

CURRENTLY - FROM NEWS TO NOTES
DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Hindu & The Indian express

Headline	Source
Lok Sabha passes the Income-Tax Bill, 2025	The Hindu, Page 5
Rift between two blocs continues in Geneva Plastic Treaty negotiations	The Hindu, Page 6

Headline	Source
Delhi stray dogs to be captured and never released: Supreme Court	The Hindu, Page 1
A court ruling with no room for gender justice	The Hindu, Page 8 (Editorial)
Will the rules-based international order survive the Trump presidency	The Hindu, Page 10
An eye on CO ₂ from space	The Indian Express, Page 13



Lok Sabha passes Income Tax Bill; officials' powers broadened

The proposed law will allow officials to forcibly break into personal emails and social media accounts of assesseees during search operations; the revised version has around 2.59 lakh words compared with the 5.12 lakh words in the I-T Act, 1961

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Monday passed the revised Income Tax Bill, 2025.

The Bill seeks to simplify, rationalise, and shorten the existing Income Tax Act, 1961. It also broadens the powers of income tax officials, allowing them to forcibly break into personal emails and social media accounts of assesseees during search operations.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had introduced the previous version of the Bill in the Lok Sabha in February, following which it was sent to a Select Committee chaired by Baijayant Panda for a review. The Select Committee submitted its recommendations on July 21. Following this, the government on Friday withdrew the Bill to incorpo-



Opposition MPs troop to the Well of the House in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session of Parliament on Monday. SANSAD TV

rate the suggestions made by the committee.

Ms. Sitharaman introduced the updated version – the Income Tax (No. 2) Bill, 2025 – in the Lower House on Monday. The Bill has around 2.59 lakh words compared with the 5.12 lakh words in the Income Tax Act, 1961. The number of chapters has been brought down to 23 from 47 and the number of Sections to 536 from 819.

In order to provide greater clarity, the new Bill has increased the number of tables to 57 from 18 and the number of formulae to 46 from six.

In search operations

Apart from these changes, the new Bill has also tweaked the powers of income tax officials during search and seizure operations.

The new Bill requires

any person “who is found to be in possession or control of” any books of account or other documents in electronic form to provide the authorised officer assistance in accessing these, “including access code, by whatever name called”.

Further, it allows the authorised officer to “override the access code to any computer system” if the access code is not made available.

The Select Committee defended these provisions in its report, saying that various “incriminating evidences and material are found/seized from electronic records including WhatsApp communications, emails, etc.” and that passwords for these are often not shared with officials. However, a few members of the committee submitted dissent notes calling for changes to these

provisions. Congress MP Amar Singh argued that the wording of the relevant section “gives very wide-ranging power to the government to force tax payees to hand over all types of personal digital data including passwords, chats, etc.” and asked for a reduction in these powers.

“This provision is arbitrary and [gives] excess powers to the authorities and there is every chance of misuse of this provisions and ultimately infringing the Right to Privacy of an individual guaranteed in the Constitution and reiterated by the Supreme Court in *Puttaswamy* case,” Revolutionary Socialist Party leader N.K. Premachandran said in his dissent note.

He added that the provisions in the original Income Tax Act, 1961 were sufficient and should be retained.

Mains

GS-2: Right to Privacy

GS-3: Tax reforms

Purpose and Scope:

The revised Income Tax Bill, 2025, aims to simplify, rationalise, and shorten the 1961 Income Tax Act. It introduces broader powers for income tax officials, particularly allowing them to forcibly access personal emails and social media accounts of assesseees during search operations.

Expansion of Officials' Powers:

- Officials can demand access to electronic records including emails, social media, WhatsApp messages, and computer files.



- **Assessee** Should provide access codes for any controlled accounts or computers, regardless of the account type or system.
- The Bill allows authorities to override access codes not willingly provided by the assessee.

Comparison with Previous Act:

- Previous version (Income Tax Act, 1961) had around 5.12 lakh words; new bill has 2.59 lakh words.
- Chapters reduced from 47 to 23; sections decreased from 819 to 536.

Search and Seizure Operations:

Enhanced powers aim to make search and seizure procedures more effective, but concerns exist about privacy infringements.

Parliamentary Debate and Dissent:

- Some MPs and committee members, including Congress MP Amar Singh, criticized the broad authority to demand all personal digital information, warning of potential privacy violations and misuse.
- Dissenting notes highlighted risks to the constitutional Right to Privacy as upheld in Supreme Court judgments (e.g., Puttaswamy case).
- Some MPs argued that the original Income Tax Act, 1961, was sufficient and that excess powers in new provisions could negatively impact personal rights.

