

## The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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—It's about quality—

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna emphasized the judiciary's independence as vital for unbiased decision-making in a democracy, countering criticisms of "unelected" judges.

- He highlighted challenges such as pending cases, balancing public scrutiny, and constitutional duties, while also showcasing improved judicial productivity.

## CJI flays barbs about 'unelected' judiciary

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Tuesday threw a counter-punch at critics who question the power wielded by "unelected" judges in an electoral democracy, indicating the alternative is even more frightening.

"But imagine a world where judges campaign for votes, solicit views and decisions from the public and make promises about future judgments...", Chief Justice Khanna addressed his audience, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at a Constitution Day function.

Appointment of judges, and not voting them to power, was a way to ensure



Sanjiv Khanna

their decisions were unbiased and free from "external pressures". Their conduct was guided solely by the Constitution and the law.

Chief Justice Khanna said judges walk the razor's edge. Their decisions make some happy while drawing

criticism from others.

The CJI said some rate the constitutional courts of India among the most powerful in the world. Others felt the courts were straying from their constitutional duties by either failing to challenge the status quo or in resisting the transient popular mandate of the electorate.

### 'Duty towards public'

"For judges, perspectives and critique matter, because our foremost duty is towards the public, and secondly, being open and transparent is the biggest strength of the judiciary," he said.

The CJI said judges were certainly not above reproach. Constructive feedback would only make the

judiciary more efficient, citizen- and public-centric and accountable.

"By opening ourselves to scrutiny, we can identify systemic inefficiencies and bottlenecks, and work towards eliminating them," Chief Justice Khanna said.

The Chief Justice said judicial independence was not a high wall, but a bridge. Each branch of government was not "a satellite in an independent orbit but rather a related actor which works in a degree of separateness".

He flagged pendency as a prime concern. He said the scale of cases flowing through courts was "staggering". The CJI pointed out that the district courts received 2.08 crore cases, the High Courts around

16.6 lakh and the Supreme Court 54,000.

### Pending cases

"Therefore, it is not surprising that about 4.54 crore cases are pending in the district courts and 61.10 lakh cases are pending in the High Courts... But the case clearance rate in district courts – a key metric of judicial productivity – has risen steadily from 98.29% in 2022 to an impressive 101.74% in 2024. Last year alone, our district courts resolved over 20.14 lakh criminal and 8.09 lakh civil cases," he noted.

The Supreme Court, too, has enhanced its performance, with case clearance rate climbing from 95% to 97%, the CJI said.

### Judicial Independence in Democracy

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna countered criticisms about the judiciary's power in an electoral democracy, emphasizing the dangers of judges being elected through campaigns.
- He explained that the appointment system ensures unbiased decision-making, free from external pressures, and is guided by the Constitution and the law.
- The CJI highlighted that judges face the challenge of balancing public expectations and criticism, as their decisions often elicit varied reactions.

### Debate over judiciary's power in an electoral democracy

- Arguments in Favour of Judiciary's Power in an Electoral Democracy
  - **Checks and Balances:** The judiciary acts as a vital check on the legislative and executive branches, preventing abuse of power and ensuring adherence to the constitution.
  - **Protection of Rights:** The judiciary protects the fundamental rights of citizens, safeguarding individual liberties and ensuring justice.

## Daily News Analysis

- **Interpretation of Laws:** The judiciary interprets laws and ensures their consistent application, promoting legal certainty and preventing arbitrary decisions.
- **Independent Review:** The judiciary provides an independent review of government actions, holding them accountable and ensuring transparency.

### Arguments Against Judiciary's Power in an Electoral Democracy

- **Judicial Activism:** Excessive judicial intervention in policy matters can undermine the democratic process and lead to politicization of the judiciary.
- **Limited Expertise:** Judges may lack the necessary expertise to make informed decisions on complex policy issues.
- **Delay in Decision-Making:** Judicial processes can be lengthy, leading to delays in policy implementation and hindering development.
- **Potential for Bias:** Judges, like any other human, may be subject to biases and prejudices, potentially affecting their judgments.

### Global and National Perspectives on Indian Judiciary

- India's constitutional courts are regarded as some of the most powerful globally.
- However, there are concerns about courts either not addressing critical issues or resisting transient popular mandates.

### Judiciary's Duty and Accountability

- The CJI emphasized that judges' foremost duty is towards the public, and being open and transparent enhances the judiciary's strength.
- Constructive criticism helps improve the judiciary, making it more efficient, citizen-centric, and accountable.
- He noted that judicial independence is a bridge fostering collaboration between different branches of government, rather than a high wall of separation.

### Pendency of Cases in Courts

- Pendency remains a critical concern, with a staggering number of cases in various courts:
- **District Courts:** 2.08 crore cases filed, with 4.54 crore pending.
- **High Courts:** Around 16.6 lakh cases filed, with 61.10 lakh pending.
- **Supreme Court:** 54,000 cases pending.
- Despite this, productivity has improved significantly:
- District courts' case clearance rate increased from 98.29% in 2022 to 101.74% in 2024, resolving over 28.23 lakh cases in 2023 alone.
- The Supreme Court's case clearance rate rose from 95% to 97%.

### Challenges and Way Forward

- The judiciary faces systemic inefficiencies and bottlenecks that require attention.
- By remaining open to scrutiny, the judiciary can identify and address challenges to ensure efficiency.
- Judicial independence fosters accountability while enabling collaboration between different branches of government to uphold the Constitution and serve public interests effectively.

