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Judicial discipline or overreach? Supreme Court's rebuke of a HC judge raises questions

NEWS ANALYSIS

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court's recent chastisement of an Allahabad High Court judge for an "absurd" order raises two questions: can the top court act as an "elder brother" to High Courts and if "institutional concerns affecting rule of law" give the top court authority to intervene in the exclusive "master of roster" powers of the Chief Justice of a State High Court?

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan found an order by the High Court judge Justice Prashant Kumar so "erroneous" that it directed the

Chief Justice of the High Court, Arun Bhansali, to pair him with a "seasoned senior judge" in a Division Bench. The Supreme Court further directed that Justice Kumar should not be assigned a criminal roster till he demitted office.

The two directions, part of an August 4 order, were objected to by the Allahabad High Court lawyers, who wrote to the Chief Justice.

Justice Pardiwala's Bench modified the August 4 order on Friday after receiving a letter from Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai to reconsider the two directions.

The six-page order by the Supreme Court Bench said it had never meant, by passing the now deleted di-



rections, to challenge the power of Chief Justice Bhansali as "master of roster" of his High Court.

"We fully acknowledge that the Chief Justice of a High Court is the master of the roster. Our directions are absolutely not interfering with the administrative power of the Chief Justice of the High Court. When matters raise institutional

concerns affecting the rule of law, this court may be compelled to step in and take corrective steps," the Supreme Court order read.

The August 8 order explained that when the "dignity of the institution is imperiled, it becomes the constitutional responsibility of this court (Supreme Court) to intervene".

Exclusive authority

However, the Supreme Court's own judgment in 2004 in the case of *Tirupati Balaji Developers* show that though the Supreme Court is "elder brother" to High Courts in matters of administration of justice, the top court does not have "any power of superintendence" over the High Courts.

Besides, repeated judgments have undisputedly confirmed the exclusive authority of a High Court Chief Justice to master his court's roster.

The top court had found the "master of roster" dictum essential to maintain judicial discipline and decorum, especially after four senior top court judges convened an unprecedented press conference in January 2018, insinuating selective allocation of "sensitive" cases by the then Chief Justice of India.

A Full Bench of the Madras High Court in *Mayavaram Financial Corporation Ltd* case of 1991 had opined that the Chief Justice possessed the "inherent power" to allocate the judicial business of the High court.

Prelims:

Concepts: Master of Roster, Rule of Law, Judicial Discipline, Judicial Overreach

Mains:

GS-II (Polity & Governance) – Structure, organisation, and functioning of the judiciary; judicial accountability; independence of judiciary

Context

Recently, the Supreme Court criticised an Allahabad High Court judge for passing an "absurd" order and removed him from handling criminal cases. This incident sparked debate on whether the SC can intervene in the master of roster powers of a High Court Chief Justice — seen by some as judicial discipline and by others as judicial overreach.



Key Terms

Master of Roster: Exclusive authority of the Chief Justice of a court to allocate judicial work and decide which judge hears which case.

Judicial Discipline: Maintaining order, respect, and adherence to constitutional boundaries, precedents, and institutional hierarchy within the judiciary.

Judicial Overreach: Judiciary exceeding its constitutional role and interfering in legislative, executive, or other courts' internal powers.

Rule of Law: All individuals and institutions are subject to the law, applied equally and fairly.

Two landmark rulings were cited:

- **Tirupati Balaji Developers (2004):** SC may guide High Courts as an “elder brother” but has no power of superintendence.
- **Mayavaram Financial Corporation (1991):** Chief Justice of a High Court has inherent power to decide the roster and allocate judicial work

Which of the following are regarded as the main features of the “Rule of Law”?

1. Limitation of powers
2. Equality before law
3. People’s responsibility to the Government
4. Liberty and civil right

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 4 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

(2018)



India has set an example in lion conservation: Minister

The rise in population of Asiatic lion shows India's intimate relationship with nature and wildlife, says Bhupender Yadav; praises 'coexistence' of the pastoralist Maldhari community and big cats

Abhinay Deshpande
AHMEDABAD

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Sunday said the rise in the Asiatic lion population in Gujarat reflected India's intimate relationship with nature and wildlife.

"India has given a commitment to the world to work for nature's conservation through the rehabilitation of wildlife," Mr. Yadav said at a World Lion Day function at Timbdi village in the Barda Wildlife Sanctuary in Devbhumi Dwarka district of Gujarat.

As per the census conducted in May, the estimated population of Asiatic lion has increased to 891 from 674 five years ago.

