

THE PALA

CIVIL TIMES

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P2. NATIONAL



Indus Waters Treaty: Government focus on Chenab projects, renegotiation - Understand why India seeks to renegotiate the Indus Waters Treaty and how changing security, climate and water management needs have reshaped the debate.

P3. NATIONAL



Anti-defection law needs a fundamental rethink - Understand how the Tenth Schedule seeks to prevent political defections, the challenges in its implementation and the reforms needed to strengthen democratic accountability.

P4. WORLD



Four Indian seafarers killed near Ukrainian port Odessa - Understand how the attack on an Indian-crewed merchant vessel highlights the importance of freedom of navigation, maritime security and the strategic significance of the Black Sea..

P7. HEALTH



India approves first dengue vaccine for individuals aged 4 to 60 years - Learn about India's first approved dengue vaccine, its significance in disease prevention and the country's growing dengue burden.

Editor's Note

In today's edition of the Pala Civil Times, we explore how India and the world are navigating evolving legal, constitutional and geopolitical realities. On the national front, India's renewed focus on the Chenab hydropower projects and its call to renegotiate the Indus Waters Treaty raise important questions about the relevance of decades-old water-sharing arrangements in an era of changing security and climate realities. We also examine the growing debate on strengthening the anti-defection law to curb political opportunism and uphold democratic accountability.

Our Decoded Editorials section analyses the recent youth protests in Delhi, highlighting issues of examination reforms, democratic dissent and government accountability. It further explores the constitutional balance between the Right to Freedom of Speech, the Right to Reputation, and the limits on the State's use of criminal law in responding to criticism. In the international section, we trace the impact of the Houthi blockade in the Red Sea and the continuing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which claimed the lives of Indian seafarers and underscored the strategic importance of global maritime routes. Finally, our Science page covers India's first approved dengue vaccine, a significant milestone in public health. Together, these topics provide a strong blend of current affairs and core concepts essential for competitive examinations. Happy reading!

Editorials Decoded

 **The Indian EXPRESS**

Can't have sabka vishwas with tear gas and lathi



Examine the constitutional right to peaceful protest, the challenges in India's examination system and the importance of accountable governance.

THE HINDU

Allowing Dissent



Learn how the Constitution balances freedom of speech with the right to reputation and why governments must exercise restraint while addressing dissent.

Indus Waters Treaty: Government focus on Chenab projects, renegotiation

A year after placing the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) "in abeyance" following the 2025 Pahalgam terrorist attack, India has reiterated that the Treaty, in its present form, requires renegotiation. The government has also prioritised the early completion of major hydropower projects on the Chenab River—including **Sawalkote (1,856 MW), Pakal Dul (1,000 MW), Ratle (850 MW), Kiru (624 MW) and Kwar (540 MW)**—to utilise India's legitimate rights under the Treaty while supporting clean energy, water security and regional development. India has maintained that any restoration of treaty-based cooperation remains contingent upon Pakistan ending cross-border terrorism.

Indus Waters Treaty: Constitutional and Institutional Framework

The Indus Waters Treaty was signed in 1960 between India and Pakistan, with the World Bank acting as a facilitator. It allocates the Eastern Rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej) to India and the Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab) primarily to Pakistan, while permitting India specified non-consumptive uses, including run-of-the-river hydropower projects on the western rivers. The Treaty is implemented through the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC). Importantly, the Treaty is not immutable—Article VII permits future cooperative engineering works by mutual agreement, while Article XII explicitly allows the Treaty to be modified through a subsequent agreement between the two governments.

