



P2. NATIONAL



SC seeks Centre’s reply on AI use in public welfare. - A Supreme Court petition seeks a statutory framework and human oversight for high-risk government AI systems that can affect citizens’ welfare, privacy, liberty, livelihood and other fundamental rights.

P3 NATIONAL



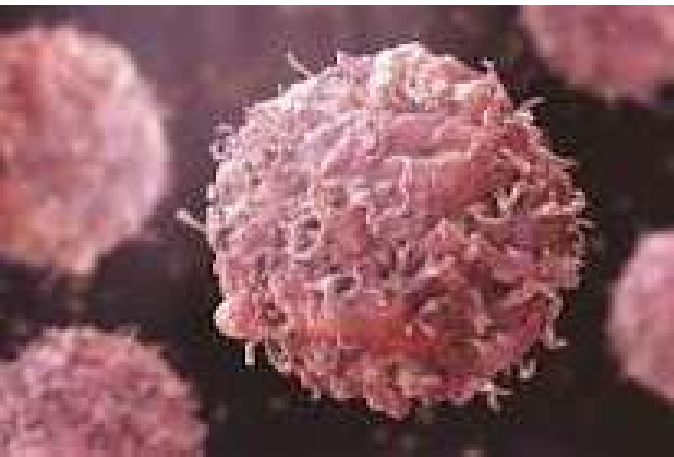
CJI flags ‘misuse’ of live-streamed court proceedings on social media - The Supreme Court’s restrictions on unauthorised circulation and monetisation of livestreamed proceedings seek to balance judicial transparency and public access with protection against decontextualised clips

P4. WORLD



Vladimir Putin’s Kuril Islands trip - Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to Iturup highlights the long-standing Russia-Japan territorial dispute over the Kuril Islands

P7. HEALTH



Why vital chemotherapy drugs are in short supply in India - India faced shortages of cisplatin and carboplatin due to high platinum costs, import dependence, West Asian shipping disruptions and price controls, prompting the NPPA to temporarily raise their price ceilings.

Editor’s Note

In this latest edition of Pala Civil Times, the key themes span governance, technology, health, economy, geopolitics and society. The Supreme Court’s recent interventions on AI in public welfare and the regulation of livestreamed court proceedings highlight the need to balance technological innovation and judicial transparency with constitutional safeguards, accountability and protection against misuse. The inflation trends in India provide an opportunity to understand price stability, monetary policy and their wider economic implications. The edition also examines the Meta controversy and social media’s growing influence on young people, highlighting concerns around digital platforms and their social impact. In health, the shortage of cisplatin and carboplatin demonstrates how rising platinum prices, import dependence and geopolitical disruptions can threaten essential healthcare supply chains. Geopolitically, Putin’s Kuril Islands visit and the Saudi Arabia–Pakistan–Türkiye defence pact illustrate evolving regional security dynamics. Together, these topics provide a multidimensional foundation for informed UPSC preparation.

Editorials Decoded



A predictable Rise



India’s July retail inflation remained within the RBI’s tolerance band but exceeded its 4% target, with food and transport costs, weather risks, imported inflation and weakening economic momentum creating challenges for monetary policy.



Major trial for Meta, large question for Big Tech



Legal action against Meta over allegedly addictive social media design raises broader questions about the responsibility of technology companies to anticipate, disclose and address harms associated with products used extensively by children and adolescents.

SC seeks Centre's reply on AI use in public welfare

What happened? The Supreme Court asked the Union Government to consider a petition questioning the lack of a comprehensive statutory framework for the government's use of high-risk Artificial Intelligence (AI) in areas that directly affect citizens' rights.

What does "high-risk AI" mean in this context? high-risk AI refers to AI or automated systems whose decisions can significantly affect a person's access to welfare, livelihood, liberty, privacy or other fundamental rights. This includes :

- Beneficiary verification and fraud detection
- Automated decision-making and risk scoring
- Aadhaar-linked authentication
- Data-driven de-duplication
- Predictive policing
- Biometric surveillance
- AI-assisted content moderation

Where is AI already being used in welfare governance?

The petition points to the use of AI/ML and other algorithmic systems in areas such as health-benefit delivery, ration distribution, fraud prevention and beneficiary verification. Such systems can influence whether a person receives essential services such as food, healthcare, wages, pensions, scholarships and welfare subsidies.

The petitioner argued that the Court could intervene to address the legislative gap, given the absence of a comprehensive statutory mechanism governing government use of AI/ML in public welfare.

