



THE HINDU



## GS Paper 2-IR

# India, Qatar elevate ties to strategic partnership

Modi, visiting Emir of Qatar discuss possibility of a bilateral FTA, and West Asian developments; both sides sign double taxation avoidance pact, agree to deepen relations in trade and security

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

**Q**atar, a major energy supplier to India, on Tuesday signed an agreement to elevate India-Qatar relationship to the level of a strategic partnership, officials here said.

The Ministry of External Affairs announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the visiting Emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, discussed multiple issues, including the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict in the Gaza Strip. Both sides are also exploring



**Warmer ties:** Narendra Modi with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, in New Delhi on Tuesday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ing at deepening cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, energy, security as well as in the regional

avoidance treaty.

"India and GCC are negotiating about having an FTA. Both India and Qatar

India-GCC FTA continues.

The Indian side also said that the strategic partnership would have a security component, though a clear timeline for such a process was not articulated.

### Bilateral trade

A total of 38 Qatari entities representing retail, finance, and energy sector participated in the deliberations where the two sides resolved to double bilateral trade to \$28 billion.

The visit also presented a challenge for both sides, as Purnendu Tiwary, an ex-Indian Navy commander, remains in Qatari custody



## KEY POINTS

- India and Qatar signed an agreement on February 18, 2025, to elevate their relationship to a strategic partnership. The partnership aims to strengthen cooperation in trade, investment, energy, security, and international forums.
- Discussions covered issues like the Israel–Palestinian conflict, with both sides presenting their positions.







THE HINDU



## GS Paper 2-Governance

# What is the 'rarest of rare' doctrine?

What was the sentence meted out to the accused in the R.G. Kar Medical College case and the Sharon murder case? How were they different from each other? Is the death penalty constitutionally valid? In what circumstances can the death sentence be given and does judicial discretion play a part in it?

### EXPLAINER

Smruti S.

#### The story so far:

**I**n January 22, two separate murder convictions resulted in sharply contrasting verdicts, highlighting how the Indian courts apply the death penalty. While one case led to capital punishment, the other saw the accused sentenced to life imprisonment, reigniting questions about the judiciary's approach to the 'rarest of rare' doctrine, which till now does not have a statutory definition.

#### What were the cases?

On August 9, 2024, a second-year female postgraduate trainee doctor, who was on duty, was raped and murdered inside a seminar room at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital. Sanjay Roy, a civic volunteer, was arrested and convicted on January 20, based on forensic evidence linking him to the crime. During sentencing, the Additional district and sessions judge said, "this doesn't fall into the category of rarest of rare" crimes, and Roy was sentenced to life imprisonment with a fine.

In contrast, the Sharon murder case, did invite the death penalty, the courts decided. Sharon Raj, a 23-year-old student from Kerala, was poisoned on October 14, 2022 by his partner, Greeshma, who



**In rage:** Junior doctors raise slogans in protest against the alleged rape and murder of a woman medic at the R.G Kar Medical College and Hospital, in Kolkata, on October 30, 2024. PTI

sentence puts an end to all fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 19 and, therefore, the law with regard to the capital sentence is unreasonable and not in the interest of the general public. He also pointed out that judges have no clear

stage, there were no clear guidelines on when the death penalty should be used, which meant judges had wide discretion to decide.

In 1980, the Supreme Court in *Bachan Singh versus State of Punjab*, established

is committed in an extremely brutal and dastardly manner so as to arouse extreme indignation within the community, b) motive of the murder; when the murder is committed for a motive which reveals total depravity, c) socially abhorrent nature of the crime; that is when a murder occurs of someone belonging to a minority community and is committed not for personal reasons but in circumstances which arouse social wrath, d) magnitude of the crime, and e) personality of the offender; when the victim of murder is a child, a helpless woman, a person rendered helpless by old age or infirmity etc.

#### Were there any revisions?

Despite the framework set in *Machhi Singh versus State of Punjab*, the Supreme Court in 1983, in *Mithu versus State of Punjab*, struck down Section 303 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which prescribed mandatory death penalty for anyone who commits murder while serving a life sentence. The court ruled that it was against Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution. Hence, all the cases regarding murder shall be dealt with as per Section 302 of the IPC which says whoever commits murder shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to a fine.

In September 2022, the Supreme Court, referred to a Constitution Bench on the question of how to provide a "meaningful, real and effective" hearing

### THE GIST

On January 22, two separate murder convictions resulted in sharply contrasting verdicts, highlighting how the Indian courts apply the death penalty.

The debate on the discretion given to judges to award the death sentence dates back to 1972, when the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the death penalty in *Jagmohan Singh versus State of U.P.*

In 1980, the Supreme Court in *Bachan Singh versus State of Punjab*, established the 'rarest of rare' doctrine. A five-judge Bench heard the case, and held that the death penalty should be used only in exceptional cases. However, it did not embellish what the 'rarest of rare' meant, leading to further confusion.