**Ques :** Constitutionally guaranteed judicial independence is a prerequisite of democracy. Comment.  
(150 Words /10 marks)





The article highlights significant milestones in India's space program, celebrating 61 years since the first rocket launch in 1963.

- It also covers recent advancements, such as the launch of GSAT-N2 and private sector contributions to space technology.

## Six decades since Thumba launch, slew of private entities prepare for flight

The Departments of Space and of Biotechnology have signed agreements to conduct biological experiments on the forthcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station; while researchers will be able to conduct experiments on other missions as well, the agreement pertains to experiments onboard the station

Pradeep Mohandas

November 21 was 61 years since the birth of the Indian space programme. On this date in 1963, scientists launched a Nike-Apache sounding rocket from Thumba in Kerala. These rockets helped the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) master the solid propellant technology powering India's launch vehicles today. Around the same time as this anniversary, India launched its first satellite onboard a SpaceX rocket even as multiple Indian private sector entities geared up for launches of their own.

### Launches of merit

NewSpace India, Ltd. launched the 4,700-kg GSAT-N2/GSAT-20 satellite onboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Florida. N2 wasn't launched onboard an Indian launch vehicle because its weight exceeded the payload capacity of the country's most powerful rocket, the LVM-3, which can place satellites weighing up to four tonnes in the geostationary transfer orbit (GTO). INSAT-3D was the last such satellite launched from Florida, in 1990.

GSAT-N2 is a Ka-band high throughput communication satellite built by ISRO to enhance broadband services in underserved areas, including the northeast, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep. It will also support services like in-flight internet connectivity and the Smart Cities Mission.

The satellite was placed in a GTO with a perigee of 250 km, an apogee of 59,730 km, and at a 27.5° inclination. From here, the satellite will use its thrusters to move to a geostationary orbit at 63° E longitude over the next few days.

Next, ISRO is preparing to launch its PSLV-C59 mission bearing the European Proba-3 mission. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) will fly in its extended length configuration (XL), which was last used to launch Aditya-L1 in September 2023.

The twin Proba spacecraft to study the Sun arrived in Chennai on November 6 and will be integrated with the launch vehicle. Liftoff is currently scheduled for 4 p.m. IST on December 4.

India's astronaut designate Shubhanshu Shukla, who is set to fly to the International Space Station in 2025, is undergoing training at the European Space Agency's European Astronaut Centre. Part of the training is to familiarise astronauts-to-be with the European modules of the space station.

**From the private sector**  
Four Indian private companies are preparing to launch their payloads/satellites into orbit.



A Nike-Apache two-stage rocket on its launcher at Thumba, Kerala. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Pixel, which is Indian-American, unveiled 'Fireflies', its six hyperspectral satellites expected to be launched early next year. Each satellite weighs around 50 kg, has a native 5 m spatial resolution, and scans 40-km swaths for data in more than 150 spectral bands. These satellites constitute the first batch in what is eventually expected to become a constellation of 24 satellites. These satellites are capable of providing data that can help detect crop diseases, water-stressed areas, real-time deforestation, and ocean pollution early.

Second, GalaxEye Space is flying its "It's NOT a Satellite. It's Just a Tech Demo" on board the PSLV's Orbital Experimental Module (POEM) platform. This is when the final stage of a PSLV finishes deploying its payload and enters earth orbit, becoming an orbital platform where onboard instruments can run experiments. The Tech Demo will test subsystems of a synthetic aperture radar (SAR).

PierSight Space will also fly a mission on a PSLV POEM called 'Varuna', which will demonstrate a deployable reflectarray antenna and test SAR and aeronautical information service avionics in orbit.

HEX20 will fly its 'Nila' satellite onboard SpaceX's Transporter 13 mission in February 2025. 'Nila' is a 5-kg cubesat that can host different payloads and provide data-processing services. A ground station will be built in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, to control and receive data from the satellite.

### India recently launched its first satellite onboard a SpaceX rocket even as multiple Indian private sector entities geared up for launches of their own

Catalyst Space's SR-0 satellite launched onboard the third developmental flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle mission re-entered the earth's atmosphere on November 3. The company announced the satellite had achieved all its objectives in its three-month lifespan.

AAKA Space Studio launched India's first Space Analog Mission in Leh, Ladakh, in collaboration with the ISRO Human Spaceflight Centre, IIT-Bombay, and the University of Ladakh. The site was chosen for its similarity to surfaces on the moon and Mars.

One person from AAKA Space Studio will stay in the habitat in Leh for 21 days to test habitat sustainability, life-support systems, and the human experience of isolation.

SatSure is working with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for "automated image feature extraction models for building footprints, roof type, roads, and water bodies among other classes for more than two lakh villages". This is the Indian government's largest programme to map rural property. Drones under the government's 'Svamvita' programme will capture images of 3-5 cm resolution and SatSure will use its machine-learning tools

developed for satellite data to extract and classify the relevant features.

### Space science updates

India celebrated its full membership of the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO), an international effort to build the world's most advanced radio telescope in Australia and South Africa. India will contribute cash as well as advanced electronics and engineering for telescope components in exchange for scientific data collected by the telescope.

The first scientific result from the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph onboard the Aditya-L1 spacecraft was published in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*.

