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India flags attacks on minorities in Bangladesh

India flags attacks on minorities in Bangladesh

External Affairs Ministry condemns the killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Mymensingh city

Reports claiming over 2,900 incidents of violence against minorities can't be brushed aside, it says

New Delhi reiterates call for inclusive election, indicating opposition to barring any political party

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India on Friday said that more than 2,900 violent incidents targeting minority communities had taken place in Bangladesh under the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, and that these incidents could not be dismissed as "political violence" or "media exaggeration".

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal condemned the killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Mymensingh city and reiterated India's call for holding an "inclusive" election, indicating its opposition to excluding any political party from participating in the upcoming election.

"The unremitting hostility against minorities in Bangladesh, including Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists, at the hands of extremists is a matter of grave concern. We condemn the recent gruesome killing of a Hindu youth and expect that the perpetrators of the crime would be brought to justice," he said in the weekly briefing of the Ministry.

Minorities targeted

The remarks came in response to a number of questions on the recent spurt in violence against the minority Hindu community in Bangladesh, especially after the death of Islamist leader Sharif Osman Hadi on December 18. In the aftermath of Hadi's death, several reports of arson attacks against the minority community and the brutal lynching of Das in Mymensingh and Amrit Mandal in Rajbari near Dhaka have cropped up in the media.

In this context, Mr. Jaiswal cited the reports published by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council and other independent organisations and said, "Over 2,900 incidents of violence against minorities, including cases of killings, arson, land grab, have been documented by independent sources during the tenure of the interim government."



Coming together: Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal activists protest, in Prayagraj on Friday over the killing of a Hindu youth in Bangladesh. PTI

These incidents cannot be brushed aside as mere media exaggerations or dismissed as political violence," he added.

'Responsibility of govt.' He reminded Dhaka that the law and order situation and the developments in Bangladesh are "the responsibility of the government" of Bangladesh.

Earlier, Bangladesh had also summoned India's envoy Pranay Verma after protests were held outside its missions in Delhi, Kolkata, Agartala and visa centre in Siliguri.

Responding to a question on Bangladesh's leading daily *Prothom Alo* calling upon India to act "responsibly" by reining in Sheikh Hasina and other

leaders of the Awami League who are allegedly operating from the Indian territory, Mr. Jaiswal did not clarify whether India would recognise the upcoming election as genuine as it will exclude the Awami League but reiterated India's resolve to strengthen ties with the "people of Bangladesh".

The violence against minorities triggered a diplomatic confrontation between Dhaka and New Delhi after protesters targeted India's missions and visa centres in Bangladesh, alleging that the killers of Hadi too had fled to India like the leaders of the Awami League.

In this regard, Mr. Jaiswal said India rejected the "false narrative" that had been circulated in Bangladesh.

He further said New Delhi will support "free, fair, inclusive and participatory elections in Bangladesh".

'Free, fair elections' He also responded to the massive welcome that the acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party Tariq Rahman received in Dhaka on his return from London after prolonged exile, saying Mr. Rahman's return "must be seen" within the "context" of India's support for "free, fair and inclusive elections in Bangladesh".

India has strongly condemned the continuing violence against minority communities in Bangladesh, stating that over 2,900 incidents targeting Hindus, Christians and Buddhists have occurred during the tenure of the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, these incidents—documented by independent organisations such as the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council—include killings, arson attacks and land grabbing, and cannot be dismissed as political violence or media exaggeration.



External Affairs Ministry spokesperson **Randhir Jaiswal** expressed particular concern over the **brutal killings of Hindu youths Dipu Chandra Das in Mymensingh and Amrit Mandal in Rajbari**, which followed a spike in communal violence after the death of Islamist leader **Sharif Osman Hadi** on December 18. India urged Bangladeshi authorities to **bring the perpetrators to justice** and underlined that maintaining law and order is the **responsibility of the Bangladesh government**.

The violence has also led to **diplomatic tensions**, with protests targeting India. New Delhi rejected this “**false narrative**”.

On the political front, India reiterated its support for **free, fair, inclusive and participatory elections in Bangladesh**, signalling opposition to the exclusion of any political party, including the **Awami League**.

Centre raises H-1B interview cancellation issue with U.S.