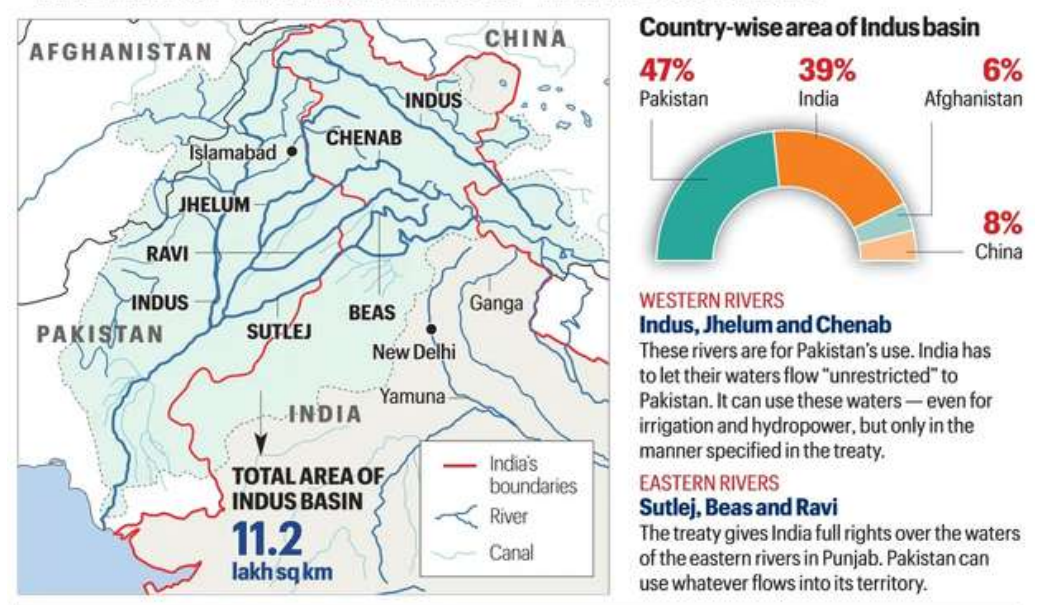
Nature of the data leak and what it implies

India argues that the need for renegotiation extends beyond current security concerns. Like most transboundary river agreements, water-sharing arrangements require periodic updates to reflect changing realities such as population growth, evolving water demand, technological advancements, scientific knowledge and climate change. Unlike many modern river basin agreements, the IWT lacks provisions relating to groundwater management, water quality, environmental flows, integrated basin management and climate resilience. It also follows an unusual model of allocating entire rivers rather than sharing river flows, limiting opportunities for cooperative basin management. India has therefore maintained that revising the Treaty is necessary to ensure efficient, sustainable and contemporary management of the Indus basin.

Key Challenges and Contemporary Context

Alongside institutional concerns, India has linked the current stand-off to the erosion of the mutual trust and good faith necessary for implementing long-term international agreements, citing continued cross-border terrorism. Separately, studies indicate that climate change is affecting different parts of the Indus basin unevenly, with declining rainfall in the eastern river basins and relatively stable precipitation in the western basins, further strengthening the case for reviewing water allocation and management mechanisms. Many international river agreements have undergone amendments, supplementary protocols and institutional reforms, highlighting that periodic revision is an accepted global practice.

• THE WAY OF WATER: RIVERS OF THE INDUS BASIN



Way Forward

The present debate is not solely about suspending the Treaty, but about whether a 1960 water-sharing arrangement remains adequate for present-day hydrological, environmental and geopolitical realities. India's position is that renegotiation would modernise the Treaty while enabling better utilisation of available water resources within its treaty rights.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Present an account of the Indus Water Treaty and examine its ecological, economic and political implications in the context of changing bilateral relations. (GS I – 2016)

RELEVANCE

GS I: Indian Geography

Anti-defection law needs a fundamental rethink

With the commencement of the Monsoon Session of Parliament, the Rajya Sabha has witnessed changes in its party composition due to recent defections and political realignments. While the Opposition attributes these shifts to political inducements and pressure, the ruling party describes them as voluntary departures from undemocratic party structures. The developments have revived the debate on whether India's anti-defection law is effectively preventing political defections or merely changing the way they occur.

Anti-Defection Law: Constitutional Framework

The Anti-Defection Law was introduced through the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985, which inserted the Tenth Schedule into the Constitution to curb political instability caused by frequent defections. It empowers the Speaker of the Lok Sabha/State Legislative Assemblies and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha/Legislative Councils to decide disqualification petitions. The 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 strengthened the law by abolishing the earlier exemption for one-third splits and retaining only the exemption for mergers supported by at least two-thirds of the members of a legislature party.



Challenges in the Present System

Despite constitutional safeguards, the anti-defection law has faced several implementation challenges. Delays in deciding disqualification petitions by presiding officers often allow defecting legislators to continue in office for long periods, reducing the law's effectiveness. Questions have also been raised about the impartiality of presiding officers, particularly because Speakers are not required to resign from their political parties after assuming office. Although the Supreme Court has observed that such petitions should ordinarily be decided within three months, delays continue to weaken the credibility of the law.

RELEVANCE

GS II: Indian Polity

Why the Law Needs Reform

The stricter provisions introduced through the 91st Amendment have not eliminated defections; instead, political parties increasingly attempt to engineer large-scale defections that satisfy the two-thirds merger requirement. This has transformed defections from isolated acts into organised political exercises. A frequently suggested reform is to provide for the automatic vacation of a legislator's seat upon resigning from the political party on whose ticket they were elected, requiring them to seek a fresh electoral mandate before continuing in public office. Such a system would place the final decision in the hands of the electorate rather than party leadership or presiding officers.