"The growth of India's lion population since 1889 (when the last Asiatic lions were seen) shows our intimate relationship with nature and wildlife," Mr. Yadav said.

He said the resolution made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year to boost Gujarat's lion population and develop the Barda Sanctuary as a new habitat had been fulfilled.

Mr. Yadav said climate change had brought chal-



Increased count: As per the 2025 census, the estimated population of Asiatic lion increased to 891 from 674 five years ago. VIJAY SONEJI

lenges such as heavy rain and cyclones.

To address these, Mr. Modi had initiated multiple global efforts such as the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the International Solar Alliance.

"In addition, the International Big Cat Alliance has been established. Conservation work has been undertaken for five of the seven big cat species found in India. Asiatic lions are only found in India, and that too in Gir, and Gujarat gets 100% of the pride for

their conservation," he said.

The Minister praised the unique bond between the pastoralist Maldhari community and lions as a model of coexistence.

"If one wants to see the example of wildlife conservation, they should visit Gir, observe the work of the State government, and witness the lifestyle of the Maldhari and other local communities," he said.

Mr. Yadav said the number of tiger reserves in India had risen to 58 from 47 during Mr. Modi's tenure,

and they host 70% of the global tiger population. Snow leopard conservation efforts continue, with their population in India currently at 714.

On cheetah reintroduction, he said, "Bringing African cheetahs to India was a challenge, but we successfully rehabilitated them."

He also mentioned ongoing projects such as Project Lion, Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Project Dolphin, and Project Great Indian Bustard, which are reinforcing India's conservation leadership.

Mr. Yadav said two more species of big cats – jaguar and puma – are found in Latin America, and quoted Mr. Modi's call for global cooperation in conserving all seven big cat species found across 97 countries, especially in Africa and Asia, through knowledge sharing, artificial intelligence, and technology.

CM launches projects

On the occasion, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel launched 11 eco-development projects worth ₹189 crore, including a new safari park, interpretation centre, and breeding centre at Barda.

Prelims (Env & Ecology): Asiatic Lion Conservation Project, IBCA

Mains (GS-III/GS-II): Case study for biodiversity conservation, eco-tourism benefits, global environmental diplomacy via IBCA, South-South cooperation.

Summary:

Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav highlighted the rise in the Asiatic lion population in Gujarat—from 674 (five years ago) to 891 (2025 census)—as proof of India's intimate relationship with nature and wildlife. Speaking at World Lion Day celebrations in Barda Wildlife Sanctuary, he credited conservation efforts and the coexistence of the pastoralist Maldhari community with big cats.

India hosts 70% of the global tiger population, is progressing in snow leopard conservation (current population 714), and has successfully rehabilitated cheetahs. Other major initiatives include Project Lion, Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Project Dolphin, and Project Great Indian Bustard. He emphasised climate change challenges such as heavy rain and cyclones and global partnerships like the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the International Solar Alliance.



The number of tiger reserves in India increased from 47 to 58 during PM Modi's tenure. Yadav also noted that all seven big cat species are found across 97 countries, stressing the importance of global cooperation through knowledge sharing, AI, and technology.

Objectives:

- Global cooperation in big cat conservation.
- Knowledge-sharing, research, technology use.
- Combat wildlife crime and illegal trade.
- Promote eco-tourism and sustainable livelihoods.

Maldhari Community

- **Who:** Traditional pastoralists of Gujarat, mainly in Gir forest region.
- **Livelihood:** Cattle rearing, milk production.
- **Role in Conservation:** Coexist with Asiatic lions; grazing practices impact lion habitat; involved in eco-tourism and community-based conservation.

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

- **Launch:** 2023, India-led, HQ in New Delhi.
- **Founding Members:** Open to 97 big cat range countries
- **Covers:** Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma.

How Gaza war delayed IMEC, India's key connectivity plan



BASHIR ALI ABBAS

LAST WEEK, India's National Security Council Secretariat hosted officials from the United States, UAE, Saudi Arabia, France, Italy, Germany, Israel, Jordan and the European Union to discuss progress on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

Expected to cut shipping time from India to Europe by about 40% compared with the Red Sea route, IMEC is an ambitious idea that can potentially change the map of global shipping. But progress has been limited.

An ambitious idea

The IMEC was announced during the G20 Summit in New Delhi in 2023 "to stimulate economic development through enhanced connectivity and economic integration between Asia, the Arabian Gulf, and Europe."

The IMEC comprises two corridors. Its eastern leg will carry container traffic

from India's western ports to the UAE, from where high speed freight railway will carry goods across the Arabian peninsula (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan) upto Haifa port in Israel. The second leg will see cargo being shipped from Haifa to ports in Greece and Italy, from where Europe's well-established train networks will take goods to their final destinations across the continent.