India on Friday said it **had expressed its concern to the U.S. over the mass cancellation of scheduled H-1B visa interviews of Indian applicants** and that it was “**actively engaged with the U.S. side to minimise disruptions caused to our nationals**”.

The **interviews of thousands of H-1B visa applicants** scheduled in the middle of December have been abruptly **postponed by several months to scrutinise their social media posts and online profiles**.

Some of the applicants, whose appointments were scheduled last week, received mails from U.S. immigration authorities informing them that their interviews are being pushed back to May.

Centre raises H-1B interview cancellation issue with U.S.

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

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forming them that their interviews are being pushed back to May.

The government has received several representations from Indian nationals facing problems with rescheduling of visa appointments, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a media briefing.

Visa-related issues pertain to the sovereign do-

main of any country, he said. “We have flagged these issues and our concerns to the U.S. side, both here in New Delhi and in Washington, DC,” he said.

The U.S. move has resulted in significant delays for the visa applicants in their return to the U.S. The rescheduling of the interviews is for applicants who were given appointments from December 15.

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H-1B visa :

A **non-immigrant US work visa** for employing foreign professionals in **specialty occupations** requiring at least a **bachelor’s degree or equivalent** (e.g., IT, engineering, medicine, finance, research).

The US employer must file a petition on behalf of the foreign worker.

Duration: Initially **3 years**, extendable up to **6 years** (extensions possible if green card process is underway).

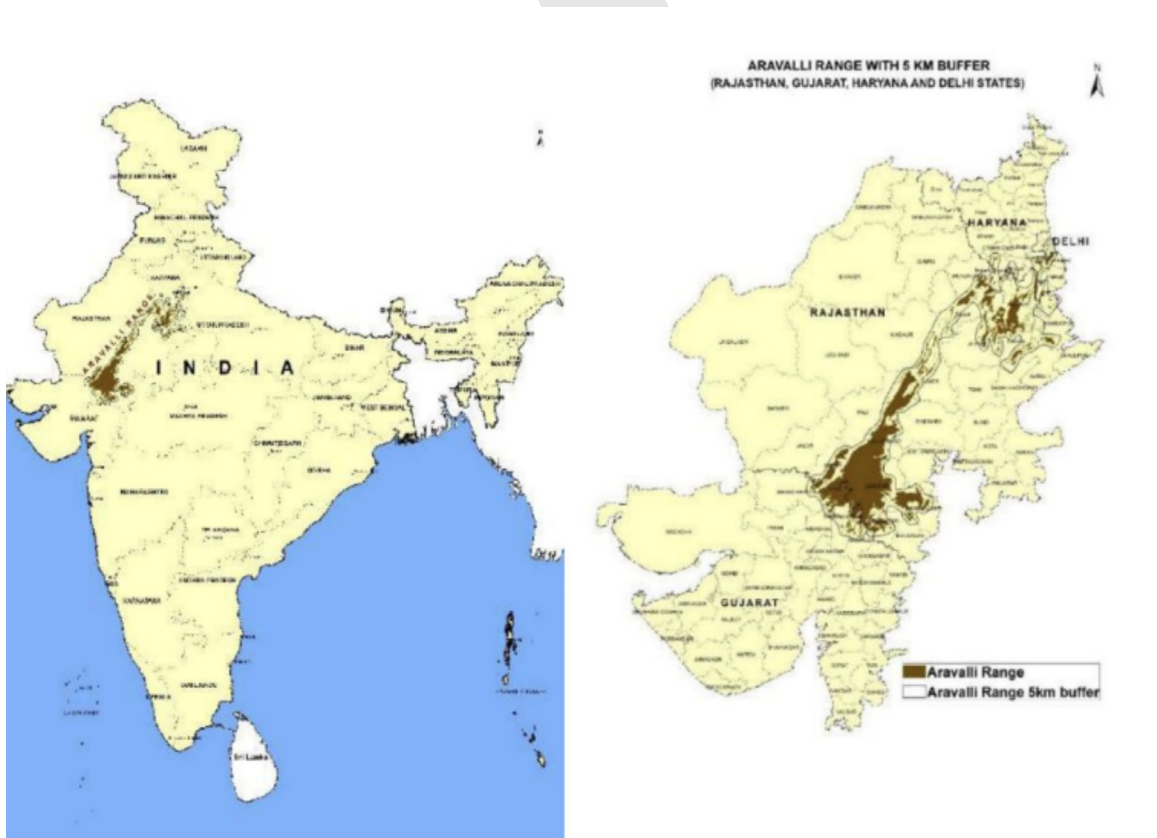
Annual cap:

- **65,000** regular cap
- **20,000** additional for candidates with **US master’s degree or higher**
- Allocation through a **lottery system** due to high demand.