A team led by researchers at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, used data from the coronagraph to accurately predict the time of a coronal mass ejection on July 16. Coronal mass ejections affect satellites in orbit, electricity grids on the ground, and radio communications when they blow past the planet.

Finally, the Departments of Space and of Biotechnology have signed agreements to conduct biological experiments on the forthcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station. While researchers will be able to conduct experiments on other missions (including the uncrewed Gaganyaan flights), the agreement pertains to experiments onboard the Indian space station.

(Pradeep Mohandas is a technical writer and space enthusiast in Pune. pradeep.mohandas@gmail.com)

### THE GIST

NewSpace India Ltd. launched the 4,700-kg GSAT-N2/GSAT-20 satellite onboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Florida

Pixel, which is Indian-American, unveiled 'Fireflies', its six hyperspectral satellites expected to be launched early next year

PierSight Space will also fly a mission on a PSLV POEM called 'Varuna', which will demonstrate a deployable reflectarray antenna

HEX20 will fly its 'Nila' satellite onboard SpaceX's Transporter 13 mission in February 2025

## Celebrating 61 Years of Indian Space Program

- India marked 61 years of its space program, recalling the launch of the Nike-Apache rocket in 1963 from Thumba, Kerala.
- This launch laid the foundation for ISRO's mastery in solid propellant technology.

### Launches of Merit

## Daily News Analysis

- NewSpace India, Ltd. launched the 4,700-kg GSAT-N2 satellite on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket due to weight limitations of India's LVM-3 rocket.
- GSAT-N2, a Ka-band communication satellite, aims to enhance broadband in underserved areas and support services like in-flight internet and the Smart Cities Mission.
- The PSLV-C59 mission, scheduled for December 4, will carry the European Proba-3 mission to study the Sun.

### Private Sector Contributions

- Pixxel: Preparing to launch six hyperspectral satellites capable of detecting crop diseases and monitoring pollution.
- GalaxEye Space and PierSight Space: Testing SAR technology and reflectarray antennas using PSLV's POEM platform.
- HEX20: Launching its 'Nila' satellite on SpaceX's Transporter 13 mission in 2025.
- AAKA Space Studio: Conducting a Space Analog Mission in Leh to test habitat sustainability for Moon and Mars missions.

### Scientific Achievements

- India joined the Square Kilometre Array Observatory to contribute to the world's largest radio telescope.
- Researchers from Aditya-L1 published findings on coronal mass ejections, crucial for satellite and communication safety.
- Agreements between the Departments of Space and Biotechnology will enable biological experiments on the upcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station.

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques : Discuss the evolution of India's space program and private sector contributions to India's space Sector. Analyze the role of India's space science initiatives in global collaborations, particularly its involvement in the Square Kilometre Array Observatory. (150 words/10m)**



The article discusses the Supreme Court's ruling on the inclusion of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

- It outlines the historical context, legal developments, and the recent dismissal of challenges against these terms.
- The Court affirmed that these words are integral to the Constitution's basic structure.

# SC ruling on socialism, secularism

What was the original Preamble and how has it evolved? What has been the court's stand earlier and how has it changed? What was the current case about?  
What bearing will it have on the society?

## EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R

### The story so far:

**A** Division Bench of the Supreme Court led by the Chief Justice of India dismissed pleas challenging the inclusion of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble to our Constitution.

### What is the history of Preamble?

The original Preamble adopted on November 26, 1949, declared India a sovereign, democratic, republic. Our Constituent Assembly consciously avoided the word 'socialist' as they felt that declaring the economic ideal of a country in its Constitution's preamble was not appropriate. People should decide what suits them according to time and age.

Likewise, Indian secularism is different from western secularism. In the latter, the state and religion are strictly separated and the government does not interfere in religious affairs. However, in India, the state enjoys the power to regulate the economic, financial, political and secular aspects associated with religious practice. It can also provide for social welfare and reform in religious practices. Further, various provisions of the Constitution that include right to practise any religion, non-discrimination on the basis of religion in any affairs of the state embodied the 'secular' values of our Constitution. Hence, in the Constituent Assembly, the amendment to introduce the word 'secular' in the Preamble was not accepted.

In *Berubari* case (1960), the Supreme Court opined that the Preamble is not a part of the Constitution and thus not a source of any substantive power. Subsequently, in *Kesavananda Bharati*



**Guiding book:** Indian National Congress (INC) party workers carry a model of the Indian Constitution during rally on the occasion of Constitution Day celebrations in Kolkata on Tuesday. AFP

case (1973), the Supreme Court reversed its earlier opinion and said that the Preamble is part of the Constitution and that it should be read and interpreted in the light of the vision envisioned in the Preamble. It also held that the Preamble is subject to the amending power of Parliament as any other provision of the Constitution. The 42nd Constitutional Amendment in 1976 inserted the words 'Socialist', 'Secular' and 'Integrity' in the Preamble.

### What was the current case?

The current case was filed by former Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy, advocate Ashwini Upadhyay and others. Mr. Upadhyay and others had opposed the insertion of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble. They argued that these were included during the Emergency and forced the people to follow specific ideologies. They felt that since the date of adoption by the

Constituent Assembly was mentioned in the Preamble, no additional words can be inserted later by Parliament. Mr. Swamy was of the view that subsequent amendments to the Constitution including the 44th Amendment in 1978 during Janata Party rule after emergency had supported and retained these two words. Nevertheless, he was of the view that these words should appear in a separate paragraph below the original Preamble.