Q1. 'Right to Privacy' is protected under which Article of the Constitution of India?

- (a) Article 15
- (b) Article 19
- (c) Article 21
- (d) Article 29

(PYQ 2021)

Mains Question (150 words)

The Income Tax Bill, 2025 expands officials' powers to access personal digital data during search operations. Critically examine its implications for the constitutional right to privacy in light of the Supreme Court's Puttaswamy judgment.

Rift between two blocs continues in Geneva Plastics Treaty negotiations

While one group of countries bats for production cuts to reduce pollution, the other group says the issue can be addressed through waste management; the plastics manufacturing industry has moved from Europe to South and Southeast Asia

Jacob Koshy
GENEVA

The deadlock between two blocs of countries on the best way to contain plastic pollution mirrors a shift in the global plastic and polymer-manufacturing industry, which in recent years has moved out of Europe and drifted towards South and Southeast Asia.

Since 2022, the United Nations Environment Programme has been spearheading efforts to get countries to evolve, by consensus, a legally binding treaty that commits them to address plastic pollution on land as well as in oceans.

However, two broad coalitions have evolved over four sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on Plastic Pollution here – the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) chaired by Norway and Rwanda, consisting of nearly 80 countries, including members of the European Union (EU), and the Like Minded Countries



No consensus: Two coalitions have evolved over four sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in Geneva. AP

(LMC), which includes Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, China and Cuba. While the latter is not a formal coalition like the HAC, it is a much smaller group of countries whose interests are aligned because they are all major petrochemical states.

India on Saturday had expressed solidarity with the LMC. Under the current rules of negotiation, countries cannot pass a proposal by a majority vote, and near-unanimous agreement is required.

The fundamental rift

between the two is that the HAC says plastic pollution cannot be contained without imposing cuts or capping production of plastic and its constituent, polymer. The LMC says plastic pollution can be addressed through waste management, and imposing production cuts would only cause disruptions in trade, rather than a meaningful reduction in plastic production and use.

An analysis in July by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) tracking

the flows of the main chemical constituents of plastic – ethylene, propylene, styrene and their derivatives polypropylene, low-density polyethylene, linear low-density polyethylene, high-density polyethylene and polyethylene terephthalate – showed that Asia dominated the global trade in primary plastic polymers, with 11 exporting and 18 importing countries.

Divergent stance

In North America, the United States was the largest exporter of these primary plastic polymers, while several European countries served as both importers and exporters. Trade volumes in Africa and South America were negligible. This year, the United States, which is part of neither coalition but had always pitched for a “strong treaty”, said it would not support any proposals for production cuts.

India’s support for the LMC echoes in a submission made by the All India

Plastic Manufacturers Association, an industry lobby, to the Chair of the INC 5.2, Ambassador Luis Vayas Valdivieso, on August 5. “We believe that any cap on the production of primary polymers will do more harm than good as its growing needs in a multitude of areas cannot be met with other materials in the quantities needed,” says the submission.

“We ask that the INC focus on helping countries increase their waste management capabilities... and build programmes for behavioural change to eradicate littering.” Independent observers said that the business case for petroleum and polymer refining in major economies was “weak”. “Look at China for instance. Its petrochemical refining is working at 50% capacity. Several major refiners the world over are seeing that margins and demands for polymer products are declining,” said David Azoulay, managing attorney, Center for International Environmental Law, at a seminar.

GS-3 (Environment and Ecology): International environmental governance, multilateral agreements, climate change linkages.

- The United Nations Environment Programme has led negotiations since 2022 for a legally binding treaty to address global plastic pollution.

Two major blocs have emerged:

1. **High Ambition Coalition (HAC)**, led by Norway and Rwanda (including EU nations), advocates for curbs on plastic production to reduce pollution.
2. **Like Minded Countries (LMC)**, including nations like Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, and India, favors waste management solutions instead of production cuts.

India supports the LMC position, arguing that plastic pollution should be tackled via better waste management, not strict production or trade limits, citing risks of trade disruption and limited actual reduction of pollution.

- Analysis shows Asia now dominates global polymer production and trade, with many export/import countries in the region.



Call For More Info
8377072252



2nd Floor, 32-B, Pusa Road Opposite Metro Pillar No. 122 Block 11 Old Rajinder Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, Delhi, 110005



understand.upsc



UnderStandUPSC.com



UnderStand UPSC



UnderStand UPSC

- Western countries (especially the EU) push for restrictions on primary polymer exports and production, arguing these contribute significantly to pollution.
- Industry groups, like the All India Plastic Manufacturers Association, oppose production caps, claiming such measures could harm economic growth and materials supply.
- Experts note that margins for polymer producers are falling, and major refiners across the world are reducing capacity due to weak demand.
- The deadlock continues with demand for consensus decision-making, highlighting ongoing tensions and challenges in achieving a global plastics treaty.

