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Daily News Analysis

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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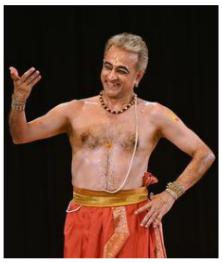
Page 06 : Prelims Exam

The Music Academy, Chennai, has announced its prestigious awards for the 100th Annual Conference and Concerts (2026-2027). Renowned Saraswati veena exponent Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh has been selected for the Sangita Kalanidhi award, while Bharatanatyam dancer Narendra G. will receive the Nritya Kalanidhi award. This year is particularly historic as it marks the centenary of the Academy's landmark sessions.

Veena exponent Jayanthi Kumaresh to receive Sangita Kalanidhi award at Music Academy's 100th Conference

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI



Jayanthi Kumaresh, an exponent of the Saraswati veena, performs in Chennai; and Bharatanatyam dancer Narendra G., who will receive the Nritya Kalanidhi award. B. VELANKANNI RAJ, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The 100th Conference and Concerts of the The Music Academy, Chennai, beginning in December this year, will be marked by the conferment of the Sangita Kalanidhi award on renowned veena player Jayanthi Kumaresh. Bharatanatyam dancer Narendra G. will receive the Nritya Kalanidhi award.

"The executive committee, at its meeting on March 15, decided to confer the award on her and other awards on various musicians," said N. Murali, President of the academy, on Sunday.

Ms. Kumaresh, a member of the musically rich Lalgudi G. Jayaraman family, learnt from her mother, Rajalakshmi. She later trained under her aunt Padmavathi Ananthagopalan and then maestro S. Balachander. She also received guidance from her uncle Lalgudi G. Jayaraman, Sangita Kalanidhi T.K. Brinda, composer Thanjavur Sankara Iyer, and T.R. Subramanian.

A postgraduate in English, Ms. Kumaresh is one of the foremost exponents of the Saraswati veena and has collaborated with the late tabla maestro Zakir Hussain. She has contributed in large measure to the present increase in the popularity of the instrument.

"It is a great honour that I have been selected for the award in the 100th Conference and Concerts of the Academy, whose logo features Saraswati with a veena. It is an honour not just for me, but for the veena, the national instrument," Ms. Jayanthi told *The Hindu*.

She said a veena artiste had been selected for the award after a gap of 34 years, and it was a matter of pride that it had happened in the centenary year of her guru, the late S. Balachander.

The Sangita Kala Acharya awards will go to vocalist Sugandha Kalamegam and mridangam player Thrissur C. Narendran. The recipients of the TTK Awards are nagaswaram player Injikudi Subramaniam and violinist T.K.V.B. Ramanujacharyulu.

The Musicologist Award will go to D. Balasubrahmaniyan, Adjunct Professor of Music and Co-chair of Global South Asian Studies at Wesleyan University. Bharatanatyam dancer A. Janardhanan will receive the Nritya Kala Acharya award, a newly instituted award this year. S. Rajeswari will receive the Dance Musician Award (vocal), and T.K. Padmanabhan the Dance Musician Award (instrumental), the other two new dance awards.

Mr. Murali said the Sangita Kalanidhi-designate would preside over the academic sessions of the Annual Conference and Concerts of the Academy to be held between December 15, 2026 and January 1, 2027. She will receive the award along with the other awardees on January 1, the day of Sadas.

Mr. Narendra will receive the Nritya Kalanidhi award at the inauguration of the 20th Annual Dance Festival of the Academy on January 3, 2027.

1. Sangita Kalanidhi Award: Key Facts

Significance: Considered the "Oscar" of Carnatic music, it is the highest accolade in the field.

Origin: Instituted in 1942, though the Academy itself was born out of the 1927 All India Congress Session in Madras.

Criteria: Awarded annually to an eminent Carnatic musician (vocalist or instrumentalist).

The 2026 Recipient (Jayanthi Kumaresh):

She is the first veena player to receive this honor in 34 years.

The award coincides with the centenary of her guru, the legendary S. Balachander.

She hails from the illustrious Lalgudi G. Jayaraman family.

2. Instrument in Focus: The Saraswati Veena

The UPSC often asks about the technicalities of musical instruments.

Type: A plucked string instrument (chordophone) of the lute family.

Structure: Typically carved from a single log of jackwood. It has 24 fixed frets and 7 strings (4 melody, 3 drone).

Cultural Context: Named after Goddess Saraswati; it is the National Instrument of India and central to South Indian classical music.

3. Other Major Awards (2026)

The Academy also announced several other honors that recognize various pillars of the performing arts:

Award	Recipient(s)	Field
Nritya Kalanidhi	Narendra G.	Bharatanatyam
Sangita Kala Acharya	Sugandha Kalamegam & Thrissur C. Narendran	Vocal & Mridangam
TTK Awards	Injikudi Subramaniam & T.K.V.B. Ramanujacharyulu	Nagaswaram & Violin
Musicologist Award	D. Balasubrahmaniyan	Academic Research
Nritya Kala Acharya	A. Janardhanan	Dance Pedagogy (New Category)

4. Institutional Importance: The Music Academy, Chennai

Founded: 1928.

Historical Link: It emerged as an offshoot of the 1927 Madras Session of the Indian National Congress, aiming to institutionalize and preserve Indian classical arts.

Conference Format: The Sangita Kalanidhi-designate presides over the Academic Sessions, which involve lecture-demonstrations and research discussions on ragas and talas.