The EU is India's largest trading partner with bilateral trade in FY 2023-24 at \$137.41 billion. Non-oil trade between India, the UAE and Saudi Arabia has increased significantly in recent years.

The IMEC, however, is meant to be more than a trade corridor. Its implementing partners were to lay cables for "electricity and digital connectivity", pipes for "clean hydrogen export", to "increase efficiencies, reduce costs, enhance economic unity, generate jobs, and lower greenhouse gas emissions."

From the perspective of trade facilitation and accessibility, the IMEC was meant to address several issues, including no corridor-wide tariff standardisation and low financial integration among corridor partners, lack of corridor-wide insurance, and widely differing port and rail capacities.

Born during peace...

In September 2023, during India's G20



Presidency, the IMEC's conceptualisation and agreement was a testament to a remarkable period of stability in the Middle East.

Years of conflict along ideological and geopolitical lines (Qatar-GCC, Iran-Saudi Arabia, Arab states-Israel) had given way to normalisation agreements and rapprochements that prioritised economic growth.

The Arab normalisation with Israel, which Saudi was set to join, was yielding enough geo-economic gains for Arab states to overlook the Palestine question and perhaps even explore minilateral arrangements with Israel (on the lines of the I2U2

with India).

This rare geopolitical window allowed India and its partners to envision a new economic corridor that would reap benefits across the board.

But soon after the IMEC was announced, the Middle East was plunged into an unprecedented conflict that continues till date. The intended stakeholder meeting never happened.

...hindered by war

The single most important challenge for the IMEC is Israel's increasingly unpopular

war on Gaza, which has killed at least 61,000 people so far.

After all, the IMEC's cornerstone is the 'Middle East-Europe' connection.

But unlike in 2023, Jordan-Israel relations are presently at a significant low, and are worsening due to the Israeli-American push for Jordan to absorb more of the Palestinian population.

Similarly, the potential for Saudi Arabia-Israel normalisation is much lower today than in 2023. Riyadh has doubled down on the need for Israeli concessions towards Palestine while Israel's appetite to concede a Palestinian state is at a historic low.

The IMEC has directly suffered as a result of Israel's seemingly endless war.

For instance, while the Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping (which carries the bulk of Europe's trade) vindicated the need for the IMEC as a more secure alternative, the expansion of Israel's war (into Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and with Iran) bodes high insurance premiums for any trade transiting the region.

That said, the corridor remains vital for Israel, for whom it represents the pinnacle of its economic integration into a region where it has historically fought for acceptance and recognition.

Future up in air

While the western leg of the corridor is unlikely to materialise in the near future, the IMEC's eastern leg benefits from the strategic partnerships that India has forged with the Arab states, most notably the UAE and Saudi Arabia. These partnerships have already yielded several instruments to bolster connectivity. Both Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, for instance, allow using UPI for fund transfers and remittance payments.

In the long term, however, for the IMEC to be realised in its originally envisioned form, a secure and stable Middle East is an imperative.

