



Sanskriti IAS

5th May 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: INDIAN POLITY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 12

Assam-Bengal template will go national. It fuels support for BJP, not resistance

INDIAN POLITICS is a story of vanishing exceptionalisms. The two most entrenched and enduring regional formations have collapsed. Kolkata has fallen; Chennai has cracked. Kerala, true to form, has seen anti-incumbency; the BJP's hold over Assam endures. These results consolidate the unprecedented national electoral prowess of the BJP and the ideological supremacy of Hindutva. It would be churlish to deny the unprecedented power of the Modi-Shah duo in the annals of electoral politics.

Even in a state that prided itself on being as distinctive as Bengal, the BJP has brought about a near-impossible electoral realignment. Even by the standards of its storied history, the BJP's victory in Bengal is a remarkable tribute to its unmatched combination of ambition, perseverance, and political ruthlessness. It is, in a literal sense, a triumph of the will. It has not been stopped by any conventional electoral arithmetic, institutional propriety, identities like language, region or caste, or the embeddedness of a towering figure like Mamata Banerjee.

Defeat in retrospect always seems overdetermined. The fatigue, boredom, the corruption and nepotism, creeping thuggishness, the limits of welfare politics, and regional symbolism created background conditions for a BJP victory. But they would not have translated into victory if three things were not in place. After all, there is no evidence that the BJP will address better many of the discontents that fuelled it to power. The sheer determination of the BJP,

the energy of the Modi-Shah duo to persist in hostile terrain, is remarkable. Then there is the belief that politically salient identities are not given. A new Hindu consciousness can be reconfigured through sheer mobilisation to the point where Hindu-Muslim polarisation nearly displaces all other axes. Longstanding grievances are now processed through that template. And finally, something that will be studied for a while, the employment of institutional tactics, from the use of the Election Commission to the taming of the Supreme Court, to create a narrative of the cleaning of the electoral process and a violence-free election. The actual effects of the SIR process will be studied over time. But what was remarkable about it was that the inconvenience and pain it imposed seemed to become a source of the BJP's strength rather than a cause for punishment. Whether or not it decisively tilted the electoral outcome, it became handy for mobilisation and a demonstration of its institutional capture. The Assam-Bengal template will go national. It seems to fuel support for the BJP rather than resistance.

The victory of the Vijay-led TVK is no less a vanquishing of another exceptionalism. Anti-incumbency is the norm in Tamil Nadu. But still, the TVK's victory is unprecedented in the way in which it breaks the duopoly of the DMK and AIADMK. What is remarkable about it is that it breaks the standard assumption that the only way a party can win a regional setting is by playing the re-



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

If Bengal's history is any guide, the TMC will fade away faster than its vote share suggests, and the DMK is not a Dravidian force in the way it was. The BJP now has an opening in Punjab, and the lesson of Tamil Nadu is that the South is open territory

gional pride card more strongly — there is nothing natural about that regionalism. But it is also a warning that even relatively successful states like Tamil Nadu, trailblazers in industrialisation and welfare politics alike, are in the grip of dissatisfaction and restlessness, in this case powered by young people. Vijay has done what stars before him, like Vijaykanth, were not able to do, without much of a party organisation or a social movement. Is this form of politics a new canary in the mine?

The BJP has demonstrated a triumph of the will. But its triumphs, while a testament to its furious energy and political imagination, also carry a shadow for Indian democracy. This victory consolidates Amit Shah's position as a national leader and his lead over rivals by a mile. Total command over the party organisation, and an ability to deliver wins in all kinds of contexts, including a straight two-cornered context. It is also a new experiment for India. When one party acquires this degree of organisational dominance and ideological ascendancy, all countervailing forces and voices of dissent will gradually fall away. If Bengal's history is any guide, the Trinamool will fade away faster than its proportion of vote share suggests, and the DMK is not a Dravidian force in the way it was. The BJP now also has an opening in Punjab, and the lesson of Tamil Nadu is that the South is open territory.

