



Sanskriti IAS

25th Mar 2026



IMPORTANT

EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

DELHI CENTRE:
636, Mukherjee Nagar
New Delhi-110009

PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE:
1/1/8A, Stanley Rd,
Maharana Pratap Chauraha,
Civil Lines, Prayagraj, UP - 211002

 **9555-124-124**

 **sanskritiias.com**

GS 2: POLITY

THE HINDU PAGE : 1

SC status 'only for Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs'

Top court says conversion to any other religion will lead to loss of Scheduled Caste status | Petitioner filed an appeal under the SC Act of 1989, alleging he suffered repeated attacks and caste slurs | HC had held that the petitioner could not claim protection under SC Act as he is a Christian now

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday held in a judgment that a person professing any religion other than Hinduism, Buddhism, or Sikhism should not be considered a member of a Schedule Caste community.

The court concluded that conversion to any other religion would result in "immediate and complete loss of Scheduled Caste status from the moment of conversion, regardless of birth".

A Bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Manmohan invoked Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, which mandates that "no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste". The

Sikh religion was added to the ambit of Clause 3 in 1956. The provision was further amended in 1990 to include persons professing Buddhism.

"This bar under Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 is categorical and absolute," Justice Mishra, who authored the judgment, interpreted the 1950 Order.

Appeal by convert

The court was hearing an appeal filed by Chinthada Anand, who was born a Hindu-Madiga (Scheduled Caste) but converted to Christianity to become a pastor.

Mr. Anand had filed a case under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 after he alleged that he had suffered repeated attacks and caste slurs.

The Andhra Pradesh

Identity question

The top court said that a person professing a religion other than those mentioned in Clause 3 cannot be part of a scheduled caste

- Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, mandates that 'no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste'
- The Sikh religion was added to the ambit of Clause 3 in 1956
- The provision was further amended in 1990 to include persons professing Buddhism
- The top court observed that the bar in Clause 3 is 'categorical and absolute'



High Court, in a decision in April last year, quashed the criminal proceedings on the ground that Mr. Anand could no longer claim protection under the 1989 Act as he professed Christianity. The High Court was of the view that the caste system was not recognised in Christianity.

The top court drew attention to the term "pro-

fess" in Clause 3 of the 1950 Order.

"The term 'profess' connotes to publicly declare or practice a religion. its essence lies in the open avowal of one's religious beliefs in a manner discernible to the public at large. It is not merely a question of personal belief or private conviction, but requires an outward man-

ifestation of one's faith. Christianity, by its very theological foundation, does not recognise or incorporate the institution of caste," Justice Mishra agreed with the High Court.

The top court said a convert who did not profess any of the three religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism – in Clause 3 of the 1950 Order could not claim any "statutory benefit, protection, reservation or entitlement" of a Scheduled Caste (SC) member. Justice Mishra said the bar admitted no exception.

"A person who professes and practices such religion for personal, social and spiritual purposes cannot, in law, assert membership of a Scheduled Caste for the purpose of securing statutory benefits. The two positions are mutually exclusive and contrary to the Constitutional scheme,"

Justice Mishra observed.

A person claiming to have "re-converted" to Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism must "cumulatively and conclusively establish" clear proof of his earlier caste; provide credible and unimpeachable evidence of bona fide re-conversion to the original religion; and show satisfactory evidence that members of his original caste have accepted and assimilated him into the community.

The court said renunciation of the new religion by the convert should translate to the actual adoption and observance of the customs, usages, practices, rituals, and religious obligations of the original caste.

Scheduled Tribes Order The judgment also dealt with the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, which did not pre-

scribe religion-based exclusion as in the case of the Scheduled Caste community. Justice Mishra said a person could claim benefits under the Constitution (ST) Order, 1950, only if he or she continued to belong to that particular tribe "in substance".

"If, due to conversion or long-term abandonment of tribal customs, his/her tribal identity is in doubt, that question becomes a factual matter to be determined at trial... If it is proved that the person in question has completely renounced himself from the customs, rituals and other traits of his tribe, and has assimilated into the converted religion following the practices and customs of that particular religion, a reasonable inference can be drawn that such a person shall not be considered a part of the tribe," the court held.

GS 2: SOCIAL ISSUES

THE HINDU PAGE : 3

Social media algorithms come to aid of Telangana Police in preventing suicides

Lavpreet Kaur
HYDERABAD

Minutes after an Intermediate student in Warangal swallowed a large number of tablets and uploaded a video, a police team knocked on his door.