### What did the court rule?

The court dismissed the pleas and held that 'socialism' and 'secularism' are integral to the basic structure of the Constitution. It observed that the Constitution is a 'living document' subject to the amending power of Parliament. This amending power extends to the Preamble as well and the date of adoption mentioned in it does not restrict such power. The court opined that 'socialism'

in the Indian context primarily means a welfare state that provides equality of opportunity and does not prevent the private sector from thriving. Similarly, over time India has developed its own interpretation of 'secularism'. The state neither supports any religion nor penalises the profession and practice of any faith. In essence, the concept of secularism represents one of the facets of right to equality.

### Why is it important?

The initial years after Independence fostered 'democratic socialism' characterised by centralised planning and many industries being established by the state. The period of 1960s and 70s saw nationalisation of banks and insurance, higher tax rates and various regulations. The economy, though declared as mixed economy where public and private enterprises would co-exist, displayed the characteristics of classical socialism with license controls and regulations. Starting from 1991, our economy has evolved from such socialistic pattern to a market-oriented model. The ensuing growth has uplifted vast majority of people from abject poverty in the last three decades. However, there is also growing inequality that needs to be addressed. As the court observed, our socialism continues to address the needs of the poor through schemes such as MGNREGA, subsidised food grains, direct benefit transfers for women and farmers etc. Hence, it is imperative that such socialism continues to guide the actions of the state for the welfare of the needy while private enterprise flourishes resulting in increased employment and strong economic growth. The spirit of our 'unity in diversity' should be equally preserved by upholding the values of secularism.

*Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. Views expressed are personal.*

## THE GIST

➤ The original Preamble adopted on November 26, 1949, declared India a sovereign, democratic, republic. Our Constituent Assembly consciously avoided the word 'socialist' as they felt that declaring the economic ideal of a country in its Constitution's preamble was not appropriate.

➤ Indian secularism is different from western secularism. In the latter, the state and religion are strictly separated and the government does not interfere in religious affairs. However, in India, the state enjoys the power to regulate the economic, financial, political and secular aspects associated with religious practice.

➤ The current case was filed by those opposed to the insertion of the words 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble. They argued that these were included during the Emergency and forced the people to follow specific ideologies.

## History of the Preamble

- The original Preamble, adopted on November 26, 1949, declared India a sovereign, democratic republic.
- The term 'socialist' was intentionally excluded from the Preamble as the Constituent Assembly felt that the economic direction should evolve with time, rather than being fixed in the Constitution.

## Daily News Analysis

- Indian secularism differs from the Western model. In India, the state regulates religious practices in certain areas, promoting reforms and welfare while respecting religious freedom.
- The amendment to include 'secular' was not accepted during the Constituent Assembly's discussions.

### Legal Developments

- **Berubari Case (1960):** The Supreme Court ruled that the Preamble was not a part of the Constitution and did not hold any substantive power.
- **Kesavananda Bharati Case (1973):** The Court reversed this decision, declaring that the Preamble is a part of the Constitution and must be interpreted in line with its core vision. The Preamble can be amended just like other provisions of the Constitution.
- **42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976):** This amendment inserted the words 'Socialist', 'Secular', and 'Integrity' into the Preamble.

### The Current Case

- Filed by Subramanian Swamy, Ashwini Upadhyay, and others, the case challenged the inclusion of 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble.
- Petitioners argued that these words, added during the Emergency, imposed specific ideologies and should not alter the original text of the Preamble.
- However, the petitioners did not contest these terms added through later amendments, like the 44th Amendment (1978).

### Court's Ruling

- The Supreme Court dismissed the petitions, ruling that 'socialist' and 'secular' are integral to the basic structure of the Constitution.
- The court affirmed that the Constitution is a living document and subject to amendments, with the date of adoption not restricting this power.
- The court also clarified that socialism in India means a welfare state promoting equality of opportunity, while secularism means a neutral state respecting all religions.

### Importance of the Ruling

- India's socialism continues to guide welfare policies like MGNREGA and direct benefit transfers while supporting private enterprise.
- Secularism remains essential for preserving India's unity in diversity.

### Interpretation of Words 'Secular' and 'Socialist'

- **Supreme Court's Interpretation of 'Secular'** The Supreme Court explained that secularism in India means the State neither supports nor discriminates against any religion.
- It ensures equal respect for all faiths and guarantees citizens' rights to freely practice their religion.
- This interpretation is grounded in Articles 14, 15, and 16 of the Constitution, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion.
- These provisions ensure equal protection under the law and guarantee equal opportunities in public employment, reinforcing the secular ethos of the Constitution.



## Daily News Analysis

- Supreme Court's Interpretation of 'Socialist' The Supreme Court clarified that 'socialist' in India's context signifies the state's commitment to being a welfare state, ensuring equality of opportunity and socio-economic justice.
- It does not dictate a specific economic policy, whether left or right.
- The term reflects the Constitution's goal of promoting social welfare and addressing inequality.
- India adopts a mixed economy model, where both the private sector and the government play crucial roles in fostering economic development.