Conclusion

The selection of Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh for the 100th Sangita Kalanidhi is a symbolic nod to the Saraswati Veena, an instrument that has seen a resurgence in popularity due to her global collaborations and research.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: With reference to the Sangita Kalanidhi Award, consider the following statements:

1. It is considered the highest honour in Carnatic music.

2. It is awarded annually by the Music Academy, Chennai.

3. It was instituted after the formation of the Music Academy in 1928.

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

Ans: A)

Page 07 : GS III : Environment / Prelims Exam

A recent study by ISRO scientists, published in NPJ Natural Hazards, has identified a new and "under-recognized" threat in the Himalayan region: exposed ice-patch collapses. Analyzing the August 5, 2025, flash flood in Dharali (Uttarakhand), researchers found that the thinning of seasonal snow and the exposure of older ice patches—rather than just traditional Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)—are becoming critical triggers for downstream disasters. This highlights a transitional phase in Himalayan deglaciation driven by global warming.

Ice patches on melting glaciers greater threat than thought: ISRO scientists

Researchers have found that the presence of exposed ice patches on the Srikanta Glacier immediately before the flood in Uttarakhand on August 5, 2025, was a signal of ongoing deglaciation and a direct indicator in the landscape of the likelihood of such floods

Meena Menon

A new study by scientists from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), published in *NPJ Natural Hazards*, examines the August 5, 2025 flash flood that destroyed Dharali village in Uttarakhand and killed six people. It sheds light on how warming temperatures affect glaciers, especially exposed ice patches on retreating glaciers, and highlights the need to monitor glaciers using satellite images to provide early warnings of possible disasters.

The study, titled 'Ice-patch collapse and early-warning implications from a Himalayan flash flood: emerging cryo-hydrological hazards under deglaciation', concludes that the collapse of an ice patch on the glacier above Dharali is linked to deglaciation in the Himalaya.

The authors say the findings could help improve understanding of climate risk and disaster preparedness. The study shows that the flash flood was triggered by the collapse of an ice patch in the nivation area of the Srikanta glacier.

Nivation is defined as the erosion of the ground beneath and around a snow bank, primarily as a result of alternate freezing and thawing. This can form a nivation hollow, which gradually becomes deeper when snow repeatedly accumulates in the same place.

History of extreme events

The study area lies in the upper Bhagirathi river basin in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand. It covers the ridge-to-valley system from the Srikanta glacier to Dharali village, located at a height of 2,650-2,700 m along the Bhagirathi river. The village lies downstream of the glacier-fed Khir Gad stream, which originates from the Srikanta glacier, flows through Dharali, and then joins the Bhagirathi river. The Khir Gad divides Dharali into right- and left-hand bank settlements, increasing its risk of flash floods.

The region has a documented history of extreme events, including the large landslides that brought down massive boulders during the June 2013 Himalayan floods. The researchers used satellite observations, high-resolution topographic analysis, and visual records to reconstruct the sequence of events linking unstable glacier ice to the sudden flood.

The findings expand the range of recognised glacier-related hazards in the Himalaya and identify exposed ice patches as an under-recognised risk from glacier melt.

The Dharali event also shows how instability in the cryosphere can create hazards downstream in high-altitude regions.

The study calls for closer monitoring of glaciers and argues that the focus should extend beyond glacial lake outburst floods (or GLOFs) to include smaller, often overlooked instabilities in the cryosphere. The exposure of ice patches in the Srikanta glacier before the flood represents a transitional state in the snow-ice regime. "Pre-event imagery during the ablation period revealed exposed ice patches on steep north- to northeast-facing slopes, indicating thinning seasonal snow and firn cover consistent with ongoing deglaciation," the authors wrote in the paper.

Such exposure indicates thinning seasonal snow and firn, which is ice that lies between snow and fully formed glacial ice. It usually occurs when warmer conditions reduce the insulating snow layer that stabilises the ice beneath.

Ice patches covered by firn and seasonal snow are relatively resistant to short-term temperature changes whereas exposed ice is more likely to shift or loosen. Because exposed ice responds more quickly to temperature changes or heavy rainfall, it can melt, fragment or collapse more easily, releasing ice, meltwater, and debris that can trigger flash floods.

Therefore, the study finds that the presence of exposed ice patches on the Srikanta Glacier immediately before the floods of August 5 was a signal of ongoing deglaciation and a direct indicator in the landscape that increased the likelihood of such floods.

Satellite observations

Srikanta Glacier is a small- to medium-sized valley glacier with a height of 6,133 m, around 9.8 km upstream of Dharali. The glacier has steep accumulation and ablation zones, seasonal snow cover, and extensive nivation areas. Mountaineering and expedition reports describe unstable ice surfaces, steep slopes, avalanche-prone terrain, and persistent nivation zones beneath the ridge below the Srikanta peak, the paper said.

A key implication of the study is that it shows the value of pre-event satellite observations for early warning. Satellite images showed exposed ice patches persisting in the nivation zone during the ablation period, when the glacier loses ice and snow. This indicated that the seasonal snow and firn cover had thinned.

Studies from other cold regions, including the Canadian Arctic and Greenland, also show that the collapse of ice patches can trigger hazards as glaciers lose more ice and snow due to regional warming.

Identifying nivation hollows

Although rarely reported from the Himalaya, events such as the February 2021 Chamoli rock-ice avalanche demonstrate the growing prominence of cryospheric hazards in deglaciating terrain, the study said. In steep nivation hollows, such instability can suddenly release ice, meltwater, and debris, triggering downslope mass movement and related cryo-hydrological hazards.

