended that the attractiveness of Malta's CBI scheme did not lie in the acquisition of Maltese nationality per se, but instead in the rights that accrue from the complementary EU citizenship. The implicit assumption here being the unique appeal of the absence of internal frontiers, the right to free movement and work across the bloc, the right to vote and to be elected in local as well as European parliament elections. The Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made a pointed reference to golden passports in the 2020 State of the Union address, declaring that "European values are not for sale." Brussels further argued that the grant of nationality in return for investments — a commodification of

citizenship — was incompatible with the principles of membership of the bloc. These are sincere cooperation, fairness and non-discrimination — codified in Article 4(3) of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and under Article 20 of the 2009 Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

What did the ECJ verdict state?

Upholding the Commission's claims, the court reasoned that the pillars of European citizenship are dependent on mutual trust among member states and mutual respect for national decisions. The bond of nationality of a given state is underpinned by a "relationship of solidarity, good faith and the reciprocity of rights and duties between the state and citizens," the court added. These principles are infringed upon once citizenship is sought to be granted as a commercial transaction in exchange for an investment. The 2020 Maltese scheme is tantamount to the commercialisation of the grant of nationality of a particular state, and by extension, of the entire bloc. This is incompatible with EU treaties.

What next?

In theory, Malta could exercise its authority to confer nationality to those who availed the CBI scheme, minus union citizenship. This would risk diminishing its appeal as a destination state.

The writer is Director, Strategic Initiatives, AgnoShin Technologies.

THE GIST

Citizenship by investment (CBI), known as golden passports, and residency by investment (RBI), or golden visas, enable third country nationals to live and work in host countries in exchange for financial investments.

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Key points from article

In April 2024, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) struck down Malta's 'golden passport' scheme. The scheme allowed foreigners to gain Maltese (and thereby EU) citizenship in exchange for large financial investments.

The European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against Malta for continuing this scheme despite repeated objections — only blocking Russians and Belarusians post-Ukraine war.

What Are Golden Passports and Golden Visas?

Citizenship by Investment (CBI):

Also called **Golden Passports**.

Citizenship granted to foreigners in exchange for **significant financial investments**.

Residency by Investment (RBI):

Also called **Golden Visas**.

Foreigners obtain **residency rights** (not citizenship) through investment.

Concerns:

Security risks: **Money laundering, Organised crime, Tax evasion, Corruption**

Scale of Use (2013–2019)

1.32 lakh individuals gained access to the EU via CBI/RBI.

Generated €20 billion+ in investments.

Major beneficiaries: Nationals from **China, Russia, and West Asia**.

Why Did the EU Oppose Malta's Scheme?

- **Legal Stand:**
- As per **EU law**, the **acquisition or loss of nationality** is a national decision — BUT, EU citizenship was introduced by the **1992 Maastricht Treaty** — any EU national is also a **citizen of the EU**, with rights across the Union.
- **EU's Argument:**
Malta's scheme **commodified** EU citizenship:
It wasn't just about Maltese nationality, but **access to EU benefits, Free movement, Right to work, Right to vote (local & European), No internal borders**
Such access should be based on **genuine ties**, not monetary transactions.
- **Principles Violated:**
Sincere cooperation, fairness, and non-discrimination under:
Article 4(3) of the Maastricht Treaty.
Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (2009).

CBI schemes, while economically lucrative, risk diluting the sanctity of citizenship.

EU opposes commodification of values and rights associated with **European citizenship**.

The **Malta verdict** signals stricter scrutiny of such schemes across the EU.

Raises broader questions: Should **national identity and belonging** be sold? Can citizenship be earned through **contribution or association**, not just capital?





Why C . Sankaran Nair's legacy cannot be compartmentalised

Syllabus :

GS-I: Modern Indian History Contributions of freedom fighters beyond GandhiNehru.

Why C. Sankaran Nair's legacy cannot be compartmentalised

The political appropriation of Sir C. Sankaran Nair's legacy by both the BJP and the Congress is deeply problematic, given his complex historical positioning

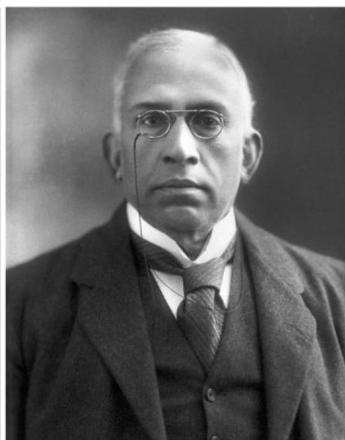
Faisal C.K.