Aravalli Range

The Centre’s prolonged effort to define the **Aravalli range**, one of the world’s oldest mountain systems stretching nearly **700 km from Delhi to Gujarat across Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat**, has exposed deep scientific, administrative, and policy contradictions.

Despite more than a year of work by **three expert committees**, supported by satellite imagery and inputs from institutions such as the **Forest Survey of India (FSI)**, **Geological Survey of India (GSI)**, Survey of India (SoI) and State Forest Departments, the government failed to arrive at **uniform technical criteria** to demarcate the Aravallis



The issue reached a turning point only after the **Supreme Court threatened contempt proceedings** against Environment Ministry officials due to repeated delays.

A new sub-committee was formed in **August 2025**, which effectively abandoned the **attempt to scientifically define the Aravallis**.

Instead, it sought to evolve a definition that would “*balance*” ecological concerns with the Centre’s 2019 National Mineral Policy, which promotes mining of **critical minerals for economic growth**, as revealed in a **2,000-page affidavit** submitted to the Supreme Court.

The **final definition triggered a major environmental and political controversy**, with critics alleging that it **protects only hills above 100 metres in height**, thereby leaving most of the Aravalli landscape **vulnerable** to mining and degradation, especially in Rajasthan where the bulk of the range lies.

Environmental activists argue that such a narrow definition undermines conservation of a fragile ecological system that plays a crucial role in groundwater recharge, desertification control, and climate moderation in north-west India.

Responding to criticism, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav assured that **no new mining licences would be granted until a Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) for the entire Aravalli range is prepared** by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE).

The **Supreme Court had earlier, in 2024, constituted a high-level Committee to resolve the issue**.

While the **FSI had earlier (2010) defined Aravalli hills in Rajasthan based mainly on slope rather than height**, the **Committee expressed concern that such criteria could wrongly include non-Aravalli hilly terrain within the notified districts**.

It emphasised that **not all Aravalli regions are hilly**, and **not all hills in the 34 identified districts are geologically part of the Aravallis**.

Both **FSI and SoI rejected a rigid definition based solely on slope and local relief**, stressing that hill formations vary across terrains and that **uniform criteria are scientifically impractical**.

Overall, the episode highlights the tension between **environmental conservation and resource extraction**, the limitations of technocratic decision-making under policy pressure, and the judiciary’s growing role in arbitrating complex ecological governance issues.

Decoding air pollution concerns in Delhi-NCR

Decoding air pollution concerns in Delhi-NCR

In Delhi's National Capital Region (NCR), vehicular emission is the primary source of air pollution, especially in terms of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and toxic gases such as carbon monoxide, benzene and nitrogen oxides. Unfortunately, officials, un-official agencies, citizens and the higher judiciary have held stubble burning farmers of neighbouring Punjab and Haryana responsible for Delhi's deteriorating air quality.

On PPP
The principle widely recognised to determine liability for polluted water, air and land is the “polluter pays principle” (PPP) which envisages that the person or firm who damages the environment must bear the cost of such damage. In *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum vs Union Of India and Ors.* (1996), the Supreme Court of India held that the PPP is part of the law of the land, which paved the way for statutory recognition of the principle in the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010. The application of the principle of PPP (a principle of cost allocation and cost internalisation) is replete with complexity in a situation consisting of both multiple point and non-point sources of pollution that are directly or indirectly involved in the air pollution. The latter has a transboundary angle which cannot be addressed by PPP alone which is contingent on cooperation among neighbouring entities.

The jurisprudence laid down in the *Standley* case decided by the European Court of Justice in 1999 is very relevant. The case was about the implementation by the United Kingdom government of the so-called EU Nitrates Directive. This directive was aimed at reducing water pollution from nitrates discharged into waters from agricultural sources. In the U.K., the action programmes initiated by the local authorities in certain nitrate vulnerable zones led to a limitation on the agricultural activities in those areas. The



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In India, the polluter pays principle has shifted to the government-pays principle

farmers of these areas opposed it on the ground that they could not be held liable for nitrates released from the industrial sources into waterbodies.