Way Forward

The anti-defection law seeks to balance governmental stability with legislative independence, but its implementation continues to raise questions about democratic accountability and institutional neutrality. The central debate is not merely about preventing defections, but about ensuring that elected representatives remain accountable to the mandate on which they were elected while preserving legitimate political dissent.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



- Q. Which one of the Schedules of the Constitution of India contains provisions regarding the anti-defection? (2014)
- (a) Second Schedule
 - (b) Fifth Schedule
 - (c) Eighth Schedule
 - (d) Tenth Schedule

WORLD

Four Indian seafarers killed near Ukrainian port Odessa

India condemned the July 2026 attack on the merchant vessel MV Golden Leo near **Odessa, Ukraine's largest port** on the Black Sea, in which four Indian sailors were killed and one was critically injured. According to Ukraine, the vessel was struck while leaving Odessa, and Russia was blamed for the attack, though Russia had not officially commented. This was **the first reported instance of Indian seafarers being killed in the Russia-Ukraine war** (ongoing since February 2022). The incident also highlights the growing risks faced by commercial shipping in conflict zones.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reiterated that attacks on merchant vessels violate the principle of freedom of navigation and endanger innocent civilian crew, making them unacceptable under international norms. Ukraine informed the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and partner countries about the attack.



Key pointers to remember

Odessa – Ukraine's largest seaport on the Black Sea

Black Sea – a strategically important maritime region for global trade.

Yemen's Houthis declare naval blockade of Saudi Arabia

The Houthis (Ansar Allah), an Iran-backed armed group controlling much of northern Yemen, announced a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia in July 2026, citing retaliation for the alleged attack on Sanaa International Airport. The move marks a major escalation in the Yemen conflict, where the Saudi-led coalition has supported Yemen's internationally recognised government since 2015. The blockade comes amid heightened regional tensions due to the ongoing U.S.–Iran confrontation over the Strait of Hormuz, raising concerns over maritime security and global energy supplies.

The blockade threatens shipping through the Red Sea, particularly the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a strategic chokepoint linking the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, through which about 12% of global trade passes. The Houthis have previously targeted over 100 commercial vessels in this region, demonstrating their ability to disrupt international shipping.



Key pointers to remember

Bab el-Mandeb Strait – gateway between the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden

Strait of Hormuz – critical oil transit route connecting the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Turkey is located between (2014)

- Black Sea and Caspian Sea
- Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea
- Gulf of Suez and Mediterranean Sea
- Gulf of Aqaba and Dead Sea

RELEVANCE

GS II: International Relations

Allowing Dissent (The Hindu : 21-07-2026)

The issue has gained attention following multiple police actions in Tamil Nadu against individuals accused of criticising the Chief Minister, Ministers and the ruling party on social media and other public platforms. The incidents have revived the debate on whether governments should invoke criminal defamation and cybercrime laws to respond to criticism or exercise restraint in a democracy. The broader question is where the line should be drawn between protecting an individual's reputation and safeguarding democratic dissent.

Constitutional and Legal Position

Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees the **Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression**, but this right is not absolute. Under **Article 19(2)**, the State may impose reasonable restrictions, including on the grounds of defamation, public order, decency, morality, contempt of court and national security. The Supreme Court, in **Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India (2016)**, upheld the constitutional validity of criminal defamation, observing that the right to reputation is a part of **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)** and therefore deserves legal protection.



The Core Constitutional Dilemma

The challenge lies in balancing two equally important constitutional values—**freedom of speech (Article 19)** and the **right to reputation (Article 21)**. Criticism of governments, elected representatives and public policies is a normal feature of democracy, whereas false and malicious statements that seriously damage an individual's reputation may amount to defamation. Since there is no rigid black-and-white distinction between legitimate criticism and criminal defamation, authorities must apply the law carefully, ensuring that constitutional rights are balanced rather than allowing one to overshadow the other.

RELEVANCE

GS II : Indian Polity

Democratic Concerns and the Need for Restraint

Frequent arrests or police action for speech-related offences can create a chilling effect, discouraging citizens, journalists and political opponents from expressing legitimate criticism. Democratic accountability depends on governments tolerating dissent, especially when criticism concerns public policy or governance. While criminal law remains available in genuine cases of defamation, its routine use against political criticism raises concerns about the misuse of state power, selective policing and the weakening of democratic institutions. Governments are therefore expected to exercise restraint, proportionality and fairness before invoking criminal provisions.