Recruiting historical figures – particularly stalwarts of the Indian National Movement – into contemporary political narratives has become a recurring strategy employed by Indian politicians. After daffily appropriating icons like Sardar Patel, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the BJP has recently “discovered” a long-forgotten hero of the freedom struggle: Sir C. Sankaran Nair, the only stalwart from Kerala to have presided over the Indian National Congress. Not to be outdone, the Congress has scrambled to reclaim its former president – a man it had buried in oblivion for nearly a century. The recent film *Kesari Chapter 2: The Untold Story of Jallawala Bagh*, which portrays Sir C. Sankaran Nair as an unsung hero, has now brought him into the limelight. The political appropriation of Sir C. Sankaran Nair's legacy by both the BJP and the Congress is deeply problematic, given his complex historical positioning. The BJP highlights Nair's criticism of Mahatma Gandhi, particularly in his later work *Gandhi and Anarchy* (1922), where he questioned Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. By portraying Nair as a “forgotten nationalist” sidelined by the Congress due to his opposition to Gandhi, the BJP reinforces its broader narrative of the Congress “erasing” leaders who dissented from the Gandhi-Nehru line. However, reducing Nair's legacy to mere anti-Gandhianism is a disservice to his multifaceted contributions. On the other hand, the Congress appears clueless in deciphering Nair's colonial personality, having ignored him for decades.

The autobiography of Sir C. Sankaran Nair, published by his daughter Lady Mathuram Nair in 1966, is a treasure trove for enthusiasts of modern Indian history. His prelude aptly underlines the historical significance of his memoirs, “Reminiscences are sometimes regarded as the harmless hobbies of the advanced age [...] I believe that interest in these reminiscences is not merely personal but historical. To be an octogenarian in a land where this species has become a rarity and to have spent over half a century in front ranks of public life forms perhaps a sufficient excuse for recapturing one's memories [...] This has become all the more necessary on account of the publications of such books as the late Mr Montagu's *An Indian Diary* and Sir Michael O'Dwyer's *India as I Knew It* which contain jaundiced versions of incidents of which I was once spectator and actor”.

A liberal humanist

Sir C. Sankaran Nair was a cosmopolitan thinker who loathed parochialism and ethnic nationalism. A lifelong member of London's National Liberal Club, he was a staunch advocate of universal liberty and equality. Even during his college days, he boldly challenged British racial supremacy. Once, when Justice Holloway, an English judge, asserted that the English were the only people never conquered, young Sankaran Nair refuted him by citing French historian Adolphe Thiers, who noted that the Normans – descendants of a French duchy – had conquered and enslaved the English.



A portrait of C. Sankaran Nair. NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY LONDON

Holloway retorted that Normans and Saxons were of the same stock. “By that logic,” Sankaran Nair shot back, “we are all descended from Adam, rendering your argument meaningless!” This exchange epitomised his unswerving commitment to humanist ideals – principles that today's politicians, eager to exorcise Nair for political gain, would barely find indigestible.

Despite his differences with Gandhi, Sir C. Sankaran Nair shared some common ground with him. Both admired India's autonomous village republics; as a member of the Madras Legislative Council, Nair opposed the Village Cess Bill, fearing it would erode the traditional village system. He expressed hope that a future nationalist government would revive these republics. And similarly, like Gandhi, he was a passionate social reformer and eventually became president of the social reform movement. For Nair, political independence was not an end in itself but a means to achieve social regeneration. He made unsuccessful attempts to reform the matrilineal system among Kerala's Nairs and actively fought against caste oppression and gender disparities in Hindu law.