Delhi stray dogs to be captured and never released: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Delhi government and local bodies to immediately capture stray dogs, detain them in pounds created across the National Capital Territory (NCT), and never release them back into public spaces.

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan said anyone who resists rounding up of stray canines would face contempt action from the Supreme Court.

The top court said authorities should "at the earliest, start picking up strays from all localities, more particularly the vulnerable ones in the city and outskirts. How to do it is for the authorities to decide. If they have to create a force, do it at the earliest."

The foremost and first exercise is to free localities from stray dogs. There is

no compromise".

The court was hearing a *suo motu* case on the increasing instances of stray dog attacks on children, including infants. Addressing the clamour to protect stray dogs, the court asked whether animal rights activists would be able to return children lost to rabid canines to their parents.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the government, supported the court's decision.

"Have you seen Western movies? There is one called *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. When Ugly is lying in a soap-filled bathtub, his assailant comes to kill him. The man says he had been searching for Ugly for a long time. Ugly shoots him without a word, and says 'if you have to shoot a man, shoot and don't talk'... So, no talk. It is time to act and now," Justice Pardiwala addressed Mr. Mehta and other lawyers for the government



On the clamour to protect stray dogs, the court asks if activists can return children lost to rabid canines to parents. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

and authorities.

The court said the situation with stray dogs was "extremely grim" across the national capital territory, Noida, Gurugram, and Ghaziabad. Justice Pardiwala said the court's directions were in the best public interest, and to end a menace. The judge remarked in an aside that, hopefully, the directions would not prompt stray dogs to transform into pet dogs overnight.

In a series of directions,

the Bench ordered the authorities, including the NCT government, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, and the New Delhi Municipal Council to establish enough dog shelters/pounds to house at least 5,000 stray dogs in the first six to eight weeks.

The dog pounds should be peopled with sufficient personnel. The stray dogs, once they are picked up and brought in, should be sterilised and immunised, the court said.

"Since this is a progressive exercise, shelters have to be increased over time. The action should inspire confidence in the minds of the people, young and old, that they can move around freely on roads, without any fear of being bitten by strays," the court said.

'Process to be objective'
"No sentiments should be involved in the entire exercise," the top court observed in the order.

The dog shelters must be put under CCTV surveillance in order to ensure the dogs were neither released nor taken out. The authorities must maintain a record of strays captured and housed in pounds, and produce the records in court, the Bench said.

"Not a single dog picked up shall be released back on the streets/public spaces. Otherwise, the entire exercise will go futile. If we come to know that this (release of captured dogs) has

happened, we shall take stern action. If any person or organisation comes in the way of authorities picking up strays, we shall take strict action. We have only the larger public interest in our minds... infants and young children should not at any cost fall prey to such dog bites leading to rabies," the court observed.

The Bench directed the authorities to start a helpline to report incidents of dog attacks. "All cases of dog bites are to be immediately reported. Action must be taken to catch, pick up, round up the dog within four hours of the complaint received. Any resistance offered by any individual or organisation would be viewed very strictly and would lead to contempt action. The dog in question would be captured, sterilised and immunised as required by rules and not released under any circumstances," the court directed.

Usage in Ethics (GS Paper 4):

Public Interest vs. Animal Rights: Balancing human safety with compassion towards animals.

Utilitarian Approach: Maximising safety and well-being for the greatest number.

Supreme Court – Stray Dog Order

- Delhi govt & local bodies to capture all stray dogs, keep in permanent shelters, never release them.
- 5,000 dogs to be sheltered in 6–8 weeks; all to be sterilised, immunised, kept under CCTV with records.
- Helpline for dog-bite cases; capture within 4 hours of complaint.
- Contempt action for anyone obstructing.
- Aim: Protect public, especially children, from bites & rabies.



Call For More Info
8377072252



2nd Floor, 32-B, Pusa Road Opposite Metro Pillar No. 122 Block 11 Old Rajinder Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, Delhi, 110005



understand.upsc



UnderStandUPSC.com



UnderStand UPSC



UnderStand UPSC



A Court ruling with no room for gender justice

In its judgment, *Shivangi Bansal vs Sahib Bansal*, that was delivered in late July, the Supreme Court of India has effectively endorsed the suspension of the arrest or coercive action under the anti-cruelty law in Section 498-A of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code (IPC). Apart from being predicated on false premises, the judgment sets a dangerous precedent for both criminal justice and gender equality.