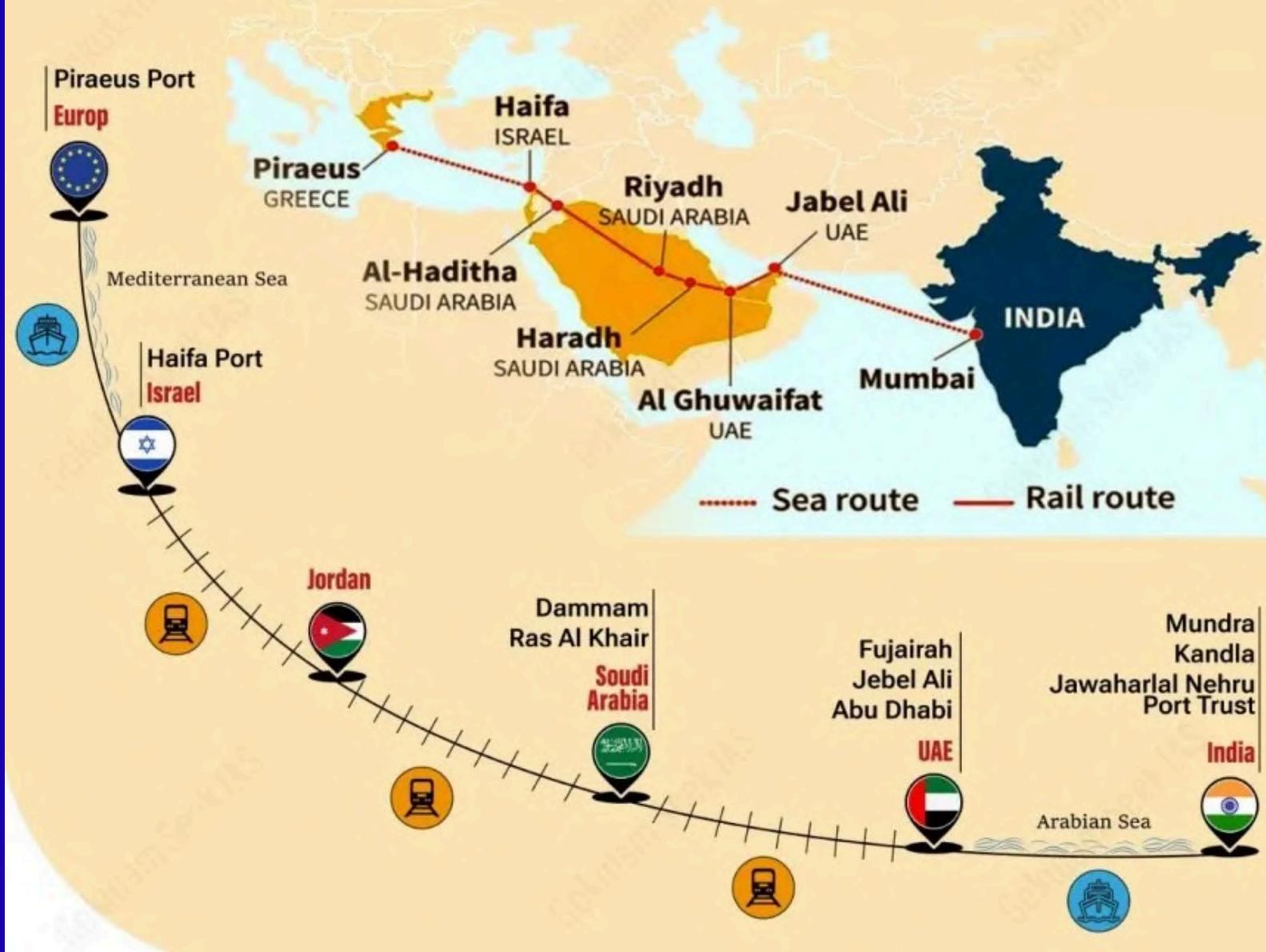
The regional architecture that brought about the stability in which the IMEC was born will have to be recreated. Fundamental issues, such as that of Palestinian statehood, will have to be addressed or any regional connectivity plan will inevitably be susceptible to renewed conflict.

As things stand, IMEC is essentially a 'day-after' plan — waiting for the resolution of the Middle East's oldest conflict. Until then, efforts like the August meeting in New Delhi can only focus on a few modalities.

Bashir Ali Abbas is a Senior Research Associate at the Council for Strategic and Defense Research, New Delhi

EXPLAINED GLOBAL

India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)



Usage in Prelims:

Location & route of IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor).

Usage in Mains:

GS2 (IR): Example of connectivity diplomacy & impact of Middle East conflict on multilateral projects.

- India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was announced during G20 Summit 2023 to boost trade and connectivity between India, Gulf nations, and Europe. It aims to cut shipping time to Europe by 40% compared to the Red Sea route.
- IMEC has two segments:
 1. **Eastern leg:** India to UAE via sea; then high-speed freight rail through UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan to Haifa, Israel.
 2. **Western leg:** Haifa to Greece/Italy via sea, then European rail to destinations.

- The project symbolized a stable Middle East, with countries like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Arab states moving towards normalisation.
 - Gaza war (2023) disrupted plans — Israel–Jordan ties deteriorated, Saudi–Israel normalisation stalled, and regional stability collapsed.
- While the western leg's future is uncertain, India retains strong eastern leg partnerships with UAE and Saudi Arabia, which support trade, digital payments (UPI), and investments.
- Progress is hindered by geopolitical tensions, especially Israel's actions in Gaza, making near-term implementation unlikely.

Reaching out to patients



K SRINATH REDDY

Lab tests at rural health centres can plug diagnostics gap. Technicians need to be trained

THE ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS of a health disorder should precede the selection and judicious administration of effective therapies. Such a diagnosis is usually based on well-recorded medical history, careful clinical examination, and a set of laboratory tests that confirm or alter the initial diagnosis. Such tests can often project the likely course of the disease. Lack of access to diagnostic tests can result in a delayed or incorrect identification of the disorder, leading to mistimed or misdirected therapeutic approaches.

