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GS 2 · POLITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE HINDU · PAGE 4

SC: Conversion Does Not Automatically Grant Reservation Benefits

WHY IN NEWS A Supreme Court Bench headed by **Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra** dismissed a **Tamil Nadu government appeal** and held that a Hindu belonging to a Backward Class cannot claim the reservation benefits of a **Backward Class Muslim** merely by converting to Islam or any other religion — **Article 16(4)** benefits do not "travel" with the convert.

SC says conversion does not automatically grant benefits of reservation

T.N. govt. appeal seeking confirmation of order issued by State in 2024 dismissed; caste identity cannot be treated as an immutable personal attribute, irrespective of a change in religious affiliation: court

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday declared that a Hindu belonging to a Backward order cannot claim the same reservation benefits as a Muslim Backward Class member merely on conversion to Islam or other religions.

"A person who converts from a Hindu social order to a non-Hindu social order cannot claim affirmative action under Article 16 (4) of the Constitution merely on the basis of the social backwardness associated with his pre-conversion status," it held.

The court clarified the law while dismissing a Tamil Nadu government appeal seeking confirmation of an order issued by the State government in March 2024 to provide reservation benefits to members of the Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes, De-notified communities, and Scheduled

Castes who had embraced Islam. The policy of the State was intended to create a level-playing field by preserving affirmative action despite the change of religion.

A Bench headed by Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra held that a member of a Backward Hindu community does not automatically become a member of a notified Backward Muslim community merely through conversion.

It said a caste identity cannot be treated as an immutable personal attribute, irrespective of a change in religious affiliation. It said the constitutional benefits of reservation under Article 16(4) cannot be made to travel from the religion in which the backwardness arose to a religion of which the basic theological structure did not recognise caste as its foundational basis.

"No statutory benefit, protection, reservation or other entitlement under Article 16(4) of the Constitution, the enjoyment of which is predicated upon a particular Hindu social order, can be claimed or extended merely on the basis of such antecedent membership after the person has converted to Islam, Christianity or any other non-Hindu social order. Conversion severs the legal foundation of an entitlement specifically conditioned upon membership of that Hindu social order," the court held.

The State's appeal was based on a Madras High Court decision to reject the petition of Sameer Ahamed, a convert to Islam. The Thoothukudi resident, born to Hindu parents, changed his faith to Islam in 2015. He was issued a certificate of conversion by the Sunnath Jamath. He subsequently applied for a community certificate certifying him as 'Muslim Lebbai', but the request was declined by the Tahsildar.

HC decision upheld

Confirming the High Court's decision to deny him quota benefits, the Supreme Court explained that the identity of a Backward Class Muslim community was historically constituted by social membership. A mere declaration of conversion cannot be treated as proof of such membership.

"A Jamath may certify that a person has embraced Islam. However, it cannot, merely by issuing a testimonial, conclusively determine a statutory Backward Class status," Justice Mishra, who authored the judgment, held.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JUDGMENT

- **Core holding:** "A person who converts from a Hindu social order to a non-Hindu social order cannot claim affirmative action under Article 16(4) merely on the basis of the social backwardness associated with his pre-conversion status."
- **No automatic migration:** A member of a Backward Hindu community does not automatically become a member of a **notified Backward Muslim community** through conversion. Caste identity cannot be treated as an **immutable personal attribute** that survives a change of religion.

- **Theological reasoning:** Reservation cannot be made to travel from the religion in which the backwardness arose to a religion whose basic theological structure does **not recognise caste as its foundational basis**. "Conversion severs the legal foundation" of any entitlement predicated on membership of the Hindu social order.
- **Certificate ≠ status:** "A Jamath may certify that a person has embraced Islam. However, it cannot, merely by issuing a testimonial, conclusively determine a statutory Backward Class status." The identity of a Backward Class Muslim community was historically constituted by **social membership**; a mere declaration of conversion is no proof of it.
- **The case: Sameer Ahamed** of Thoothukudi, born to Hindu parents, converted to Islam in 2015 and received a conversion certificate from the **Sunnath Jamath**. His request for a **'Muslim Lebbai'** community certificate was refused by the Tahsildar and the **Madras High Court** upheld the refusal. Tamil Nadu appealed seeking confirmation of its **March 2024 order** extending benefits to BC, MBC, Denotified Community and SC members who embraced Islam — intended to create a **level-playing field** by preserving affirmative action despite a change of religion.

ANALYSIS: SIGNIFICANCE VS CONCERNS

- **Significance:** Reaffirms that backwardness is **group-based and context-specific**, not an individual label; guards against conversions motivated only by quotas — echoing **C. Selvarani (2024)**, where the SC called such conversion a "fraud on the Constitution"; clarifies that **revenue authorities**, not religious bodies, determine statutory status.
- **Concerns:** Sociological studies (and the **Ranganath Mishra Commission, 2007**) show caste-based discrimination often **persists after conversion**. Converts may fall between two stools — losing their Hindu BC/SC status without gaining a Muslim BC status. The ruling also bears on the pending debate before the **Justice K.G. Balakrishnan Commission (2022)** on SC status for Dalit converts.
- **Way forward:** Empirical data on the social condition of converts; transparent, objective tests for community membership; and a considered policy view once the Balakrishnan Commission reports — balancing **substantive equality** with the integrity of reservation.

VALUE ADDITION · CONSTITUTIONAL TOOLKIT ON RESERVATION

Art. 15(4): Special provisions for SEBCs, SCs and STs (1st Amendment, 1951, after *Champakam Dorairajan*).

Art. 16(4): Reservation in appointments/posts for any backward class **not adequately represented** in services under the State.

Art. 16(4A): Reservation in promotion for SCs/STs (77th Amendment, 1995).

Art. 340: Backward Classes Commission — Kaka Kalelkar (1953), B.P. Mandal (1979).

Arts. 341 / 342: President notifies SCs / STs; only **Parliament** can include or exclude.

Art. 342A: Central SEBC list (102nd Amendment, 2018); **105th Amendment, 2021** restored States' power to prepare their own lists.

Constitution (SC) Order, 1950 — Para 3: only persons professing **Hinduism, Sikhism (1956) or Buddhism (1990)** can be SCs.

Key cases: *Soosai v. UoI* (1985) — converts must prove continuing disabilities; *Indra Sawhney* (1992) — caste can be a criterion, 50% ceiling, creamy layer; *C. Selvarani* (2024).

Tamil Nadu: 3.5% sub-quota for **Backward Class Muslims** (2007 Act) within the BC quota — covers groups such as Labbais, Ansar, Dekkani and Mapilla.

PRELIMS POINTERS **Lebbai / Labbai** — Tamil-speaking Muslim community of coastal Tamil Nadu, notified as a BC Muslim group · **Jamath** — mosque-based community body that can certify conversion · **Thoothukudi** — home of V.O. Chidambaranar Port; pearl-fishing coast of the Gulf of Mannar.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 2 — Fundamental Rights; Mechanisms, laws and institutions for the protection of vulnerable sections · GS 1 — Social empowerment, communalism

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GS 2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS **THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · OP-ED**

A Contested UNSC Seat Poses a Test for India

WHY IN NEWS After the **81st UNGA session** (Sept 8–28, 2026), India faces a rare **contested race against Tajikistan** for the Asia-Pacific non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for **2028–29**; voting in the UNGA is due in **June 2027**.