The Congress might exult in the fact that all its INDIA bloc rivals

have fallen away. But Congress is nowhere near even putting up a minimal resistance and is no match for the BJP's ruthlessness. Its lack of leadership, backward-looking ideas of caste and region, and utter listlessness meant that the regional vacuums will be filled by the BJP more than Congress. Hindutva is now the reigning ideology and identity of the new India. This is not a moment that can be analysed purely in contingent political terms; it is part of the inner conflict over the idea of India since 1857. Much of the template of that conversation over India's identity was laid in 19th-century Bengal, beginning with Bankim. It is only the myopia of the Left and Centre parties that they assumed that regions are irrevocable natural formations that can be opposed to Hindutva. The idea that "Kali" would be pitted against "Ram" was the kind of cultural nonsense where the Left began to believe its own cultural illiteracy. For now, Hindutva is producing a culturally hierarchical order, where the claims of identity imperil India as a zone of freedom. The check on this ideology is not going to be external. We are on a wing and a prayer that the consolidation of this form of Hindutva does not result in deeper exclusion and violence, which is typically the denouement of such nationalisms. For now, India is in the grip of Hindutva supremacy; it has been sold as a utopian dream. There is no rival. What this supremacy does, or what brittleness it masks, only time will tell.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

GS 3 : INTERNAL SECURITY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 15



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the North Tech Symposium 2026, in Prayagraj on Monday. PTI

Op Sindoor biggest example of hi-tech warfare, says Rajnath

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, May 4

DEFENCE MINISTER Rajnath Singh Monday said Operation Sindoor served as an irrefutable proof that India not only understands the evolving nature of warfare, but is deploying technological advancements with confidence.

Addressing the inaugural session of the three-day North Tech Symposium, organised by the Indian Army's Northern and Central Commands and Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers, in Prayagraj, Singh also highlighted the criticality of sustained focus on research and cultivating the element of surprise to stay future-ready in the present era of intense technological revolution.

Lauding the defence forces and the industry for thoroughly analysing the evolving circumstances and ensuring India's preparedness, he said, "Operation Sindoor demonstrated

the valour and capabilities of our defence forces to the world. Cutting-edge indigenous equipment, including advanced missile systems such as Akashteer, Akash missile system, and BrahMos, was used during the operation."

He added, "It served as irrefutable proof that we not only understand the evolving nature of warfare but are deploying technological advancements with unwavering confidence."

On the rate of technological change in modern-day warfare, he said, "In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the nature of warfare transformed from tanks and missiles to game-changer drones and sensors within a span of merely three or four years." "Furthermore, things that are part of day-to-day life are turning into deadly weapons. The pager attacks in Lebanon and Syria have prompted a reassessment of modern warfare methods. In such a situation, we need to be prepared," he added.

GS 3 : INDIAN ECONOMY

INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 20

• ECONOMICS

Jobs to GDP to debt: State of poll state economies

A look at fiscal health of states is essential to understand voters' choices and recognise the challenges Chief Ministers will face



ACROSS FOUR very different states — Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal — voters gave resounding mandates in the 2025 Assembly elections. The landslide victories underscored how decidedly voters wanted to either punish the incumbent and summarily change the way their states were being governed or, as was the case in Assam, to reward the incumbent without hesitation.

Here's a look at some of the key macro-economic data and the state government's fiscal health. This is not just to understand why voters might have chosen the way they did, but also to recognise the main challenges the incoming Chief Ministers face.

State of economic growth and people's incomes

Chart 1 espouses a broad trend of how each of the four states grew and what happened to average incomes in each of the states over a decade between 2015 to 2024.

Over this decade, Assam's gross state domestic product (GSDP) — a measure of the overall size of the economy — not only grew at the fastest rate among the four states in question but also has been one of the fastest across India. Among the larger states, only Telangana registered a faster growth rate during this period.

As a result, Assam registered the fastest growth rate in per capita incomes, beating not just Telangana but also other prosperous states such as Gujarat and Karnataka. Even though Assam's per capita GSDP is still the lowest in this comparison, it has almost trebled to catch up with West Bengal.

The two states that were bastions of Left parties, West Bengal and Kerala, continued to post modest gains for their people with per capita GSDP growing at a rate below 5%.

Tamil Nadu has fared better over the past decade, and an average resident of the state is now richer than their next-door neighbour in Kerala, thanks to substantially faster growth rates both of the overall economy and per capita incomes. Kerala had registered the slowest growth rate in overall economic size — a pace that has seen some other states (such as Telangana and Gujarat) jump ahead in per capita incomes.

State of (un)employment

India is undergoing a demographic transition with millions joining the working age population, and this has created a growing challenge for governments in the form of unemployment.