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques : Examine the significance of the terms 'socialist' and 'secular' in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. Discuss the Supreme Court's recent ruling on their inclusion and its implications for the Constitution's interpretation. (150 Words /10 marks)**



Norway's Parliament issued an unreserved apology to the Sami, Kven, and Forest Finn peoples for over a century of discriminatory assimilation policies.

## Norway's apology to Sami and other minority groups for assimilation policies

A century-long process of Norwegianisation of indigenous peoples and migrant groups commenced in the 1850s. These policies finally came to an end in the 1960s, with laws formally repealed or replaced in 1963. Yet, discrimination has continued the groups have been adversely affected

### EXPLAINER

Scruthi Darbhamulla

**The story so far:-**  
Last week, Norway's Parliament, the Storting, issued an unreserved apology for its assimilation policies towards Sami, Kven and Forest Finn peoples. It also laid out a series of resolutions to address the continuing discrimination faced by these communities. *The New York Times* reported.

A century-long process of Norwegianisation of indigenous peoples and migrant groups commenced in the 1850s and did not officially end till the 1960s. It saw the suppression of indigenous languages and traditional culture. Further, Sami children were separated from their parents and sent to boarding schools all across the Sapmi – 'the land of the Sami' which corresponds with present-day northern Russia, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

### Who are the Samis, Kvens and Forest Finns?

Norway engaged in a century-long process of "Norwegiansation" and assimilation, which intensified after the nation gained independence in 1905. Policies to integrate and assimilate these groups by suppressing their native language and culture emerged. These policies used education and religion as a tool to erase local language and culture. Traditional practices such as 'yoiking', a traditional call of the Samis, were forbidden during this time. Young Sami children were taken away from their parents and forced to live in foster homes and state-run boarding schools in the 1900s. The government demarcated some regions for "suitable populations," where these groups were not allowed to settle. Groups also lost access to grazing land and fishing grounds.

Native cultural beliefs were suppressed by Christian mission churches belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran and Catholic denominations. The Sami were forced to give up their earlier shamanistic rituals. Social discrimination persisted under the guise of scientific research. Members from these communities were made to undergo anthropological tests by scientists, and their burial grounds were exhumed to study the ethnic characteristics of their predecessors.

These Norwegianisation policies finally came to an end in the 1960s, with laws formally repealed or replaced in 1963.

Both Kvens and Forest Finns are much smaller groups (than the Sami) which migrated to present-day Norway around 500 years ago.

Kvens are the descendants of migrants from the Torne River Valley, part of present-day Sweden and Finland, who historically practised slash and burn farming, fishing and blacksmithing. The Kven language, a Finnish language closely related to Meänkieli and Finnish, was recognised as an independent language in Norway in April 2005. Forest Finns, meanwhile, are descendants of immigrants from eastern Finland who settled in Sweden in the 1500s, before making their way to Norway in the early 1600s.

### What were the Norwegianisation policies?

Indigenous peoples and minority groups historically faced discrimination from Scandinavian governments, and laws in the second half of the nineteenth century gave this historical prejudice a more solid form in Norway.



Many Samis are reindeer herders, and the Norwegian government has designated reindeer herding as an activity exclusive to the Sami.AP

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### What is the Truth and Reconciliation Committee?

Measures at the community and government level were taken up to address the past oppression. Today, the Sami have a university as well as schools teaching the Sami language, and a (mostly symbolic) independently elected Sami Parliament established in 1989, with which the Norwegian parliament has a working relationship. The Education Act of 1969 gave Sami students the right to compulsory and upper-secondary education in their own language, and policies have also sought to integrate the language in school curricula.

Community efforts too have persisted to preserve the unique identity of these groups. For example, Young Forest Finns works to revive the group's culture and also has a museum under development.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was launched in 2018 to investigate the historical injustice and suggest measures for inclusion and revitalisation versus earlier policies of Norwegianisation and assimilation.

The Committee released a 700-page report on June 1, 2023. The current apology and a set of 17 resolutions to address prejudice against these groups stem from this report, which took 35 hours to read aloud in parliament, and was broadcast nationally. Recommendations in the report included the establishment of a centre for reconciliation work, preservation of minority and indigenous languages and language training.

Other Nordic nations too have launched similar commissions, including the Truth Commission for the Sami People in Sweden and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sami People in Finland. Both are expected to present their reports sometime next year.

### What is the current apology?

The unreserved apology was tendered last week to the Sami, Kvens and Forest Finns by the Norwegian parliament following on the heels of last year's Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. The move was approved by the Parliament and the apology read out loud on November 11.

All lawmakers except one group – a bloc from the right-wing Progress Party – voted for the resolution. This cited possible conflict among communities as a reason for voting against it. In a debate held in May, the party's leader, Bard Hoksruud, said it was "fundamentally wrong to give special privileges to some groups at the expense of others," adding that they believed that "history should remain history."

In a written response to a question from a journalist, Conservative party member Svein Haberg said, "The assimilation policy that was historically pursued continues to be both the root of personal hardship for the individuals and groups that were subject to this policy, and a source of conflict today."

Silje Karine Muotka, a Sami leader, called it "a day with many emotions," in a

written statement. "Going forward, we expect an active policy of reconciliation....The decision from today ensures long-term follow-up, and it has both financial and legal repercussions. But unfortunately, no settlement is made with ongoing injustice and conflicts over land and water," she wrote.