Universal health coverage (UHC), to which India committed in the National Health Policy of 2017 and also as a signatory of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), requires high levels of service coverage and financial protection. Outpatient care accounts for over 60 per cent of the out-of-pocket expenditure for patients and their families. This involves personal expenditure on drugs, diagnostics, and transport. Health insurance policies only cover expenses incurred during hospitalisation. Absence of reliable diagnostic facilities in close-to-home public health-care facilities reduces levels of both service coverage and financial protection.

While India's private sector provides a wide array of diagnostic services, they are not within the easy reach of the urban poor or vast segments of the rural population. Despite the private sector trying to reach the last mile through point-of-care diagnostic devices and mobile clinics, many parts of rural India are dependent on diagnostic services in the public healthcare system. **As are the urban poor.** The objectives of UHC are well served only if the diagnostic facilities are available close to home — at the **Ayushman Aarogya Mandir (Health and Wellness Centre at the sub-centre level)** and the **Primary Health Centre.**

While deciding on the nature and range of diagnostic services to be provided at each level of care, attention has to be paid to the changing list of priority health problems over time. As demographic, socio-economic, environmental and nutrition transitions are occurring across India, rising rates of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) demand greater attention, alongside the stubbornly persisting infectious diseases. Cardiovascular dis-

While India's private sector provides a wide array of diagnostic services, they are not within the easy reach of the urban poor or vast segments of the rural population. Despite the private sector trying to reach the last mile through point-of-care diagnostic devices and mobile clinics, many parts of rural India are dependent on diagnostic services in the public healthcare system. As are the urban poor. The objectives of UHC are well served only if the diagnostic facilities are available close to home — at the Ayushman Aarogya Mandir and the Primary Health Centre.

eases and diabetes now join tuberculosis and malaria in qualifying for early and accurate diagnostic assessment.

There have been remarkable advances in the diagnostic armamentarium of modern medicine. Advances in molecular diagnostics and imaging have vastly increased diagnostic precision. Some of these can be applied even in primary care settings. Tele-diagnostics (like tele-radiology, tele-pathology and tele-dermatology) are bridging gaps between diagnostic capacity in primary care and expertise in institutions of advanced healthcare. Technical capacity has also been augmented, with semi-auto analysers supplied to primary health centres and imaging capabilities enhanced in district hospitals.

While employing diagnostic tests across a health system, cost-effectiveness has to be taken into account as well. If multiple tests are available, which of them will yield the maximum diagnostic benefit? How much incremental value in diagnostic accuracy and correct clinical decision making will the more technically advanced but more expensive test add to the less expensive and more easily performed test? Which of the many tests should be performed sequentially, and which must run simultaneously? Diagnostic algorithms provided by the government must provide evidence-based guidelines on such questions. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) should lead this effort.

The National List of Essential Diagnostics (NLED), revised recently by the ICMR, after the first iteration in 2019, takes into account epidemiological and technological transitions in the country. There is also an earnest effort to enhance the scope of diagnostic services at the frontlines of primary care. As the number of diabetes and pre-diabetes cases mount in millions across the country, the ICMR recommends that blood samples be collected at the PHC level for estimating HbA1C levels to provide a three-month profile of blood sugar. These samples will then be transported to higher-level centres for analysis.

Rapid diagnostic tests for sickle cell anaemia, thalassaemia, Hepatitis B, and syphilis will now be available at the sub-centre level. Collection of samples for dengue test-

ing will also be done at the sub-centre level. As climate change is rapidly increasing the geographic and seasonal span of mosquito-borne diseases, this is an essential measure. Many blood chemistry tests (for blood glucose levels, liver enzymes, and plasma cholesterol estimation) can now be performed at the PHC level. Dental X-rays will become available at the CHC level, as oral health is belatedly recognised as a priority for the health service.

The recent list recommends collecting samples for molecular TB testing right from the sub-centre level. Sputum samples collected at sub-centres and primary health centres will be transported to a higher centre. At the community health centre, sub-district and district hospitals, the ICMR recommends performing these tests in-house. India's high burden of TB cases is also clouded by high numbers of latent cases and late detection. Improved TB diagnostics will enable these challenges to be effectively addressed.

All this is possible due to the extensive deployment of cost-effective molecular diagnostics equipment. While the value of molecular testing for TB was recognised in the past decades, the Covid pandemic directed public spotlight onto that laboratory technique. These machines reached across all layers of the health system, as RT-PCR became part of the common jargon. Less sensitive techniques, like microscopic examination for TB bacilli, will yield place to molecular testing. Drug-resistant TB is also easier to monitor with the availability of these testing methods.