The Dharali flash flood illustrates how cryospheric instability can trigger geomorphic changes and create hazards downstream in high-altitude Himalayan regions. The study finds that the rapid disintegration of an exposed ice patch in the nivation zone of the Srikanta glacier was the main cause of the event.

The reconstructed sequence, from the exposure of the ice patch during the ablation period to its disappearance and the resulting downstream impacts, shows how earth-observation data can help identify and reconstruct such extreme events in remote mountain terrain.

"A broader implication of this analysis is the identification of nivation hollows as geomorphologically sensitive zones for cryospheric instability," the authors concluded.

"Persistent snow and ice retention on north- to northeast-facing slopes below the Srikanta ridge created conditions conducive to ice-patch exposure and subsequent failure during the ablation season. Similar settings are widespread across the Himalaya, suggesting that systematic identification and monitoring of such zones should form part of regional hazard assess- ment and disaster-risk reduction strategies in the context of ongoing deglaciation

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A screengrab shows houses being swept away after heavy rains triggered by a cloudburst at Dharali, Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand in August 2025. PTI

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THE GIST

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- Satellite images showed exposed ice patches persisting in the nivation zone during the ablation period, when the glacier loses ice and snow. This indicated that the seasonal snow and firn cover had thinned
- Studies also show that the collapse of ice patches can trigger hazards as glaciers lose more ice and snow due to regional warming
- The study calls for closer monitoring of glaciers and argues that the focus should extend beyond glacial lake outburst floods to include smaller, often overlooked instabilities in the cryosphere

Key Geographical & Technical Concepts

Nivation: The erosion of ground beneath a snow bank through alternate freezing and thawing. This process creates nivation hollows, which act as collection points for snow and ice.

Firn: A transitional state of water between snow and glacial ice. It acts as an insulating layer; when it thins, the underlying ice becomes unstable.

Ablation Period: The period (usually summer) when a glacier loses ice and snow through melting or evaporation.

Cryo-hydrological Hazard: Hazards originating from the interaction of ice (cryosphere) and water (hydrosphere), such as ice-avalanches or slush flows.

Findings of the ISRO Study

The Trigger: The Dharali flood was caused by the collapse of an ice patch in the Srikanta Glacier's nivation area.

The Warning Signal: High-resolution satellite imagery showed exposed ice patches immediately before the event. Normally, these are covered by protective snow/firn. Exposure indicates the landscape is losing its thermal "buffer," making it hypersensitive to temperature spikes and heavy rainfall.

Small-Scale Risks: While GLOFs involve large lakes, this event proves that even small-to-medium valley glaciers and "ice-patches" can trigger catastrophic debris flows if they are on steep, north-facing slopes.

Vulnerability of the Himalayan Region

Geomorphic Sensitivity: The upper Bhagirathi basin is prone to "ridge-to-valley" mass movements.

Climate Change Impact: As temperatures rise, the "insulating blanket" of seasonal snow vanishes faster, leaving brittle ice exposed to solar radiation and liquid rain.

Precedent: The study draws parallels with the 2021 Chamoli rock-ice avalanche, suggesting that the Himalayan cryosphere is becoming increasingly unstable.

Policy and Disaster Management Implications

Shift in Monitoring: Disaster Management authorities must look beyond large glacial lakes. Monitoring must now include nivation hollows and slope stability of smaller ice bodies.

Early Warning Systems (EWS): The study proves that pre-event satellite observations can identify "at-risk" slopes before they collapse. Integrating AI-driven satellite analysis into the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) framework is essential.

Infrastructure Planning: Habitations like Dharali, situated on river banks (Khir Gad stream), need stricter land-use regulations and specialized flood-protection engineering.

Conclusion

The Dharali flash flood serves as a "canary in the coal mine" for the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region. It signifies that deglaciation is not just about receding terminuses, but about the structural failure of the mountain slopes themselves. To safeguard the millions living downstream, India must evolve its "Himalayan Monitoring" strategy from a macro-focus on large glaciers to a micro-focus on fragile ice patches and nivation zones.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: With reference to nivation, consider the following statements:

1. It refers to the erosion of land beneath a snow patch due to freeze–thaw processes.

2. It leads to the formation of depressions known as nivation hollows.

3. It occurs only in tropical regions with heavy rainfall.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

A. 1 only

B. 1 and 2 only

C. 2 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Explain the processes of nivation and ablation in glacial geomorphology. How do these processes influence landscape evolution in the Himalayan region? **(150 Words)**

Page 08 : GS I & II : Social Issues & Justice / Prelims Exam

On March 13, 2026, a Supreme Court Bench led by CJI Surya Kant declined a petition seeking a national law for mandatory menstrual leave. The Court's intervention underscores a critical tension in gender-sensitive policymaking: the balance between acknowledging biological realities and preventing "protective discrimination" from becoming a barrier to women's employment and career progression.

Current Legal & Policy Landscape in India

While there is no central law, several states and institutions have taken "voluntary" steps:

Odisha: Provides one day of additional leave per month for government employees up to age 55.

Kerala: Grants menstrual leave to female students in universities and ITIs.

Karnataka: Issued a government order for one day of leave in both public and private sectors (currently under challenge in the High Court).

Bihar: Has a long-standing policy (since 1992) providing two days of special leave per month.

Arguments Against Mandatory Leave (Judicial & Economic Perspective)

The Supreme Court and economists raise concerns regarding Biological Determinism—the idea that biological differences justify different (and often limiting) social roles.