Despite his disagreements with Gandhi, Nair acknowledged his global stature, remarking, “Thanks to him, India has become a world problem.” However, in *Gandhi and Anarchy*, Nair sharply criticised the contradiction between Gandhi's doctrine of Ahimsa and his support for the caste system, which,

English law is individualistic; Indian law is communalistic. Under English law, England progressed astonishingly; Hindu law perpetuated a stagnant society, hastening its enslavement.” Nair admitted Buddha and Christ, and even published an article on the Biblical sisters, Mary and Martha of Bethany, contrasting the West's action-oriented ethos (epitomised by Martha) with the East's contemplative tradition (symbolised by Mary). As the Viceroy's council member in charge of education, he advocated English as the medium of higher education, believing it essential for India's political progress, social reform, and women's emancipation. It is doubtful whether the BJP, with its conservative social outlook, can genuinely embrace Nair's liberal secularism.

Protector of free speech

Nair was a fearless practitioner of free speech. As the third Indian appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council, he oversaw education, health, and land. During World War I, as the member in charge of ecclesiastical affairs, he was presented with a draft prayer for churches, seeking Allied victory. Nair refused, stating, “Christ does not take sides in war. He who lives by the sword shall perish by the sword – that is his teaching.” His defiance cost him the ecclesiastical portfolio, but he never compromised his principles for political expediency.

Even the Viceroy felt the sting of his candour. After resigning from the Viceroy's Council in protest against the Jallawala Bagh massacre, Nair had a final interview with Viceroy Chelmsford, who asked if he had a successor to recommend. “Yes,” Nair replied, pointing to his pen, “What?” exclaimed the shocked Viceroy. “Why not? He is tall, handsome, wears his livery well, and will agree to everything you say. An ideal council member!” This fearless wit contrasts sharply with today's political climate, where the BJP nurtures an ecosystem of “repressive tolerance” – mirroring the Congress's authoritarianism during the Emergency.

A thorough pragmatist

K.P.S. Menon, Independent India's first Foreign Secretary and Nair's son-in-law, wrote in *Builders of Modern India*: C. Sankaran Nair (1867), “Once, I remarked to Nair: ‘Your time in the Viceroy's Council must have been the most fruitful period of your life.’ ‘Fruitful!’ he exclaimed. ‘It was hellish... hellish.’ After a pause, he added: ‘Still, perhaps it was fruitful. I would have no regrets if I advanced Indian unity as I did Indian freedom.’ Nair's tenure – hellish for him but fruitful for India – cements his place among the nation's builders. Unlike many of today's politicians, whose careers are fruitful for themselves but hellish for the nation, Nair embodied selfless service.

He was a political realist. As Menon noted, “The vision of ‘Mother India,’ with its emotional overtones, held no appeal for Sankaran Nair. He never romanticised a golden past, nor did he see India as a mystic entity, as Jawaharlal Nehru sometimes did. To him, India was a land of millions – ignorant, illiterate, half-starved, superstitious, and shackled by caste.”

Tragically, India's reality remains as deplorable today as in Nair's time. If politicians genuinely care for the masses, they should learn from Nair's selflessness and integrity rather than exploit him for propaganda fodder. Sir C. Sankaran Nair was a visionary liberal, a secularist, and a fearless advocate of justice – qualities scarce in today's political landscape. Reducing him to a partisan mascot insults his legacy.

Faisal C.K. is Deputy Law Secretary to the Government of Kerala.

Sir C. Sankaran Nair

Sir C. Sankaran Nair — a towering figure of the Indian freedom struggle and a former president of the Indian National Congress — has recently been catapulted into political discourse through films like Kesari Chapter 2 and competing narratives by BJP and Congress.

About Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair

- Born in **1857** into an aristocratic family in **Mankara village**, Palakkad district, **Malabar region** (present-day Kerala).
- Renowned for his **moral courage, strong convictions, and vocal opposition to colonial injustice.**
- Graduated from **Presidency College, Madras.**
- Began his legal career under **Sir Horatio Shepherd**, who later became Chief Justice of the Madras High Court.