Beyond the supply of testing equipment to primary and secondary healthcare settings, there is a need to build technical capacity for performing tests and interpreting results. We need to train more laboratory technicians while enabling frontline health workers to perform point-of-care diagnostic testing. Interpretation of test results requires the care provider to understand probability estimates (sensitivity, specificity, predictive values and likelihood ratios) to identify false positives and false negatives. Perhaps, AI can help in bridging these capacity gaps.

The writer is Distinguished Professor of Public Health, Public Health Foundation of India

Usage in Mains:

GS2 – Governance, Welfare Schemes & Health: Demonstrates the implementation challenges of the National Health Policy 2017 and SDGs in ensuring equitable access to diagnostics. Highlights rural-urban healthcare disparity and the need for last-mile delivery of diagnostic services.

Summary

- **Importance of Diagnosis – Accurate and timely health diagnosis depends on medical history, clinical examination, and laboratory tests.**
- **Current Gap – Lack of diagnostic facilities in rural and remote areas results in misdiagnosis and delayed treatment.**
- **Policy Context – Universal Health Coverage (UHC), under India's National Health Policy 2017 and SDGs, mandates comprehensive health services, but many diagnostics are unavailable at the last mile.**



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- **Private vs Public Access** – Private sector diagnostics are mostly urban-centric, while public healthcare needs to expand point-of-care devices to sub-centres, PHCs, and wellness centres.
- **Technology as a Solution** – Molecular diagnostics, tele-diagnosis, and semi-auto analyzers can help bridge the rural-urban diagnostic gap.
- **ICMR Recommendations** – PHCs and sub-centres should conduct tests for TB, malaria, dengue, hepatitis, and diabetes.
- **Workforce Development** – Training of technicians and quality control are crucial for improving accessibility and diagnostic accuracy in rural India.

Mains Question (GS2 – Health):

“Discuss the role of diagnostic accessibility in achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in India. How can technology and workforce training bridge the rural-urban diagnostic gap?” (150 words)

What is Telangana's Kaleshwaram project?

Where has the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project been built? Why was the location of the project suddenly shifted from Tummidihatti to Medigadda? Why did the piers of the Sundilla barrage sink? Who did the one-man judicial commission question regarding the project?

EXPLAINER

M. Rajeev

The story so far:

The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP), billed as the lifeline of Telangana by the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government, is mired in controversies over the manner in which it has been executed. A barrage forming a major component of the project suffered damages within three years of its inauguration, while two others constructed upstream developed cracks resulting in the charge that the KLIP was a colossal waste of public money.

What is the KLIP?

The KLIP is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari river in Kaleshwaram of Bhupalpally in Telangana. Billed as the world's largest multi-stage irrigation project, Kaleshwaram's upstream influence is at the confluence of Pranahita and Godavari. It utilises a canal network of more than 1,800 km. The project was conceived by the BRS government, headed by K. Chandrasekhar Rao, to provide irrigation facilities to over 16 lakh acres in 13 districts of Telangana, besides stabilising the existing ayacut. It aims at storing and distributing 240 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) of Godavari water of which 169 tmc ft is proposed to be allocated for irrigation, 30 tmc ft for drinking water to Hyderabad, 16 tmc ft for miscellaneous and industrial uses and another 10 tmc ft for drinking water to villages en route.

Where was it built?

The government has constructed barrages across Godavari at Ramadugu, Medigadda, Sundilla and Annaram. The water is stored there to cater to drinking water and irrigation needs. The project was conceived at a cost of ₹71,000 crore initially. The cost escalated to close to over ₹1 lakh crore over a period of time.



Bad planning: Water levels of the Medigadda barrage of the Kaleshwaram project in 2024. FILE PHOTO

Finishing works is likely to take few more thousands of crores.

What is the controversy?

The project has been mired in controversies right from the beginning as the then government shifted the location from Tummidihatti to Medigadda even after reportedly receiving hydrology clearance for the former location. The shifting of the site was made on the pretext of non-availability of water at Tummidihatti, but an inquiry revealed that the Central Water Commission had estimated the water availability at Tummidihatti to be over 200 tmc ft.