In many marriages, women suffer great levels of inequality. Apart from being discriminated against and stereotyped, they also face harassment and violence including torture. To redress violence in the domestic sphere, the Parliament has brought in laws such as Section 498-A in the IPC in 1983. Section 498-A IPC (Section 85 of the new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) penalises cruelty against women, by her husband or his relative with imprisonment for three years and a fine. Cruelty is defined wide enough to include dowry harassment and driving the woman to suicide or injury to life or health.

The statement of objects of the Amending Act which brought in the law has underlined the need to expand the scope of the law to apply to all kinds of cruelty within marriage. This was done in the wake of a large number of dowry deaths and also noting that cruelty cases “culminate in suicide by, or murder of, the helpless woman concerned, constitute only a small fraction of the cases involving such cruelty”. Penal legislation such as the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 were enacted to operate harmoniously with other laws enacted for violence against women. Therefore, Parliament, as the policymaker, after legislative deliberation and study, has chosen to enact the anti-cruelty law in this particular socio-cultural context.

Blanket protection from arrest

However, it is without properly appreciating these social realities that the Allahabad High Court directed that no arrest or coercive action must be taken against the accused persons for a ‘cool-off’ period of two months from the complaint. It also directed the district-level constitution of family welfare committees, to which cases are directed to be transferred to. These directions are now endorsed by the Supreme Court, amounting to a temporary but blanket protection for the accused from arrest or coercive action, when it is permitted by the criminal law.

Importantly enough, this was done in an individual dispute without examining in detail the socio-political implications of such a suspension. Nor was the State government heard in elaborate detail – at least going by the top court’s judgment



Thulasi K. Raj
is a lawyer at the
Supreme Court
of India

– before approving the suspension concerning a central criminal enactment. As a result of the judgment and its binding nature, even when there is overwhelming evidence of this serious crime, no arrests can be made by the police for at least a period of two months after its filing. This move also places a chilling effect on the complainants, who are otherwise already disadvantaged and discouraged from filing police complaints. The safety of the complainant is also severely put to risk. Further, the delay and inaction of the police in a proper investigation of complaints pertaining to ‘problems inside marriage’ are also legitimised by the judgment.

Now, it might be true that family law jurisprudence in the country could improve with alternate dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation, rather than adversarial litigation. There is substance in the general argument that in cases of divorce or custody of children, conciliatory and effective resolution is more desirable than a long adjudicative process. Family cases are also highly sensitive and emotionally charged, which makes them much more suitable for the former than the latter. These aspects do not, however, apply when serious allegations of violence are made which come under the ambit of the penal law.

The question of ‘misuse’

The narrative of ‘misuse’ of the anti-cruelty law is often heard in popular discourse. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court itself has echoed a similar sentiment in a series of cases. In *Preeti Gupta and Anr. vs State Of Jharkhand and Anr.* (2010), the Court held that several cases which are not bona fide are filed under this provision. In *Sushil Kumar Sharma vs Union Of India and Ors.* (2005), the Court even said that “by misuse of the provision a new legal terrorism can be unleashed”. In *Arnesh Kumar vs State Of Bihar and Anr.* (2014), the Court already issued strict guidelines before arrest in anti-cruelty cases. It directed “the State Governments to instruct its police officers not to automatically arrest when a case under Section 498-A of the IPC is registered but to satisfy themselves about the necessity for arrest under the parameters” under Section 41 of the earlier Criminal Procedure Code which deals with appearance before police officers. Such guidelines have already rendered police action difficult.

Yet, before the Court, apart from individual allegations, there is no concrete empirical data with evidence of any such ‘misuse’ of the anti-cruelty law. Every time the Court is faced with a dispute, it pertains to individual facts and counter versions. Being a complex social problem, this is also an area where the Court has

much less institutional competence to conclude that there is overall ‘misuse’. To venture into the terrain of legislative wisdom, therefore, is outside the corners of judicial expertise.

One of the arguments often used is the allegedly low conviction rate in such cases, which is around 18% as per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data in 2022. This means that almost one out of five cases leads to conviction, which is much higher than those in several other offences. Even otherwise, a low conviction rate does not automatically translate into the misuse of the law. In a society such as ours, with close-knit and dominating family relationships, it is attributable to various factors such as the problems in investigation, systemic bias and social and familial pressure on the woman to settle matters. The requirement of family members having to testify in criminal court is a daunting task. Moreover, there is a high burden of proof of ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ in criminal cases in addition to the difficulty in finding evidence for violence in intimate spaces.