A contested UNSC seat poses a test for India

Following the conclusion of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), held from September 8 to 28, 2026, the government must double its efforts to secure a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in next year's election. India's bid for the 2028-29 two-year term of the UNSC was launched by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar this year, with voting in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to take place in June 2027. As a result, Mr. Jaishankar was busier than usual during UNGA week, holding nearly 90 meetings over a 10-day stay in New York. Between now and next summer, India needs at least 129 affirmative votes in the 193-member Assembly to win.

This has not been as much of an issue on the eight occasions that India has won the seat over the past eight decades, becoming the Asia-Pacific grouping's consensus choice once every decade. Even Pakistan votes for India at the UNGA in these elections, and India returns the favour. With the full backing of the 55-member group, India won a record 187 of 191 votes in 2010 and 184 of 192 votes in 2020.

The bid for a ninth term

India's ambition to win a ninth term is guided by several factors – its terms were in 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12 and 2021-22. Its last tenure, in 2021-22, was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Narendra Modi government felt it had been unable to meet all its objectives. New Delhi may want to complete these objectives, including resolutions on terrorism and United Nations reform, before the Modi government's current term ends in 2029. With India's push for permanent membership of the UNSC still elusive, the government may wish to increase the frequency of its non-permanent tenures, keeping India at the centrestage of geopolitics from the UNSC's horseshoe table.

The difference this time, however, is that when India announced its candidacy for the 2027 election, Tajikistan was already in the fray and, according to the chart drawn up for the Asia-Pacific seat, was to be the consensus choice. On the two previous occasions when India had to contest an election – in 1975 against Pakistan and in 1996 against Japan – it lost. Decisions on consensus are made informally by diplomats at the UN, sometimes decades in advance for the 55-country Asia-Pacific grouping.

Like with all the other regional groups – African, Latin American and Caribbean (GRULAC), the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), and the Eastern European Group – a different number of seats fall vacant each year. When consensus breaks down, votes within the group are split, leading to a contest in the wider UNGA. From there it is a race for every country's vote; the rule that contestants must also win two-thirds of the assembly, or more than 129 votes, complicates the task. Given that the course is set, the Modi government has three options, each opening a differently difficult path. The first is to battle it out against Tajikistan on the global stage; the second is to convince the Tajik government to withdraw its candidature; and the third is for India to withdraw its own. Another option – to divide the two-year term equally between the two candidates – has been tried in the past, but these cases have been countries that are evenly matched in other respects.

Suhasini Haidar

It is a battle that can be avoided – the path to next year's UNSC election will not be a cakewalk, and India must consider its options

Battling it out

At first glance, India's advantage over Tajikistan seems glaringly obvious, given its size, economic standing and past record on the Council. However, UN insiders know that these are not the only criteria by which UNSC elections are won. To begin with, India's multiple terms on the UNSC may work against it, as there is a growing push within the UNGA to consider smaller countries that have never held council membership such as Tajikistan. In his UNGA speech, Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin said that, more than status, his country's bid for a seat on the UNSC was about its responsibilities to the UN Charter and to "listen to all voices – large and small". This David-versus-Goliath pitch is attractive to other smaller states, especially those from the Global South that feel their lack of representation is unfair. Japan, for instance, which has served 12 terms on the UNSC, announced its candidature for the 2043 election in 2024, having previously declared its intention to contest the 2032 election.

The next important factor is how subregional blocs are likely to vote within the Asia-Pacific grouping. Tajikistan already has the endorsement of its own region, Central Asia, and possibly, by extension, that of several neighbouring countries. It also has the endorsement of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, a grouping of 57 member-states which would largely follow that position, although New Delhi may be able to win over some of its friends within the organisation. India is fairly confident of the votes of the Global North – the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and allied countries – as well as those of Southeast Asian countries (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN), Caribbean nations represented by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and Pacific island countries (PIC). This means the battle ground that matters most is the Global South – Africa, South America and also South Asia.

The current mood among Global South countries, as reflected in a number of UNGA resolutions over the past year, has been decidedly against the big powers, the U.S. and Russia, and has been inordinately critical of Israel. During the 80th session, member-states voted overwhelmingly in favour of at least 13 resolutions criticising Israel. The UNSC elections this year were particularly instructive. For the Asia-Pacific seat, the UNGA voted for first-timer Kyrgyzstan over the western-backed Philippines. For the WEOG, Germany, which had never lost a UNSC election, lost to Portugal and Austria, ostensibly due to its stance in support of Israel. In the election for the President of the UNGA, too, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, Khalilur Rahman, defeated his rival from Cyprus, another western-backed candidate. While India's assertion of strategic autonomy *vis-à-vis* the big powers may stand it in good stead, its diplomats may have to answer questions about India's own ties with Israel in recent years, particularly following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel in February 2026.

Tajikistan or India bowing out

The next option, which has worked in the past, is to persuade Tajikistan to withdraw its candidature – India was able to negotiate with Kazakhstan in 2010 for the 2011-12 term, and Afghanistan in 2013 to step aside for the 2021-22 tenure. However, despite meetings between Mr. Modi and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Bishkek, and between Mr. Jaishankar and his Tajik counterpart during the UNGA session (both in September 2026), there has been no such announcement.

Even if Tajikistan decides to step aside after studying its chances, India must consider the message this would send to other Global South countries: that its second turn in a decade is more important than giving a smaller country its first opportunity to serve on the Council.

This leaves the third alternative, which would certainly make the world sit up: India could agree to step aside for Tajikistan, in order to return to the UNSC a year or two later with the full backing of the Asia-Pacific grouping. Such a move would acknowledge Tajikistan's special strategic relationship with India in the past, particularly its role in hosting an Indian Air Force base at Ayni and a medical base at Farkhor, strategically important in the Afghan conflict in the early part of this century, despite pushback from the U.S., China and even Russia. There is little evidence so far, however, that the Modi government, which announced its candidature with some fanfare, is considering backing down.

The path to securing another non-permanent seat on the UNSC next year is not easy. India's win can only be guaranteed by defeating the ambitions of its old friend and regional partner – the choice is between a Pyrrhic victory versus a tactical defeat. In the bigger war for India's rightful place as a permanent member of the UNSC – one whose voice represents the aspirations of the Global South – this is a battle that could be avoided.

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THE BID AT A GLANCE

- **Campaign:** Launched by EAM **S. Jaishankar**, who held nearly **90 meetings in 10 days** in New York. India needs at least **129 affirmative votes** in the 193-member Assembly — the two-thirds rule.
- **Track record:** Eight terms — **1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12, 2021-22** — usually as the Asia-Pacific group's **consensus choice once a decade**. With the 55-member group's backing, India won a record **187 of 191 votes (2010)** and **184 of 192 (2020)**; even Pakistan votes for India.
- **Why a ninth term:** The 2021-22 tenure was disrupted by COVID-19; goals on **counter-terrorism resolutions and UN reform** remain unmet before the government's term ends in 2029. With permanent membership elusive, frequent tenures keep India at the "centrestage of geopolitics" at the horseshoe table.
- **The problem:** Tajikistan was already in the fray and was to be the consensus choice. India has contested only twice — **1975 vs Pakistan** and **1996 vs Japan** — and **lost both**.