Chart 2 taps two key metrics in this regard. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) essentially talks the demand for jobs in a state. Higher the LFPR, more the percentage of people in the working age group who are actively looking for a job.

Compared with the national average of 55.5%, all the states that went to polls had a higher demand for jobs. None more so than West Bengal, which also had the highest unemployment rate among the four states. The unemployment rate is the percentage of people who were looking for a job but did not get it.

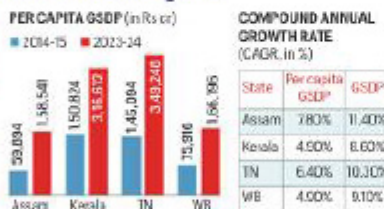
West Bengal's unemployment rate was



BJP supporters celebrate the party's victory in the West Bengal Assembly election in Salt Lake, Kolkata, on Monday. (PHOTO BY PALLI)

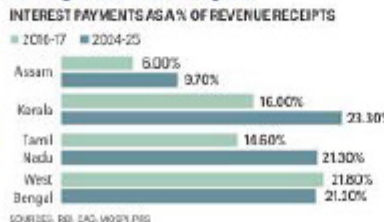
• THE STORY SO FAR

1. The state of income growth



NOTE: PER CAPITA INCOME, OWNERSHIP AND EXPENDITURE HAVE BEEN CALCULATED USING STATE-WISE POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR THE RESPECTIVE YEARS USING POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SEPARATION OF STATES. SOURCE: RBI, MOSPI, NATIONAL COMMISSION ON POPULATION, STATE BUDGET ESTIMATES OF VARIOUS STATES FOR 2023-25; PPS

3. Rising interest burden for govts



SOURCE: RBI, CAG, MOFPI, PPS

substantially higher than the national average, while Kerala's was the lowest and substantially lower than the country's average. Tamil Nadu's unemployment rate might be lower than West Bengal's, but one has to take into account the lower demand for jobs as well. For instance, even with lower LFPR than Assam, Tamil Nadu has been witnessing a higher unemployment rate, suggesting there was elevated stress among

2. State of unemployment

States	Labour Force Participation Rate % (July-Sept 2015-26)	Unemployment Rate*
Assam	60.4	5.2
Kerala	59.4	3.7
Tamil Nadu	58.6	5.7
West Bengal	51	5.1
India	55.1	5.2

*ACCORDING TO CURRENT WEEKLY STATUS FOR PERSONS 15 YEARS AND ABOVE. SOURCE: ECONOMIC SURVEY 2025

4. State of government finances

State	Fiscal Deficit as a % of Gross State Domestic Product	Revenue Deficit as a % of GDP	Unconditional Cash Transfers as a % of revenue receipts
Assam	2.5	0	4.30%
Kerala	3	-1.9	NA
TN	2.8	-1.2	4.20%
WB	3.2	-1.7	10%

SOURCE: PPS, ALL DATA IS 2023-24

voters when it came to jobs.

State of government finances

However, before any Chief Minister can address these macroeconomic parameters, they will have to first set in order the health of government finances. A government that has already borrowed more than its capacity one that is saddled with the burden of paying back past loans, or one that is

spending too much on freebies instead of creating new productive assets, cannot rewrite a state's growth story.

Charts 3 and 4 lay down some of the key metrics that the incoming Chief Ministers will have to contend with.

The first metric is fiscal deficit as a percentage of the state's economy. Fiscal deficit essentially refers to the amount of money a state government can borrow from the market to meet the gap between its revenues and expenses. Prudential norms peg it to be 3% or lower. As things stand, West Bengal was the one state that exceeded this prudential norm.

But another key metric — revenue deficit or gap between a state's revenue expenditure and revenue receipts — shows that while the overall borrowing levels may not be as high, the borrowed money is being used by many just to meet day-to-day gaps in expenditure and revenues.

Ideally, the 3% fiscal deficit should be used to invest in capital expenditure — the kind that creates productive capacity in the economy like making roads, railways and ports, etc. But if a state has a revenue deficit, it implies that the government is borrowing to meet its everyday expenses such as salaries and pensions. Barring Assam, the other three slip up on this metric.