Survey findings

The NCRB recorded that at least 1,34,506 cases were registered under the law in 2022. The National Family Health Survey-5 has reported the ground reality – that there is a gross under-reporting of violence against women in several States. The rising number of cases, a report by the women’s centre Humsafar said, “may be attributed to growing awareness among women about the law”. Therefore, to draw conclusions of widespread misuse from individual cases “reflect institutional bias that exists within the criminal justice system” (A comprehensive study on the efficacy of Section 498-A).

Now, even if we assume that there are false cases filed under the law, the potential for misuse is inherent in any law. The veracity of the allegation under any criminal complaint can only be determined upon a proper investigation. Now, by selectively suspending the anti-cruelty law, the Court has made the victims of cruelty much more vulnerable than ever under India’s justice system. To subject certain criminal provisions to a more rigorous test than the others also has effects on the uniformity and the consistency of the criminal law.

The Court itself reiterated in *Sushil Kumar Sharma* (2005), wherein the constitutional validity of this very law was under challenge, the settled legal principle that misuse of a law is no ground to strike it down. Now, it has acted exactly against this idea, making rigid the possibilities of victims of cruelty to aspire for any meaningful semblance of justice.

GS1: Women & gender equality; social empowerment.

GS2: Judicial role in rights protection; women’s protection laws; balancing misuse vs. protection.

Context

The Supreme Court’s recent ruling in Shivangi Bansal vs Sahib Bansal has suspended arrests under the anti-cruelty provision (Section 498-A IPC / Section 85 BNS) for a “cool-off” period, sparking concerns over the erosion of women’s legal protections.

Key Points from the Article

Case & Ruling

- **Shivangi Bansal vs Sahib Bansal (July 2025) — SC ordered no arrest or coercive action for up to two months.**
- **Arrests only after review by district-level or family welfare committees.**

Purpose of Section 498-A

- **Enacted in 1983 to punish cruelty by husband/relatives, including dowry harassment and abetment to suicide.**



Concerns Raised

- Delays immediate protection for victims.
- Discourages women from pursuing complaints.
- May endanger those in abusive situations.

Supreme Court Judgments Cited

- Preeti Gupta vs State of Jharkhand (2010) – Many cases not bona fide.
- Sushil Kumar Sharma vs Union of India (2005) – Misuse can cause “legal terrorism.”
- Arnesh Kumar vs State of Bihar (2014) – Police must verify necessity before arrest.
- Sushil Kumar Sharma (2005) reiterated in conclusion – misuse cannot be the ground for striking down an IPC section.

Data in the Article

- NCRB 2022: 18% conviction rate in such cases.
- NFHS: One-third of women face spousal violence.

Editorial Stand

- Misuse must be addressed, but protections for women should not be diluted.
- The law’s constitutional validity and intent must be preserved.



KEYWORD



Remaking the world order: U.S. President Donald Trump speaks to the press in the Press Briefing Room at the White House, in Washington D.C., U.S., on August 11. REUTERS

Will the rules-based international order survive the Trump presidency?

The rules-based international order was brought into existence by the U.S. And now with the onslaught of political and economic confrontations foisted on the world by U.S. President Donald Trump, the same order seems to be unravelling

Narayan Lakshman

Recent observations on the rules-based international order have suggested that this system of interlocking governance institutions that emerged since the end of World War II, known to some as Pax Americana, might survive or thrive despite the onslaught of political and economic confrontations foisted on the world by U.S. President Donald Trump. The real question is not about its survivability per se, but rather the extent to which it might mutate under pressure from Washington's coercive policy prescriptions inflicted upon developing and emerging economies, particularly across the Asian region.

A few definitional remarks are in order at this point. Firstly, the rules-based international order, a liberal paradigm seen as a remedy to the devastation wreaked by the two World Wars, was brought into existence by the U.S. This was made possible by the U.S. pushing ahead with the Marshall Plan to rebuild war-torn Europe, returning it to a minimum threshold of economic advancement and political stability that would enable the continent to support the global narrative of a unipolar world as envisioned by Washington. Thereafter, a broad set of "norms and institutions that govern international relations as well as broad patterns of power distribution and economic flows across the world, most of it backstopped by American power and leadership" came into force, including the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (as well as the "Washington consensus" that they implied), and a variety of related organisations. All these institutions existed to put guardrails in place for international politics – in other words these organisations were used as leverage

to limit the regional and global ambitions of any potential rival to the aforementioned unipolar balance of power.