Rajasthan Cabinet nod to Bills for Uniform Civil Code



What happened? The Rajasthan Cabinet approved the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill ahead of the Model Code of Conduct for the upcoming panchayat and local body elections.

What is the Rajasthan UCC Bill? The Bill seeks to establish a uniform legal framework for matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance and live-in relationships, irrespective of religion. It is presented by the State government as an "ideal and progressive" law inspired by Article 44 of the Constitution, which directs the State to endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for citizens.

What will change regarding marriage, divorce and inheritance ? The proposed UCC would:

- Prohibit polygamy.
- Make registration of marriages and divorces mandatory within 60 days.
- Allow marriages to be solemnised according to the customs and traditions of different religions and communities, including Saptapadi, Nikah, Anand Karaj and Holy Union.

The proposed inheritance provisions would provide equal property rights to sons and daughters across religions, irrespective of the personal laws otherwise applicable to different religious communities.

Thus, the proposed uniformity is primarily in the legal framework, while recognised religious customs for solemnising marriages can continue. The proposed UCC will not apply to Scheduled Tribes and classes whose customary rights are protected under the Constitution.



PYQ Compass

With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following? (2020)

1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
2. Create meaningful short stories and songs
3. Disease diagnosis
4. Text-to-Speech Conversion
5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only b) 1, 3 and 4 only c) 2, 4 and 5 only d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

RELEVANCE GS II: Government Policies and Interventions, Inclusive Development

CJI flags 'misuse' of live-streamed court proceedings on social media

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has raised concerns about the misuse of live-streamed court proceedings, particularly when short clips of oral remarks are taken out of context and circulated on social media. It was also alleged that some oral observations were misquoted and used with malicious intent.

Why are court proceedings live-streamed?

The Supreme Court began live-streaming proceedings of its Constitution Benches in September 2022 to make judicial proceedings more transparent and accessible to the public. This followed the Supreme Court's 2018 judgment in *Swapnil Tripathi v. Union of India*, which recognised live-streaming of court proceedings as part of the right to access justice under Article 21.

What is the concern with live-streaming?

Live-streaming improves transparency, but court proceedings can be misused when small portions of oral arguments or observations are extracted, edited or circulated without context. Such clips may distort what judges actually said and can undermine public understanding of judicial proceedings.

What did the Supreme Court order on July 24, 2026?

The Supreme Court issued an interim order prohibiting the unauthorised extraction, editing, dissemination, reposting, uploading and monetisation of audio and video recordings of judicial proceedings on social media and other digital platforms. Such use requires prior permission from the concerned court registrars.

Does the order prevent the media from reporting court proceedings?

The restriction is on the unauthorised circulation and exploitation of the audio-visual recordings. The Supreme Court clarified that the embargo does not prevent news reporting of court proceedings.



What is the legal basis for the restriction?

The Supreme Court said the July 2026 order gives effect to its 2022 Model Rules for Live Streaming and Recording of Court Proceedings. These rules prohibit unauthorised recording, sharing and dissemination of livestreamed proceedings.

What does the CJI say about transparency and misuse?

CJI Surya Kant has stressed that transparency in judicial proceedings is essential, but transparency should not become an opportunity for commercial exploitation or personal gain. He has urged citizens and the media to use livestreamed proceedings responsibly and avoid spreading misleading or decontextualised content.

Major Takeaway

The CJI has urged the media to report judicial proceedings responsibly, particularly because inaccurate or decontextualised reporting can affect public perception and social harmony. At the same time, responsible news reporting remains an important part of keeping the judicial process accessible to the public.

PYQ Compass



Q. What do you understand by the concept "freedom of speech and expression"? Does it cover hate speech also? Why do the films in India stand on a slightly different plane from other forms of expression? Discuss. (GS II - 2014)

RELEVANCE

GS II : Indian Polity - Judiciary

Vladimir Putin's Kuril Islands trip

What happened? Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Iturup Island (called Etorofu by Japan) on August 13, 2026. It was his first visit to the disputed island.

Where is Iturup Island? Iturup is one of the southernmost islands of the Kuril Islands, a volcanic island chain in the Pacific Ocean. The Kuril Islands are controlled by Russia but partly claimed by Japan.

Why are the Kuril Islands disputed? The USSR seized the islands in 1945, at the end of World War II. Russia has continued to control them, while Japan claims the southern islands as the "Northern Territories" and considers them its inherent territory.

Why did Japan protest Putin's visit? Japan strongly protested because Iturup (Etorofu) is one of the islands claimed by Japan. Japan says its claim is supported by both history and international law.