Concern	Description
Recruitment Bias	Mandatory leave may disincentivize private employers from hiring women to avoid perceived "loss of productivity" or higher "cost of employment."
Career Progression	It could lead to women being passed over for "big responsibilities" or leadership roles due to perceived "unreliability."
The "Motherhood Penalty" Parallel	Much like long maternity leaves without state support, menstrual leave could inadvertently widen the Gender Pay Gap.
Informal Sector Gap	With the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) rising to 41.7% (2023-24), largely in informal/rural sectors, a mandatory law remains unenforceable for those who need support most.

Global Precedents and Lessons

Spain (2023): Hailed as historic, but data shows low uptake due to fear of workplace stigma.

Zambia: Reports of "misuse" have led to friction in workplace dynamics.

Japan/South Korea: Long-standing policies exist, but cultural barriers often prevent women from actually availing the leave.

Proposed Alternatives: Moving Beyond "Leave"

The analysis suggests that "blanket leave" might be a blunt instrument for a nuanced problem. A more holistic approach to Workplace Inclusivity includes:

Flexibility: Utilizing existing sick leave or "work from home" options where feasible.

Infrastructure: Providing free sanitary products, clean washrooms, and private rest areas in all establishments (under the Maternity Benefit Act or OSH Code).

Medical Support: Recognizing specific conditions like Endometriosis, PCOD, and PCOS as valid grounds for medical leave rather than a generic monthly absence.

Stakeholder Consultation: As suggested by the SC, policies must be framed by the government in consultation with women workers, medical experts, and industry leaders.

Conclusion

Mandatory menstrual leave is a well-intentioned policy that risks backfiring in a competitive, profit-driven labor market. To truly empower women, the state must move away from "biological determinism" and toward workplace equity. The focus should be on creating an environment where biological realities are accommodated through infrastructure and flexibility, rather than creating a "compliance burden" that makes women less "employable" in the eyes of the private sector.

Another barrier

Mandatory period leave sans parity in recruitment will hurt women

When considering a measure to address a work-related need, care must be taken to ensure that it does not inadvertently reduce the employee's opportunity to work. This was again made evident on March 13, when a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, refused to entertain a petition seeking a law providing menstrual leave for women workers and students. The Court cautioned that mandatory menstrual leave could unintentionally hinder women's careers and deny them "big responsibilities". Instead, it encouraged "voluntary" initiatives by States. In Odisha, women government employees up to the age of 55 can take an additional day of leave each month, while Kerala grants menstrual leave to female trainees in ITIs and universities. Karnataka issued an order that entitles women in the public and private sectors up to the age of 52 to a day's menstrual leave a month, raising concerns whether private establishments might be disincentivised from hiring women. This government order has been challenged in the High Court. Such changes must come with safeguards, and the top court rightly suggested that the government come up with a menstrual leave policy in consultation with stakeholders – as it had done in 2024 as well.

Many women face debilitating menstrual pain and conditions such as endometriosis, PCOD and PCOS. But the Court's reasoning rests on another, more universal reality: women are already disadvantaged at work, facing systemic barriers such as unequal pay. In this context, mandatory menstrual leave could become a form of biological determinism, limiting opportunities, pay and promotions for women. In countries where menstrual leave policies exist, they are either poorly enforced or are not opted for by most women. In Spain, legislation enacted in 2023, and hailed as "... historic ... for feminist progress", saw few women exercising the right a year later. In Zambia, some women said it was being misused. In India, the female Labour Force Participation Rate rose from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24, driven largely by rural women entering work due to distress, insecure employment and unpaid household work. In this context, a blanket menstrual leave policy could be counterproductive: many women cannot afford to lose workdays, and in informal jobs, it may also be unenforceable. Providing free sanitary products and medicines at workplaces and allowing time off under existing leave provisions would be a way forward. That would be an acknowledgement of biological realities without turning such well-intentioned but poorly thought-out initiatives into yet another barrier to women's participation.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: With reference to menstrual leave policies in India, consider the following statements:

1. India currently has a national law mandating menstrual leave for all working women.

2. Bihar provides special leave for women during menstruation in government service.

3. Odisha provides an additional day of leave per month for women government employees.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

A. 1 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 2 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: The Supreme Court has suggested that menstrual leave policies should emerge from stakeholder consultation rather than judicial mandates. Critically examine. **(150 Words)**

Page 09 : GS II : Indian Polity / Prelims Exam

The recent Supreme Court judgment regarding Harish Rana, a patient in a Persistent Vegetative State (PVS) for 13 years, marks a significant moment in India's constitutional jurisprudence. By allowing the withdrawal of Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH), the Court has reaffirmed that the Right to Life (Article 21) is not merely about biological survival but encompasses the Right to Die with Dignity.

On the right to die with dignity

Satvik Varma

is a senior advocate in New Delhi. With inputs from Shantanu Parmar, advocate

On an evening in 2013, 20-year-old Harish Rana fell from the fourth floor of his PG accommodation and sustained critical injuries. His condition confined him to a bed while tubes kept him on life support. Owing to his Persistent Vegetative State (PVS), he responded to no stimuli around him and was largely nursed by his parents, with frequent visits to the hospital. Mr. Rana's closest friends and family, who fondly describe him as energetic and exuberant, were faced with the agonising pain of witnessing his stasis. His parents, along with the doctors, devoted 13 years in tending to Mr. Rana, but no improvement was seen. Confronted with such despairing circumstances, the parents moved the Supreme Court to withdraw life support, so that nature can be allowed to take its course. What followed was a pivotal discourse on the import of life under Article 21 of our Constitution.

A respectable death

The Constitution's tryst with 'Right to Life with dignity' was first laid down in *Gian Kaur vs State of Punjab* (1996) where the Supreme Court held that 'life' under Article 21 included the right to live with dignity. However, in *Gian Kaur*, the Court opined that Article 21 did not include the right to die.

