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Time: 45 Min

Date: 23-03-2026

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SUPREME COURT PUSH FOR PRISON REFORMS

Context

- The Supreme Court of India has directed all States and Union Territories to submit updated and comprehensive data on prison conditions, in a suo motu case on inhuman conditions in prisons.
 - “Prisons/persons detained therein” is a ‘State-list’ subject as per **Entry 4** of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India.

Directions Issued by the Supreme Court

- The Court has directed States to **specify both ongoing and proposed measures** to address overcrowding.
- It has also emphasized the need to **ensure education, healthcare, and welfare of children** living with incarcerated mothers.
- The Court has directed States to **provide details of sanctioned staff strength**, vacancies, and steps taken for recruitment.

Existing Issues in Indian Prisons

- Overcrowding:** As per the **Prison Statistics India 2023** report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India’s prisons operated at an average occupancy rate of **120.8%**.
- Undertrial Crisis:** The high proportion of undertrial prisoners reflects delays in investigation and trial processes, which undermines the principle of justice.
- Poor Infrastructure and Hygiene:** Many prisons face challenges like inadequate ventilation, sanitation, and access to healthcare. Such conditions fail to meet international norms and are often cited as grounds to deny extradition.
- Lack of Classification:** There is **no separate category of detention facilities** for economic offenders, foreign nationals, or high-risk fugitives.
- Reports from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), have highlighted cases of **custodial violence, delayed medical attention, and limited legal access**, further weakening India’s position in international courts.

Committees on Prison Reforms

- A. N. Mulla Committee:** Formally the **All India Committee on Jail Reforms (1980–83)** recommended Separation of undertrial prisoners

from convicts and improvement of prison conditions, nutrition, and sanitation.

- Justice Amitava Roy Committee:** It recommended decongestion of prisons, speedy trials and legal aid reforms and use of technology for prison management.
- Krishna Iyer Committee:** It advocated for separate jail facilities for women to prevent exploitation.

Judicial Interventions

- Hussainara Khatoun v. State of Bihar:** The Supreme Court held that the right to a speedy trial is a fundamental right under Article 21.
- In State of Rajasthan vs. Balchand,** the Supreme Court of India, established the foundational legal principle that “bail is the rule and jail is the exception,” reinforcing Article 21 regarding personal liberty.

Measures taken for Prison Reforms

- The State Legal Services Authorities** have established Legal Service Clinics in jails, who provide free legal assistance to persons in need.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs** had prepared a **‘Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act’ in the year 2023.**
 - The Model Act has appropriate provisions for reformation, rehabilitation and integration of prisoners in the society.
 - It also has provision for **‘Welfare Programs for Prisoners’ and ‘After-Care and Rehabilitation Services’**, as an integral part of institutional care.

Way Ahead

- Technology Integration:** Digital prison management systems must be implemented for better record-keeping, monitoring, and transparency.
 - Video conferencing must be expanded to facilitate court hearings and reduce delays.
- Social reintegration of prisoners:** Prison systems must prioritize vocational training and skill development programmes to enhance employability of inmates after release.
- Strengthening Legal Aid:** Legal aid mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure timely and effective representation for prisoners, particularly undertrials and economically weaker sections.

Source: TH

IS COMPULSORY VOTING FEASIBLE IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT?

Context

- Recently the Chief Justice of India made the observation that India may need to explore a mechanism for **compulsory voting** to enhance voter participation and strengthen democratic engagement.

Right to Vote in India

- Article 326** of the Indian Constitution provides that every citizen of India, not less than **18 years of age** is entitled to be registered as a voter for Elections to the House of the People and Legislative Assembly of every State on the basis of **adult suffrage**.
- However, voting is a **statutory right**, not a fundamental right (as held by the Supreme Court of India in various judgments).

What is Compulsory Voting?

- Compulsory voting mandates citizens to participate in elections, failing which penalties may be imposed.
- It is practised in over **20 countries** including;
 - Australia:** Fines for non-voters; turnout consistently above 90% since 1924
 - Belgium:** Oldest system (1893); turnout often 85–90%
 - Brazil:** Mandatory for 18–70 age group.
- Indian Experience:** Gujarat became the **first state** to introduce compulsory voting in local bodies through the **Gujarat Local Authorities Laws (Amendment) Act, 2009**; however, the Gujarat High Court stayed its implementation, highlighting legal concerns.