What is Russia's position? Russia argues that the status of the Kuril Islands was determined by the outcome of World War II and is reflected in international documents. Therefore, Moscow considers its control over the islands to be a post-war reality. Russia has strengthened its military presence in the Kuril Islands, making the dispute more significant from a regional security perspective.

Is Russia willing to resolve the dispute with Japan? Russia has said it remains open to concluding a peace treaty with Japan and cooperating with Japan and other countries in the region.

How have Russia-Japan relations changed? Putin said Japan's position towards Russia changed after February 2022, when Japan imposed sanctions on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine. He also recalled former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who had worked to improve Russia-Japan relations.

What did Putin say about future relations with Japan? Despite the dispute and worsening relations, Putin said that Russia remains ready to cooperate with Japan and other neighbouring countries in the region.

Turkiye lays out plans for defence pact with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia

What happened? Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have expanded their mutual defence pact to include Türkiye. The **trilateral agreement was signed in Mecca on August 7, 2026.**

What does the new defence pact provide? The pact follows a collective-defence principle: **an external armed attack on any one of the three countries will be considered an attack on all three.**

Why was this pact signed now? The agreement comes as the US and Israeli attacks on Iran triggered a wider conflict that spread to the Gulf and disrupted maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. Simultaneously, Saudi Arabia faced attacks from Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen and armed groups in Iraq.

Is the pact directed against Iran? The three countries have said that it is not directed against any specific country, particularly Iran. They have also stated that the agreement does not replace or cancel their existing defence and security agreements with other countries.

Why is Iran concerned despite these assurances? Iran's initial response was relatively subdued, with officials emphasising Muslim unity and regional cooperation. However, analysts believe Tehran could be concerned that the pact may strengthen Saudi Arabia's deterrence and eventually allow greater coordination against Iran in Yemen, Iraq and through economic channels involving Türkiye and Pakistan.



PYQ Compass

Q. Which one of the following statements best reflects the issue with Senkaku Islands, sometimes mentioned in the news? (2022) a) It is generally believed that they are artificial islands made by a country around the South China Sea. b) China and Japan engage in maritime disputes over these islands in the East China Sea. c) A permanent American military base has been set up there to help Taiwan to increase its defense capabilities. d) Though the International Court of Justice declared them as no man's land, some South-East Asian countries claim them.

A predictable rise (The Hindu : 14-08-2026)

Retail inflation, measured through the Consumer Price Index, reflects changes in prices faced by consumers. India's retail inflation rose to 4.45% in July, from 4.38% in June, remaining above the RBI's 4% target for the second consecutive month but within its 2%-6% tolerance range. The increase was driven mainly by food, transport and other supply-side pressures, while weakening economic momentum creates a difficult policy environment for balancing price stability with growth.

Drivers and Composition of Inflation

Food inflation: Rural food inflation rose to 5.79%, while urban food inflation marginally declined to 5.05%.

Vegetable pressures: Onion, garlic and ginger recorded sharp inflation, while potato and tomato prices declined.

Transport costs: Transport inflation increased to 4.43%, reflecting continuing input-cost pressures.

Services: Food and beverage serving services inflation rose to 7.75%, despite reductions in commercial LPG prices.

Core inflation: Core inflation, excluding precious metals, remained below 3%.

Precious metals: Gold inflation stood at 32.98% and silver inflation at 109.84%, despite some moderation.



External & Macroeconomic Developments

Monsoon risk: Rain-deficient areas in western, central and southern India could sustain food-price pressures.

Crude vulnerability: Russia supplied nearly half of India's crude imports in June, making disruptions to Russian exports significant for energy costs.

Global disruptions: Ukraine-related disruptions around Russia's Black Sea infrastructure could raise freight and risk premiums.

Rupee depreciation: The rupee weakened by about 1.6% between the June 15 and July 15 CPI reference dates, potentially amplifying imported inflation.

Economic momentum: HSBC composite PMI fell from 57.1 to 54.3, its weakest expansion since March 2022.

Monetary stance: The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee retained the 5.25% repo rate for the fourth consecutive meeting.

RELEVANCE GS III : Indian Economy

Inflation-Growth Trade-off and Policy Challenges

Supply-side pressure: Food, transport and energy-related costs continue to generate inflationary pressures beyond conventional demand management.

Growth concern: Weakening PMI momentum complicates the policy response because tighter monetary conditions could further affect economic activity.

Imported inflation: Crude-price risks and rupee depreciation can increase domestic energy and input costs.