A growing worry in this regard is the growth of unconditional cash transfers by state governments in aid to alleviate economic distress among voters and to purchase allegiance. West Bengal, for example, has been spending 10% of all its revenue receipts on such doles. Read in the context of a revenue deficit, this essentially means the state government is borrowing to dole out cash.

Lastly, when governments borrow weakly for years, the interest on past loans starts to pile up. Chart 3 shows how all the states have racked up high interest payment bills. West Bengal's number does not show as much growth but it was high to begin with, whereas Kerala and Tamil Nadu's liability in this regard has shot up.



GS 3 : SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Households face rising medical inflation

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nivedita S.

Medical inflation in India is rising at an exponential rate every year with many households, despite government support, at risk of piling up large debt if a family member falls chronically ill or has an accident.

The government's 2025-26 Economic Survey showed health inflation slowed to 3% in December 2025 from 6% in 2023. However, the Aon's Global Medical Trends Rate 2026 and other reports put medical inflation at 12-13%.

This is significant as most Indians lack health cover and depend on out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE). In 2025, the estimated average OOPE per hospitalisation case (excluding childbirth) was ₹34,064 (₹31,484 in rural and ₹38,688 in urban) as per the Survey on Health conducted as part of the 80th round of the National Sample Survey. In government hospitals, the average OOPE per hospitalisation was ₹6,631, ₹39,530 in charitable/NGO-run hospitals and ₹50,508 in private hospitals. This is a huge jump from the 75th round where the average medical expenditure was ₹20,135 in hospitalisation cases (excluding childbirth). For a large section of the population, this exceeds monthly household income.

Factors behind inflation

The reasons for the rise in healthcare costs are multifaceted. "Rising medical inflation can be attributed to rapid technological advancement resulting in costlier treatments, increased demand as non-



Turning pauper: Families resort to taking loans, selling jewels and property to meet medical expenses. GETTY IMAGES /ISTOCK

the Indian Institute of Public Health, said.

She added pharmaceutical inflation (rise in drug price) was also a factor.

The advancement in healthcare relies on technology leading to higher input costs in hospitals and increased imports of costly medical devices and drugs. The fluctuations caused by global supply chain disruptions also contribute.

"When new technology is introduced in healthcare, the initial costs will be high. However, with the streamlining of the technologies and boosting local production, the costs can be reduced," said Dr. M. Muniyandi, Head of Department of Health Economics at the ICMR-National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis.

Privatisation issue

Privatisation of healthcare in India is also a major factor in costs rising. In 2025, 61.25% of hospitalisation cases were at private hospitals as per the Survey on Health. Many patients often had to resort to private health institutions to take certain lab tests and undergo complex surgeries on account of quality issues and absence of these facilities in public hospitals.

rate players entered the market to fill the gap. Private equity investment in Indian healthcare stood at \$5.5 billion in 2023. The profit-driven model in private hospitals worsens inequities and accessibility.

The Supreme Court on March 4, 2025, urged States to come out with guidelines to regulate pricing in private hospitals to ensure patients were not exploited or compelled to undergo expensive treatments and scans. "Enforcement of regulations is challenging given the size of the private sector and heterogeneity among providers," Dr. Mehta said.

Lack of insurance

In a 2026 study published in *Global Heart* on heart failure, one of the leading causes of death in India, showed over 70% of patients lacked health cover for costly treatment and hospitalisation. As much as 90% of the total health expenditure was financed by OOPE. The average OOPE per patient was ₹1,06,566. In over 30% of the cases, the families resorted to distress financing by taking out loans, selling jewellery and even property.

As of 2025, only 47.4% rural and 44.3% of urban households had some kind

of hospitalisation; OOPE as well as expenditure on medicines is left out, which means people access these by paying out of pockets," Dr. Mehta said.

The government's Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) provides ₹5 lakh to 12 crore poor and vulnerable families in urban and rural areas for secondary and tertiary healthcare.

However, rejection of claims on account of incorrect documents, excessive lag in reimbursement, fraudulent activities by hospitals and reliance on digital services caused hindrances in its effectiveness.

Another problem is the "missing middle," says Dr. Mehta. "Those who are left out of coverage entirely because they are not poor enough to be eligible for government-funded schemes and not well-off enough to buy private insurance."

