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Over 100 killed in Central African Republic gold mine collapse

Bangui: The death toll from a gold mine collapse in a western part of Central African Republic has risen to over 100, a Red Cross volunteer involved in relief efforts said Wednesday.

The low-tech, artisanal gold mine collapsed Tuesday morning in the village of Zamboye, in the Nana-Mambere prefecture, near the border with Cameroon.

Gervais Ganagoroh, a local Red Cross volunteer involved in relief efforts, said more than 100 dead bodies have been recovered so far, while several survivors are critically injured.

Bertrand Be Yangue, a member of the Zamboye youth council, also said the death toll is more than 100, adding that it's likely to rise, as several people are still missing and others are

• Scene of Tragedy

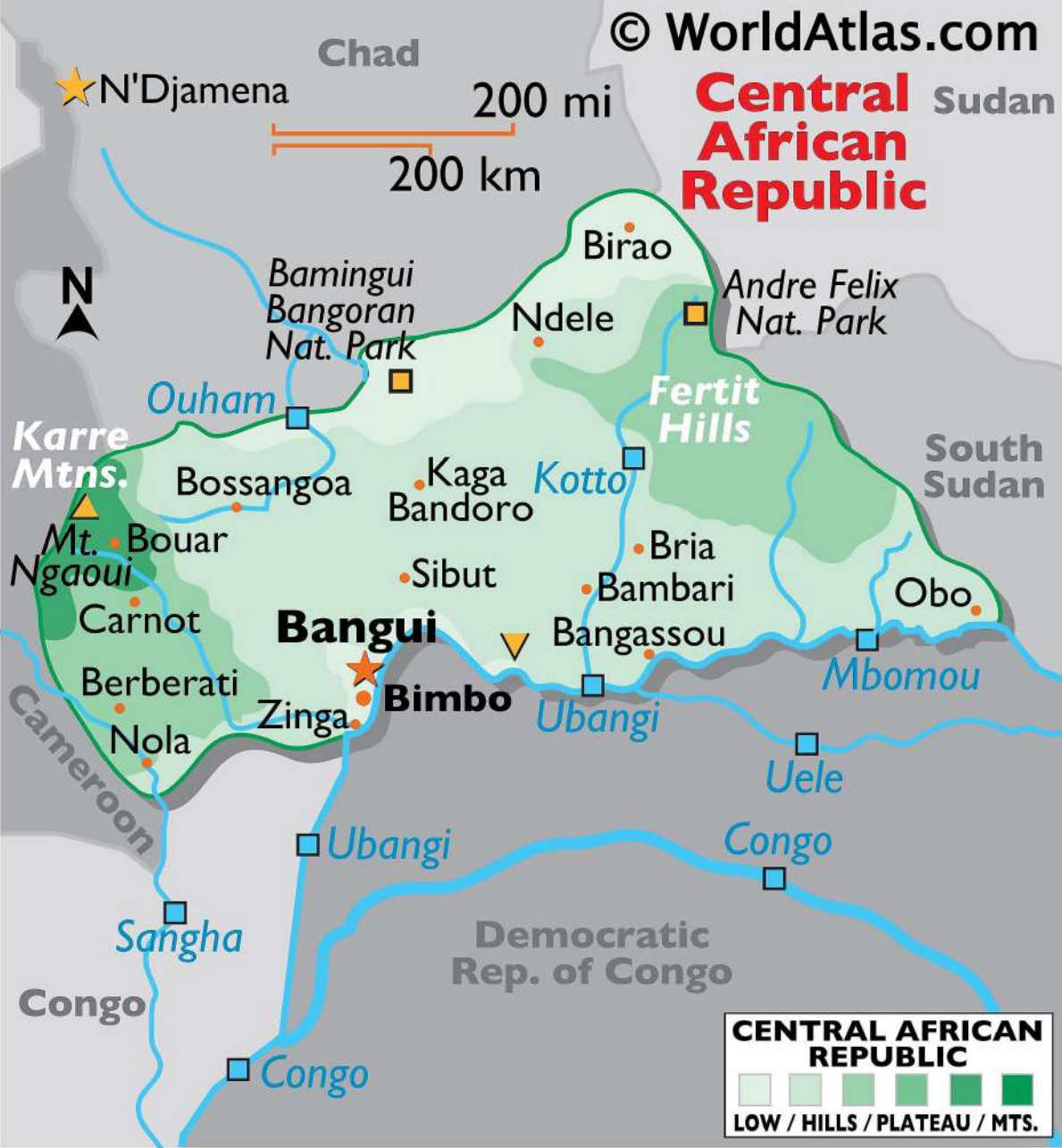


trapped under the rubble.

"Finding them alive would be a miracle," Yangue said. "We are saddened and heartbroken to see young men and women perish after coming to the mines to save their families from despair," he added.

AP

Central African Republic





1. **CONTEXT [GS-I – World Geography | GS-III – Natural Resources]**

A gold-mine collapse at **Zamboye**, in the **Abba** area of **Nana-Mambéré Prefecture**, western **Central African Republic**, killed 100+ people, highlighting the risks of unsafe artisanal mining.

2. **LOCATION IN NEWS – CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)**

- **Central Africa** | **Capital: Bangui** | **Landlocked**
- **Neighbours**: Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Republic of the Congo.
- **Resources**: Gold, diamonds, uranium and iron ore.

3. **SPECIFIC LOCATION – NANA-MAMBÉRÉ**

- **Prefecture in western CAR**; **headquarters**: Bouar.
- **Zamboye → Abba → Nana-Mambéré → Western CAR → Cameroon border.**
- **Cameroon lies to the west of Nana-Mambéré.**

A Palestinian state is the foundation for regional peace

There is one, and only one solution to the decades long, volatile and bloody situation in West Asia: the creation or the establishment of a sovereign, independent, viable Palestinian state. In essence, it is no different from the oft-touted two-state solution. But the **two-state formula** speaks of the establishment of two states living side by side in good neighbourliness. However, one state already exists. What is needed is to establish or create a new, second state, namely Palestine. There will never be peace and