Arguments in Favour of Compulsory Voting

- Improves Voter Turnout:** The Law Commission of India (255th Report, 2015) observed that compulsory voting can increase turnout by around **7% on average**.
- Enhances Democratic Legitimacy:** Prevents governments from being elected by only a minority of voters.
- Promotes civic duty:** Encourages citizens to treat voting as a democratic responsibility, reinforcing active participation in governance.
- Reduces money power:** With higher and more uniform turnout, dependence on costly voter

mobilisation campaigns declines, curbing the influence of money in elections.

Arguments Against of Compulsory Voting

- Violation of Fundamental Freedom:** Forcing voting may violate **Article 19(1)(a)** (freedom of expression, including right not to vote).
- Practical Challenges in India:** With a vast electorate (~96+ crore voters), along with high internal migration and logistical constraints, enforcing compulsory voting is difficult.
- Risk of Random/Invalid Voting:** Compulsory voting may increase invalid or random votes, as unwilling voters may select candidates arbitrarily just to comply, potentially distorting electoral outcomes and raising concerns about democratic legitimacy.
- Harsh Penalties Not Suitable:** Denial of services (as in Peru) or fines may be disproportionate in Indian socio-economic conditions.

Expert & Committee Views

- B. R. Ambedkar** rejected the compulsory voting idea during debates on the Representation of the People Bill (1951).
- The **Dinesh Goswami Committee** opposed compulsory voting citing **implementation challenges**.
- Law Commission of India** (255th Report): Effective only with strict penalties, hence not suitable for India.

Way Forward

- Strengthen awareness:** Expand voter education through Election Commission of India initiatives like SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation).
- Improve accessibility:** Ensure better transport, more polling booths, and convenient polling holidays.
- Enable migrant voting:** Scale up remote voting solutions for internal migrants.
- Leverage technology:** Use secure digital tools for wider and safer participation.
- Boost urban turnout:** Target low-participation urban areas with focused engagement strategies.

Conclusion

- While compulsory voting can increase participation, it is neither feasible nor desirable in India due to constitutional, administrative, and socio-economic constraints.

- The focus should be on incentivising voluntary participation and strengthening democratic awareness, rather than enforcing participation through coercive measures.

Source: TH

ALIGNING INDIA'S ACCOUNTING EDUCATION WITH GLOBAL STANDARDS

Context

- India's increasing integration into the global financial system has created demand for professionals proficient in international accounting frameworks such as IFRS and U.S. GAAP.

Background

- **International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)** is a globally accepted accounting framework developed by the **International Accounting Standards Board (IASB)** and is followed by over 140 countries.
- **US Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (US GAAP)** is a rules-based framework primarily developed and maintained by the **Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB)** and used by companies operating or listed in the United States.
- **India follows Ind AS**, which are largely converged with IFRS but include certain modifications to suit domestic regulatory and economic conditions.
 - ♦ As a result, full harmonisation with global standards has not yet been achieved.

Accounting as a Global Financial Language

- Standardised accounting systems ensure **comparability, transparency, and efficiency** in global business operations.
- **India as a Global Finance Hub:**
 - ♦ India hosts around **55% of Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**, reflecting its growing role in global financial services.
 - ♦ GCCs contribute over **\$64 billion** in India's exports, expected to reach **\$110 billion by 2030**.
 - ♦ GCC workforce in India is projected to reach **3.46 million by 2030**, adding nearly **1.3 million jobs**.

Gap in Commerce Education in India

- Commerce education in India is predominantly theoretical and examination-oriented. Students

have limited exposure to **real-world financial statements** prepared under global standards.

- Commerce graduates exhibit an employability rate of around **62.81%**, indicating a skills mismatch.
 - ♦ Inadequate skill alignment can reduce India's attractiveness as a global outsourcing and finance hub.