## KEY POINTS

- Two murder cases led to contrasting verdicts, highlighting the application of India's "rarest of rare" doctrine for the death penalty.
- The doctrine's origins go back to 1980, when the Supreme Court in Bachan Singh set the framework for the death penalty's application. The Court identified five criteria for "rarest of rare," including brutality, motive, social abhorrence, magnitude, and victim vulnerability.





In 1983, the Court struck down the mandatory death penalty in *Mithu v. State of Punjab*. Recent debates, including a 2022 referral to a Constitution Bench, aim to clarify the application of mitigating circumstances.







THE HINDU



GS Paper 2-Governance

# Government obliged to consider remission of eligible convicts: SC

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in a judgment on Tuesday declared that appropriate governments must consider the premature release of

the grant of premature release under Section 432 of the Criminal Procedure Code or [the corresponding provision of] Section 473 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, it is the obligation of the



## KEY POINTS

The Supreme Court ruled that governments must proactively consider the premature release of convicts once they become eligible, without waiting for an application from the convict or their family.







THE HINDU



## GS Paper 3-Economy

# Slight dip in unemployment rate in urban areas: survey

The rate of unemployment for persons of age 15 and above is at 6.4% for the period of October to December 2024, says the Periodic Labour Force Survey; Gujarat has the lowest rate at 3%

A.M. Jigeesh  
NEW DELHI

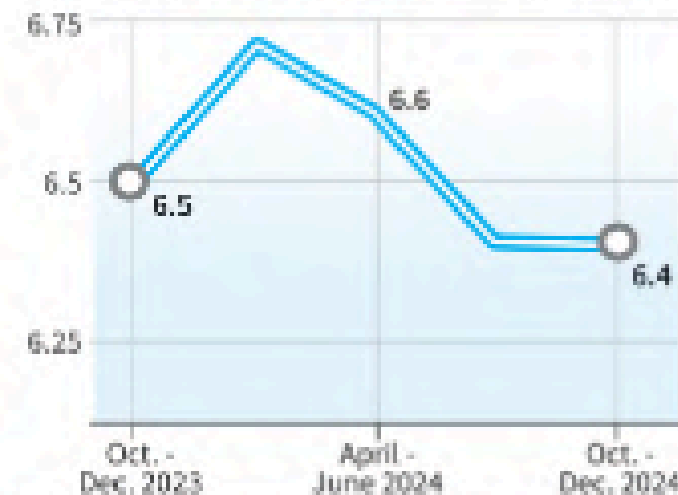
**T**he unemployment rate in urban areas of the country was 6.4% for the period of October to December in 2024 for persons of age 15 and above, says the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) released by the Statistics and Programme Implementation Ministry here on Tuesday.

For men, the unemployment rate was 5.8%, and for women, 8.1%.

In 2023, during the corresponding quarter, the unemployment rate for the

### Faint glimmer

The chart shows the unemployment rate (in %) in urban areas for persons of age 15 years and above



Source: MOSPI



**Seeking prospects :** Job seekers participating in a job mela in Hyderabad. NAGARA GOPAL

persons in the labour force in current weekly status (CWS) — the number of

respectively. The PLFS was done among 1,70,487 people in 15,074 households

status in employment such as self-employed, regular employees, employees



## KEY POINTS

The urban unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 and above in October–December 2024 was 6.4%, slightly down from 6.5% in 2023. Men had a rate of 5.8%, and women 8.1%. Himachal Pradesh had the highest unemployment rate at 10.4%, while Gujarat had the lowest at 3%. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was 39.6%, with women at 20%.







THE HINDU



## GS Paper 3-Environment

# India prepares to submit updated greenhouse gas inventory to UN

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

India is in the final stages of preparing its first ever Biannual Transparency Report (BTR), part of its commitment as a signatory to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, Environment Ministry officials told *The Hindu*.

This report will be India's official position on its greenhouse gas emissions inventory, key sectors and sources, and steps taken to improve energy efficiency use, as well as the transition to renewable energy sources and the availability of required resources.



The Biannual Transparency Report is part of a commitment made at COP-21, but countries started submitting it only by 2024. FILE PHOTO

view by independent, non-Indian, UNFCCC-accredited experts. The UNFCCC, or the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is the core agreement on which rest

UNFCCC's 21st Conference of Parties (COP), held in Paris in 2015, in a bid to increase transparency.

However, it was only at the 2024 COP in Baku that countries actually began

"The main feature of the upcoming BTR submission is that it will have data up to 2022. In the BUR, the data submitted reflected the emissions inventory of 2020. The other aspect is that this will be reviewed by an external set of experts," a Ministry official, who declined to be identified, told *The Hindu*.