Fifteen years later, a similar case reached the Supreme Court when a young Aruna Shanbaug, owing to a brutal sexual assault, was left in PVS. Pinki Virani, journalist, and human-rights activist, petitioned the Supreme Court as Aruna's friend for withdrawal of her life support. Although under its own circumstances, Virani's plea was rejected, it culminated in the crucial decision of *Aruna R. Shanbaug vs Union of India* (2011). The Supreme Court drew sustenance from foreign legal frameworks and recognised passive euthanasia in cases of patients with terminal illness and undergoing prolonged, but ineffective treatment. Guidelines were framed to bridge the legislative gap, until Parliament promulgated on the subject. Additionally, the Law Commission in 2006 and 2012, entered into an in-depth examination of the above-detailed issues and made extensive observations. It reported that withholding life support from terminally ill patients should not attract criminal liability if done in pursuance of the "best interest of the patient."

The watershed moment on the subject was the 2018 Constitution Bench's decision in *Common Cause vs Union of India*. Armed with developing jurisprudence on the subject, the Supreme Court unequivocally recognised and permitted the withdrawal/withholding of medical treatment to fall within Article 21. The right of refusal of medical treatment was held to be a manifestation of dignity intersecting with privacy, autonomy, and self-determination. This judgment provided extensive guidelines and underwent certain modifications in a similarly titled 2023 decision. These are now cumulatively referred to as the 'Common Cause guidelines', which rest on two core principles: first, that the intervention in question must qualify as "medical treatment"; and second, that its withdrawal must be strictly in the patient's "best interest."

The Supreme Court embedded various safeguards to prevent misuse and a detailed procedure involving opinions of primary and secondary Medical Boards prior to undertaking such decisions. The legislative void was once again highlighted by the Court and one Judge expressed the "pious hope" for legislative intervention. This hope still lingers.

Case evaluation

The Harish Rana chronicle has now reached its end with the intervention by the Supreme Court. Speaking through two judges, who authored separate but concurring judgments, the Court allowed the withdrawal of life support from Mr. Rana under the Common Cause guidelines. Since he relied on Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH), the first question which required consideration was whether CANH qualified as 'medical treatment.' To answer this, the Court noted that the administration of CANH requires careful and experienced medical supervision. Since such skills are only available by drawing upon medical knowledge, and owing to its continuous periodic evaluation, emergency medical management and supervision, it was held to be 'medical treatment.' The second question was whether the withdrawal of CANH from Mr. Rana was in his best interests. It held that 'best interests' must be envisaged from the lens of the stakeholders, who are the next of kin and medical boards. It was rightly opined that a doctor's duty to perform treatment continues till it is capable of "conferring some therapeutic benefit." When recovery is impossible, the continuation of treatment merely prolongs biological existence de-hors any benefits. It led to the sole conclusion – withdrawal of treatment which was noted to be in Mr. Rana's best interests.

A definitive end

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause." Through his prose, the Bard cautioned that hesitation about death stems from the uncertainty of what comes after. However, what is definitive is that the ones who pass-on tend to live through us. Harish Rana will soon die. Yet, his contributions will forever be etched in history and in our constitutional jurisprudence.

And so, the advancement of constitutional morality is not only circumscribed to legislative actions which reach the country at large. It is also through addressing uncomfortable issues that advance the cause for humanity, even if they concern just an indiscernible minority.

The right of refusal of medical treatment was held to be a manifestation of dignity intersecting with privacy, autonomy, and self-determination

Legal Evolution: From Gian Kaur to Common Cause

The journey of passive euthanasia in India has been defined by four landmark judicial interventions:

Case	Year	Key Ruling/Outcome
Gian Kaur vs. State of Punjab	1996	Held that "Right to Life" includes "Right to Dignity," but rejected the "Right to Die."
Aruna Shanbaug vs. Union of India	2011	Recognized Passive Euthanasia for the first time. Allowed withdrawal of life support under strict judicial supervision.
Common Cause vs. Union of India	2018	A Constitution Bench declared the Right to Die with Dignity a Fundamental Right. Recognized "Living Wills" (Advance Medical Directives).
Common Cause (Modification)	2023	Simplified the procedural guidelines for the Medical Boards to make the process more practical.

Key Legal Principles in the Harish Rana Case

The Court addressed two technical but vital questions to allow the withdrawal of life support:

- **CANH as 'Medical Treatment':** The Court clarified that Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (tubes for food and water) requires expert medical supervision and evaluation. Therefore, it qualifies as "medical treatment" that can be legally withdrawn.
- **The 'Best Interest' Test:** When a patient is in PVS with no hope of recovery, the Court ruled that a doctor's duty to treat ends if there is no "therapeutic benefit." Prolonging biological existence without any quality of life was deemed contrary to the patient's best interest.

Active vs. Passive Euthanasia: A Critical Distinction

It is crucial to distinguish between the two:

- **Passive Euthanasia (Legal in India):** Withdrawing or withholding medical treatment (like ventilators or CANH) that allows a terminally ill patient to die in the natural course.
- **Active Euthanasia (Illegal in India):** The intentional act of causing death by administering lethal substances (e.g., a lethal injection).

Ethical and Governance Challenges

- **The Legislative Void:** Despite repeated "pious hopes" expressed by the Supreme Court, the Indian Parliament has yet to enact a comprehensive law on euthanasia. Currently, the field is governed solely by judicial guidelines (Common Cause guidelines).