Weather sensitivity: Rainfall deficiencies could intensify food inflation and make price pressures more persistent.

Policy dilemma: The RBI must balance persistent supply-side inflation against signs of weakening economic momentum.

Near-term stance: Persistent inflation pressures alongside weaker growth momentum could favour continued caution in monetary policy.

Major Takeaways

India's July inflation reading presents a mixed macroeconomic picture: headline inflation remains within the tolerance band, but food and transport costs continue to exert pressure while external risks could amplify imported inflation. At the same time, weakening economic momentum limits the scope for aggressive monetary tightening. The policy challenge is therefore to contain persistent supply-side pressures while avoiding measures that unnecessarily weaken economic activity.

PYQ COMPASS



Q. What are the causes of persistent high food inflation in India? Comment on the effectiveness of the monetary policy of the RBI to control this type of inflation. (GS III – 2024)

Major trial for Meta, large question for Big Tech (I.E : 14-08-2026)

The growing scrutiny of social media platforms centres on whether technology companies should be held responsible for harms arising from the way their products are designed. Allegations against Meta focus on features such as infinite scroll and autoplay that can encourage prolonged, addiction-like use among young users. The issue has gained importance following legal proceedings and research linking such behaviour with poorer mental and social well-being, raising wider questions about responsible technology design, user welfare and corporate accountability.

Social Media Design and User Engagement

Addictive design: Platforms have been accused of deliberately designing products to encourage prolonged user engagement.

Frictionless experience: Features such as infinite scroll and auto-playing videos reduce barriers to continued consumption.

Youth vulnerability: Concerns are particularly significant for children and adolescents exposed extensively to social media.

Potential harms: Addiction-like behaviour has been linked with poorer mental and social well-being among young users.

Positive role: Adolescents also use social media for peer support and social interaction, making its impact complex rather than uniformly harmful.

Legal and Regulatory Developments

Whistleblower revelations: Former Meta employee Frances Haugen leaked thousands of pages of internal research in 2021 concerning potential harms to teenagers.

Multi-state investigation: A joint investigation involving 29 U.S. states preceded the latest legal action.

Current trial: California, Colorado, Kentucky and New Jersey allege that Meta deliberately made Facebook and Instagram addictive for children.

Recent precedent: A jury held Meta and YouTube responsible for a young user's social media addiction and ordered \$6 million in damages.

New Mexico ruling: A court described Meta as a "public nuisance" and ordered it to pay \$567 million for endangering children.

Technology Governance and Accountability

Knowledge and responsibility: A central question is whether companies knew about potential harms and failed to address them.

Design choices: The issue extends beyond harmful content to whether product architecture itself can contribute to problematic behaviour.

Corporate accountability: Legal proceedings challenge the idea that platforms should be treated simply as neutral tools for connection.

User welfare: When maximising engagement becomes the overriding design objective, potential effects on users' well-being become a governance concern.

AI implications: These debates extend beyond social media to the broader governance of transformative technologies, where design choices can create significant social consequences.

Way Forward

Innovation and user engagement cannot be considered independently of potential social consequences. Social media can provide meaningful peer interaction while simultaneously creating risks when design features encourage excessive use. The emerging legal scrutiny therefore raises an important principle for the wider technology sector: companies must be accountable not only for what their products contain, but also for how their design choices influence users. This principle becomes increasingly significant as transformative technologies, including AI, become embedded in everyday life.

PYQ Compass



Q. Use of internet and social media by non-state actors for subversive activities is a major security concern. How have these been misused in the recent past? Suggest effective guidelines to curb the above threat. (GS III - 2016)

RELEVANCE

GS III : Science and technology; Internal Security

HEALTH

Why vital chemotherapy drugs are in short supply in India

India is facing a shortage of two crucial chemotherapy drugs: **cisplatin** and **carboplatin**. The shortage has affected several private hospitals, while government hospitals in some States have managed to maintain supplies. For cancer patients, this shortage has resulted in delays or interruptions in treatment.

What are cisplatin and carboplatin?

Both are **platinum-based chemotherapy drugs** used mainly to treat tumours. Cisplatin is a chemotherapeutic agent used in the treatment of solid tumors as well as certain blood cancers. Carboplatin is a second-generation platinum compound that is also used to treat solid tumours. Both are among the most widely used chemotherapy drugs in India and are indispensable in the treatment of several cancers, including ovarian, head and neck, lung, gall bladder, urinary bladder, breast and testicular cancers.

Why are these drugs in short supply?