Future Outlook

The debate is not about abolishing criminal defamation, but about ensuring its responsible and proportionate application. The Law Commission of India (285th Report) recommended retaining criminal defamation, emphasising that reputation is a constitutional right under Article 21, while also recognising the need to balance it with free speech.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Which of the following are regarded as the main feature of "Rule of Law"? (2018)

1. Limitation of power
2. Equality before the law
3. People's responsibility to the Government
4. Liberty and civil rights

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Can't have sabka vishwas with tear gas and lathi (Indian Express : 21-07-2026)

Large-scale protests were held in New Delhi following repeated concerns over NEET and other public examination paper leaks, delays and irregularities. Protesters, mobilised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), demanded accountability, including the resignation of the Union Education Minister, and called for reforms in the examination system. Police used lathi-charge, tear gas and detentions to disperse the march towards Parliament, while the government subsequently initiated discussions with CJP representatives. The episode has brought attention to youth concerns over education, employment and democratic accountability.

Core Issues Behind the Protests

The protests reflect broader concerns about the credibility of India's public examination system and its impact on the aspirations of millions of students. Repeated incidents of paper leaks and administrative irregularities undermine the principles of fairness, merit and equal opportunity, while delays in examinations and recruitment contribute to uncertainty and youth unemployment. The issue extends beyond a single examination, highlighting the need for a transparent, reliable and accountable system that safeguards public confidence.

Constitutional Perspective

The Constitution guarantees citizens the Right to Freedom under Article 19(1), including the Freedom of Speech and Expression [Article 19(1)(a)], the Right to Assemble Peacefully and Without Arms [Article 19(1)(b)], and the Right to Form Associations [Article 19(1)(c)]. These rights form the foundation of democratic participation and enable citizens to peacefully express grievances and seek government accountability. However, these freedoms are not absolute. Under Article 19(2), the State may impose reasonable restrictions on free speech in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency, morality, contempt of court, defamation and incitement to an offence. Similarly, Article 19(3) permits reasonable restrictions on peaceful assembly in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India and public order. Therefore, while peaceful protests are constitutionally protected, restrictions imposed by the State must satisfy the test of reasonableness, legality and proportionality, ensuring that public order is maintained without unnecessarily curtailing fundamental freedoms.

Government Response and Legal Framework

Following the protests, the government initiated dialogue with representatives of the CJP regarding their demands. The issue has also highlighted the relevance of the **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024**, which seeks to curb organised examination malpractices, including paper leaks, through penal provisions. While legal measures strengthen deterrence, their effectiveness ultimately depends on timely implementation, institutional accountability and systemic reforms that restore public trust in examination processes.



Way Forward

The episode illustrates the intersection of education governance, youth aspirations, democratic rights and public accountability. A credible examination system is essential for ensuring merit-based opportunities and maintaining confidence in public institutions. Equally, democratic governance requires constructive engagement with peaceful dissent through dialogue and institutional reform.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. What are the aims and objects of the recently passed and enforced, The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024? Whether University/State Education Board examinations are also covered under the Act? (GS II – 2024)

HEALTH

India approves first dengue vaccine for individuals aged 4 to 60 years

The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has granted market authorisation to **Takeda Biopharmaceuticals India's QDENG A (TAK-003)**, making it the first dengue vaccine approved in India. The vaccine is approved for individuals aged 4–60 years and is administered as two doses, three months apart. The approval marks an important milestone in India's efforts to reduce the health burden of dengue, a disease that has witnessed a significant rise in reported cases over the past two decades.

About QDENG A (TAK-003)

QDENG A is a live-attenuated tetravalent dengue vaccine, designed to provide protection against all four dengue virus serotypes (DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3 and DENV-4). It can be administered regardless of whether a person has had a previous dengue infection and does not require pre-vaccination screening, making it easier to implement in public health programmes. Clinical trials involving over 28,000 participants across multiple countries demonstrated that the vaccine is safe, well tolerated and immunogenic, with sustained protection against dengue and dengue-related hospitalisation.



India's Dengue Burden

Dengue remains a major public health challenge in India. Reported cases have increased nearly eleven-fold over the past two decades, and India accounts for nearly one-third of the global dengue burden, although the actual number of infections is believed to be considerably higher than officially reported. Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral disease transmitted primarily by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito and is endemic in many tropical and subtropical regions. Effective disease control requires a combination of vector control, early diagnosis, surveillance, public awareness and vaccination.