The Role of Medical Boards: The process requires a Primary Medical Board (at the hospital) and a Secondary Medical Board (including a district-level officer) to concur. This remains a cumbersome process for many families.

Constitutional Morality: The author emphasizes that the law must address the needs of an "indiscernible minority"—those in PVS—to truly advance the cause of humanity.

Conclusion

The Harish Rana case closes a painful chapter for a family while opening a clearer path for Indian law. It moves the focus of Article 21 from quantity of life to quality of life. However, the continued absence of a formal statute creates a "chilling effect" where doctors may fear criminal liability despite judicial protection. A legislative framework is now essential to provide clarity, prevent misuse, and ensure that "dignity in death" is a reachable reality for the terminally ill.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The concept of "Living Will" (Advance Medical Directive) allows a person to:

A. Donate organs after death

B. Decide medical treatment in case they become incapable of expressing consent in the future

C. Transfer property after death

D. Choose the hospital for future treatment

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: "Article 21 protects not only the right to live but also the right to die with dignity." Discuss in the context of recent Supreme Court judgments on passive euthanasia. **(250 Words)**

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In March 2026, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) initiated two separate investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 against India and several other trading partners. These probes target "excess manufacturing capacity" and "forced labor practices." Coming on the heels of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that limited the President's tariff powers, these investigations are widely viewed as a strategic maneuver to create a legal "pathway" for the re-imposition of high tariffs.

Why is the U.S. investigating India?

What allegations has the U.S. made on excess capacity and forced labour? How do the two Section 301 investigations relate to the current U.S. tariff regime? What issues are the U.S. investigating and why do industry experts see them as a pathway to new tariffs?

EXPLAINER

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

The story so far:
Over the last week, the U.S. government has launched two investigations against India and several other countries in a bid to find some form of actions or policies that "are unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce". These investigations will likely take a few months, but could eventually result in the return of tariffs.

What is the current situation on tariffs?
The U.S. Supreme Court on February 20 ruled against the validity of U.S. President Donald Trump's use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to levy reciprocal tariffs on America's trade partners. For India, these reciprocal tariffs had been 50% from August 2025 to February 6, 2026, after which Mr. Trump reduced them to 25%.

Following the court's decision, Mr. Trump imposed a 10% tariff on imports from all countries for a period of 150 days under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. He threatened to increase this to 15%, but has not done so.

However, he said the U.S. would use other sections of the Trade Act to levy additional tariffs.

What was the first investigation?
On March 11, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) said it had initiated investigations against 16 economies, including India, to see whether these economies were using excess manufacturing capacity to export to the U.S. in a manner that was hurting American businesses.

The order for investigation under Section 301(b) of the Trade Act included specific allegations against the economies named – China, the European Union, Singapore, Switzerland, Norway, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Mexico, Japan, and India.

GETTY IMAGES

In India's case, the U.S. said the country had a bilateral trade surplus with it of $58 billion in 2025. Indian government data, however, shows that India had a merchandise trade surplus of $42.2 billion with the U.S. over this period.

"India's global goods trade surplus sectors include textiles, health, construction goods, and automotive goods," the U.S. order said. "For example, evidence suggests the solar module sector is plagued by excess capacity, including that India's current module manufacturing is nearly triple annual domestic demand."

It added that India has created "significant excess capacity" in petrochemicals, steel, and other industries.

What is the second investigation about?
A day later, the USTR announced the launch of a fresh investigation, this time on 60 countries, including India. The fresh investigation was to look into whether these countries had taken "sufficient steps" to prohibit the import of goods produced with forced labour and how the "failure to eradicate" these practices impacts U.S. workers and businesses.

This investigation, too, was under Section 301(b) of the Trade Act of 1974.

Why is Section 301(b) significant?
Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 is aimed at addressing unfair foreign practices affecting U.S. businesses. Notably, according to the website of the USTR, "Section 301 may be used to respond to unjustifiable, unreasonable, or discriminatory foreign government practices that burden or restrict U.S. commerce".

According to trade and industry experts, this "response" that has been allowed in the law is the pathway through which the Trump administration could once again levy tariffs on imports from other countries once the 150-day window for his current 10% expires.

"While its [the investigation's] impact on India's exports will be clear only after the investigation concludes, it seems the move is aimed at imposing a new tariff once the 150 days for the 10% global tariff expires," Pankaj Chadha, chairman of the Engineering Exports Promotion Council of India, said.

How did the Indian government respond?
So far, it has not responded publicly. In contrast, the European Union has already spoken strongly about it.

"We will be seeking further clarity from the U.S. on how the opening of this section 301 investigation would interact with" the EU-U.S. agreement signed last year, European Commission spokesman Olof Gill said. "The commission would respond firmly and proportionately to any breach of the joint statement commitments," he added.

How have Indian industries responded?
Mr. Chadha said that this fresh development comes over and above the existing tariffs that the steel, aluminium, auto, and auto components sectors still have to pay. The U.S. has implemented a separate 50% tariff on the import of these goods, including from India, which continues even after the Supreme Court's order.

Similarly, the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry has said that the recent developments add further uncertainty to the textiles and apparel sector, which it said is already under significant stress due to the developments in West Asia and a lack of clarity over how the U.S. tariff situation will unfold.

Ravi Sam, the Vice Chairman of industry body Texprocil, however, said there is no need for panic as these investigations will be long, drawn-out processes and will not have any immediate impact. This sentiment was echoed by trade expert and former Director General of Foreign Trade Ajay Srivastava as well.