In 1977, King Harald V apologised to the Sami people, and Sami People's Day has been celebrated since 1993 on February 6 (the first Sami National Congress was held on February 6, 1917 in Trondheim, Norway). However, this is the first instance of a public apology to the Kvens and Forest Finns.

### What are the continuing challenges?

Even after the formal repealing of the laws, prejudice in the nation has continued. The report by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that members of these groups have less access to health care in Norway, a country with a robust social security net.

The Sami have had a longstanding dispute with the Norwegian government over their way of life and land use, although some laws exist over the Samis' right to grazing land. A 2007 law sought to limit the size of reindeer herds – ostensibly to prevent overgrazing, a move opposed by some Sami herders.

Indigenous and minority languages, too, remain critically endangered. Bullying, hate speech and harassment has persisted, as have negative stereotypes.

As reported by *The New York Times*, a 2021 survey was conducted as part of an Arctic University of Norway project which studied the efficacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. According to the results of this survey, 60% of Norway residents said they thought most people knew little to nothing about how the assimilation policies affected the Sami. That figure rose to 88% when it came to how the practices affected Forest Finns and Kvens.

The project was led by Eva Josefson, a political scientist at the Arctic University who is Sami herself. She highlighted that the lack of transparency about land rights was a sticking point, saying that there was a "general implementation gap between legal rights and what is actually delivered."

- This apology follows the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which highlighted ongoing challenges these communities face.

**The minority groups in news:**

## Daily News Analysis

- Sami – Indigenous people spread across northern Europe, including Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia, with the largest population in Norway. They are known for their reindeer herding culture and unique language.
- Kvens – Descendants of migrants from the Torne River Valley (present-day Sweden and Finland) who settled in Norway. They historically practiced slash-and-burn farming, fishing, and blacksmithing.
- Forest Finns – Descendants of immigrants from eastern Finland who settled in Sweden and then moved to Norway in the 1600s. They have a distinct cultural identity and language.
- Jews, Roma, and Romani people – These groups are also considered national minorities in Norway, with long-standing ties to the country.

### Why are they in the news?

- **Historical Injustice:** These groups faced forced assimilation policies, language suppression, and cultural erasure for over a century.
- **Ongoing Discrimination:** They continue to experience prejudice, limited access to healthcare, and challenges in preserving their languages and traditions.
- **Reconciliation Efforts:** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the recent apology by Norway's Parliament highlight the need for recognition, reparations, and active efforts to address past and ongoing discrimination.



### In News : PAN 2.0

Recently the Union Cabinet approved the PAN 2.0 Project to modernize India's tax identification system.

- ➡ It aims to upgrade the Permanent Account Number (PAN) with features like QR codes, a paperless online application process, and a unified identifier for businesses by merging PAN, TAN, and TIN.

#### Analysis of the News

- ➡ **Introduction to PAN 2.0** : The Permanent Account Number (PAN), a 10-digit alphanumeric identifier issued by the Income Tax Department, is being upgraded under the PAN 2.0 Project.
- ➡ **Key changes include** : Integration of a QR code on both new and existing PAN cards.
- ➡ A fully online, paperless application process for issuing and upgrading PAN cards.
- ➡ PAN will become the common business identifier by merging it with other identification numbers like TAN (Tax Deduction and Collection Account Number) and TIN (Taxpayer Identification Number).

#### Government Approval and Objectives

- ➡ The Union Cabinet approved the PAN 2.0 Project on November 25, 2024, with a budget of ₹1,435 crore.
- ➡ The goal is to make PAN the "single source of truth" for individuals and businesses by ensuring consistency and reliability of data.

#### Benefits for Individuals and Businesses

- ➡ **Individuals:**
  - Around 78 crore PAN holders can upgrade their cards, retaining the same PAN number but with enhanced features like QR codes.
  - The upgrade will be provided free of cost to all existing users.
- ➡ **Businesses:**
  - PAN will serve as a seamless, unified system for filing various tax returns and challans, reducing the need for multiple identifiers.
  - This will simplify compliance for businesses, addressing longstanding demands for a single business identifier.

#### Key Features of PAN 2.0

- ➡ **QR Code Integration:**
  - A QR code will be integrated into all PAN cards (old and new), enhancing the ability to link financial transactions with the Income Tax Department.
  - This feature, first introduced in 2017, will be improved in PAN 2.0.
- ➡ **PAN Data Vault System:**
  - Organizations like banks and insurance companies that use PAN data will be required to store this information securely in a mandatory data vault system.
  - This measure aims to enhance data protection and cybersecurity.
- ➡ **Unified Online Portal:**
  - A new, modernized portal will replace the outdated software (currently 15-20 years old).

- The portal will focus on a paperless process and include features for grievance redressal, making it more user-friendly.

### ➡ **Consolidation of Systems:**

- PAN/TAN/TIN systems will be merged to streamline tax compliance processes and improve service delivery.

### **Technology-Driven Transformation**

- ➡ The PAN 2.0 Project aims to modernize taxpayer registration services by consolidating core and non-core activities.
- ➡ The project will also introduce new technology to enhance service delivery and provide better accessibility for taxpayers.

### **Impact on Financial Transactions**

- ➡ The improved QR code integration will strengthen the link between financial transactions and the Income Tax Department, increasing transparency and accountability.
- ➡ PAN 2.0 is expected to significantly reduce errors and fraud in financial transactions.