Solutions ahead

India's public health expenditure is below 2% of GDP. The Union Budget 2026 allocated ₹1,04,559 crore towards the healthcare sector, which is only 0.26% of GDP. "Most countries that succeeded in keeping healthcare affordable and accessible for all have done so on the back of robust public sector provisioning as well as public spending and subsidies," Dr. Mehta said. She added there was no other alternative to address the rising medical inflation.

The Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010, mandates private and public hospitals to charge the rates for each type of procedure and service within

mentation lags. As healthcare is a State subject, State governments should step in to form guidelines to enforce this measure to prevent overcharging.

"Strengthening public healthcare network via integration of hospitals is necessary. Patients must be able to move easily from a primary health centre to tertiary care. There must be massive testing and diagnostic facilities in place run by the government," Dr. Muniyandi said. He added the interventions the government introduced for addressing polio, HIV and tuberculosis, which ensured free treatment for vulnerable populations, must now be expanded to other serious illnesses and non-communicable diseases.

To address pharmaceutical inflation, the National List of Essential Medicines 2022 must be expanded. Currently, there are 384 drugs in the list and prices capped by price ceilings via market-based formula.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) list of essential medicines, however, has 520 drugs. Several experts pointed out lack of frequent updation left out several life-saving drugs from the national list.

"Apart from focusing on prevention by adopting a healthy lifestyle and opting for periodic screening against common illnesses, those who can afford to must buy private insurance with ample coverage to protect against catastrophic health expenditure," Dr. Mehta said.

There is also a need to expand the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to include healthcare services apart from medicines to

GS 2: INDIAN POLITY

THE HINDU PAGE : 14

Did the PM's broadcast violate MCC?

What does Part VII say about using public resources? How does election law treat such appeals? Can public broadcasters be used for campaign messaging? Why has the Election Commission not acted so far?

EXPLAINER

V. Venkatesan

The story so far:

The Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which guides political parties and candidates during elections, was first drafted by the Kerala government in 1960. The Election Commission (EC) formalised it in 1968, revised it in 1974, and added Part VII on the "party in power" in 1979. Former Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan enforced it with unprecedented rigour from 1991. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's April 18 address has raised questions about whether the address violated the Code.

How did the Model Code of Conduct evolve?

The Supreme Court, in *Mohinder Singh Gill v. Chief Election Commissioner* (1978), described Article 324 as "a reservoir of power" that allows the EC to act where Parliament has not legislated. The Punjab and Haryana High Court, in *Harbans Singh Jalal v. Union of India* (1997), held that the Code comes into effect from the announcement of the election schedule. Sanctions range from censure to the suspension of party recognition under paragraph 16A of the Election Symbols Order, 1968.

Mr. Modi's address was carried live on Doordarshan, Sansad TV, and All India Radio. He named four Opposition parties and urged women voters in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal to punish them at the polls on April 23 for defeating the 131st Constitution Amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha.

Does the Prime Minister's broadcast violate the Code?

Clauses 1(a), 1(b), and 4 of Part VII of the MCC prohibit the party in power from



Prime Minister's address was carried live on Doordarshan, Sansad TV, and All India Radio. PTI

combining official visits with electioneering, using government machinery for campaign work, and misusing publicly funded mass media for partisan coverage during the election period. The broadcast raises distinct questions under both the Code and the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The Code asks what the incumbent did with public resources. It does not provide a closed list of impermissible appeals; that open texture is deliberate. On its face, the April 18 address appears to be a textbook Part VII matter. At the time of writing, the Commission has taken no action on the complaints it has received.

The statute is less flexible than the Code. Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, as amended in 1961, makes it a corrupt practice for a candidate or his agent to appeal to voters on the ground of "his" religion, race, caste, community, or language. The provision turns on a pronoun, "his", and five enumerated nouns. In *Abhiram Singh v. C.D. Commachen* (2017), a seven-judge

Bench of the Supreme Court settled, by a 4:3 majority, that "his" extends to the voter as well as the candidate.

What do the law and the courts say about such appeals?

However, Abhiram Singh grappled with the pronoun, not with the nouns. The 1961 Parliament was legislating against the sectarian appeals of its moment, when religion, race, caste, community, and language were the dominant axes of Indian politics. Section 123(3) was not drafted to police every form of partisan appeal.

The April 18 broadcast ran on different axes: gender as a mobilising category, party affiliation as a target, and the Prime Minister's national broadcast on Doordarshan as the medium. The objection here is not to the identity of the audience, but to the partisan use of publicly funded media. The statute's five nouns were never meant to catch that.