THE GIST

- The U.S. has launched two investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 against India and other economies to examine practices that may be 'unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce'.
- One probe examines whether countries, including India, are using excess manufacturing capacity to export to the U.S. in a manner that hurts American businesses, while another looks at whether countries have taken 'sufficient steps' to prohibit imports of goods produced with forced labour.

The Current Tariff Context

To understand these investigations, one must look at the recent legal volatility in U.S. trade policy:

The Supreme Court Blow: In February 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to levy reciprocal tariffs.

The 10% Stopgap: To circumvent this, President Trump used Section 122 of the Trade Act (intended for balance-of-payment emergencies) to impose a 10% blanket tariff for 150 days.

The Goal: Since the Section 122 tariffs are time-limited, the Section 301 investigations act as a bridge to justify new, permanent tariffs once the 150-day window expires.

Analysis of the Two Investigations

A. Excess Capacity (Targeting 16 Economies)

The U.S. alleges that India and others are over-producing goods to "dump" them in the American market, harming domestic U.S. industries.

India Specifics: The U.S. highlights a bilateral trade surplus ($58 billion by U.S. estimates) and specifically names the Solar Module sector, claiming India's production is triple its domestic demand.

Sectors at Risk: Textiles, Steel, Petrochemicals, and Automotive goods.

B. Forced Labour (Targeting 60 Economies)

This investigation examines whether trading partners have failed to "sufficiently prohibit" goods produced via forced labor.

The Impact: Under Section 301, "failure to eradicate" such practices can be deemed an "unreasonable" trade practice that burdens U.S. commerce.

Economic Diplomacy: This allows the U.S. to frame trade barriers as ethical/human rights issues, making it harder for countries to challenge them at the WTO.

Understanding "Section 301(b)"

Section 301 is a powerful tool in the U.S. trade arsenal because it allows the USTR to:

Investigate foreign government acts that are "unreasonable or discriminatory."

Negotiate to eliminate the practice.

Retaliate by imposing duties or import restrictions if negotiations fail.

Expert View: Industry leaders like those from the Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) see these probes not as genuine inquiries into labor or capacity, but as a predetermined legal foundation to justify new tariffs.

Impact on Indian Industry

The investigations have created a climate of "Trade Uncertainty," affecting key sectors:

Steel & Aluminum: Already facing separate 50% tariffs that survived the Supreme Court ruling.

Textiles: Facing double pressure from these probes and supply chain disruptions in West Asia (Red Sea crisis).

Solar Energy: India's ambition to become a global solar hub faces a direct challenge if the U.S. (a major market) blocks modules under the "excess capacity" tag.

Conclusion

The U.S. is transitioning from "emergency" tariffs to "rule-based" protectionism. By using Section 301, the U.S. administration is attempting to institutionalize trade barriers under the guise of protecting its workers from unfair foreign competition and ethical lapses. For India, this necessitates a two-pronged strategy: robustly defending its labor laws and capacity stats at the USTR hearings, while accelerating the diversification of its export markets to reduce "U.S.-dependency.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: In the context of international trade, "dumping" refers to:

A. Exporting goods at prices lower than their normal value or domestic price

B. Destroying surplus goods in international markets

C. Imposing import quotas on foreign goods

D. Exporting only environmentally friendly products

Ans: A)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: "Trade wars are increasingly shifting from tariffs to regulatory and ethical standards." Examine this statement with reference to investigations on excess capacity and forced labour in global supply chains. **(250 Words)**

Building India's climate resilience with water at the core

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Branded the "COP of Implementation," COP 30, the 30th session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025, marked a decisive shift in how adaptation is understood – not as an abstract promise of resilience, but as a measurable, accountable discipline grounded in systems that function under stress. At the centre of this shift is 'water', moving from the margins of infrastructure planning to the core of climate survival. For the first time, global adaptation indicators integrated water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) into climate accountability, reshaping the water-food-climate nexus with implications for all countries, including India.

Climate change felt through water

Climate change is experienced most viscerally through water. Floods submerge cities, droughts hollow out rural economies, glacial melt destabilises Himalayan river systems, saline intrusion contaminates coastal aquifers, and erratic monsoons disrupt food security. Agriculture alone accounts for roughly 40% of anthropogenic methane emissions, with rice cultivation, livestock systems, and organic waste at the centre of the challenge. So, water use efficiency, wastewater reuse, aquifer recharge, and resilient sanitation systems are now climate strategies as much as development priorities.

The 59 Belém Adaptation Indicators, under the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, signal a new discipline in global governance. Two clusters stand out. The first focuses on climate-resilient water and sanitation systems: reducing climate-induced water scarcity, building resilience to floods and droughts, ensuring universal access to safe drinking water, and upgrading sanitation infrastructure to withstand extreme events. The second emphasises risk governance: universal multi-hazard early warning systems by 2027, strengthened hydrometeorological services, and updated national vulnerability assessments by 2030. Water security is no longer about asset creation; it is about whether systems continue to deliver when climate stress intensifies.

Guided by the Belém indicators, India can set an example for the Global South by making water systems resilient

Not starting from scratch

India is building on existing foundations. The consolidation, in 2019, of water governance under the Ministry of Jal Shakti marked a shift toward integrated stewardship, while the Water Vision 2047 aligns with Belém's adaptation framework, emphasising sustainability, equity, and resilience.

Groundwater management illustrates this transition. The evolution of the National Aquifer Mapping and Management (NAQUIM) Programme 2.0 has moved from mapping aquifers to implementing aquifer-level management plans (hydrogeological knowledge to policy action), exemplifying the systems integration that global adaptation indicators now require.