The triumphs of Pax Americana
The argument made by some who see the continuation of the rules-based international order even through the turbulence of the Trump years is that throughout the history of Asia's development, the U.S. has displayed the very same bullying tactics around the region that curbed and shaped the growth trajectory of Asian powerhouse economies. For example, Sandeep Bhardwaj argues that during the post War years, when Japanese cloth imports of the U.S. outstaid American domestic product, the U.S. in 1955 compelled Japan to agree to a voluntary export restriction that capped the latter's share of the U.S. market. However, the U.S. has equally nurtured the quality of openness within the rules-based order, allowing room for Asian and Latin American economies to periodically assert themselves and play a larger role within limited spaces, thus introducing the necessary element of system flexibility that has helped it endure despite a series of economic and political shocks over the past half century.

Examples cited of such openness within Pax Americana include the U.S. and developed nations encouraging developing countries to join the United Nations umbrella of institutions; getting China to join the WTO in 2001 after going slow on global concerns about Beijing's human rights violations; supporting Japan's entry to the G7 in 1973; strongly backing the entry of China, India, Indonesia, Japan, and Saudi Arabia into the G20; establishing the UN Millennium Development Goals to backstop the financing of industrialisation in emerging economies; and structural adjustment loans from the IMF. These loans, however,

were a double edged sword, offering a financial lifeline for Asian countries while benefitting U.S. trade policy by forcing the opening up of these markets.

The extent of U.S.' power
There is no denying that the rules-based international order is far from an authoritarian hierarchy of forced policy prescriptions and expected political genuflection of so-called subordinate Asian nations. Yet, it is fair to ask whether such a warped balance of power in favour of the U.S. could ever emerge, given the Asian trajectory of rapid economic growth built on global trading and capital systems, the collective social emancipation of people, the propagation of individual and institutional liberty, and the growing state capacity for meaningful regional action and collaboration. If the sense of agency and autonomous power of Asian nation-states is overlooked, then it leads to a false sense of U.S. munificence in "bestowing" openness and flexibility upon the rules-based order. In reality, the U.S., for all its economic heft and technological prowess had no choice but to find its own place within this complex matrix of competing nations worldwide, each strong in specific economic sectors, but perhaps less so in other areas.

Within this more reasoned paradigm of the global political economy, which neither denies the unipolarity of the present moment nor overstates the U.S.'s ability to impose its hegemonic ambitions on other nations in today's multi-alliance, interconnected and interdependent framework of international engagement, it becomes clear that damage done to the rules-based liberal international order under the second Trump administration will transform the order to the point of it resembling a new order entirely.

Ironically, at the heart of this act of reshaping the rules-based liberal

international order, are not so much the consequences of what the U.S. is inflicting upon Asian nations but rather its abrupt pulling of the rug from under the heels of Europe by undermining the ideological cause and financial prospects of NATO and leaving the continent exposed to the risk of ever-increasing depredations of Russia.

Similarly, the resoluteness with which Mr. Trump has tied his administration to the whims and fancies of the genocidal and warmongering causes of Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu will rewrite the playbook for everyone. This will impact the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, rethinking regional political dynamics, as much as it will aspiring college students from India seeking admissions in countries other than the U.S. in the wake of compulsory social media scrutiny as a condition of visa issuance.

A new order

Yes, the silhouettes of the old rules-based liberal international order will continue to fall upon the new arrangements that the world will find itself forced to confront by the end of the second Trump term.

However, there can be no denying that it will indeed be a new order built on the rise of bilateral agreements in place of broader regional ones.

The newer order will feature the widespread use of economic sanctions to penalise political opponents across the globe in contravention of WTO norms; ever-growing skirmishes and limited wars; a reliance on drones and AI to settle territorial and other disputes; as well as a steady, catastrophic dismembering of global institutions fostering cooperation, reducing transactions costs and speaking up for human rights and standards of international engagement more broadly.

Pax Americana may well give rise to the next phase of its own evolution, Flux Americana.

GS Paper 2: International Relations

PSIR Optional:

Paper 2, Section A: International Economic and Political Order.

Paper 2, Section B: International Relations – Changing International Political Order and its Impact on Asia.

Context

The rules-based international order, created and sustained largely by the United States after World War II (often termed Pax Americana), is facing strain under the policies of President Donald Trump. The debate is whether this order can survive in its present form amid U.S. withdrawal from traditional commitments, rising geopolitical rivalries, and the assertiveness of emerging economies.