In Mahabubnagar district, a young man upset by a relationship breakdown consumed a toxic substance after posting a video of the act on social media. The footage triggered an alert, and by the time the poison began to take effect, local police had tracked him down.

These are not isolated rescues. They are part of a rapidly evolving system where distress signals post-



ed online are converted into real-world interventions.

Since November, the Telangana Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB) has received 89 such alerts and rescued 76 individuals, according to the Telangana Socio

Economic Outlook 2026. At the centre of this system is a continuous, AI-driven monitoring mechanism developed in collaboration with Meta.

The process begins on social media platforms, where algorithms scan posts in real time – analysing keywords, language, images, audio, visuals and even behavioural patterns, explained TGCSB director Shikha Goel.

Once identified, Meta shares critical identifiers linked to the account, including phone numbers and IP address. This information is received by the TGCSB's social media unit, where analysts immediately begin a digital trace.

Using open-source intelligence tools, the team triangulates the individual's location, often within minutes. The details are then relayed to the nearest police station and Dial 100 patrol units.

The cases span across Telangana, and the triggers are varied – academic pressure, financial distress, family conflict and emotional trauma stemming from relationships.

The TGCSB has also tied up with NGOs to provide counselling and psychological support to survivors and, in some cases, their families.

(For those in distress, counselling is available at TeleMANAS-14416)

GS 1: GEOGRAPHY

THE HINDU PAGE : 7

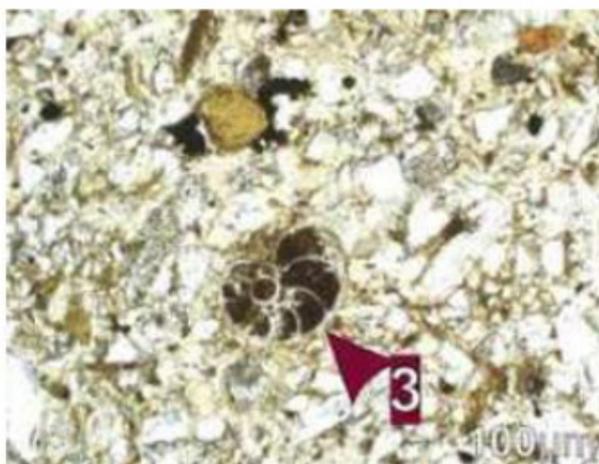
WHAT IS IT?

Dwarka Basin: an ancient haven

In February, researchers from IIT-Bombay, the Indian Statistical Institute, and IISER-Kolkata reported that fossil beds in the Dwarka Basin date back to the early Miocene epoch. They identified 42 species of snails, including four new to science, that indicated the area was once warm and rich in nutrients. The findings are expected to help scientists better understand the ancient marine environments and biodiversity of western India.

The Dwarka Basin is a significant geological and archaeological region located off the coast of Gujarat. It mainly refers to a sedimentary basin in the Kathiawar Peninsula that contains layers of marine rocks and fossils. Geologists are interested in the Basin to understand the earth's history over millions of years. The Basin features rock layers such as the Gaj and Dwarka formations dating back to the Miocene epoch (23 million to 5.3 million years ago). These layers hold a wealth of marine fossils, including ancient snails and foraminifera. Energy companies are also exploring the basin for potential signs of oil and gas deposits beneath the volcanic rock.

The area's popularity surged in the 1980s when marine archaeologists



Petrographic thin-section image of an *Ammonia* sp. microfossil in the Gaj formation of the Dwarka Basin. DOI: 10.1017/JPA.2025.10198

found submerged pillars and over 120 stone anchors on the seafloor near the modern city of Dwarka. Experts from the Archaeological Survey of India continue to dive into the basin to map these structures. The Gujarat government has also announced plans to launch submarine tourism here to allow visitors to see the structures firsthand.



For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'

GS 2: POLITY

THE HINDU PAGE : 8

Deepening global corruption as a pointer for India

The Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 (CPI) published by Transparency International delivers an unmistakable message. Corruption is not receding. It is deepening in ways that erode democratic accountability and hollow out public institutions. For the first time in over a decade, the global average score has dropped to 42 out of 100, with 122 of 182 countries scoring below 50. Only five countries now score above 80, compared with 12 a decade ago. The direction is clear and troubling. Where oversight weakens and civic freedoms narrow, corruption perceptions worsen.