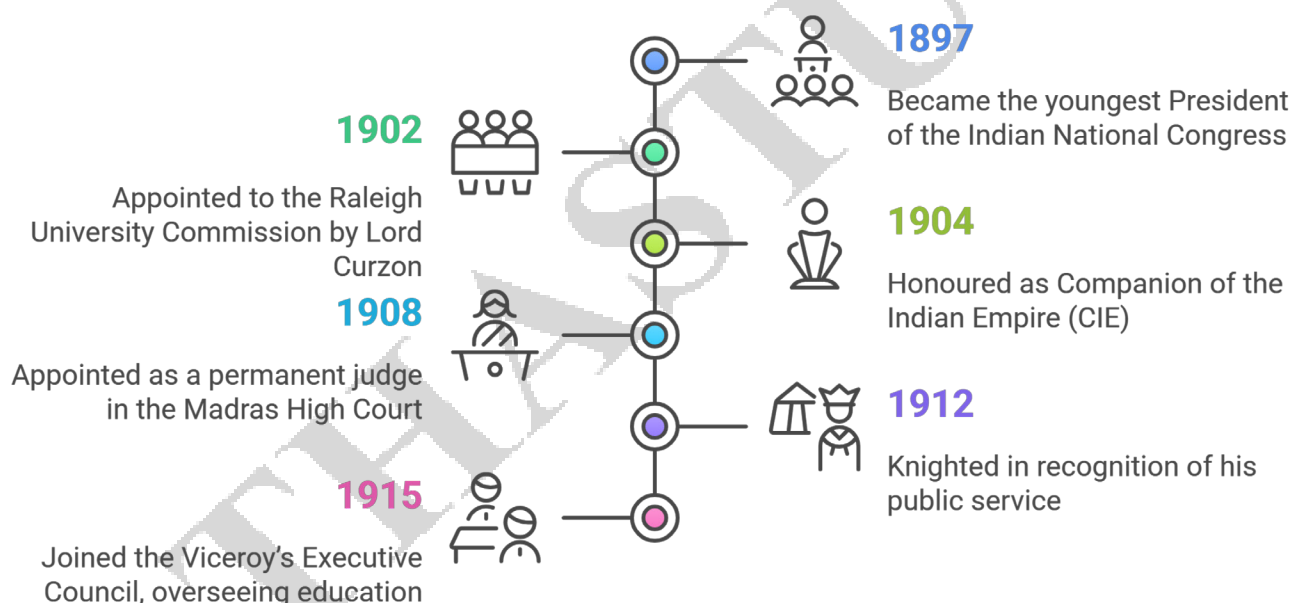




The Humanist and Liberal Thinker

- He was a staunch believer in universal liberty and equality. As a member of London's National Liberal Club, he reflected a cosmopolitan worldview.
- He became known for a famous rebuttal to British racial arrogance during his college days, which highlighted his early commitment to human dignity.
- His remark, "By that logic, we are all descended from Adam," challenged racial superiority.
- His ideology stood in opposition to the religious nationalism and narrow identity politics prevalent today.
- He served on the Viceroy's Executive Council, handling portfolios such as education, health, and land.
- He resigned in protest after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Sir Chettur Sankaran Nair's Illustrious Career



Relationship with Gandhi: Agreement and Dissent Common Ground

- Both leaders admired autonomous village systems.
- They shared a deep passion for social reform, especially concerning caste and women's rights.



Points of Divergence

- He opposed Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement and the Khilafat agitation. He criticised Gandhi's contradiction in upholding Ahimsa while supporting caste hierarchies. He remarked, "**The caste system is opposed to Ahimsa.** It dedicates one caste to death."
- His criticism was constructive, rooted in ethical coherence and a belief in constitutionalism.



Vision of a Secular and Just India

In his **Amaravati Congress** speech, he called for: Breaking Hindu religious isolation Promoting education for the lower castes Ensuring gender equality Establishing a strictly secular state supportive of liberal reform He opposed religious universities such as Banaras Hindu University, fearing the communalisation of education. His concept of secularism was proactive and progressive, rooted in Enlightenment rationalism rather than mere tolerance.

A Realist, Not a Romantic

He did not idealise Mother India or ancient civilisational glory.

He viewed India as a land plagued by:, Superstition, Hunger, Caste oppression Illiteracy

For him, freedom held value only if it brought an end to social degradation.

Sir C. Sankaran Nair's life and legacy offer a **rare blend of courage, intellect, and moral clarity**. Reducing him to a political mascot not only **insults his memory**, but also deprives India of one of its **most visionary thinkers**. His legacy reminds us that **freedom, justice, and rational reform are eternal democratic values**, not partisan tools.