Key Points from the Article

Origins and Purpose of the Rules-Based Order

- Established after WWII to ensure economic advancement, political stability, and prevention of another global conflict.
- Institutions like the UN, World Bank, IMF, and WTO became pillars of this system, promoting free trade, political cooperation, and liberal governance.



Call For More Info

8377072252



2nd Floor, 32-B, Pusa Road Opposite Metro Pillar No. 122 Block 11 Old Rajinder Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, Delhi, 110005



understand.upsc



UnderStandUPSC.com



UnderStand UPSC



UnderStand UPSC

Pax Americana's Role

- The U.S. used economic power, security guarantees, and market access to lead the post-war liberal order.
- Supported Asia's rise by integrating economies like Japan and later China into global markets.

Trump's Challenge

- Policies signal a retreat from multilateralism, focus on transactional bilateral deals, and rejection of traditional alliances.
- Actions include pressuring NATO allies, questioning security commitments in Asia, and economic decoupling from China.

Impact on Asia

- U.S. influence in shaping Asian economic integration is diminishing.
- Rising powers (e.g., China) promote alternative norms and institutions, challenging U.S.-led rules.

Risks to the Order

- U.S. retreat may fragment the system into rival blocs.
- Authoritarian powers could fill the vacuum, reshaping trade rules and security arrangements.

Possible Outcomes

- The order may survive in a diluted form, with continued liberal elements but greater regionalisation.
- Alternatively, it could be replaced by competing power-centric arrangements.

An eye on CO2 from space could soon shut: why this matters

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 11

THE TRUMP administration has reportedly asked the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to prepare to shut down two major satellites that monitor atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO2) and crop health.

It was unclear why the missions were being ended prematurely, *NPR*, which first reported on the plan last week, said.

NASA told *The Associated Press (AP)* in an emailed statement that the missions were "beyond their prime mission", and were being terminated "to align with the President's agenda and budget priorities".

Experts have argued that the satellites are still more sensitive and accurate than any other mission, operating or planned, in the world.

What are Orbiting Carbon Observatories?

OCO are a series of dedicated Earth remote sensing satellites that were designed specifi-

cally to observe atmospheric CO2 from space in order to better understand the characteristics of climate change.

The first mission, called OCO, of the series failed soon after launch in February 2009, as the launch vehicle's 'fairing', the nose cone that protects the payload, did not separate during the ascent. The extra weight of the fairing prevented the satellite from reaching its orbit.

A replacement satellite, OCO-2, was launched in July 2014. It was built based on the original OCO mission to minimise cost, schedule, and performance impacts.

The satellite not only measures atmospheric CO2, it can also locate its sources and sinks. In addition, the mission tracks crops and crop-growing seasons by measuring the "glow" that plants emit when they photosynthesise.

In 2019, a third mission, OCO-3, was sent to the International Space Station (ISS) to further enhance the observation of atmospheric CO2. OCO-3 was built from the spare components left over after the assembly of OCO-2.

While OCO-3 and OCO-2 do the same job,



The OCO-2 satellite before launch. NASA

they provide different perspectives to scientists. This is because OCO-2 flies around Earth in a sun-synchronous polar orbit, which allows it to see any given location at the same time of

day. OCO-3, on the other hand, flies aboard the ISS, which orbits Earth every 90 minutes – it can, therefore, observe a location at many different times of day, and add to the dataset of its predecessor mission.

The US government now plans to shut down both OCO-2 and OCO-3 satellites, according to reports.

Why are the OCO missions important?

The data collected by the satellites have revolutionised scientists' understanding of how quickly CO2 is accumulating in the atmosphere. Before the launch of the OCOs, scientists measured atmospheric CO2 mainly through instruments placed at various locations on the Earth's surface. This did not provide them information about the whole planet. The OCOs changed that.

CO2 is a potent greenhouse gas, and the primary driver of global warming. The data from the OCO missions help scientists and policymakers assess emission reduction efforts, and to develop effective strategies to tackle climate change.

The OCOs also advanced scientific

knowledge by paving the way for some surprising discoveries.

For instance, it had been believed for decades that tropical rainforests functioned as the lungs of the planet by clearing out vast quantities of CO2 from the atmosphere. However, data from OCO-2 revealed the significant role that boreal forests – also known as taiga, the coniferous forests in the higher latitudes of the northern hemisphere – play in the absorption of CO2.

The data also showed how natural carbon sinks such as forests could become carbon emitters due to drought or deforestation.

The ability of OCOs to monitor crop health has several benefits. NASA and other agencies have used the data to create high-resolution maps of plant growth around the world.