What the data show

India's position must be assessed within this global decline. With a score of 39 and a rank of 91 out of 182 countries in the 2025 index, India remains in the lower half of the table. Over the past decade, India's score has fluctuated narrowly between 38 and 41. In 2014, it stood at 38. A decade later, it remains broadly similar. For a country that has emerged as the world's fourth-largest economy and aspires to achieve developed nation status by 2047, this stagnation is revealing. While the economic scale has expanded dramatically over time, the governance perception has not kept pace.

Global comparisons sharpen the picture. China scores 42. Sri Lanka stands close to India's level, while Bangladesh and Pakistan score lower. India performs better than some of its neighbours, yet it trails several upper-middle-income democracies and many East Asian and European countries that once operated at comparable development levels. Those countries strengthened institutional independence, transparency frameworks and regulatory predictability over time. Their CPI trajectories reflect sustained reform.

Why does India's CPI score matter? First, the index measures perceived public sector integrity rather than recorded incidents. It draws on 13 independent data sources that assess public procurement, regulatory enforcement, judicial effectiveness and institutional safeguards. A score of 39 signals persistent weaknesses in

**Saumitra Bhaduri**

is Professor at the Madras School of Economics, researches financial economics and econometrics, development economics and policy analysis, and has published widely in international journals

Transparency must become a national priority as governance credibility is now a competitive economic variable

transparency, oversight and accountability. Perceptions influence investment decisions, sovereign risk assessments and long-term capital allocation. Governance credibility has now become a competitive economic variable.

Second, corruption carries measurable economic costs. It increases transaction uncertainty, raises compliance expenses and diverts entrepreneurial energy toward navigating rent-seeking systems rather than creating value. These distortions reduce productivity and discourage investment. A widely cited global estimate suggests that corruption costs at least 5% of global GDP annually, equivalent to more than \$2.6 trillion in lost output each year. This figure includes bribes, illicit financial flows and inefficiencies in public spending. While precise quantification varies across studies, the scale of the drag is undeniable.

For developing economies such as India, the impact is significant. Research linked to multilateral institutions suggests that corruption may cost India roughly 0.5% of GDP annually in direct terms, with broader estimates placing total losses between 1% and 1.5% of GDP once indirect growth effects are included. At current output levels, this represents tens of billions of dollars each year. These are resources that could finance infrastructure, health, education or industrial upgrading.

Hurdles in compliance architecture

A third structural concern lies in the complexity of India's compliance architecture. A recent report indicates that entrepreneurs operate under the shadow of 26,134 imprisonment provisions embedded across India's business regulations. The scale of the burden becomes clearer at the industry level. Even as the Union Budget 2026-27 proposes the Biopharma Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology and Innovation (SHAKTI) initiative with an allocation of ₹10,000 crore over five years, a pharmaceutical start-up with a single manufacturing unit is required to navigate 998 separate compliance obligations before commencing operations, with nearly 49% bearing potential criminal liability. Such extensive

criminalisation within regulatory frameworks not only raises the cost of doing business but also expands discretionary power in ways that can inadvertently create conditions for rent seeking.

Encouraging trends

Yet, the picture is not uniformly bleak, as there are also positive counter-currents. India's digital public infrastructure has reduced leakages in certain welfare schemes through direct benefit transfers linked to bank accounts and digital identity. The Reserve Bank of India's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI), with March 2018 as the base, has been tracking the extent of digitisation of payments across the country since January 1, 2021. The index for September 2025 stands at 516.76 as against 493.22 for March 2025. The Goods and Services Tax network has increased formalisation and traceability in indirect taxation.

E-procurement portals and digital payment systems have reduced opportunities for some forms of rent seeking. These reforms demonstrate that institutional design and the use of technology can reduce discretion. Corruption, therefore, is not merely a moral or legal problem. It is an economic constraint and a strategic vulnerability. It weakens fiscal efficiency, undermines regulatory credibility and reduces social trust. For a country that envisions becoming a \$10 trillion economy within the next decade, governance quality cannot remain static. Rapid economic expansion without parallel institutional strengthening creates an imbalance.

The 2025 Index should be read as a benchmark rather than a verdict. India possesses strong constitutional foundations, competitive elections, a capable judiciary and growing digital capacity. Even modest but sustained improvements in transparency, judicial efficiency, regulatory simplification and institutional independence could materially improve perceptions over time. Countries that climbed the CPI rankings did so through cumulative reform, not episodic crackdowns.