RELEVANCE

GS III: Science and Technology

Global Significance

QDENG A has already been approved in more than 40 countries across Asia, Latin America and Europe and has been distributed through public and private immunisation programmes. The vaccine has received World Health Organization (WHO) prequalification and is recommended by the WHO for use in dengue-endemic areas with high transmission. Countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Indonesia have already incorporated the vaccine into their immunisation programmes, reflecting growing international acceptance of dengue vaccination as a public health tool.

Way Forward

The approval of QDENG A represents an important advancement in India's public health and disease prevention strategy, but vaccination should complement—not replace—existing dengue control measures such as vector management, sanitation and surveillance.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. In the context of vaccines manufactured to prevent COVID-19 pandemic, consider the following statements: (2022)

1. The Serum Institute of India produced COVID-19 vaccine named Covishield using mRNA platform.
2. Sputnik V vaccine is manufactured using vector based platform.
3. COVAXIN is an inactivated pathogen based vaccine.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



- Q. Turkey is located between (2014)
- a) Black Sea and Caspian Sea
 - b) Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea
 - c) Gulf of Suez and Mediterranean Sea
 - d) Gulf of Aqaba and Dead Sea

Ans : b

Turkey is strategically located between the Black Sea to the north and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. It serves as a bridge between Europe and Asia, with the Bosphorus Strait linking the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles Strait connecting the Sea of Marmara to the Aegean Sea, which is part of the Mediterranean.



- Q. Which of the following are regarded as the main feature of “Rule of Law”? (2018)
- 1. Limitation of power
 - 2. Equality before the law
 - 3. People’s responsibility to the Government
 - 4. Liberty and civil rights
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans ; C

The Rule of Law emphasizes the supremacy of law over arbitrary power. Its core features include:

- 1. Limitation of power:** Ensures that no individual, including those in authority, is above the law, preventing misuse of power.
- 2. Equality before the law:** Guarantees that all individuals, irrespective of status, are treated equally under the same legal framework.
- 3. Liberty and civil rights:** Protects fundamental freedoms and individual rights, ensuring justice and fairness in governance. The concept does not include "people's responsibility to the government," as the Rule of Law primarily focuses on limiting state power and safeguarding individual rights.

- Q. Which one of the Schedules of the Constitution of India contains provisions regarding the anti-defection? (2014)
- (a) Second Schedule
 - (b) Fifth Schedule
 - (c) Eighth Schedule
 - (d) Tenth Schedule

Ans : d

The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India contains provisions regarding anti-defection laws. It was added by the 52nd Amendment Act of 1985 to address political defections by elected members. This schedule lays down the process for disqualification of members on grounds of defection by their political party. It applies to both Parliament and State Legislatures. Key provisions include disqualification for voluntarily giving up party membership or voting against party directives, ensuring political stability and curbing unethical practices in legislative processes.

PYQ Compass

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3. COVAXIN is an inactivated pathogen based vaccine.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Ans : b

1. **The Serum Institute of India produced COVID 19 vaccine named Covishield using mRNA platform – This statement is incorrect.** Covishield, produced by the Serum Institute of India, is based on a viral vector platform (specifically the AstraZeneca–Oxford vaccine), not mRNA technology.
2. **Sputnik V vaccine is manufactured using vector based platform – This is correct.** Sputnik V is a viral vector–based vaccine, using two different adenovirus vectors (rAd26 and rAd5) to deliver genetic material for the spike protein of the SARS CoV–2 virus.
3. **COVAXIN is an inactivated pathogen based vaccine – This is correct.** COVAXIN, developed by Bharat Biotech, is an inactivated virus–based vaccine, where the SARS–CoV–2 virus is inactivated to trigger an immune response without causing the disease.

Practice Questions and answers

Q. With reference to the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:

1. It was inserted by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985.
2. The 91st Constitutional Amendment abolished the exemption available for splits by one–third of legislators.
3. A merger is exempt from disqualification only if supported by at least two–thirds of the members of the legislature party.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Statement 1 is Correct. The Anti–Defection Law was introduced through the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985, which inserted the Tenth Schedule into the Constitution with the objective of curbing the practice of legislators frequently changing political parties for personal or political gain.

Statement 2 is Correct. Originally, the Tenth Schedule allowed a split in a political party if at least one–third of the legislators broke away. Such members were protected from disqualification.

However, the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003 deleted the one–third split provision, and made defections much more difficult by removing this exemption.

Statement 3 is correct. After the 91st Amendment, the only major exception retained under the Anti–Defection Law is a merger.