THE BATTLEGROUND

- **Tajikistan's pitch:** FM **Sirojiddin Muhriddin** told the UNGA its bid is about "listening to all voices — large and small" — a **David-vs-Goliath** appeal to smaller states that have **never served** on the Council (Japan, by contrast, has served 12 terms).
- **Bloc arithmetic:** Tajikistan has Central Asia's backing and the **OIC's (57 members)** endorsement. India is fairly confident of the **Global North**, ASEAN, CARICOM and Pacific islands — the real battleground is the **Global South** (Africa, South America, South Asia).
- **Mood of the Assembly:** Anti-big-power and critical of Israel (13+ resolutions). This year **Kyrgyzstan** beat the Philippines; **Germany** lost to Portugal and Austria; Bangladesh's **Khalilur Rahman** beat Cyprus for UNGA President. India's growing ties with Israel (PM's visit, Feb 2026) may draw questions.
- **Three options:** (i) **Battle it out** — a possible Pyrrhic victory; (ii) **Persuade Tajikistan** to withdraw — precedents: **Kazakhstan (2011-12)** and **Afghanistan (2021-22)** stepped aside — but no announcement despite Modi–Rahmon talks at the **Bishkek SCO Summit**; (iii) **India steps aside** and returns a year or two later — honouring Tajikistan's special ties (**Ayni air base, Farkhor** hospital). A split term suits only evenly matched rivals.
- **Verdict:** In the bigger war for a permanent seat as the **voice of the Global South**, this is "a battle that could be avoided" — a tactical retreat may serve India better.

VALUE ADDITION · UNSC BASICS

Composition (Art. 23): 15 members — 5 permanent (P5) + 10 non-permanent elected for **2-year terms**; 5 elected every year; **no immediate re-election**.

Election: By UNGA secret ballot with a **two-thirds majority of members present and voting**.

Seat distribution (1963 reform): Africa & Asia-Pacific 5 (Africa 3 + Asia-Pacific 2, with an **Arab swing seat**) · Latin America & Caribbean 2 · WEOG 2 · Eastern Europe 1.

Voting (Art. 27): Procedural matters — any 9 votes; substantive — 9 votes including concurring votes of P5 (**veto**).

Charter amendment (Art. 108): two-thirds of UNGA + ratification by two-thirds of members **including all P5**.

Reform groups: G4 (India, Brazil, Germany, Japan) · **Uniting for Consensus** (Pakistan, Italy

etc.) · **L.69** · African **Ezulwini Consensus**; talks via **IGN**.

India 2021-22: Presided in **Aug 2021** (maritime security debate) and **Dec 2022**; chaired the Counter-Terrorism Committee in 2022 — **Delhi Declaration** on new technologies and terrorism.

PRELIMS POINTERS **Tajikistan** — capital Dushanbe; Pamir mountains; borders Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan; the **Wakhan Corridor** separates it from PoK · **Ayni** (Gissar) air base — developed with Indian assistance · **UNGA-81 President:** Khalilur Rahman (Bangladesh) · India's last two wins came with record vote tallies of 187 and 184.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 2 — Important international institutions, their structure and mandate; India and its neighbourhood; Global groupings affecting India's interests

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GS 2 · POLITY & GOVERNANCE

THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · EDITORIAL

Out of Site: Jantar Mantar Denotified as a Protest Venue

WHY IN NEWS The **Delhi Police** (under the Union Home Ministry) has **denotified Jantar Mantar** as a designated protest site, citing a Supreme Court directive of **October 9**. Following an **MHA committee's** recommendation, **Ramlila Ground, Burari Ground and CBD Ground (East Delhi)** have been identified as alternative venues — drawing criticism for arbitrariness.

BACKGROUND

- **The SC directive:** A Bench headed by **CJI Surya Kant** urged the Union government to identify an alternative protest site that is **"spacious and open"**. The order came while hearing petitions against restrictions on movement in the capital to halt the **October 10 protests** demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner **Gyanesh Kumar**; observations were made on the inconvenience to commuters.
- **The editorial's case:** Traffic and inconvenience arguments are valid "only as much as" similar arguments raised against **democracy itself** — that it delays decisions, that elections disrupt development, hence "fewer elections and less politics" (the logic behind **simultaneous elections**).

WHY LOCATION MATTERS

- **Global practice:** A centrally located protest site is part of urban space in most democracies — e.g., **Washington DC** and **London**.
- **Voice of the powerless:** Protesters are usually **marginal groups** with no seat at the decision-making table; street protest is "an instrument for people with no other way of being heard". Rendering them invisible is a **"violent police argument"** against their attempt to be seen.
- **Proximity is the point:** Jantar Mantar lies close to the **Parliament complex** and the **President's Estate**. Pushing protesters to the city's margins traps them "in the very situation they are trying to escape"; the same logic could insist that people "stay at home and protest".
- **Constitutional lens: Art. 19(1)(a)** (speech) and **19(1)(b)** (assemble peaceably and without arms) are subject to reasonable restrictions under **Art. 19(3)** — sovereignty & integrity and **public order**. These must be balanced against others' freedom of movement (19(1)(d)) and right to life (Art. 21).

- **Way forward:** Prefer **time–place–manner regulation** over blanket denotification; apply the **proportionality test** (*Modern Dental College*, 2016; *Puttaswamy*, 2017); transparent permissions; and alternative venues that remain **visible and accessible**.

Out of site

People's protests are meant to be seen and heard, not hidden away

The Delhi Police's decision to denotify Jantar Mantar in the national capital as a site where protests can be organised has itself triggered a storm of protest over its sheer arbitrariness. The Delhi Police, which is under the Union Home Ministry, have told the Delhi High Court that Jantar Mantar was denotified as a protest site following a Supreme Court directive issued on October 9. The Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant had urged the Union government to identify an alternative protest site that is spacious and open. The order was passed while hearing petitions challenging the government's decision to restrict movement within and into the city to halt the October 10 protests demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. Observations were also exchanged that protests in and around Jantar Mantar were a source of inconvenience for ordinary commuters. It is possible to argue that protesters cause traffic congestion and inconvenience. But those arguments are valid only as much as similar arguments that are usually raised against democracy itself. There is a reactionary view that democracy delays decision-making, elections disrupt development and economic activity, and that there should therefore be fewer elections and less politics. The BJP's push for simultaneous elections to Parliament and State Assemblies once every five years is based on the same logic, that at its heart questions the legitimacy of democracy itself. The argument against protests at Jantar Mantar does not hold water. It is antithetical to the concept of public deliberation and protest, which are central to democracy.

A centrally located site of protest is part of the urban space in most democracies, as in Washington DC and London. Public protesters are usually marginal groups who lack representation at the decision-making table. Street protest is actually an outcome of their lack of power, and an instrument for people with no other way of being heard. To keep them far away from the seat of power and render them invisible is a violent police argument against their very attempt to be heard and seen. The reason why a protester wants to be in Jantar Mantar is its proximity to the centre of power – it is located close to the Parliament complex, and the President's Estate. If, in the name of public order, they are pushed far away into the margins of the city, as is now being sought, it is equivalent to keeping them trapped in the very situation they are trying to escape. If protests can happen only far away from the seat of power, the logic can easily be extended to argue that people must stay at home and protest. That is not how a democracy works.