India unlikely to ratify 'High Seas Treaty' at UN Ocean Conference

Syllabus :

GS Paper II: International Relations

Treaties and agreements affecting India's global environmental role.

GS Paper III: Environment and Ecology

India unlikely to ratify 'High Seas Treaty' at U.N. Ocean Conference

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

India is unlikely to ratify the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement – also known informally as the 'High Seas Treaty' – at the ongoing United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, France, sources indicated to *The Hindu*.

Though India signed the agreement in September 2024, formal ratification is pending. Before proceeding, the government is required to amend certain laws, including the Biological Diversity Act, it is learnt. "This will probably be taken up after the Monsoon Session (July 12-August 12) and needs to be passed in Parliament. There are other issues that also need to be sorted out," a person familiar with the negotiations said.



India had signed the agreement in 2024, pending ratification. (Seen here) Minister Jitendra Singh at the Ocean Conference 2025. AFP

As of June 10, 49 countries have ratified the treaty. Once 60 countries complete the process, the treaty will enter into legal force.

Union Minister for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh, who is representing India at the conference, which continues until June 13, stated in France that India was in

the "process of ratifying the treaty".

One of the most contentious aspects of the BBNJ is the sharing of resources. The high seas, lying beyond the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of nations, are not under the jurisdiction of any single country, and are known to harbour unique and exotic marine life. While com-

mercial extraction remains technically challenging, a clear mechanism for equitable sharing of potential economic benefits is yet to be finalised.

In his address on June 10, Dr. Singh highlighted India's progress on Samudrayaan, the country's manned submersible mission, which is expected to reach ocean depths of up to 6,000 metres and is slated for a trial dive in 2026. He also referred to India's nationwide ban on single-use plastics and highlighted more than \$80 billion in Blue Economy investments.

India reiterated its call for a legally binding Global Plastics Treaty and launched the 'SAHAV' digital ocean data portal at the conference, underscoring its growing leadership in global marine conservation efforts.





What is the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ Agreement)?

Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement

Purpose:

To ensure the **conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ)**, i.e., **the high seas**.

Addresses issues like **marine genetic resources, environmental impact assessments, capacity building, and technology transfer**.

Negotiated under: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

Trigger for Enforcement: Needs ratification by 60 countries

(As of June 10, 2025, **49 countries** have ratified it)

India's Position

Signed: September 2024

Ratification: Pending

Current Status (June 2025): India is "in the process of ratifying" — according to Union Minister Jitendra Singh.

Why is India Delaying Ratification?

Legal Hurdles: Requires amendments to **existing domestic laws**, especially : **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**
These amendments will likely be taken up **after the Monsoon Session** (July–August 2025).

Contentious Clauses:

Particularly around **resource sharing**:

High seas contain **valuable genetic material** and marine biodiversity.

No clear mechanism for **equitable benefit-sharing**, especially in case of **commercial exploitation**.

Developing countries, including India, are cautious of **developed nations monopolising these benefits**.

Strategic Considerations for India India balances between:

Global marine environmental commitments.

Sovereign control over ocean resources and domestic legal alignment.

Geopolitical competitiveness in ocean technology and exploration.

Concerns over **technology access, intellectual property, and global commons governance** remain.



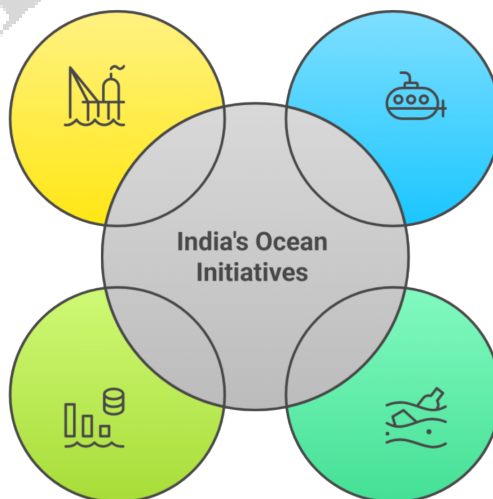
India's Ocean Initiatives

Blue Economy Investments

India has attracted over \$80 billion in marine economy ventures.

Digital Ocean Data Portal

Launch of 'SAHAV' for sharing marine research and data.



Samudrayaan Mission

India's manned deep-sea exploration mission aiming to reach 6,000 meters below sea level.