The shortage of these drugs has been driven by soaring global platinum raw material costs, India's dependence on imported platinum, West Asia shipping route disruptions, and domestic price caps. As a result, some generic drug manufacturers slowed or temporarily stopped production. While government hospitals in several States have managed to stabilise supplies, private hospitals in many parts are still facing a crunch. For patients, this has meant interruptions or delays in life-saving treatment. In response, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) temporarily raised the ceiling rates for the two drugs by 50% to help restart halted domestic manufacturing lines.

Why is the shortage serious for cancer patients?

Cisplatin and carboplatin are important components of standard cancer-treatment protocols and cannot always be easily replaced. Shortages can cause treatment delays, changes in chemotherapy regimens, higher costs and additional side effects. In some curative-intent cancers, treatment disruption could affect outcomes.

CISPLATIN	CARBOPLATIN
Cisplatin is a chemotherapy drug that has two chloride ions attached to a platinum atom	Carboplatin is a chemotherapy drug that has a cyclobutene diamine group
Has two chloride ions as ligands	Has a cyclobutane-1,1-dicarboxylate (CBDCA) ligand
Considered to be more toxic	Generally considered to be less toxic
Typically administered intravenously	Can be administered intravenously or intramuscularly

What should be done?

- Establish a broader oncology drug-security framework.
- Create a strategic reserve of essential cancer medicines
- Promote greater domestic manufacturing
- Diversify existing API and raw-material supply chains
- Regulate centralised procurement
- Maintain buffer stocks and equitable distribution
- An early-warning system to identify potential drug shortages.

RELEVANCE

GS III : Indian economy & Food security

PYQ Compass



Q. One of the scientists working in the R&D laboratory of a major pharmaceutical company discovers that one of the company's bestselling veterinary drugs has the potential to cure a currently incurable liver disease which is prevalent in tribal areas. However, developing a variant of the drug suitable for human being entailed a lot of research and development having a huge expenditure to the extent of Rs. 50 crores. It was unlikely that company would recover the cost as the disease was rampant only in poverty stricken areas having very little market otherwise. If you were the CEO, then

(a) Identify the various actions that you could take

(b) Evaluate the pros and cons of each of your actions

PYQ Compass



Q. With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following? (2020)

1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
2. Create meaningful short stories and songs
3. Disease diagnosis
4. Text-to-Speech Conversion
5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- c) 2, 4 and 5 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans : b

AI can generate stories and songs (e.g., using models like GPT), but their quality and meaningfulness are still subject to human review and often lack depth or true creativity. Thus, this cannot be considered "effectively" done.

So 2 is incorrect.

Wireless transmission of electrical energy is not a function of AI. It is a field of study within electromagnetic engineering and physics, unrelated to AI. **So 5 is incorrect.**

Q. Which one of the following statements best reflects the issue with Senkaku Islands, sometimes mentioned in the news? (2022) a) It is generally believed that they are artificial islands made by a country around the South China Sea.

- b) China and Japan engage in maritime disputes over these islands in the East China Sea.
- c) A permanent American military base has been set up there to help Taiwan to increase its defense capabilities.
- d) Though the International Court of Justice declared them as no man's land, some South-East Asian countries claim them.

Ans : b

The Senkaku Islands, located in the East China Sea, are the subject of territorial disputes between China and Japan. These uninhabited islands are controlled by Japan but claimed by China (referred to as Diaoyu) and Taiwan. The issue arises from their strategic location and the potential for natural resource reserves, making them a flashpoint in East Asia.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. The controversy surrounding Meta primarily raises which broader question about technology governance?

- a) Whether all social media platforms should be prohibited for adolescents
- b) Whether technology companies should be accountable for foreseeable harms arising from product design
- c) Whether social media can provide any form of social interaction
- d) Whether technology companies should be exempt from legal scrutiny

Answer: b)

The central concern is whether companies should be accountable when design choices contribute to harmful or addiction-like user behaviour, particularly among young users.

Q. Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Kuril Islands:

- 1. The Kuril Islands are currently controlled by Russia but are claimed by Japan as the Northern Territories.
- 2. The dispute over the islands is linked to territorial changes following World War II.
- 3. Iturup, known as Etorofu in Japan, is one of the disputed southern islands.

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

Answer: D. 1, 2 and 3

The Kuril Islands are under Russian control but Japan claims the southern islands as the "Northern Territories." The Soviet Union seized the islands in 1945, making their status a continuing Russia-Japan dispute. Iturup (Etorofu) is one of the southern islands claimed by Japan.