A major allegation that has surfaced in the construction of the project was that the barrages were constructed on

permeable foundations rather than strong foundations that can withstand the inflow of heavy quantum of water. The shifting of location, from Tummidihatti to Medigadda, too came under criticism as almost 30% of the works at Pranahita Chevella Sujala Sravanti (PCSS) project, started in united Andhra Pradesh in 2008, at Tummidihatti costing over ₹11,000 crore were completed by then. Another major charge against the BRS Government was that the decision to go ahead with the project was taken solely by Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao. It was alleged that he had not obtained the consent of the State Cabinet before launching work on the project.

The faults in the Kaleshwaram project were exposed during the BRS regime

when the piers of the Sundilla barrage sunk, substantiating the claims that the barrage was constructed on permeable foundation. Two other barrages, Annaram and Sundilla, too developed cracks as the government impounded and stored huge quantities of water against technical advice.

Was an inquiry ordered?

The constitution of a judicial commission to probe the lapses in the Kaleshwaram project was an election promise of the Congress. Subsequently, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy constituted a one-man judicial commission headed by Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose for a thorough inquiry into the process. Justice Ghose examined over 110 witnesses during the course of his 15 month inquiry and those examined included former CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao, former Ministers T. Harish Rao (Irrigation) and Eatala Rajender (Finance) of BRS government, the latter especially for releasing funds adopting a "negligent and indifferent attitude". The judicial commission submitted its report on July 31, and subsequently the Telangana government decided to take up a discussion on the Kaleshwaram project in the legislature during the monsoon session. The government plans to explain the lapses to the people in detail and to elicit views of all political parties, including the BRS, on the future course of action.

How has the BRS reacted?

The BRS on its part appears to be guarded in its response to the accusations. Mr. Harish Rao, however, defended the project claiming that the project received approvals from several statutory bodies, including the CWC. It also had the approval of the Cabinet, the papers of which have not been revealed by the government. The project was also ratified by the Assembly when Chief Minister Chandrasekhar Rao had made a power point presentation, the first of its kind, on the Kaleshwaram project, elaborating on its salient features.

THE GIST

▼ The KLIP is a multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari river in Kaleshwaram of Bhupalpally in Telangana.

▼ A major allegation that has surfaced in the construction of the project was that the barrages were constructed on permeable foundations rather than strong foundations that can withstand the inflow of heavy quantum of water.

▼ The constitution of a judicial commission to probe the lapses in the Kaleshwaram project was an election promise of the Congress.

Context:

Project Overview:

- **Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP)** — multi-purpose project on the Godavari River at Kaleshwaram, Bhupalpally, Telangana.
- **Recognised as the world's largest multi-stage lift irrigation project.**

Purpose:

- **Lift and store Godavari water for irrigation, industrial, and drinking water purposes.**
- **Aims to irrigate over 16 lakh acres in 13 districts.**



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Infrastructure:

- Three major barrages: Medigadda, Sundilla, Annaram.
- Initial project cost: ₹71,000 crore.

Controversy:

- Piers of Sundilla barrage sank; cracks developed in Annaram and Sundilla.
- Allegations of construction on permeable foundations.

Location Shift:

- Originally planned at Tummidihatti, shifted to Medigadda due to water availability concerns.

Judicial Inquiry:

- One-man commission headed by Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose.
- Examined 110+ witnesses over 15 months.
- Report submitted on July 31.

Political Angle:

- Current Congress govt. probing lapses.
- Blame exchange between Congress and former BRS govt.

What are the new rules on chemically contaminated sites?

What were the tasks under the Capacity Building Program for Industrial Pollution Management Project?

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

The Environment Ministry has notified new rules under the Environment Protection Act that lays out a process for addressing sites with chemical contamination. Called the Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025, they give a legal structure to a process of addressing chemical contamination, that until now was missing despite several such sites already identified across the country.

What are contaminated sites?

Contaminated sites, according to the Central Pollution Control Board, are those where hazardous and other wastes were dumped historically, and which has most likely resulted in contamination of soil, groundwater and surface water that pose a risk to human health and the

environment. Some of the sites were developed when there was no regulation on management of hazardous wastes. In some instances, polluters responsible for contamination have either closed down their operations or the cost of remediation is beyond their capacity. These may include landfills, dumps, waste storage and treatment sites, spill-sites, and chemical waste handling and storage sites. There are 103 such sites identified across the country. Only in seven sites has remedial operation commenced, which involves cleaning the contaminated soil, groundwater, surface water and sediments by adopting appropriate technologies.

Why were these rules necessary?