The *Standley* judgment adds the proportionality dimension to the PPP which amounts to saying that seasonal stubble burning by the farmer cannot be held liable for the air pollutants created by other sources.

The narrative relating to the long-range trans-boundary effect of air pollution in India and in this part of the world has yet to acquire traction that air pollution is not simply local in nature but is subject to regional and global influences. The *Trail Smelter* case (1941) held sulphur spewing smelters based in British Columbia (Canada) responsible for damage of properties in the State of Washington, U.S. There is growing evidence of the global and regional impacts of air pollution (*Q Zhang et al., Nature*, 2017).

Zhang mentions that the trans-boundary health impacts of PM_{2.5} pollution related to international trade are even higher than those linked with long-distance atmospheric transport of pollution. The Convention on Long-Range Trans-boundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP, 1979) (51 parties and eight protocols), and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Trans-boundary Haze Pollution (2002) are examples of air pollutants travelling long distance. The Gothenburg Protocol to the CLRTAP Convention was amended in 2002 to include PM_{2.5} as a pollutant, making it clear that PM_{2.5} is also a long-distance air pollutant.

Government-Pays Principle

The judiciary in India has not been able to suggest precise contours in terms of the valuation choice to be deployed to determine the quantification of exact damage. In the Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action case, the Court

recognised that the precise scope of the principle and its implications for those involved in polluting activities have never been satisfactorily agreed. Instead, the Court, in *Indian Council For Enviro-Legal Action vs Union Of India and Ors. Etc.* (1996), *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum vs Union Of India and Ors.*, and *S. Jagannath vs Union Of India and Ors.*, leaned on the formula of compensation to human victims of pollution and environmental restoration. This is more aligned with corrective justice and less with PPP.

In India, PPP has shifted to the government-pays principle. India has used the Water Act 1974, Air Act 1986, the Environment Protection Act 1986 and Articles 48A and 51A(g) incorporated through constitutional amendments, to create specialised authorities and vested them with wide powers. These include the closure of industries and the power to give any directions to protect the environment.

Activist judiciary

These authorities suffer from administrative failures like the rest of the bureaucracy and the executive. In India, the increasingly activist judiciary tends to take greater note of these standards and creates an obligation on governments to bear the entire costs of monitoring air pollution and only secondarily to impose liability on the polluters.

On counts of well-being, the Indian judiciary takes special interest in such matters, since most of the victims of such environmental degradation have little means possible of individually suing polluters to enforce the PPP. This approach projects the government's welfare-maximising nature but does not fully internalise the costs of pollution prevention and public health benefits to the people. Last but not the least, the environmental duties of individuals as compared to their rights are seldom discussed in detail in India.

In Delhi–NCR, vehicles are the biggest source of air pollution, especially **PM2.5 and harmful gases like carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides**. However, farmers in Punjab and Haryana are often blamed for Delhi's poor air quality due to stubble burning, even though it is not the main cause.

On PPP

The **polluter pays principle (PPP)** means that whoever causes pollution should pay for the damage. **The Supreme Court recognised this principle in 1996 and it later became part of Indian law through the NGT Act, 2010.**

However, **applying PPP is difficult in air pollution cases because pollution comes from many sources and also crosses State boundaries**. Such transboundary pollution cannot be handled by PPP alone and needs cooperation between States.

Standley case and proportionality

In the Standley case (1999), the European Court held that farmers could not be held responsible for pollution mainly caused by industries. This added the idea of proportionality to PPP. Similarly, in India, seasonal stubble burning by farmers cannot be held responsible for pollution caused largely by vehicles and industries.

Transboundary air pollution

Air pollution is not only local; it also travels across regions and countries. **The Trail Smelter case (1941)-(Canada and USA)** showed that pollution in one country can damage another. Scientific studies now show that PM2.5 pollution spreads over long distances. PM2.5 is now officially treated as a long-range pollutant.

Government-Pays Principle

Indian courts have found it difficult to precisely calculate environmental damage. Instead of strictly applying PPP, courts have focused more on **compensation and environmental restoration**. Over time, this has shifted responsibility from polluters to the **government**, making it closer to a government-pays principle rather than a polluter-pays one.