Plastic Pollution Ban

National ban on single-use plastics and advocacy for a global treaty.

Human oversight key to safe use of AI in healthcare

Syllabus :

GS Paper II: Governance of emerging technologies Healthcare delivery mechanisms

GS Paper III: AI in health science & technology

UPSC PYQ 2023

5. कृत्रिम बुद्धि (ए० आइ०) की अवधारणा का परिचय दीजिए। ए० आइ० क्लिनिकल निदान में कैसे मदद करता है? क्या आप स्वास्थ्य सेवा में ए० आइ० के उपयोग में व्यक्ति की निजता को कोई खतरा महसूस करते हैं?

(उत्तर 150 शब्दों में दीजिए)

Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis? Do you perceive any threat to privacy of the individual in the use of AI in healthcare? (Answer in 150 words) 10

Human oversight key to safe use of AI in healthcare, say experts

From foetal dating and high-risk-pregnancy guidance to virtual autopsies and clinical chatbots, AI tools are matching expert accuracy; yet their promise comes entwined with the systemic challenges of automation bias and weak regulation, exacerbated by sensitivities of the sector itself.

Sayantan Datta

Researchers at IT Madras and the Transnational Health Science and Technology Foundation in Bangalore are developing an artificially intelligent (AI)-model to use ultrasonography pictures to predict a foetus's growth from the 12-week gestation. The model, called 'Fetus Growth Estimating Class', was trained on scans from about 2,500 pregnant women who had visited the Gargaram Hospital, Bangalore. The model can identify different parts of the foetus, its size, and its weight – measures that can be used to monitor the foetus's growth.

After the training, team members tested it with (unlabelled) scans from women who had not visited the same hospital and around 1,000 pregnant women who had visited the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. The model found Carbin G2 agreed on the age of the foetus by only half a day. This is a significant improvement over the common method used: using Hadlock's formula. Because the formula is based on data from Caucasian populations, it has been known to be less accurate in India by up to seven days, according to the IT Madras team.

The team plans to test its model in datasets from around India.

Promise with pitfalls
This is just a glimpse of how AI tools are quietly reshaping Indian healthcare. From foetal ultrasound dating and high-risk-pregnancy guidance to virtual consultations and clinical chatbots, they are matching expert accuracy while accelerating workflows. Yet their promise comes enmeshed with the systemic challenges of data and automation bias, privacy, and weak regulation, often exacerbated by the sensitivities of the

Almost half of all pregnancies in Indian women are high risk pregnancies (HRPs), according to ICMR data in the *Journal of the Global Health*. In 2002, there is a high chance of the mother and the newborn taking ill or dying. The conditions that cause these outcomes include severe anaemia, blood pressure problems, pre-eclampsia, and hypothyroidism. The risks are higher for women with no formal education, those from rural areas, and those belonging to marginalised social groups.

Best way for routine monitoring is the best way to reduce maternal and perinatal mortality in HRPs. In rural areas, this task is often carried out by auxiliary nurse-midwives (ANMs), female health workers who are trained in close contact between a pregnant woman and the medical system. ANMs are trained by medical professionals to recognise HRPs and advise women on their options.

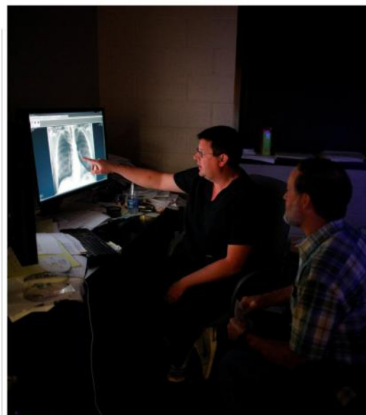
The NGO trains ANMs to track and manage HRPVs through "classroom training and digital learning," Ms. Mahale said, adding that ANMs are also supported through a WhatsApp helpline "for doubt solving and hand holding as they go through the learning content and apply it to real life high risk pregnancy

When in doubt, ANMs are encouraged to reach out to their trainers with queries. However, "the trainers themselves are overworked and do not always prioritize responding to ANM queries," Ms. Mahale said. So AKHMAN adopted an AI chatbot earlier this year. It recognizes both text and voice-based queries from ANMs and responds in the same medium with clinically validated answers.