The Environment Ministry had, in 2010, initiated a Capacity Building Program for Industrial Pollution Management Project to formulate the National Program for Remediation of Polluted Sites. This

consisted of three broad tasks – creating an inventory of probable contaminated sites; developing a guidance document for assessment and remediation of contaminated sites; and developing a legal, institutional and financial framework for the remediation of contaminated sites. While the first two steps have been in place, the last step, regarding a legal codification, remained unfulfilled. The rules that were made public on July 25 were part of this legal codification process.

Under these rules, the district administration would prepare half-yearly reports on “suspected contaminated sites.” A State board, or a ‘reference organisation’ would examine these sites and provide a “preliminary assessment” within 90 days of being thus informed. Following these, it would have another three months to make a detailed survey and finalise if these sites were indeed ‘contaminated.’ This would involve

establishing the levels of suspected hazardous chemicals – there are currently 189 marked ones under the provisions of the Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016. If these sites exceed safe levels, the location of these sites would be publicised and restrictions placed on accessing it. Then, the ‘reference organisation’, which would basically be a body of experts, would be tasked with specifying a remediation plan. The State board would also have 90 days to identify the person(s) responsible for the contamination. Those deemed responsible would have to pay for the cost of remediation of the site, else the Centre and the State would arrange for the costs of clean-up. “Any criminal liability, if it is proved that such contamination caused loss of life or damage would be under the provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (2023),” an official told *The Hindu*.

Are there any exemptions?

Contamination resulting from radioactive waste, mining operations, pollution of the sea by oil, and solid waste from dump sites would not be dealt with under the provisions of these laws as they are governed by a separate legislation. Another major omission from the rules is the lack of a defined timeline whereby once a contaminated site is identified, a deadline is set by which it must be returned to safe levels.

THE GIST

Contaminated sites, according to the Central Pollution Control Board, are those where hazardous and other wastes were dumped historically.

There are 103 such sites identified across the country.

Contamination resulting from radioactive waste, mining operations, pollution of the sea by oil, and solid waste from dump sites would not be dealt with under the provisions of these laws.



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Prelims

Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025.

GS3: Hazardous waste, soil/groundwater contamination law.

Legal Framework Introduced

- Environment Ministry notified new rules under the Environment Protection Act – Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025.
- First legal structure for managing chemically contaminated sites in India.

Definition

As per CPCB, contaminated sites are where hazardous/other wastes were dumped historically, leading to contamination of soil, groundwater, and surface water, posing risks to human health and environment.

Why Necessary?

- Earlier, no regulation for hazardous waste site management.
- Industrial units closed due to high remediation costs and limited capacity.
- Includes landfills, dumps, spill sites, hazardous waste handling & storage areas.

Background Program

- Began in 2010 under the Capacity Building Program for Industrial Pollution Management Project.
- Tasks:
 1. Inventory of probable contaminated sites.
 2. Guidance document for assessment/remediation.
 3. Legal, institutional & financial framework for remediation (now fulfilled).

Extent of Problem

- 189 Chemicals marked under Hazardous and Other Wastes Rules, 2016.

New Rule Provisions

- District administration to submit half-yearly reports on “suspected contaminated sites.”
- State Board/Reference Organisation to give preliminary assessment within 90 days, then 3 months for a detailed survey.
- Public disclosure of contaminated sites & restrictions on access.
- Person(s) responsible for contamination to pay for remediation; else Centre/State will arrange and recover costs.
- Criminal liability for contamination causing loss of life/damage (covered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita)

Exemptions

- Contamination from radioactive waste, mining operations, sea oil pollution, and dump-site solid waste excluded (covered under separate laws).

DAILY MCQs FOR PRACTICE

Q1. In India's judicial system, "judicial discipline" means:

- A. Lower courts must follow decisions of higher courts.
- B. Supreme Court can change laws passed by Parliament at will.
- C. High Courts can refuse to follow Supreme Court rulings if they disagree.
- D. Judges must not deliver judgments on weekends.

Q2. Asiatic lions in India are found naturally in:

- A. Gir Forest National Park
- B. Ranthambore National Park
- C. Sundarbans
- D. Jim Corbett National Park

Q3. The main aim of the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is:

- A. To build a road link between Delhi and London.
- B. To increase trade between India, Middle East, and Europe.
- C. To connect all ports in South Asia.
- D. To replace the United Nations trade routes.

Q4. Which of these is a major problem for rural healthcare diagnostics in India?

- A. Diagnostic machines are mostly in cities.
- B. Villages have too many testing labs.
- C. All rural clinics are equipped with AI-based testing.
- D. Doctors in rural areas refuse to use test reports.

Q5. The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project is built on the:

- A. Krishna River
- B. Narmada River
- C. Godavari River
- D. Mahanadi River