stability in the region unless this is done. All the conflicts in the region – Israel's war on Gaza, the Iran war, the Hezbollah-Israel war, the Houthi phenomenon – will not be resolved unless a viable Palestinian state comes into being. Israel's relations with its Arab neighbours will remain strained until it accepts the reality of a Palestinian state, just as the Arabs have reconciled to the reality of Israel.

United States President Donald Trump seems to have recognised the importance of working towards the creation of a Palestinian state. **Resolution 2803 setting up a Board of Peace (BoP), which was adopted by the United Nations Security Council in November 2025** has the following provision in its annex: "While Gaza re-development advances and when the PA [Palestinian Authority] reform program is faithfully carried out, the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood, which we recognize as the aspiration of the Palestinian people."

On Iran and Israel

A major player in this conflict-infested region is Iran. Iran has not always been hostile to Israel. Indeed, under the Shah, Iran's relations with Israel were cordial and there was a sizeable Jewish community in Iran. Since the Islamic revolution of 1979, most Jews left for Israel. But there are still about 15,000 Jews in Iran. Iran's Constitution provides for a seat for the Jewish community in Parliament.

Historically, there has not been perpetual enmity between Islam and Judaism. The Koran mentions many prophets and patriarchs from the Hebrew bible, such as Moses, and Abraham. The Crusades were fought between Muslims and Christians; the Jews were not a party to them. Jews were persecuted in countries professing Christianity. The Arabs bore no responsibility for the Holocaust which was carried out by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. It would not be an



C.R. Gharekhan

Former United Nations Coordinator for Occupied Territories and Special Envoy of India for West Asia

exaggeration to say that but for the Holocaust, and the sense of guilt felt by the western countries, Israel might not have been born. It is well known that most western countries, including the U.S., barred the entry of Jews seeking refuge from Hitler's Germany.

The transition from holy land to homeland started with the infamous Balfour Declaration of 1917 when the British expressed support for a homeland for the Jews, expressly limiting the indigenous Arab population only to civil and religious rights.