VALUE ADDITION · PROTEST JURISPRUDENCE & HERITAGE

***Himat Lal K. Shah* (1973):** State cannot impose a blanket ban on public meetings on streets; it may only regulate.

***Ramlila Maidan Incident* (2012):** Right to peaceful protest is a fundamental right; midnight crackdown on sleeping protesters was disproportionate.

***Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v. UoI* (2018):** Set aside the near-total ban at Jantar Mantar and Boat Club (after NGT's 2017 order); directed guidelines for regulated use.

***Amit Sahni* (2020, Shaheen Bagh):** Public ways cannot be occupied indefinitely; dissent in designated areas.

Delhi Police & MHA: Art. 239AA(3)(a) keeps public order, police and land outside the Delhi Assembly's domain.

Jantar Mantar: Built in **1724** by **Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II** — first of five observatories (Delhi, Jaipur, Ujjain, Varanasi, Mathura; Mathura's no longer survives).

Name: *Yantra* (instrument) + *Mantra* (formula/calculation); **13** naked-eye astronomical instruments incl. the **Samrat Yantra**, Jai Prakash, Ram and Misra Yantras.

Jaipur's Jantar Mantar is the largest and a **UNESCO World Heritage Site (2010)**; Jai Singh II also compiled the *Zij-i-Muhammadshahi* tables.

Jantar Mantar, New Delhi — the 18th-century masonry observatory that lends the protest site its name

PRELIMS POINTERS **Removal of CEC** — only in the manner and on the grounds of a Supreme Court judge (Art. 324(5)) · Appointment now governed by the **CEC and Other ECs Act, 2023** · **Simultaneous elections** — Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, referred to a JPC.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 2 — Fundamental Rights; Role of civil society and pressure groups; Separation of powers; Issues in governance · GS 1 — Indian architecture & science heritage

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GS 2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS **THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · EDITORIAL**

Double Standards: The U.S. Must Stop Moralising to the Global South

WHY IN NEWS U.S. President **Donald Trump** announced a deal to buy **Russian diesel** — 300,000 tonnes immediately and 5,00,000 tonnes in November — and the **Treasury Department suspended sanctions** on Russian diesel exports until **April 7, 2027**, just a month after signing a law threatening up to **100% tariffs** on buyers of Russian energy, including India and China.

THE FLIP-FLOP DECODED

- **Penalising India:** In 2025 the U.S. imposed an **additional 25% tariff** on India over Russian oil purchases; trade adviser **Peter Navarro** even called the Ukraine invasion **"Modi's war"**.
- **New law:** The **Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act**, signed last month, empowers the President to impose tariffs up to 100% on countries buying Russian energy.
- **Incoherence:** Sanctions were meant to weaken Vladimir Putin's "war machine". After the U.S. began bombing Iran and fuel prices spiked, Washington first eased sanctions on Russian fuel and then struck its own deal with Moscow.
- **Sanctions as a double-edged sword:** The West's 2022 two-pronged response — **sanctions + arming Kyiv** — hurt Russia but plunged European economies, especially **Germany**, into crisis. Moscow simply looked east, where **China and India** bought discounted fuel.

Double standards

The U.S. must stop moralising to the Global South for trading with Russia

Last year, U.S. President Donald Trump imposed an additional 25% tariff on India over India's oil purchases from Russia. Peter Navarro, Mr. Trump's trade czar, even called Russia's invasion of Ukraine "Modi's war", saying India was funding the Russian aggression through energy deals. Last month, Mr. Trump signed the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act into law, giving him the power to impose up to 100% tariffs on countries buying Russian energy, including India and China. And then, last week, Mr. Trump announced a deal to buy Russian diesel – releasing 300,000 tonnes immediately to the "American and global marketplace" followed by 5,00,000 tonnes in November. Immediately after the announcement, the Treasury Department suspended sanctions on Russian diesel exports until April 7, 2027. Mr. Trump's flip-flop is a lesson for countries such as India, which have been criticised and penalised for trading with Russia. The latest policy switch also exposes the incoherence in western strategic thinking. The West imposed sanctions on Russia's energy sector to weaken Vladimir Putin's "war machine". Four years later, the U.S. began bombing Iran. When the Iran war drove up fuel prices, Washington temporarily eased sanctions on Russian fuel before striking a deal with Moscow.

Beyond the hypocrisy and strategic folly of the

Washington temporarily eased sanctions on Russian fuel before striking a deal with Moscow.

Beyond the hypocrisy and strategic folly of the U.S. decisions, Mr. Trump's diesel deal also marks the ineffectiveness of the western sanctions regime. When Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022, the West adopted a two-pronged response: weaken the Russian economy through sanctions and weaken the Russian military in Ukraine by arming Kyiv. The sanctions were a double-edged sword, hurting the Russian economy, but the curtailment of trade between Russia and Europe has also plunged European economies, particularly Germany, into deep crises. To offset the impact of the sanctions, Moscow looked east where China and India were willing to buy discounted Russian fuel. The episode also underscores the changes in the economic landscape. Mr. Trump's U-turn leaves Ukraine and Europe in a spot, at a time when Moscow is escalating its bombardment of Ukraine and testing NATO's resolve through grey-zone tactics. If Brussels thinks that prolonging the war would serve its strategic goal of bleeding Russia dry in Ukraine, it may be making a mistake, as Mr. Trump seems less interested in NATO's collective defence or in the defence of Kyiv. Instead, their focus must shift to finding a diplomatic way out. If Mr. Trump can reach a diesel deal with Mr. Putin amid the war, he should work with the warring parties, his allies in Europe and his new partner in Moscow, to secure a ceasefire and ease Russia-NATO tensions. In the meantime, the U.S. and Europe could stop moralising to the Global South for doing trade with Russia.

IMPLICATIONS

- **For Europe & Ukraine:** The U-turn leaves them "in a spot" as Moscow escalates bombardment of Ukraine and tests NATO with **grey-zone tactics**; Washington appears less invested in NATO's collective defence. Brussels must shift from "bleeding Russia dry" to a **diplomatic exit**.
- **The editorial's prescription:** If Mr. Trump can strike a diesel deal amid the war, he should work with Europe, Ukraine and Moscow for a **ceasefire** and to ease Russia–NATO tensions — and the West should stop moralising to the Global South.
- **For India:** Vindicates **strategic autonomy** and multi-alignment; strengthens India's hand in trade talks; underlines the need for **diversified energy sourcing** as India imports over 85% of its crude oil; and exposes the selective use of **secondary sanctions**.

VALUE ADDITION · SANCTIONS VOCABULARY

Primary sanctions: Bar a country's own citizens/firms from dealing with the target.

Secondary sanctions: Penalise **third-country** entities that deal with the target — e.g., tariffs on buyers of Russian oil.

OFAC: Office of Foreign Assets Control, under the **U.S. Treasury**, administers U.S. sanctions programmes.

CAATSA (2017): Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act — the S-400 debate for India.

G7 price cap (Dec 2022): Western shipping/insurance allowed only if Russian crude is sold below a set cap.

Grey-zone tactics: Coercion below the threshold of open war — drone incursions, cyber attacks, sabotage of undersea cables, airspace violations.