### **Existing PAN and TAN Functions**

#### ➡ **PAN:**

- PAN serves as a unique identifier linking an individual or business's financial transactions (e.g., tax payments, income tax returns, TDS/TCS credits) to the Income Tax Department.
- It is mandatory for filing income tax returns and remains unchanged throughout the holder's life.

#### ➡ **TAN:**

- TAN is a 10-digit alphanumeric number required by entities responsible for deducting or collecting tax at source.
- It must be quoted in TDS/TCS returns, challans, and certificates.

### **Conclusion**

- ➡ The PAN 2.0 Project represents a significant step toward improving India's tax infrastructure. By integrating modern technology, ensuring data security, and simplifying compliance, the government aims to enhance the usability and effectiveness of PAN for individuals and businesses alike. This initiative promises to make financial systems more efficient, transparent, and secure..

**UPSC Mains PYQ : 2022**

**Ques : Besides the welfare schemes, India needs dem management of inflation and unemployment to serve the poor and the underprivileged sections of the society. Discuss.(250 words/15m)**

# From a republic to a republic of unequals

**C**onstitution day on November 26, 2024 marked 75 years of the adoption of the Constitution and constitutional governance in independent India. The Constituent Assembly debates show the intellectual engagement of leaders from a spectrum of ideologies, right wing to left wing, in building a single political identity that was accommodative of the interests and rights of multiple cultural groups.

The Constitution-makers accepted the liberal framework, but wanted the state to play a positive role in intervening and reducing inequality due to poor social indicators at the time of Independence. With liberalism, as a political ideology, there was an insistence that there should be freedom for citizens to carry out activities without any state interference. There was the belief that only in a free environment could human potentialities, be they intellectual, moral and physical, be realised. Thus, liberty became the core value of liberalism.

The Indian Constitution makers agreed to create a liberal political state in India. But considering the social and economic inequalities, they felt that a complete withdrawal of the state would perpetuate the existing inequalities and worsen it further. So, it was that the state should be given a positive role to intervene and create conditions for everyone to participate equally in the development process. Thus, affirmative action and reservation policies to treat unequals in an unequal manner to achieve the constitutional vision of equality have become an important aspect of the Indian Constitution.

## An egalitarian outlook

Its vision of equality aims to create an egalitarian society to minimise economic inequalities among the people. Reflecting John Rawls' egalitarian liberalism, including the three important principles of equal basic liberties, equal opportunities and difference, the Constitution aims to create an egalitarian society. The fundamental rights in Part III and the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) in Part IV of the Constitution reflect all the above three principles of egalitarian liberalism. Thus egalitarian liberalism aims to reduce inequality and not create an absolute equal society. Article 38(2) of DPSP insists that the state shall strive to minimise the inequalities of income and eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities. The constitutional ideological framework lays emphasis on reducing inequalities and creating an egalitarian society based on equal opportunities and facilities through state intervention. Further, Article 39(c) emphasises that the economic system ought not to result in a concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.

The Supreme Court of India has reiterated this principle in many of its judgments till the end of



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the 1990s. In *D.S. Nakara & Others vs Union Of India* (1982), the Court said that the basic framework of socialism in the Constitution is to provide a decent standard of life to the working people and social security from cradle to grave, reiterating the role of the welfare state in India. In *Air India Statutory Corporation vs United Labour Union & Ors* (1996), the Court said that the ideological aspects of the Indian Constitution found in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights and DPSP aim to establish an egalitarian social order, protecting social and economic justice and the dignity of individual by providing equality of status and opportunities.

In *Samatha vs State of Andhra Pradesh & Ors*. (1997), the Court interpreted that the meaning of the word "socialism" in the Constitution is to reduce inequalities in income and provide equal opportunities and facilities to create an egalitarian social order. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer's interpretation of Article 39(b) of the DPSP, in *State Of Karnataka And Anr Etc vs Shri Ranganatha Reddy & Anr. Etc.*, that public and private resources fall within the ambit of community resources, was in line with the constitutional ideology of creating an egalitarian society by strengthening the state's power of redistribution of resources for common good towards reducing inequality.

But recently, the Court overturned this interpretation without locating it within Article 39(c), which empowers the state to intervene and regulate the economic system to prevent the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few towards creating an egalitarian society.

## Economic reforms and inequality

After the adoption of neoliberal economic reforms in India, the constitutional ideology took a back seat and the idea of a welfare state as envisaged in the Constitution has withdrawn its commitments towards creating an egalitarian society. Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty from the Paris School of Economics have documented the rising inequality in India in their work, "Indian Income Inequality, 1922-2015: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?" (2019).

Their research shows that the top 1% of earners had a share of less than 21% of total income in the 1930s. But after Independence, due to welfare state intervention, based on constitutional ideology, this gap reduced where the top 1% earners had a share of 6% of the total income in the 1980s.

After the implementation of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s, there were major structural changes that happened in the Indian economy, which prioritised private capital investment and a slow withdrawal of the welfare interventionist state. The state took the positive role of creating and strengthening markets rather than working towards creating an egalitarian society, as envisaged in the Constitution. As a consequence

of this, the top 1% income has reached 22% of the total income pushing back to an inequality situation worse than that in the pre-Independence period. They reiterated this inequality status in their recent research in 2024 emphasising that the top 1% of income and wealth shares have reached 22.6% and 40.1% by 2022-23, which is considered very high.