The roots of regional hostility

The hostility of Iran and the Arab countries towards Israel is based on the fact that Israel was created and imposed on the region at the expense of the indigenous Arab population. It is argued that the Palestinians were offered a state in the UN resolution of 1947 and a few times subsequently, but they rejected all offers. An Israeli Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, famously said that the Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. But one can hardly blame a landlord if he rejects an offer of a few rooms from an intruder who has occupied the whole house. Indeed, the slogan of the Zionists was: land without people for a people without land.

It is noteworthy that Hezbollah, a Shia movement, and Iran, a Shia-majority country, support Hamas, a Sunni movement. This is easily explained by their commitment to the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people. Israel naturally comes in for hostility as the only power that stands in the way of the emergence of an independent Palestine.

Hezbollah began launching rockets and missiles against Israel just after Israel started its war on Gaza after October 7, 2023. It follows that if Israel accepts the reality of a Palestinian state at some time, Hezbollah will have no reason to make the life of people in northern Israel difficult.

In that case, Iran too will stop supplying weapons to Hezbollah. This is not to suggest that if the Palestinians are able to exercise their right of self-determination, Iran and Israel will become friends. But without that, their mutual enmity will never abate. If an irreversible road map to a Palestinian state emerges and is accepted by all the parties, secondary issues such as the Strait of Hormuz will be much easier to resolve.

Since Hamas' terrorist attack on Israeli civilians in October 2023, whatever little support some in Israel had for the concept of a Palestinian state has evaporated. Israel's disproportionate and

ruthless strikes on Gaza, post October 7, might have almost isolated Israel, but in the process, the Gaza strip has been devastated and the possibility of the emergence of Palestine has receded by many years, perhaps decades. Consequently, peace and stability in the region have become an illusion.

Mediation is the key

The only way to have a realistic possibility of resolving the conflict is through external mediation. And the only external power that has the required influence and even goodwill with both sides is the United States. It is true that there is no such thing as an honest broker. But brokers, even non-honest ones, do manage to sell the transaction to the satisfaction, or equal non-satisfaction, of both parties.

Israel has insisted on bilateral talks, adding at the same time that there is no one on the other side to negotiate with. Usually, the stronger side insists on a bilateral approach, and the weaker side prefers an outside agency to help. The only time progress was achieved was when the Oslo Accord was concluded in 1993. Oslo was negotiated with the mediation or good offices of Norway.

Under Oslo, the Palestine Liberation Organization formally recognised Israel and the PA was created; it is this PA, albeit a reformed one, that is often mentioned as a possible caretaker government of Palestine. The Oslo Accords paved the way for Jordan's recognition of Israel and eventually the Abraham Accords.

The other viable broker is the UN. Israel at the moment is dead set against the UN and has even declared the UN Secretary-General *persona non grata*. But Israel owes its existence to the UN. There is nothing permanent in international relations. Positions evolve with evolving situations.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has his own personal reasons for opposing the idea of an independent Palestine. He had voted against the **Oslo Accords** and is implacably opposed to the idea of a Palestine state.

Let us hope that in due course, enlightened leadership will emerge in West Asia on all sides. If the leaders do not have the wisdom and the courage to make the necessary decisions, however difficult, the people of the region will remain doomed to suffer and be denied the peace and stability they need. Without these, they will never be able to realise the full potential for development that new technologies have to offer.

The road to peace in West Asia runs through Palestinian statehood

The term "two-state solution" is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of

- (a) China
- (b) Israel
- (c) Iraq
- (d) Yemen

1. **CONTEXT [GS-II – International Relations | West Asia]**

- The continuing Israel–Palestine conflict and Gaza crisis remain a major source of instability in West Asia, with the absence of a durable political settlement keeping Palestinian statehood and Israeli security at the centre of regional diplomacy.