NATO Art. 5: Collective defence — attack on one is an attack on all (invoked only once, after 9/11). **Art. 4:** consultations.

PRELIMS POINTERS Russia–Ukraine war began **24 February 2022** · **Diesel** is a middle distillate · India's top crude suppliers since 2022 include **Russia, Iraq and Saudi Arabia**.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 2 — Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests · GS 3 — Energy security

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GS 2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THE HINDU · PAGE 14

Rajnath Singh to Represent India at SCO Heads of Government Meet

WHY IN NEWS Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** will represent India at the two-day meeting of the **SCO Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers)** in **Dushanbe, Tajikistan**, on **October 19–20, 2026**; PM Narendra Modi is expected to join **virtually**.

- **Agenda:** Held under **Tajikistan's chairmanship**, the meeting will focus on practical cooperation among member states, particularly in **trade and commerce**. Mr. Singh will also hold a **bilateral meeting with Tajikistan** — significant amid the two countries' contest for the UNSC seat (see Topic 2).
- **What is the SCO:** A permanent **Eurasian intergovernmental organisation** for regional security, political cooperation, economic engagement and cultural exchange — a key platform linking Central Asia, South Asia, China and Russia.
- **Origin:** Grew out of the **"Shanghai Five" (1996)** — China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan — formed to resolve border disputes and build military confidence. With **Uzbekistan's** inclusion, the SCO was founded on **15 June 2001** in Shanghai; the **SCO Charter** was signed in 2002 and came into force in 2003.
- **Members (10):** China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Belarus. India and Pakistan joined in **2017**, Iran in **2023** and Belarus in **2024**. **Turkmenistan is not a member** (permanent neutrality). **Observers:** Afghanistan and Mongolia.
- **Official languages:** Russian and Chinese. Guiding ethos — the **"Shanghai Spirit"**: mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diversity of civilisations and pursuit of common development.
- **India & the SCO:** Observer since **2005**, full member since 2017. India chaired the **Council of Heads of Government in 2020** and hosted the Heads of State summit **virtually in 2023** (**New Delhi Declaration**). India's

Rajnath Singh to represent India at SCO PMs' summit

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will represent India at the upcoming two-day meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on October 19 and 20, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to participate virtually, a senior government official said on Thursday.

The meeting will be held under Tajikistan's SCO chairmanship for the year and is expected to focus on practical cooperation among member states, particularly in trade, and commerce.

The official said Mr. Singh would also hold a bilateral meeting with Tajikistan during the visit.

vision — **SECURE**: Security, Economic development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for sovereignty and integrity, Environment.

VALUE ADDITION · SCO STRUCTURE & INDIA'S RED LINES

BODY	ROLE
Council of Heads of State	Highest decision-making body; annual summit
Council of Heads of Government	Economic and developmental cooperation; approves budget
Council of Foreign Ministers	Coordinates external and political matters
Secretariat	Permanent body — **Beijing, China**
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure — **Tashkent, Uzbekistan**; counters "three evils": terrorism, separatism, extremism

India's red lines: India has consistently declined to endorse China's **Belt and Road Initiative** in SCO documents (CPEC passes through PoK). In **June 2025** at Qingdao, Mr. Singh refused to sign the SCO Defence Ministers' joint document for diluting language on terrorism; the **Tianjin Summit Declaration (2025)** later condemned the Pahalgam attack.

PRELIMS POINTERS **Dushanbe** — capital of Tajikistan, on the Varzob river · Tajikistan is the only **Persian-speaking** Central Asian republic · **Shanghai Five** did NOT include Uzbekistan · SCO's Heads of State and Heads of Government chairs rotate separately.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 2 — Regional and global groupings involving India; India and its neighbourhood; Central Asia policy (Connect Central Asia)

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GS 3 · AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY **THE HINDU · PAGE 8 · OP-ED**

World Food Day 2026: 'Innovate Today, Nourish Tomorrow'

WHY IN NEWS **World Food Day** is observed on **October 16**; the 2026 theme is "**Innovate today, nourish tomorrow**". In a joint article, the India heads of the three Rome-based UN agencies — **FAO, IFAD and WFP** — trace India's journey from scarcity to surplus and its lessons for the Global South.

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE

- **Scale: 645 million people** still face hunger, and **one-third** of the world's population cannot afford a healthy diet.
- **Three drivers:** (i) **Climate risks** reducing yields and disrupting seasons; (ii) **economic shocks** and stubborn food-price inflation eroding purchasing power; (iii) **conflict and civil strife** destroying harvests, displacing farmers, disrupting supply chains and the very institutions that protect people from hunger.

INDIA: FROM SCARCITY TO SURPLUS

- **Green Revolution:** High-yielding varieties, expanded irrigation and assured prices raised cereal output — the base for India's public distribution and nutrition schemes.
- **World's largest food safety net:** The **NFSA, 2013** gives a legal entitlement to subsidised grain to up to **75% rural and 50% urban** population (~**81 crore** people). Since **January 2024**, grains are **free** under **PMGKAY**, extended until **2028**.
- **Backbone — TPDS:** Digitised ration cards, **Aadhaar seeding** and **One Nation One Ration Card** portability let migrant workers draw rations anywhere.

HOW THE UN AGENCIES COMPLEMENT INDIA

- **FAO — on the farm:** Digital agriculture road maps; capacity building of frontline extension workers; **Clean Milk Scorecard** for dairy hygiene; measuring **food loss** and valorising waste through composting, bioenergy and recycling.
- **IFAD — the first mile:** A **"financing plus"** approach integrating support across the value chain to crowd in capital; every IFAD dollar in India has leveraged **over three dollars**; projects with private-sector participation delivered **64% income gains** — four times higher; IFAD now lends directly to the private sector.
- **WFP — access & availability:** World's largest humanitarian organisation (**Nobel Peace Prize 2020**), in India for over **63 years**; PDS efficiency via **Grain ATMs**, supply chain optimisation and the **Public Services Lab at IIT Delhi**; nutrition support for children and pregnant women, including **millets**.
- **India's blueprint:** Innovations shaped by constraints — fragmented landholdings, monsoon-fed farming, multilingual populations — offer adaptable principles for the Global South. The future lies beyond sufficiency: **climate-resilient and biofortified crops**, diverse diets, and value chains that are **pro-smallholder and pro-woman**.
- **Persisting gaps:** NFHS-5 shows **35.5% stunting** among under-5 children and **57% anaemia** among women (15–49) — the challenge has shifted from calories to **nutrition security** ("hidden hunger"), along with cereal-centric procurement, post-harvest losses and climate stress on wheat.

VALUE ADDITION · ROME-BASED AGENCIES & NFSA

FAO: Founded **16 Oct 1945** (Quebec City) — hence World Food Day (first observed 1981); HQ **Rome**. Flagship: **SOFI** (with IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO), SOFA, State of the World's Forests.

IFAD: Est. **1977**, an outcome of the 1974 World Food Conference — a UN specialised agency and international financial institution for rural poverty.

WFP: Est. **1961**; Nobel Peace Prize **2020**; co-publishes the Global Report on Food Crises.

NFSA entitlements: **5 kg**/person/month for priority households; **35 kg**/household for **Antyodaya Anna Yojana**; eldest woman (18+) is head of household for ration cards; maternity benefit of at least ₹6,000.