Medical professionals now "act as human beings who value the patient when the chatbot cannot answer a question," or if the ANIL is not satisfied with the chatbot's response," Ms. Mahale said. Currently being tested with 100 ANMs, the chatbot has received "99% positive feedback" from its users, Mahale added. "A domain expert has rated 99% of the answers to data as accurate and satisfactory."

Rishi also flagged a problem—"The current list of speech [recognition] models struggle with Indian languages, especially regional variations and accents."

This means that the chatbot might fail to understand about 5% of the queries that are shared as voice notes rather than



Tech breakthrough: A doctor reviews chest X rays with a coal miner diagnosed with black lung disease in Kentucky, U.S. (A. Felt)

In 2019 a digital healthcare company experimented with an AI bot that could chat with a patient and present them to a doctor. Nine of the 15 doctors who tested this said it was helpful.

details – and a visual examination of the body and its cavities, these challenges can be overcome.

Privacy concerns
These cases indicate that the best use of AI might be as a healthcare professional's assistant. In 2019, Medibuddy, a digital healthcare company that provides online doctor consultations and other services, experimented with an AI bot that could chat with a patient, extract clinically relevant details from the conversation, and compile and present them to a doctor.

He flagged data privacy as a key concern. In India, digital personal information, including an individual's health information, is governed by the Information Technology Act 2000 and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023. Neither Act specifically mentions AI

To allay these concerns, Mr. Chusati said strong data security protocols are necessary. At Mediabuddy, the team has deployed a few, two of which are a personal identifiable information masking engine and role-based access. A masking

Shivraj Rai, a lawyer who helped draft the National Mobile Numbering Plan, says

Digital Information Security in Healthcare Bill, said "automation bias" is also another cause for concern. Ms. Rai is currently the deputy coordinator of the Centre for Health Equity, Law & Policy in Pune.

This happens when the "human in the loop", such as a doctor, banks too much on the judgement of an AI-powered app "rather than their own clinical

In 2023, researchers from Germany and Netherlands asked radiologists with different degrees of experience to evaluate mammograms (X-ray scan of breasts) and assign them a BI-RADS score. BI-RADS is a standardised metric radiologists use to report the malignancy of cancerous tissue observed in mammograms.

The radiologists were told that an AI model would also parse the mammogram and assign a BI-RADS score. In truth the researchers had no such model; they arbitrarily and secretly assigned a score to some mammograms.

The researchers reported being surprised that "even highly experienced radiologists were adversely impacted by the AI system's judgements," the study's lead author said in 2023.

For Ms. Rai, this study is evidence of a pressing need to train "doctors on the limits of AI" and to constantly test and reassess "AI tools being developed for use in healthcare".

India's rapid adoption of medical AI

Gurjuman Datta is a faculty member at Krets University and an independent science journalist. dgurjuman@kretsuniversity.com



What's the News?

AI tools are increasingly being adopted in India's healthcare sector — from foetal age prediction and high-risk pregnancy management to virtual autopsies and clinical chatbots.

However, this rapid integration is raising concerns around automation bias, lack of regulation, data privacy, and the need for human oversight.



AI applications in healthcare



Foetal Age Prediction

Predicts gestational age from ultrasound scans with high accuracy. Trained on Indian datasets for better results.



HRP Management

AI chatbot assists Auxiliary Nurse-Midwives in managing high-risk pregnancies. Receives positive feedback despite speech model limitations.



Virtual Autopsies

Uses CT/MRI and AI for 3D internal imaging, offering a non-invasive alternative. Has limitations in soft tissue and sensory details.



Clinical Diagnosis

AI extracts patient history and suggests diagnoses to assist doctors. Doctor's reactions are mixed.

Policy and Ethical Recommendations

- **Human-in-the-loop** systems must be ensured: AI should assist, not replace, medical judgement.
- **Clinician Training** on AI capabilities and limitations to prevent automation bias.
- **Robust data protection protocols** (e.g., PII masking, role-based access).
- **Update laws** (IT Act, DPDP Act) to explicitly address AI accountability and patient rights.
- **Language localisation** for voice models (addressing regional dialects/accents).

AI challenges categorized by their impact on reliability