The "State of Inequality in India Report" (2022), prepared by the Institute for Competitiveness (commissioned by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister), highlighted the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2019-20, which recorded that average monthly wages of ₹25,000 (₹3 lakh an annum) is being earned by the top 10% and the remaining 90% earn less than ₹.25,000 a month. This shows extreme inequality and how the majority are being pushed into poverty, violating constitutional ideology.

## An overlap with social inequality

Further, the report titled "Towards Tax Justice and Wealth redistribution in India" (2024 by the World Inequality Lab at the Paris School of Economics), has brought in evidence to show how economic inequality and social inequality overlap in India. By 2022-23, 90% of the billionaire wealth was held by the upper castes in India. Scheduled Tribes are not present in billionaire wealth. Other Backward Classes (OBC) have a mere 10% presence and Scheduled Castes have a 2.6% representation in billionaire wealth. The report further emphasises that between 2014 and 2022, the OBC share has reduced from 20% to 10% and upper caste share has increased from 80% to 90% in billionaire wealth. The upper castes are the only group which owns wealth more than its proportion of population, reiterating how social capital and economic advantages are overlapping in India. Further, Oxfam International highlights the rise in the number of billionaires from nine in the year 2000 to 119 in 2023. It further compares income inequality and shows that it will take 941 years for a minimum wage earner to earn what a top corporate executive earns a year in India.

The constitutional vision of creating an egalitarian social order by minimising income inequality and eliminating social inequality is under threat from the neoliberal ideological order. Violating the constitutional ideology, inequality levels are widening, strengthening wealth concentration among the few. Further, social inequality overlaps with economic inequality to give the upper castes a greater advantage in contemporary India. Constitution Day has passed, but there is an opportunity for us to critically evaluate our political and economic practices within the constitutional framework, to assess our achievements and failures, reiterating Babasaheb's words that social and economic inequality will put political democracy in peril.

The neoliberal ideological order shadows the constitutional vision of creating an egalitarian social order in India



### **GS Paper 02 : Indian Polity**

**PYQ: (UPSC CSE (M) GS-1 2020):** COVID-19 pandemic accelerated class inequalities and poverty in India. Comment. (150 words/10m)

**UPSC Mains Practice Question:** Examine how neoliberal economic reforms have influenced the constitutional vision of reducing socio-economic inequalities in India. Discuss the implications of the overlap between economic and social inequalities. (150 Words /10 marks)

### **Context :**

- The Indian Constitution's egalitarian vision sought to address socio-economic inequalities through state intervention and affirmative action.
- However, neoliberal reforms have widened income and wealth disparities, concentrating resources among a few, and undermining constitutional ideals.
- This overlap of economic and social inequality threatens the democratic fabric envisioned by the framers.

### **Intellectual Foundation of the Constitution**

- The Constitution, adopted 75 years ago, reflects debates among leaders with diverse ideologies, focusing on building a political identity accommodating cultural and social diversity.
- While adopting liberalism, which values individual freedom, the framers emphasized state intervention to reduce social and economic inequalities.

### **Affirmative Action and Egalitarian Outlook**

- The Constitution aims to create an egalitarian society by addressing inequality through affirmative action and reservation policies.
- Inspired by John Rawls' principles of egalitarian liberalism, the Constitution incorporates:
- Equal basic liberties and opportunities.
- The difference principle to reduce inequality without mandating absolute equality.
- Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) under Article 38(2) and Article 39(c) focus on minimizing income inequalities and preventing wealth concentration.

### **Judicial Support for Egalitarianism**

- Landmark judgments have upheld the Constitution's egalitarian ideals:

## Daily News Analysis

- D.S. Nakara & Others vs Union of India (1982): Emphasized the welfare state's role in ensuring a decent life and social security.
- Samatha vs State of Andhra Pradesh (1997): Interpreted socialism as reducing income inequalities and providing equal opportunities.
- Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer linked community resource distribution with reducing inequality in State of Karnataka vs Ranganatha Reddy (1977).

### Impact of Neoliberal Reforms

- ➡ Post-1990s economic reforms prioritized private capital and reduced welfare interventions.
- ➡ Inequality surged, with the top 1% holding 22.6% of income and 40.1% of wealth by 2022-23, surpassing pre-Independence levels.
- ➡ The State of Inequality in India Report (2022) revealed that the top 10% earn over ₹25,000/month, while the rest earn less, showcasing stark income disparities.

### Intersection of Social and Economic Inequality

- ➡ World Inequality Lab (2024) highlighted overlapping inequalities:
- ➡ 90% of billionaire wealth is owned by upper castes.
- ➡ Scheduled Tribes lack representation, while Scheduled Castes and OBCs hold 2.6% and 10%, respectively.
- ➡ OBC wealth share declined from 20% to 10% (2014-2022), while upper caste share rose from 80% to 90%.
- ➡ Oxfam International noted the rise in billionaires from 9 (2000) to 119 (2023) and extreme income disparities.

### Conclusion: Revisiting Constitutional Ideals

- ➡ The constitutional vision of reducing inequality and creating an egalitarian society is at odds with the neoliberal framework.
- ➡ Increasing inequality threatens political democracy, reaffirming Babasaheb Ambedkar's warning that inequality imperils democratic values.
- ➡ Constitution Day serves as a reminder to reassess policies and align them with the ideals of social and economic justice.