Fortified rice: Supplied under PMGKAY and other welfare schemes, with continuation approved until **December 2028**.

Pillars of food security: Availability, Access, Utilisation, Stability (+ Agency and Sustainability per the HLPE).

PRELIMS POINTERS **Grain ATM ('Annapurti')** — automated multi-commodity grain dispenser developed with WFP · **2023** was the UN International Year of Millets, proposed by India · **ONORC** launched in 2019 and covers all States/UTs.

'Innovate today, nourish tomorrow' for food security

Konda Reddy Chavva
Officer-in-Charge, Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Representation in India

James Marc de Sousa-Shields
Country Director and Representative, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Elisabeth Faure
Representative and Country Director, the World Food Programme (WFP) in India

The simple yet profound theme, "Innovate today, nourish tomorrow", for World Food Day 2026, observed on October 16, reminds us that the future cannot be built with the tools of the past alone. The need to scale up innovation is urgent, as 645 million people still face hunger, while one-third of the world's population cannot afford a healthy diet.

Three interconnected factors continue to push these numbers. Climate-related risks are reducing yields and disrupting growing seasons. Economic shocks and stubborn food-price inflation are eroding purchasing power. Conflict, war and civil strife tear up harvests, displace farmers, disrupt supply chains and destroy the very institutions that protect people from hunger.

From scarcity to surplus and nutrition

Over the decades, India has emerged as a food-surplus nation and one of the world's largest producers of foodgrains, milk, pulses, fruits and vegetables. One of the decisive factors in this transformation from scarcity was the 'Green Revolution'. The introduction of high-yielding varieties, backed by expanded irrigation and assured prices, increased cereal production, which became the basis for India's public distribution and nutrition schemes.

India's abundance in food production has become the foundation of the world's largest food safety net. Under the National Food Security Act, 2013, India provides a legal entitlement to subsidised foodgrains to up to 75% of its rural population and 50% of its urban population, reaching approximately 81 crore people. Since January 2024, the government has provided these foodgrains free of cost under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, a guarantee that has been extended until 2028.

This architecture rests on the Targeted Public Distribution System, strengthened by digitised ration cards, Aadhaar seeding and the One Nation One Ration Card portability scheme, which lets migrant workers draw their foodgrain entitlements anywhere in the country.

As countries across the Global South grapple with climate change, conflict and economic uncertainty, India offers lessons that can be adapted to their needs

India's transformation in food security and nutrition is being driven by innovation. The government is focusing on technology, data and finance to make farming more resilient, resource-efficient and viable, while improving access to and the efficiency of food safety nets.

Complementing efforts

It is at this intersection that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are complementing India's efforts by providing technical expertise, developing solutions and strengthening institutional capacities.

On the farm, the FAO is supporting digital agriculture by developing advisory road maps and building the capacities of frontline extension workers. In livestock and dairy, FAO's Clean Milk Scorecard gives farmers a digital tool to assess cattle management, hygiene and milk production practices and provides actionable feedback. These tools translate technical knowledge into actionable advice, supporting better farm-level decisions and improved productivity. The FAO is also working to address food loss, a challenge with implications for nutrition, resource efficiency, climate action and farmers' incomes. Its work includes measuring losses, assessing their environmental impacts and identifying pathways to valorise them through composting, bioenergy and recycling.

On financing and investment, the IFAD focuses on the first mile of food systems, where risks are highest and private investment is thinnest. Its "financing plus" approach integrates support across the value chain – from production and market access to finance and small-scale infrastructure – and is designed to crowd in domestic public and private capital, rather than substitute for it. Every dollar IFAD has invested in India has leveraged more than three dollars in total investment. Across IFAD's global portfolio, projects with strong private-sector participation have delivered income gains of 64%, four times higher than those without such participation. IFAD is now beginning to lend directly to the private sector to bridge this gap, and India has one of its largest pipelines of such operations in Asia and the Pacific.

On access and availability, the WFP, the world's largest humanitarian organisation and the winner of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, has worked in India for over 63 years. It now focuses on enhancing the efficiency of the public food distribution system through innovations such as Grain ATMs, supply chain optimisation and the incubation of solutions through the Public Services Lab at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The WFP also works to improve the nutritional effectiveness of food assistance, particularly for children and pregnant women. This includes assessing food baskets, recommending dietary diversity and integrating nutrition considerations, including the incorporation of nutrient-rich millets and other nutri-cereals.

India's blueprint

India's experience is increasingly relevant beyond its borders. Its innovations have been shaped by constraints, including fragmented landholdings, monsoon-fed agriculture, multilingual populations and limited resources. As nations across the Global South face climate change, conflict and economic uncertainty, India offers principles to adapt.

The future requires us to look beyond sufficiency towards better nutrition, scalable innovations and equitable food systems built around climate-resilient and biofortified crops, nutritionally diverse diets and value chains that reward smallholders. Innovation must remain pro-smallholder and pro-woman, drawing deeply on traditional knowledge even as it embraces scientific advances.

On this World Food Day, we reaffirm our shared resolve with India: to innovate today, and in doing so, to nourish tomorrow.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 3 — Public distribution system, buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions in agriculture · GS 2 — Issues relating to poverty and hunger

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GS 1 · ART & CULTURE

IN THE NEWS

Hornbill Festival 2026: Nagaland's 'Festival of Festivals'

WHY IN NEWS Nagaland has begun high-level preparations for the **27th edition** of the Hornbill Festival, to be held from **December 1 to 10, 2026**, at the **Naga Heritage Village, Kisama**.

- **About:** Known as the **"Festival of Festivals"**, it is an annual 10-day cultural tourism carnival that brings together all recognised indigenous tribes of Nagaland under one roof to showcase heritage, folklore, music, dance, crafts and cuisine.
- **Venue:** Naga Heritage Village, **Kisama**, about **12 km south of Kohima**.
- **Aim:** Preserve, revive and promote tribal heritage; encourage **inter-tribal interaction**; and develop **tourism as an economic engine** for the State.
- **History:** Initiated by the Government of Nagaland in **December 2000**. Begun as a three-day event, it grew to five and then **ten days**, starting on **Nagaland Statehood Day (December 1)**.
- **Name:** After the **Great Indian Hornbill**, revered in Naga folklore, songs and traditional headgear as a symbol of **courage, alertness and splendour**.

- **Unity of tribes:** All **17 major Naga tribes** and sub-tribes build and live in authentic traditional communal dormitories called **Morungs**.
- **Arts & crafts:** Wood carving, handloom textiles, indigenous pottery, tribal painting and bamboo/cane sculpture, with live demonstrations of ancestral crafts.

Naga dancers perform in front of hornbill motifs at the festival arena, Kisama

VALUE ADDITION · NAGALAND & THE GREAT HORNBILL

Great Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*): IUCN **Vulnerable**; Schedule I, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; recognisable by its yellow **casque**; State bird of **Kerala and Arunachal Pradesh**.

Nagaland's State bird: Blyth's Tragopan — not the hornbill.

Statehood: Nagaland became India's **16th State** on **1 December 1963** (State of Nagaland Act, 1962).

Art. 371A: Acts of Parliament on Naga religious or social practices, customary law and procedure, and ownership/transfer of land apply only if the Nagaland Assembly so resolves.