Activist judiciary

Due to weak enforcement by authorities, Indian courts often step in and direct governments to bear the cost of monitoring and controlling pollution. **This welfare-oriented approach helps victims who cannot afford to sue polluters, but it fails to fully hold polluters accountable.**

Also, the **environmental duties of citizens** receive far less attention than their rights in India.

Urban malaria

Urban malaria and Anopheles stephensi

Urban malaria has become a major concern in India due to the spread of the invasive mosquito **Anopheles stephensi** in big cities like Delhi.

This **mosquito breeds easily in man-made water containers** and spreads malaria efficiently, posing a serious challenge to India's target of eliminating malaria by 2030, as highlighted in the **Malaria Elimination Technical Report, 2025**.

Invasive mosquito species threatens India's 2030 malaria elimination goal

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

Urban malaria, driven largely by the spread of the invasive vector *Anopheles stephensi* in metropolitan areas such as Delhi, has emerged as a national concern threatening India's goal of eliminating the mosquito-borne disease by 2030, according to the Health Ministry's recently released "Malaria elimination technical report, 2025".

The report said asymptomatic infections, difficult terrain, and population movement continued to drive transmission, while high-burden pockets persisted in the districts of Odisha, Tripura, and Mizoram. Cross-border transmission from Myanmar and Bangladesh continued to affect border districts in northeastern India.

Besides the malaria



India's malaria cases fell from 11.7 lakh in 2015 to about 2.27 lakh in 2024.

elimination goal, the country has assigned itself an intermediate goal of achieving zero indigenous cases by 2027, aligning with the World Health Organization's global strategy.

Anopheles stephensi is a mosquito species, now recognised as an invasive threat due to its ability to thrive in urban environments, that breed in artificial containers (tanks, tyres), and efficiently transmit the *Plasmodium falciparum* and *P. vivax* parasites, challenging current malaria control efforts

worldwide. In India, urban transmission presents unique challenges related to container breeding, construction sites, informal settings, high population density and fragmented healthcare delivery, necessitating city-specific vector control and surveillance strategies.

"Strengthening surveillance systems, enhancing vector monitoring and improving supply chain reliability emerged as the top priorities," the report noted.

High-burden pockets While India has now largely entered the pre-elimination phase, malaria is no longer uniformly distributed across large geographical areas, the report said. Instead, the disease persists in limited pockets shaped by local ecological conditions, human mobility, occupational exposure, health-system access, and

vector dynamics. The report added that active surveillance has been intensified in tribal and forest areas, border regions, and migratory population settings, where residual transmission risks remain high.

Drop in cases India has reduced its malaria burden significantly over the past decade, and the number of cases has dropped from 11.7 lakh in 2015 to around 2.27 lakh in 2024, with deaths reducing by 78%. Key challenges that need urgent attention include inconsistent private-sector reporting, limited entomological capacity, drug and insecticide resistance, operational gaps in remote tribal areas, and sporadic shortages of diagnostics and treatment commodities.

Operational research has emerged as a key enabler for elimination acceleration, the report said.

Transmission challenges

The report notes that **asymptomatic cases**, difficult terrain, and frequent movement of people continue to sustain malaria transmission. High-burden pockets remain in districts of **Odisha, Tripura and Mizoram**, while **cross-border transmission** from Myanmar and Bangladesh affects northeastern border areas.

National targets

India has set an intermediate goal of achieving **zero indigenous malaria cases by 2027**, in line with the **WHO's global malaria elimination strategy**, before reaching complete elimination by 2030.

High-burden pockets

As India enters the **pre-elimination phase**, malaria is now limited to specific local pockets instead of wide regions. These pockets are shaped by ecological conditions, migration, work-related exposure, and weak healthcare access. Active surveillance has been intensified in **tribal, forest, border and migrant-population areas**, where risks remain high.

Drop in cases

India has made significant progress, reducing malaria cases from **11.7 lakh in 2015 to about 2.27 lakh in 2024**, with deaths falling by **78%**. However, challenges remain, including poor reporting by the private sector, limited mosquito surveillance capacity, drug and insecticide resistance, operational gaps in tribal areas, and occasional shortages of testing kits and medicines.