A writ petition pending before the Supreme Court (Diary No. 24600 of

2026), filed by former Congress MP T.N. Prathapan, and a candidate in the just-concluded Assembly elections in Kerala, opens a different statutory route. It invokes Section 123(7), not Section 123(3). Section 123(7) makes it a corrupt practice to obtain or procure the assistance of government servants, including gazetted officers, for the furtherance of a candidate's electoral prospects. The sub-section was drafted to deter candidates from pressuring police and revenue officials into electioneering; the petition asks whether its reach extends to public broadcasters and the PMO.

The petition argues that the use of Doordarshan and Sansad TV, along with Prime Minister's Office personnel, to prepare and disseminate a partisan broadcast falls within this prohibition. Where Section 123(3) focuses on the grounds of an appeal, Section 123(7) turns on who was pressed into service to deliver it.

On that reading, the statute reaches April 18 not through its five nouns but through its workforce clause.

This returns the conversation to the Code. The MCC, unlike the statute, was written to be open-textured. Part VII asks what the party in power did with public resources; the statute asks which of five categories the appeal invoked, or whose assistance it procured. The statute sets a floor on corrupt practice, not a ceiling on what the Code can reach.

The Commission's silence on Mr. Modi's broadcast is not a doctrinal difficulty. It is a choice not to use the one instrument in Indian electoral regulation that was kept open precisely for settings where the statute may reach only belatedly, if at all. If the court admits the petition and the Commission is compelled to answer, the architecture of MCC enforcement may face its hardest test yet. (V. Venkatesan is a journalist and legal researcher)

THE GIST

The April 18 broadcast appears to be a textbook Part VII issue, raising questions about the partisan use of State-funded mass media and the use of public resources during the election period, but the Commission has taken no action so far.

While Section 123(3) does not cover such appeals, the petition invokes Section 123(7) on the assistance of government servants, bringing the issue back to the open-textured MCC, which the Commission has chosen not to use.

GS 3: ENVIRONMENT

THE HINDU PAGE : 14

What does the latest ruling mean for Forest Rights Act?

Why did the court intervene in the DLC's decision? What does the law say about eviction and grazing rights?

C.R. Bijoy

The story so far:

In April 20, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court reminded the District Level Committee (DLC) under the Forest Rights Act 2006 in Lakhimpur, Uttar Pradesh, that any previous court orders inconsistent with a later law are null and void.

Why is the order important?

The High Court struck down the DLC's decision in March 2021, rejecting the forest rights claims of the Tharus of Palia Kalan Tehsil, a tribal community, citing a Supreme Court interim order in 2000 that barred "de-reservation of forests/sanctuaries/national parks" until further orders.

The DLC is headed by the District Collector and includes the Divisional Forest Officer, the District Tribal Welfare Officer, and three district panchayat members.

The core legal principle in lawmaking is that all provisions in earlier laws and

court orders that are inconsistent with the provisions of a later law are null and void. The Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006 itself also states that forest rights are recognised and vested in forest dwellers "notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force and subject to the provisions of this Act". The DLC violated this provision, which is a punishable offence.

Has the DLC been punished?

While the order has thus brought relief across the country, the High Court did not invoke the mechanism the FRA provides to sanction offenders. The Gram Sabha is a statutory authority under the FRA. It has to issue 60 days' notice to the State-Level Monitoring Committee to proceed against the authority violating the law.

However, the High Court ignored this provision and instead asked the DLC itself to reconsider its offence and make its decision anew in line with existing law and court orders.

The FRA does not provide for such allowances.

How has the FRA been superseded?

FRA disallows the eviction or removal of forest dwellers "from forest land under their occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is complete". For example, in January 2026, the Uttarakhand High Court ordered the forest department that "till final adjudication of the claims, the respondents shall refrain from initiating any coercive action, including eviction of the petitioners or interference with their peaceful possession and agricultural activities on the lands under their occupation".

However, there has been repeated disregard for and violations of the FRA. For instance, in September 2014, the Madras High Court had dismissed the plea of petitioners from Asaripallam, in Theni district, challenging eviction notices they had been issued and to consider their claims under the FRA. This was based on the forest officer's submission that they were encroachers and weren't eligible for rights under the FRA.