Need for Curriculum Reforms

- **Bridging the Academia-Industry Gap:** Curriculum must align with industry expectations by integrating global accounting practices.
- **Enhancing Human Capital:** Skill-oriented education is essential to harness India's demographic dividend and service sector growth.
- **Supporting Global Integration:** Harmonisation with international standards will facilitate cross-border mobility of professionals and businesses.

Way Ahead

- India should adopt a **hybrid accounting education model** that integrates domestic and global frameworks.
- Regulatory bodies such as ICAI and universities should periodically update curricula in line with industry needs.
- Emphasis should shift from exam-centric learning to **application-based education**.

Source: TH

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: FROM COMPLIANCE TO CONSCIENCE

Context

- The recent resignation of part-time chairman of HDFC Bank, Atanu Chakraborty citing "ethical incongruence" has reignited debate on personal vs professional ethics, transparency, and corporate governance in India's financial sector.

Ethics in Corporate Governance

- Corporate Governance refers to the **system of rules, practices, and processes** by which a company is directed and controlled.
- Ethics in governance goes beyond legality to include **integrity in decision-making, accountability to stakeholders, transparency in disclosures and fairness in operations**.
- **Ethical governance** ensures that organizations act not just within the law, but in alignment with moral values and stakeholder trust.

Key Ethical Dimensions

- **Personal Ethics vs Professional Obligations:** Individuals in leadership roles may face **value conflicts between their personal moral beliefs and the organizational practices** they are expected to follow.
 - ♦ Ethical leadership requires that individuals uphold integrity even at personal cost. This **reflects virtue ethics**, as advocated by **Aristotle**, which emphasizes character, integrity, and moral courage over mere rule-following.
- **Ethics Beyond Compliance:** Legal compliance represents the minimum standard of acceptable behaviour for organizations. The absence of wrongdoing does not necessarily imply the presence of ethical conduct, as actions may still fall short of moral expectations.
- **Transparency and Trust Deficit:** Lack of clarity in decision-making or sudden exits can create uncertainty among stakeholders and erode investor confidence.
 - ♦ Ethical governance requires timely, accurate, and complete disclosure of all relevant information to maintain trust.
- **Role of Independent Directors:** Independent directors act as neutral watchdogs and their effectiveness depends on their ability to raise concerns without fear.
 - ♦ This resonates with the idea of institutional integrity highlighted by **Kumar Mangalam Birla Committee**, which emphasized the role of independent directors in strengthening governance standards in India.

What are the broader implications?

- **Institutional Integrity:** Ethical lapses, even when only perceived, can damage the credibility of institutions and adversely affect financial stability.
- **Public Trust:** Financial institutions rely heavily on the trust of depositors and investors for their smooth functioning.
 - ♦ **Ethical ambiguity can weaken this trust** and create long-term reputational risks.

Way Ahead

- **Institutionalizing Ethics:** Organizations should adopt codes of conduct, establish ethics committees, and strengthen whistleblower protection mechanisms.
- **Empowering Independent Oversight:** Functional autonomy of board members must be ensured so that they can perform their roles effectively and independently.

- **Strengthening Ethical Culture:** Organizations should promote value-based leadership and embed ethical principles into their decision-making processes.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

GENERIC SEMAGLUTIDE

Context

- The entry of generic versions of Semaglutide in India has reduced prices significantly, improving affordability for patients with Type 2 Diabetes and obesity.

About Semaglutide

- Semaglutide is a **GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1) receptor** agonist used for;
 - ♦ Glycaemic control in diabetes.
 - ♦ Weight management in obese patients.
- It works by **enhancing insulin secretion and reducing appetite** and slowing gastric emptying.
- It is often described as a **weight-loss breakthrough drug**, leading to rising demand beyond clinical indications.

What are Generic Medicines?

- A generic medicine is a medication created to be the same as an already marketed brand-name drug in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, and performance characteristics.
- It contains the same active ingredient as the brand-name version and works in the body the same way to provide the same clinical benefit.

Source: TH

CONSUMER JUSTICE REPORT 2026

Context

- Recently, the **India Justice Report's (IJR)** released the **'Consumer Justice Report 2026: Assessing Capacity of Redressal Commissions in India'**.