River rejuvenation tells a similar story. The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has moved beyond sewage treatment to integrate biodiversity, digital monitoring, and international collaboration, making clean rivers a buffer against climate volatility.

Despite visible progress, three systemic risks threaten to slow momentum. First, water scarcity remains acute and unevenly distributed. Most climate disasters in India are water-related, and WASH systems often serve as the first line of defence. Ensuring rural and urban water supply during floods or prolonged droughts would require climate stress testing of infrastructure, diversification of sources, and redundancy in service delivery – not simply expanding coverage figures.

Second, adaptation finance remains fragile. While global rhetoric speaks of mobilising $1.3 trillion annually by 2035, operational pathways remain uncertain. Without predictable and accessible flows of adaptation finance, post-disaster recovery will crowd out long-term resilience planning. Water projects need explicit classification and funding as climate investments, not mere sectoral costs.

Third, digital fragmentation persists. Despite India's vast hydrological and meteorological data, an Artificial Intelligence-driven real-time integration into planning, budgeting, and local governance systems remains limited.

A closer look at India's institutional landscape reveals that most global adaptation targets already have corresponding domestic missions. Drinking water coverage, sanitation expansion, irrigation efficiency, urban water reforms, and climate action plans exist across Ministries and States. Climate stress indicators must be embedded into mission dashboards.

Belém calls for convergence, not reinvention. India's strength in digital public infrastructure offers an opportunity to integrate hydrological data, crop advisories, insurance and financial flows into interoperable platforms for real-time decision-making.

Belém indicators guide climate survival

The Belém indicators are not a bureaucratic checklist; they are a dashboard for survival. If implemented with seriousness, they can transform adaptation from a peripheral conversation into the organising principle of development strategy. India stands at a pivotal moment. Its domestic water reforms, technological capabilities, and community-led initiatives position it not just as a participant in global climate negotiations but also as a potential leader in operationalising adaptation at scale.

Water must anchor climate action. Implementation must be swift, equitable, and technologically robust. Resilience should be measured not by infrastructure built, but by systems that continue to serve people when the next flood arrives, when the next drought lingers, and when the next climate shock tests the nation's preparedness. India has much of the blueprint in place. India should align its missions, metrics and money quickly enough to convert ambition into measurable resilience – and in doing so, lead the Global South by its exemplary performance.

GS Paper III : Environment

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question: "Water is the medium through which climate change is most viscerally felt, yet it remains under-prioritized in adaptation finance." In light of the COP 30 Belém Adaptation Indicators, discuss the shifts required in India's water governance to ensure long-term climate resilience. **(250 Words)**

Context :

The COP 30 (Belém, Brazil, November 2025) has been hailed as the "COP of Implementation." It marked a fundamental shift by placing water at the heart of global climate adaptation. For the first time, the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience integrated 59 specific indicators, moving Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) from the margins of infrastructure to the core of climate accountability. For India, this represents a transition from "asset creation" to "systemic resilience."

The Water-Climate Nexus

Climate change in the Indian subcontinent is primarily experienced as a hydrological crisis. The article identifies five visceral "water-stress" points:

Urban Flooding: Submerging cities and destroying infrastructure.

Rural Droughts: Hollowed-out agrarian economies.

Glacial Melt: Destabilizing the Himalayan river systems (e.g., the Srikanta Glacier collapse).

Saline Intrusion: Contaminating coastal aquifers due to rising sea levels.

Methane Emissions: Agriculture (rice and livestock) contributes ~40% of anthropogenic methane, linking water management directly to mitigation.

The Belém Adaptation Indicators: A New Global Discipline

The 59 indicators under the UAE Framework focus on two critical clusters that India must now align with:

Cluster	Focus Areas
System Resilience	Reducing scarcity, flood/drought-proofing WASH systems, and ensuring universal access to safe water during extreme events.
Risk Governance	Universal Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems (MHEWS) by 2027 and updated vulnerability assessments by 2030.

India's Institutional Readiness

India is not starting from scratch; several domestic missions already align with the Belém framework:

Ministry of Jal Shakti (2019): Integrated water governance under one umbrella.

Water Vision 2047: A long-term roadmap emphasizing sustainability and equity.

NAQUIM 2.0: Shifting from mere mapping to active Aquifer Management Plans (Hydrogeological action).

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG): Evolved from sewage treatment to using rivers as "climate buffers" through biodiversity and digital monitoring.

Critical Gaps & Systemic Risks

Despite progress, three "bottlenecks" remain for India:

Uneven Distribution: Scarcity is acute; coverage figures (quantity) often mask the lack of climate stress-testing (reliability during disasters).

Fragile Adaptation Finance: While the global goal is $1.3 trillion annually by 2035, actual flows are uncertain. Water projects are still treated as "sectoral costs" rather than "climate investments."

Digital Fragmentation: India has vast data but lacks AI-driven real-time integration across local governance and budgeting platforms.

Way Forward: The "Convergence" Strategy

The analysis suggests that India does not need to reinvent the wheel but rather converge its existing missions:

Embed Stress Indicators: Mission dashboards (Jal Jeevan, SBM) should track resilience, not just physical completion.

Leverage Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI): Use India's tech prowess to integrate hydrological data with crop advisories and insurance flows.

Climate Stress Testing: Infrastructure must be built with redundancy to ensure service delivery doesn't snap during the "next flood."

Conclusion

Belém has turned adaptation from an abstract promise into a measurable discipline. For India, water security is now synonymous with national security and climate survival. By aligning its "missions, metrics, and money," India can move beyond being a participant in climate talks to becoming a leader of the Global South, demonstrating how a water-stressed nation can build a climate-resilient future.