The Madras High Court stated that the claim process under the FRA would only

waste the authorities' time and dismissed the case.

The same High Court has dismissed similar petitions under the FRA by petitioners from Perambalur in 2017, Tuticorin in 2020, Sivagangai in 2021, and Theni in 2022. Authorities also continue to issue eviction orders under the Tamil Nadu Forest Act (TNFA) 1882, despite such orders having been overridden by the FRA.

Does the FRA allow grazing?

On March 13 this year, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court dismissed a review petition of the March 2022 order, noting that "the provisions prohibiting cattle trespass into forests under Section 57 of the Tamil Nadu Forest Act", to protect wildlife and the spread of disease, were the valid legal basis for the ban.

The High Court had initially banned grazing in all forest areas of Tamil Nadu; later the same month, it restricted the ban order to tiger reserves, national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries. However, it made no reference to the FRA, which recognises grazing rights in all forests, including those overlapping with tiger reserves, national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries. FRA is also a central law and thus overrides a State law with regard to both prohibition and permission for grazing.

This is why the Allahabad High Court reaffirming that provisions in the later law override inconsistent provisions in previous ones, as well as in court orders, comes as a breath of fresh air.

(C.R. Bijoy examines natural resource conflicts and governance issues)

THE GIST

The High Court reaffirmed that provisions in a later law override inconsistent earlier court orders, striking down the DLC's rejection of the Tharus' forest rights claims.

The ruling highlights repeated disregard of the Forest Rights Act, including eviction orders and denial of grazing rights, despite the law recognising and protecting these rights.

GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE HINDU PAGE : 18

UAE says Iran has resumed attacks as the U.S. moves to reopen Hormuz

U.S. military says it intercepted Iranian missiles, sunk six of Tehran's boats as American-flagged ships pass through the strait; UAE says Iran targeted oil facility; Tehran denies both claims, says any safe passage through Hormuz must be coordinated

Associated Press
DUBAI

The U.S. military said it battled Iranian forces and sank six small boats as it moved to reopen the Strait of Hormuz on Monday. The UAE, a key American ally, said it had come under attack from Iran for the first time since a ceasefire took hold in early April.

The attacks appeared to be in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's latest efforts to reopen the strait, a critical waterway for global energy. The U.S. military said two American-flagged merchant ships had transited the strait on Monday. Iran's Revolutionary Guards denied that any commercial ships had crossed the strait. Iranian state media also denied reports that the U.S. had sunk Iranian vessels.

The UAE Defence Minis-



A container ship sits at anchor as a small motorboat passes in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas, Iran on Monday. REUTERS

try said Iran had launched four cruise missiles, with three shot down and one falling into the sea.

Indian nationals hurt

Authorities in Fujairah said an Iranian drone sparked a fire at a key oil facility, wounding three Indian nationals. The British military reported two cargo vessels ablaze off the UAE.

The UAE condemned

what it called "renewed treacherous Iranian aggression" and called for an immediate halt to the attacks.

In Oman, authorities said a residential building near the strait "was targeted," resulting in two foreign workers wounded.

Responding to the accusations, Iranian state media, quoting a senior military official, said it had "no

plans" to target the UAE. Breaking Iran's chokehold on the strait would ease global economic concerns and deny Tehran a major source of leverage.

But reports of new attacks raised doubts as to whether shipping companies would take risks to use the waterway. Iran has said the new U.S. effort is a violation of the fragile truce that has held for more than three weeks.

The U.S.-led Joint Maritime Information Center had advised ships on Monday to cross the strait in Oman's waters, saying it had set up an "enhanced security area."

Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Central Command, said American forces have successfully opened a passage through the strait that is free of Iranian mines.

He said Iran launched multiple cruise missiles,

drones and small boats at civilian ships, and that U.S. military helicopters sank six of the small boats.

Mr. Trump had warned on Sunday that Iranian efforts to halt passage through the strait "will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully." He described "Project Freedom" in humanitarian terms, designed to aid stranded seafarers on hundreds of ships that have been stuck in the Persian Gulf since the war began.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency called the effort part of Mr. Trump's "delirium."

Iran's military command has warned that ships passing through the strait must coordinate with them. "We warn that any foreign military force that intends to approach or enter the strait will be targeted," Major General Ali Abdollahi said.