About 'Consumer Justice Report 2026'

- It is a first nationwide assessment of **consumer dispute redressal system capacity under Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.
- It evaluates states **using indicators** across budget, infrastructure, human resources, workload, and gender diversity etc.

Key Highlights of Report

- **Top Performing States:** Andhra Pradesh (1st), followed by Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, West Bengal.

- ♦ It reflects **institutional capacity, efficiency, and disposal rates** in consumer dispute redressal systems.

Large and mid-sized states

State	Consumer Justice Rank
Andhra Pradesh	1
Madhya Pradesh	2
Rajasthan	3
Karnataka	4
West Bengal	5
Haryana	6
Tamil Nadu	7
Assam	8
Uttarakhand	9
Uttar Pradesh	10

Small states

State	Consumer Justice Rank
Meghalaya	1
Sikkim	2
Himachal Pradesh	3
Goa	4
Nagaland	5
Mizoram	6
Tripura	7
Arunachal Pradesh	8
Manipur	9

High Vacancies:

- ♦ **State Commissions (SCDRCs):** About 50% President posts vacant; and about 40% Member posts vacant.
- ♦ **District Commissions (DCDRCs):** About 32% President vacancies; and about 39% Member vacancies.
- **Huge Pendency of Cases:** About **35% cases pending for more than 3 years** (violates 5-month disposal mandate);
- **Poor Gender Representation:** Only **2 states (Delhi & Sikkim)** had women presidents; and only **3 SCDRCs had a woman president in the last 5 years.**
- **Sector-wise Complaints:** Most complaints related to **Insurance (25.1%); Housing (18.7%); and Banking (8.7%)** in State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (SCDRCs).
 - ♦ **Housing** dominates at **national commission level (44%)**

Three-Tier System:

- ♦ **District Commission (DCDRC):** Deals with cases up to **₹1 crore** (latest revised limits may apply); **first point of complaint** (original jurisdiction);
- ♦ **State Commission (SCDRC):** Appeals & higher-value cases;
- ♦ **National Commission (NCDRC):** Apex body (New Delhi);
- These are **quasi-judicial bodies** designed for **speedy justice and accessibility.**

Key Features of Consumer Protection Act, 2019

- **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):** It regulates unfair trade practices. It can recall products, impose penalties, and ban misleading ads.
- **E-Filing System: e-Daakhil portal** enables online complaint filing, fee payment, and case tracking.
- **Mediation Mechanism: Consumer Mediation Cells** attached to commissions; and promotes **out-of-court settlement.**
- **Covers E-Commerce:** Includes online platforms (Amazon, Flipkart, etc.); Rules for transparency, refunds, and grievance officers.

Consumer Redressal in India

- It is governed by the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (replaced 1986 Act)** with objectives to protect consumer rights, and provide **simple, speedy & inexpensive redressal.**

Source: TH

ANTI-DUMPING PROBE INTO ETHYL CHLOROFORMATE

Context

- Recently, India has initiated an **anti-dumping investigation** on **imports of Ethyl Chloroformate** from China, following **allegations of unfair pricing** harming domestic industry.

About Dumping & Anti-Dumping

- Dumping** is exporting goods at a price lower than the normal value (domestic price or cost of production).
- Anti-dumping duty** is a protectionist tariff imposed to **counter unfair trade practices**.
- It is governed by **WTO's Anti-Dumping Agreement and Customs Tariff Act, 1975 in India**.
 - WTO does **not prohibit dumping**, but allows countries to act if it causes *material injury*.

Additional Information

- Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)** functions under the **Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
 - It acts as the **'designated authority'** for implementing WTO-compliant trade remedies in India.
 - It investigates whether dumping exists, and extent of **injury to domestic industry**.
 - If proven, recommends **anti-dumping duties** to the government.
- Ethyl Chloroformate**: Organic intermediate; Used in Pharmaceuticals; and Agrochemicals.

Source: TH

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES)

Context

- Recently, the **Supreme Court of India** has **dismissed a petition** alleging violation of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (**CITES**) parameters.

About Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

- It is a **legally binding agreement** aimed at ensuring that **international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival**.

- It does **not ban trade completely**, but regulates it through a system of permits and classifications.
 - Signed: 1973 (Washington Convention)**
 - Entered into force: 1975**
 - Administered by:** UNEP (Secretariat in Geneva)
 - Parties:** 180+ countries; India is a member
 - Nature:** Binding on countries, but implementation via national laws;
- Institutional Structure: Conference of Parties (CoP):** Highest decision-making body (meets every 2–3 years)
 - Secretariat:** Geneva
- Working of CITES:** CITES regulates trade through **permits & certificates system, scientific and management authorities** in each country.

Three Appendices

- Appendix I:** Species **threatened with extinction; Trade allowed only in exceptional cases;**
 - Example: Tiger, Elephant (certain populations), Rhino
- Appendix II:** Species **not immediately threatened**, but may become so; **controlled trade allowed.**
 - Example: Many timber species, marine species (e.g., sharks)
- Appendix III:** Species protected in at least one country; other countries help regulate trade.

India & CITES

- India is a **signatory since 1976**; Implemented via **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**;
- Key Authorities:** MoEFCC (Management Authority); Wildlife Institute of India (Scientific Authority).

Source: TH

NILGIRI TAHRS

Context

- The Chokramudi hills near Munnar in Idukki (Kerala) have now transformed into a thriving natural habitat for the **Nilgiri tahr**.

About Nilgiri Tahr

- Description:** A stocky mountain goat (Nilgiritragus hylocrius) with short, yellowish-brown fur, and the state animal of Tamil Nadu.
- Habitat and Distribution:** Endemic to a 400 km stretch of the Western Ghats, primarily across Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

- **Diet:** A herbivore feeding on over 120 species of grasses, herbs, and shrubs.
- **Threats:** Key threats include habitat loss (deforestation, plantations, hydroelectric projects), competition with domestic livestock, and hunting.
- **Conservation Status:** Listed as Endangered (IUCN Red List) and protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

Do you Know?

- The Nilgiri tahr is the **state animal of Tamil Nadu**, and Eravikulam National Park hosts the largest surviving population and highest density of the species.



Source: TH

INQUIRY AND PROSECUTION WING OF LOKPAL

In News

- A Parliamentary Standing Committee has sought details on the **operationalisation of inquiry and prosecution wings provision** in the **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act 2013**, highlighting delays even after a decade of enactment.

About Lokpal

- **Status & Mandate:** Statutory anti-corruption body (Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013). It became functional in 2019. Mandated to inquire into corruption allegations against public functionaries.
- **Structure:** Consists of a Chairperson (former CJI, former SC Judge, or eminent person) and eight Members (four Judicial). At least 50% of Members must be from SC/ST/OBC/Minorities/women.

- **Appointment & Term:** Appointed by the President based on the recommendation of a selection committee chaired by the Prime Minister. The term is 5 years or until 70 years of age.
- **Jurisdiction:** Covers current or former PM, Union Ministers, MPs, and Union Government officials (Groups A, B, C, D). Also includes heads and members of bodies funded by Union/State or receiving foreign contributions over 10 lakh.
- **Powers:** It has powers to superintendence over and to give direction to the CBI. Can refer complaints against Central government servants to the CVC.
- **PM Exemptions:** Cannot inquire into allegations against the PM regarding international relations, security, public order, atomic energy, or space. Initiation of a PM inquiry requires consideration by the full Lokpal bench and approval by at least 2/3rds of the members.

Inquiry Wing	Prosecution Wing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 11 of the Act mandates to constitute an inquiry wing (to be headed by a Director of Inquiry) for conducting a preliminary inquiry into corruption-related offences. • The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice noted that the appointment of the director of inquiry and staffing of the inquiry wing is still in process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 12 of the Act obligates the Lokpal to constitute a Prosecution Wing (headed by a Director of Prosecution) for the purpose of prosecution of public servants in relation to any complaint by the Lokpal. • The Prosecution Wing was formally constituted in June 2025. • At present, prosecution functions are largely handled by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Source: TH