2. **CORE ISSUE – WHY DOES THE CONFLICT PERSIST?**

- **Unresolved statehood**: A viable, sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel remains unrealised.
- **Security–sovereignty dilemma**: Israel prioritises security and demilitarisation, while Palestinians seek self-determination and sovereignty.
- **Territorial disputes**: West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, settlements and borders remain contested.
- **Political fragmentation**: The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza complicate unified Palestinian representation and governance.
- **Regionalisation**: The conflict is linked with Iran–Israel rivalry, Hezbollah and wider Arab–Israel relations, making it part of a broader regional-security problem.

3. **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND – KEY MILESTONES**

- **Balfour Declaration (1917)**: British support for a Jewish national home in Palestine.
- **UN Partition Plan (1947)**: Proposed separate Arab and Jewish states but was not implemented as envisaged.
- **1967 War**: Israeli occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza became central to the dispute.
- **Oslo Accords (1993)**: Israel and the PLO recognised each other and established the Palestinian Authority, but final-status issues remained unresolved.

Key lesson: Earlier initiatives created interim political arrangements but failed to resolve statehood, territory and security



4. CURRENT PEACE INITIATIVE — TRUMP'S BOARD OF PEACE

- **Board of Peace:** A US-led framework aimed at Gaza's post-war governance, security and reconstruction.
- **UNSC Resolution 2803 (2025):** Provided international backing, including a transitional Palestinian administration and an International Stabilization Force.
- **Core objective:** Ceasefire → Reconstruction → Transitional governance → Political settlement
- **Key limitation:** Its success depends on resolving Hamas's disarmament, Israeli security concerns and Gaza's future political status.

Mains takeaway: Post-war stabilisation can manage the crisis; only a credible political settlement can resolve it.

5. WHAT WOULD MAKE PEACE SUSTAINABLE?

- **Two-state framework:** A viable and contiguous Palestinian state alongside Israel.
- **Security guarantees:** Reconcile Israeli security with Palestinian sovereignty.
- **Legitimate governance:** Strengthen accountable Palestinian institutions capable of governing Gaza and the West Bank.
- **Reconstruction:** Restore infrastructure, healthcare, education and livelihoods in Gaza.
- **Regional diplomacy:** Connect Arab-Israeli normalisation with meaningful progress towards Palestinian statehood.
- **Effective mediation:** Combine US leverage, Arab influence and UN legitimacy.

EDITORIALS TO MAINS ANSWER INITIATIVE — DAY 12

**What are the major challenges to achieving sustainable peace in West Asia? Suggest measures to address them.
[10 Marks | 150 Words]**

**पश्चिम एशिया में सतत शांति प्राप्त करने की प्रमुख चुनौतियाँ क्या हैं? इनसे निपटने के उपाय सुझाइए।
[10 अंक | 150 शब्द]**

From scientific research to geopolitics: Why India needs a clear 'Arctic narrative'



EXPERT EXPLAINS
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 VETERAN SUBMARINER AND SENIOR FELLOW,
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INDIA HAS long viewed its engagement with the Arctic through the lens of scientific research. But the Arctic is evolving into a hub where climate change and geopolitics converge. Now, a report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, titled "India's Role and Presence in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions", asks: What is India's narrative on the Arctic?

Few realise that India, as part of the British Dominion, was among the original 14 signatories of the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, which entitles an Indian to visit Svalbard — an

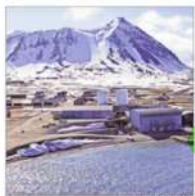
archipelago located between mainland Norway and the North Pole — without a visa and to engage in commercial ventures.

Today, India remains one of only two developing countries with a permanent scientific presence in the region, through the Himadri research station in Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard. The report, however, highlights a concerning gap between India's ambitions and its capabilities.

The Indian narrative

The first pillar of such a narrative must be climate security. India's dependence on the monsoon remains profound. Agriculture still accounts for roughly 18% of its gross domestic product and supports more than half of its population. Nearly 70% of India's annual rainfall comes from the southwest monsoon.