"That's useful to farmers, useful to rangeland and grazing and drought monitoring and forest mapping and all kinds of things, in addition to the CO2 measurements," Scott Denning, a climate scientist at Colorado State University, told *NPR*.

The data have been used by the US Department of Agriculture and many private

agricultural consulting companies to forecast and track crop yields and drought conditions.

How expensive is it to maintain the OCOs?

Experts have said that the cost of maintaining OCOs in space is a small fraction of the money that was spent to design and launch the satellites.

It took around \$750 million to design, build, and launch OCO-2 and OCO-3, David Crisp, a retired NASA scientist who helped put together the original idea for the OCO mission and led the team that designed, developed, and delivered the mission to the launch pad, told *NPR*.

Maintaining the satellites in orbit, on the other hand, costs about \$15 million per year. This includes the cost of downloading the data, maintaining a network of calibration sensors on the ground, etc.

"Just from an economic standpoint, it makes no economic sense to terminate NASA missions that are returning incredibly valuable data," Crisp told *NPR*.

However, Congress might yet vote to preserve the satellites, which are funded through the fiscal year that ends on September 30.

GS3: Climate change, science & technology in environment

Context:

The US government has reportedly asked NASA to prepare to shut down two satellites (OCO-2 and OCO-3) that monitor atmospheric CO₂ and crop health. These Orbiting Carbon Observatories (OCOs) have played a crucial role in advancing understanding of CO₂ distribution, natural carbon sinks, and climate change mitigation strategies.

- OCO satellites were designed to accurately measure atmospheric CO₂ from space and study its characteristics.
- OCO-1 failed in 2009 due to launch issues; OCO-2 launched in 2014 and OCO-3 in 2019.
- They revolutionized CO₂ monitoring by providing global data, unlike ground-based instruments.
- Findings challenged earlier beliefs—showing boreal forests also play a significant CO₂ absorption role and revealing how carbon sinks can turn into sources due to drought or deforestation.
- Data used for crop health mapping, drought prediction, and by agricultural agencies worldwide.
- Cost of maintaining OCOs is low compared to initial development; shutting them may limit future climate science and policy decisions.

DAILY MCQs FOR PRACTICE

Q1. Which of the following was the primary objective of the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill passed by the Lok Sabha in 2025?

- A. Reduce corporate tax rates to attract FDI
- B. Simplify tax filing for individuals and remove outdated provisions
- C. Introduce a nationwide property tax system
- D. Replace GST with a unified direct tax code

Q2. The Geneva negotiations on plastic credits are primarily aimed at:

- A. Reducing oil-based plastic manufacturing
- B. Establishing global rules for trading plastic waste reduction efforts
- C. Banning all single-use plastics by 2030
- D. Regulating plastic production quotas for developed nations only

Q3. In the context of “Court Ruling with Room for Gender Justice,” which case emphasized that misuse of a law should not be the sole ground for striking it down?

- A. Shreya Singhal v. Union of India
- B. Sushil Kumar Sharma v. Union of India
- C. Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India
- D. Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan

DAILY MCQs FOR PRACTICE

Q4. The CO₂ monitoring satellites' main goal is to:

- A. Measure only industrial emissions
- B. Track carbon emissions globally with high precision
- C. Replace ground-based monitoring stations entirely
- D. Measure only oceanic carbon absorption

Q5. Which of the following best defines a "rules-based international order"?

- A. An international framework where all states adhere to agreed rules and norms
- B. A system ensuring that powerful states have more rights than weaker states
- C. An order dictated by the military alliances of dominant powers
- D. A framework prioritizing economic liberalization over legal commitments

Select the correct answer:

- A. A only
- B. B only
- C. C only
- D. A and D only



GS-II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International Relations

Polity & Constitution

- Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.
- Functions and Responsibilities of the Union and the States, Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges therein.
- Separation of Powers between various Organs, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions.
- Comparison of the Indian Constitutional Scheme with that of Other Countries.
- Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues arising out of these.
- Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; Pressure Groups and Formal/Informal Associations and their role in the Polity.
- Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.
- Appointment to Various Constitutional Posts, Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of Various Constitutional Bodies.
- Statutory, Regulatory and Various Quasi-Judicial Bodies.





UnderStand UPSC
What we UnderStand, We Conquer

12th AUG, 2025



Call For More Info
8377072252



2nd Floor, 32-B, Pusa Road Opposite Metro Pillar No. 122 Block 11 Old Rajinder Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, Delhi, 110005



understand.upsc



UnderStandUPSC.com



UnderStand UPSC



UnderStand UPSC