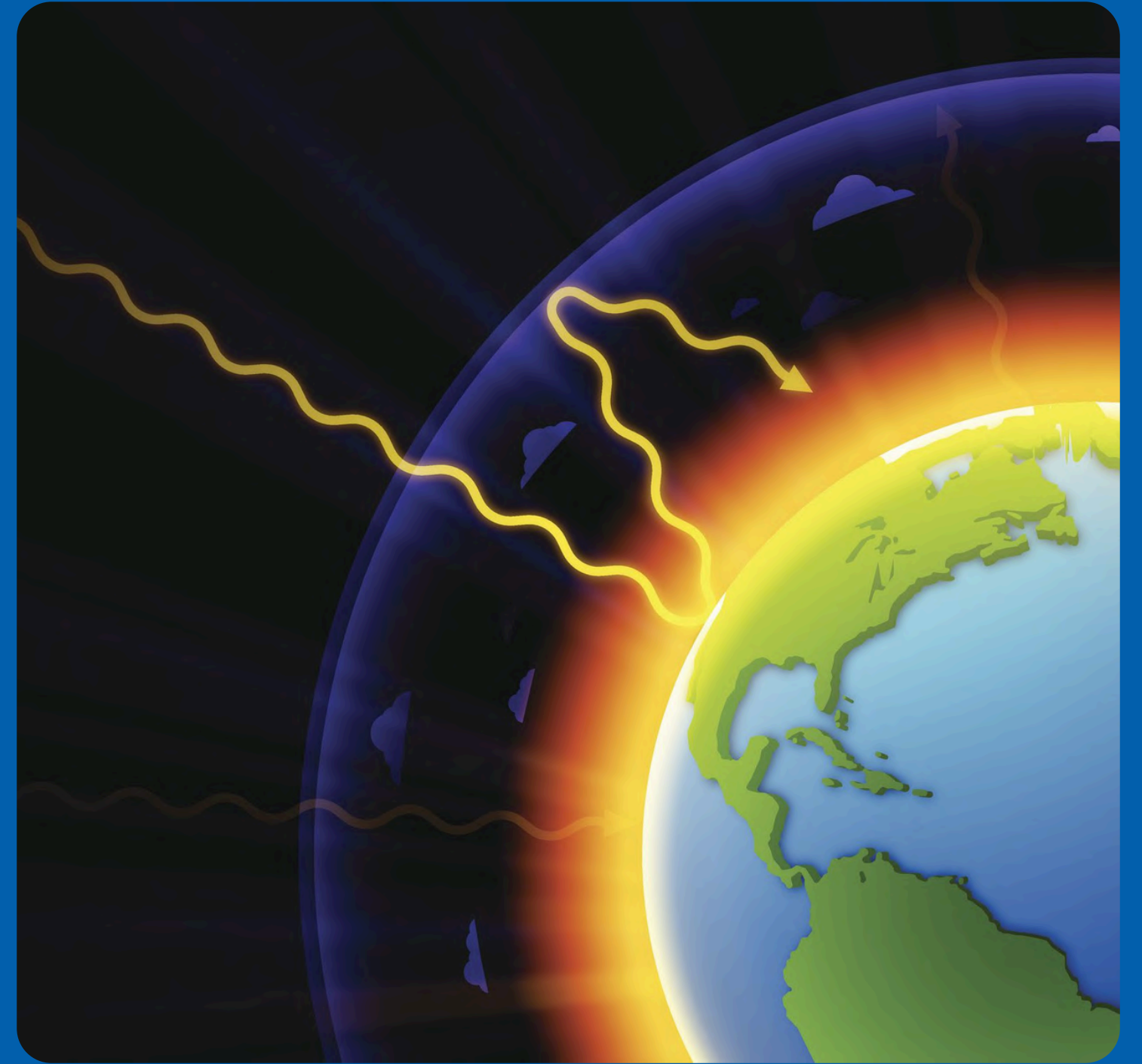
In its latest BUR, India reported that in 2020, its total GHG emissions fell 7.93% from 2019. "One of the factors was a reduction in energy consumption due to COVID-19 induced lockdowns. The forthcoming BTR is likely to show an increase in total emissions,





## KEY POINTS

- India is finalizing its first Biannual Transparency Report (BTR) as part of its Paris Agreement commitment. The BTR will detail India's greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency, and renewable energy transition, and will be reviewed by independent UNFCCC experts. India's global emissions share remains 4–5%, with per-capita emissions much lower than the global average.







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# GS Paper 3-Science and Tech

Ministry of Science & Technology



## Thermal structure of solar coronal holes and their magnetic fields unveiled

Posted On: 18 FEB 2025 4:27PM by PIB Delhi



## KEY POINTS

- A study by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics has accurately measured the thermal and magnetic properties of solar coronal holes. These holes, which emit fast solar wind, affect space weather, satellite operations, and the Indian monsoon.







## GS Paper 2-Governance

**Centre Launches Naksha Pilot Program To Revolutionize Land Records, Support Farmers: Agriculture Minister**





## KEY POINTS

1. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan launched the National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey–Naksha pilot program in Madhya Pradesh, aimed at providing secure access to land records and reducing disputes.