Morung: Traditional youth dormitory — centre of learning, defence and folklore transmission.

Naga King Chilli (Bhut Jolokia/Raja Mircha) — GI-tagged; famous chilli-eating contests at the festival.

FESTIVAL	STATE	FESTIVAL	STATE
Hornbill	Nagaland	Sangai	Manipur
Wangala (Garo)	Meghalaya	Chapchar Kut	Mizoram
Ziro Music Festival	Arunachal Pradesh	Bihu	Assam

SYLLABUS LINK GS 1 — Salient aspects of art forms, literature and culture; Tribal heritage · HPAS — Comparative tribal fairs (cf. Kullu Dussehra, Minjar, Lavi)

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Practice Zone

MAINS · PRELIMS · REVISION — 16 OCTOBER 2026

MAINS ANSWER WRITING

Q1 · GS 2 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

"Caste identity is not an immutable personal attribute that travels across religions." In the light of the recent Supreme Court judgment, examine the constitutional position on extending reservation benefits to persons who convert from Hinduism to other religions.

> "जातिगत पहचान कोई अपरिवर्तनीय व्यक्तिगत गुण नहीं है जो एक धर्म से दूसरे धर्म में साथ चली जाए।" सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के हालिया निर्णय के आलोक में, हिंदू धर्म से अन्य धर्मों में धर्मांतरण करने वाले व्यक्तियों को आरक्षण का लाभ देने से संबंधित संवैधानिक स्थिति का परीक्षण कीजिए।

INTRO: Cite the judgment (Justice P.K. Mishra Bench) — benefits under Art. 16(4) do not travel with the convert; Sameer Ahamed case, TN's March 2024 order.

BODY: Constitutional framework — Arts. 15(4), 16(4), 341, 342A; SC Order 1950 Para 3 · Judicial line — *Soosai*, *Indra Sawhney*, *C. Selvarani* · Arguments for the ruling — group-based backwardness, prevents opportunistic conversion, certification by State not Jamath · Arguments against — persistence of caste after conversion (Ranganath Mishra), converts falling between two stools, Art. 25 freedom of conscience.

CONCLUSION: Await the Balakrishnan Commission; empirical, community-acceptance-based tests to secure substantive equality without diluting reservation's purpose.

Q2 · GS 2 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

Tajikistan's candidature for the 2028–29 non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council presents India with a strategic dilemma. Critically evaluate India's options and their implications for its aspiration to lead the Global South.

> वर्ष 2028–29 के लिए संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद की अस्थायी सीट हेतु ताजिकिस्तान की उम्मीदवारी भारत के समक्ष एक रणनीतिक दुविधा प्रस्तुत करती है। भारत के उपलब्ध विकल्पों तथा 'ग्लोबल साउथ' का नेतृत्व करने की उसकी आकांक्षा पर उनके प्रभावों का आलोचनात्मक मूल्यांकन कीजिए।

INTRO: India's eight terms, consensus-candidate tradition; first contested race since 1996; 129-vote threshold.

BODY: Why India wants the seat — unmet 2021-22 goals, terrorism, UN reform · Option 1: contest — bloc arithmetic (OIC, Central Asia vs Global North), anti-big-power mood, risk of Pyrrhic victory · Option 2: persuade Tajikistan — Kazakhstan & Afghanistan precedents, message to small states · Option 3: step aside — goodwill, Ayni/Farkhor legacy, SCO & Central Asia ties · Split term — feasibility.

CONCLUSION: Weigh the tactical seat against the strategic goal of a permanent seat backed by the Global South; consensus-building over confrontation.

MAINS ENRICHMENT · KEYWORDS & QUOTABLE LINES

POLITY: "Substantive equality" · "group-based, not individual, backwardness" · conversion solely for quota benefits is a "fraud on the Constitution" (*C. Selvarani*, 2024) · "Dissent is the safety valve of democracy" (Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, 2018) · time–place–manner regulation · proportionality.

IR: Strategic autonomy · multi-alignment · India's 2021-22 UNSC priority **NORMS** — New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System · "Voice of the Global South" · secondary sanctions and selective morality.

ECONOMY & CULTURE: From food security to **nutrition security** · M.S. Swaminathan's "Evergreen Revolution" · pro-smallholder, pro-woman value chains · Hornbill Festival as cultural diplomacy for the **Act East Policy**.

PRELIMS MCQS

1. With reference to the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, consider the following statements:
1. Only persons professing Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism can be deemed members of a Scheduled Caste.
2. Buddhists were included through an amendment in 1956.
3. Inclusion of a community in the SC list can be made only by Parliament by law.
Which of the statements given above are correct?

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 1 and 3 only
c. 2 and 3 only
d. 1, 2 and 3

2. Which one of the following countries does NOT share a land border with Tajikistan?

a. Afghanistan
b. China
c. Kazakhstan
d. Kyrgyzstan

3. Consider the following statements regarding non-permanent members of the UN Security Council:
1. They are elected for two-year terms by a two-thirds majority of UNGA members present and voting.
2. A retiring member is eligible for immediate re-election.
3. The Asia-Pacific Group is allotted two seats.
Which of the statements given above are correct?

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 1 and 3 only
c. 2 and 3 only
d. 1, 2 and 3

4. India lost contested elections for a non-permanent UNSC seat in which of the following years?

a. 1975 and 1996
b. 1984 and 2010
c. 1991 and 2020
d. 1977 and 1996

5. Consider the following statements about the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):
1. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure is located in Tashkent.
2. Turkmenistan is a full member.
3. Belarus became a full member in 2024.
Which of the statements given above are correct?

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 1 and 3 only
c. 2 and 3 only
d. 1, 2 and 3

6. Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II built observatories at all of the following places EXCEPT:

a. Ujjain
b. Varanasi
c. Mathura
d. Agra

7. Under Article 19(3) of the Constitution, reasonable restrictions on the right to assemble peaceably and without arms may be imposed in the interests of:
1. Sovereignty and integrity of India
2. Public order
3. Decency or morality
Select the correct answer:

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 2 only
c. 2 and 3 only
d. 1, 2 and 3

8. Consider the following pairs:
1. FAO — Founded on 16 October 1945
2. WFP — Nobel Peace Prize 2020
3. IFAD — Established in 1977
How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

a. Only one
b. Only two
c. All three
d. None

9. With reference to the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following:
1. It covers up to 75% of the rural and 50% of the urban population.
2. The eldest woman, not less than 18 years of age, is the head of the household for issue of ration cards.
3. Antyodaya Anna Yojana households are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrains per month.
Which of the statements given above are correct?

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 2 and 3 only
c. 1 and 3 only
d. 1, 2 and 3

10. Consider the following statements about the Hornbill Festival:
1. It begins on Nagaland's Statehood Day, December 1.
2. It is held at the Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, near Kohima.
3. The Great Hornbill is the State bird of Nagaland.
Which of the statements given above are correct?

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 2 and 3 only
c. 1 and 3 only
d. 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER KEY WITH RATIONALE

1 (b) Para 3 limits SC status to Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists; Sikhs were added in 1956 and **Buddhists in 1990**. Under Art. 341(2), only Parliament can modify the list.

2 (c) Tajikistan borders Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan — **not Kazakhstan**.