India's economic ascent has been decisive. Its governance evolution must now match that ambition with equal resolve.

GS 3: ENVIRONMENT

THE HINDU PAGE : 9

The judicial push for environmental CSR

India emerged as a pioneer for mandating profit-sharing for social good through the Companies Act, 2013 – a visionary move to channel corporate earnings for crucial societal objectives. However, the environment remains largely neglected, often sidelined by prevailing corporate priorities. Despite India's commitment to net-zero emissions by 2070 at COP26, and escalating climate challenges from air pollution, water scarcity, and poor waste management, ecological needs continue to be underrepresented in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding.

However, recent Supreme Court observations have reframed environmental spending – not as mere discretionary charity, but as a constitutional mandate. By invoking Article 51A (g), the judiciary underscored that the right to conduct business is inseparably linked to the responsibility to restore our planet. The neglect of the habitats of the Great Indian Bustard by energy firms catalysed the Court to issue this mandate.

Skewed funding

An analysis of CSR data exposes a lopsided spending pattern that favours human-centric development at the expense of the environment. Over the past seven years, funds have been overwhelmingly allocated to social sectors, with education receiving approximately 38%, healthcare 22%, and rural development 10%. Conversely, the environment averaged between 7%-9%, creating an unbalanced ledger that critically underfunds vital sustainability projects. This disparity suggests that corporations view environmental crises as distant threats compared to immediate social needs. Yet, there are commendable exceptions that prove large-scale restoration is possible.

Mahindra's 'Project Hariyali' has planted almost 25 million trees, focusing on survival rates



Mohan Chandra Pargaien

Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Telangana and adviser to SCCL

By invoking Article 51A (g), the judiciary underscored that the right to conduct business is inseparably linked to the responsibility to restore our planet

rather than just sapling counts; ITC's forestry program spans 1.3 million acres, integrating livelihoods with conservation; the Tata Group leads water conservation through massive watershed management; Coca-Cola and Hindustan Unilever have undertaken circular waste management projects; and JSW has advanced mangrove restoration. These initiatives demonstrate that prioritising the environment yields significant, and measurable impact. Nevertheless, most companies still pursue 'quick wins' such as one-off awareness drives, and sidestep the arduous processes of forest restoration and natural resource recovery.

Challenges of restoration

Much needed environmental restoration, including afforestation, has been neglected in India as is evidenced in the country's report on the Bonn Challenge (a global, voluntary effort to restore 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030). While the nation aims to restore 26 million hectares by 2030, private companies have contributed a negligible 2% to the 9.8 million hectares restored so far.

There is a massive 'restoration gap' between the damage caused by industrial activity and the investment made to fix it. Companies prefer social projects such as environmental awareness campaigns, renewable energy, or basic green initiatives. These give quick visibility, clear results, and facilitate easy reporting. In contrast, land-based projects such as forest restoration with tree planting, habitat recovery, water conservation, and waste management take a long time. In addition, they also require expert skills in tree-growing, soil health, and biodiversity checks – skills that most CSR partners don't have. Corporations often support initiatives such as the recently popular Miyawaki plantations, which offer rapid growth and look

excellent in annual reports, but often compromise native ecology and biodiversity. The situation is worsened by an urban bias in the selection of the target area; a lack of practical policies for degraded lands; and poor collaboration with forest departments and other organisations.

Need for reimagining strategy

The current judicial push demands an urgent transition to a 'ecosystem recovery' strategy. This requires reimagining corporate accountability, and replacing conventional auditing with time-bound restoration initiatives and their ecological assessments.

Indicators of success should be tangible ecological services such as soil carbon sequestration, water retention, and biodiversity recovery. To achieve this, India must prioritise degraded and remote forest lands lacking resources through appropriate restoration initiatives. Further, the country needs to build alliances between forest departments, universities, conservation NGOs and joint forest management committees. These partnerships can establish dedicated restoration units under scientific supervision, giving due regard to native species and ecology. Furthermore, the challenge of long-term financing for landscape-scale projects and restoration challenges can be solved by establishing a restoration trust or an escrow fund. This would guarantee continuity and provide the long-term security necessary for real ecological impact.

Corporate governance in India must evolve from being shareholder-centric to ecosystem-centric, with directors acting as fiduciaries for the environment and moving past the ease of basic compliance. When the health of our planet is treated as a mandatory, non-negotiable part of business strategy, the country moves toward a future where sustainable development becomes a lived reality.