3 (b) Two-thirds of members present and voting; three-fourths not needed. Retiring members are **not eligible** for immediate re-election.

4 (a) India lost to **Pakistan in 1975** and **Japan in 1996**; 1984, 1991, 2010 and 2020 were wins.

5 (b) RATS is in Tashkent; Belarus joined at the 2024 Astana summit. Turkmenistan, a permanently neutral state, is **not a member**.

6 (d) Jai Singh II built observatories at Delhi, Jaipur, Ujjain, Varanasi and Mathura — **not Agra**.

7 (a) Art. 19(3) permits restrictions on assembly only for **sovereignty and integrity** and **public order**; decency or morality applies to speech under 19(2).

8 (c) All three are correct — FAO's founding day is World Food Day; WFP won the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize; IFAD was set up in 1977.

9 (d) All three are provisions of the NFSA, 2013 — the eldest-woman clause promotes women's empowerment.

10 (a) Nagaland's State bird is **Blyth's Tragopan**; the Great Hornbill is the State bird of Kerala and Arunachal Pradesh.

QUICK REVISION RECAP

CONVERSION & QUOTA: SC (Justice P.K. Mishra) — a Hindu BC convert to Islam cannot automatically claim Muslim BC status under Art. 16(4); a Jamath certificate proves conversion, not statutory status; TN's March 2024 order not confirmed.

UNSC RACE: India vs Tajikistan for 2028-29; vote June 2027; 129 of 193 needed; eight past terms; lost only in 1975 and 1996; three options — contest, persuade, or step aside.

JANTAR MANTAR: Denotified after SC's Oct 9 directive; alternatives — Ramlila, Burari, CBD Ground; editorial: protest sites must stay visible and near the seat of power; MKSS (2018) had struck down a total ban.

DOUBLE STANDARDS: U.S. buys Russian diesel and suspends sanctions until April 7, 2027 after penalising India; Graham Act allows up to 100% tariffs; sanctions hurt Europe, pushed Russia east.

SCO CHG: Dushanbe, Oct 19–20; Rajnath Singh to attend, PM virtual; 10 members; RATS Tashkent, Secretariat Beijing; Turkmenistan not a member.

WORLD FOOD DAY: Oct 16 (FAO's founding day); theme "Innovate today, nourish tomorrow"; 645 million hungry; NFSA covers ~81 crore, free grain under PMGKAY till 2028; Grain ATMs, Clean Milk Scorecard, "financing plus".

HORNBILL FESTIVAL: 27th edition, Dec 1–10, Kisama (Kohima); started 2000; 17 major tribes; Morungs; named after the Great Indian Hornbill.

PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS

✗ **Art. 15(4) vs 16(4):** 15(4) = special provisions (education etc.); 16(4) = reservation in **public employment**. Today's judgment is under 16(4).

✗ **Shanghai Five** had five founders — Uzbekistan joined only in 2001, when the SCO was formally created.

✗ **Two-thirds** in UNSC elections is of members **present and voting**, not of the total membership.

✗ **Great Hornbill ≠ Nagaland's State bird** — it is Blyth's Tragopan; the hornbill is Kerala's and Arunachal's.

✗ **Jaipur** houses the largest and UNESCO-listed Jantar Mantar, but **Delhi's (1724)** was the first.

✗ **Nobel 2020** went to **WFP**, not FAO; World Food Day marks **FAO's** founding.

PLACES & PERSONS IN NEWS

Dushanbe: Capital of Tajikistan; venue of SCO CHG, Oct 19–20.

Kisama: Naga Heritage Village near Kohima; Hornbill Festival venue.

Thoothukudi: Tamil Nadu port town; origin of the conversion-quota case.

Ramlila / Burari / CBD Ground: Delhi's alternative protest venues.

Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra: Authored the conversion-reservation judgment.

Sirojiddin Muhriddin: Tajik FM pitching for the UNSC seat.

Emomali Rahmon: President of Tajikistan.

Khalilur Rahman: Bangladesh FM, elected UNGA-81 President.

Surya Kant: Chief Justice of India.

Gyanesh Kumar: Chief Election Commissioner.

Peter Navarro: U.S. trade adviser ("Modi's war").

Lindsey O. Graham: U.S. Senator; Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act.

CONNECT THE DOTS

UNSC ↔ SCO: Rajnath Singh's bilateral with Tajikistan in Dushanbe comes as the two countries face off for the 2028–29 UNSC seat — a ready channel for the quiet diplomacy the op-ed recommends.

DIESEL DEAL ↔ FOOD SECURITY: Energy prices feed into fertiliser, irrigation and freight costs, so sanctions politics and wars (Ukraine, Iran) become a hunger driver — the "economic shocks" and "conflict" named on World Food Day.

JANTAR MANTAR ↔ CONVERSION RULING: Both turn on how a right is balanced — Art. 19 freedoms against public order, and Art. 16(4) benefits against the integrity of the reservation scheme.

HORNBILL ↔ GLOBAL SOUTH: Cultural festivals project soft power under the Act East Policy, complementing India's diplomatic claim to speak for the Global South.

STATIC LINKAGE · FROM NEWS TO SYLLABUS

TODAY'S NEWS	STATIC CONCEPT TO REVISE
Conversion & reservation	Arts. 15(4), 16(4), 340–342A; Constitution (SC) Order, 1950; *Indra Sawhney*
UNSC seat contest	UN Charter Arts. 23, 27, 108; UN regional groups; G4 & UfC on reform
Jantar Mantar denotified	Arts. 19(1)(a), 19(1)(b), 19(3); Art. 239AA; Jai Singh II's observatories
U.S.–Russia diesel deal	Primary vs secondary sanctions; NATO Art. 5; India's energy-import basket
SCO CHG, Dushanbe	Shanghai Five; SCO organs; RATS; India's SECURE vision; Central Asia geography
World Food Day	FAO–IFAD–WFP; NFSA 2013; TPDS & ONORC; Green Revolution; millets
Hornbill Festival	Art. 371A; Morungs; NE festivals; Great Hornbill conservation status

PRELIMS BYTES

129 votes: two-thirds of a full 193-member UNGA — the winning mark for a UNSC seat.

Ismoil Somoni Peak (7,495 m): Tajikistan's highest point, in the Pamirs.

SCO footprint: home to about 40% of the world's population.

Hornbills: India hosts nine hornbill species; the Great Hornbill is the largest.

Sawai Jai Singh II: founded the city of Jaipur in 1727.

FAO HQ: Rome — along with IFAD and WFP, the "Rome-based agencies".

RAPID FIRE · TRUE OR FALSE

1. Art. 16(4) covers admission to educational institutions. — **False** (that is Art. 15(4)/15(5))
2. The SCO Charter came into force in 2003. — **True**
3. India became an SCO observer in 2005. — **True**
4. Non-permanent UNSC members hold a veto. — **False** (only the P5)
5. Delhi's Jantar Mantar has 13 instruments. — **True**
6. Free grain under PMGKAY runs until 2028. — **True**
7. WFP is headquartered in Geneva. — **False** (Rome)
8. Nagaland became a State in 1963. — **True**
9. Kisama is about 12 km south of Kohima. — **True**
10. Tajikistan has served on the UNSC before. — **False** (it seeks its first term)