Scientific studies increasingly point to an Arctic-Indian monsoon teleconnection. Rapid Arctic warming and declining sea ice alter atmospheric circulation patterns that influence monsoon behaviour across South Asia, affecting rainfall patterns, agricultural productivity, food security and



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Svalbard archipelago, where India's Himadri research station is located.

economic growth in India.

Second, the Arctic is a major contributor to global sea-level rise. If current trends continue, entire low-lying island states — such as the Maldives — face existential threats. Large parts of Bangladesh and significant stretches of India's coastline could

experience recurrent flooding and displacement. By some estimates, more than 250 million people living in vulnerable coastal regions of South Asia could be affected by mid-century.

For India, this is not merely an environmental issue. Large-scale climate-induced migration from neighbouring regions could create unprecedented humanitarian, social and security challenges.

Geopolitical importance

Two of India's closest strategic partners, the US and Russia, are Arctic nations. China, India's principal long-term adversary, has invested heavily in Arctic infrastructure, research and shipping despite being an extra-regional state.

The Arctic is increasingly emerging as a battleground for major powers, with maritime access, energy security, and critical mineral supply chains intersecting.

India also maintains friendly relations with other Arctic nations, as was evident in the recent India-Nordic Summit. The question is whether India is prepared to engage at a scale commensurate with its interests.

In terms of engagement, India's present challenge is structural: responsibility for Arctic affairs is fragmented across multiple divisions within the Ministry of External Affairs. The Arctic states and Arctic Council-related matters are handled by four different territorial and functional divisions, making a coherent whole-of-government Arctic engagement difficult.

India, despite having an Arctic Policy since 2022, still lacks a dedicated senior official responsible for Arctic affairs.

Polar Research Vessel

Without an ice-class research vessel, India's scientific footprint in the Arctic remains largely confined to Svalbard. Access to the wider Arctic Ocean depends on collaboration with foreign partners and on the availability of chartered vessels.

The committee notes that India needs a dedicated Polar Research Vessel (PRV) to undertake meaningful pan-Arctic research. An indigenous PRV, despite being sanctioned in 2014, is expected to be delivered only towards the end of this decade.

Meanwhile, China offers an example: it

acquired a second-hand icebreaker from Ukraine and developed indigenous capability. Today, it operates several polar-capable vessels and is the second country after Russia to be building a nuclear icebreaker.

Shortfall in funding

The report's most striking revelation concerns funding. India spent just Rs 17.53 crore on Arctic activities in 2024-25; less than one-tenth of its expenditure on Antarctica and less than the cost of building a kilometre of a flyover. For a region that affects sea-level rise along India's 11,098-km coastline and is a climate and geopolitical hotspot, the figure appears apologetic.

On the mismatch between interests and investments, the Committee effectively asks: if the Arctic is important enough to warrant a national policy, a dedicated parliamentary study, and repeated diplomatic engagement with Arctic states, why does India's budgetary commitment suggest otherwise?

India needs a coherent Arctic narrative. The Arctic Policy provided the framework. The Parliamentary panel identified gaps. Now, policy must translate into capability.

1. **CONTEXT [GS-II – International Relations | GS-III – Environment]**

A recent Parliamentary Standing Committee report on India's Role and Presence in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions has highlighted a gap between India's growing Arctic interests and its limited institutional, financial and technological capabilities.

2. **WHY IS THE ARCTIC IMPORTANT FOR INDIA?**

- **Climate & monsoon:** Arctic warming can influence atmospheric circulation and the Indian monsoon, affecting agriculture, water and food security.
- **Sea-level rise:** Accelerated Arctic ice melt contributes to global sea-level rise, posing long-term risks to India's 11,098-km coastline and coastal population.
- **Emerging maritime route:** Melting sea ice is increasing the navigability of the Arctic Ocean, making the Northern Sea Route (NSR) strategically relevant for global shipping and India's connectivity with Europe.
- **Energy & critical minerals:** The Arctic holds significant energy resources and critical minerals, creating potential implications for India's long-term supply-chain security.
- **Geopolitics:** The Arctic is increasingly a zone of competition involving Russia, the US, China and other Arctic states, making it relevant to India's strategic interests.

3. **INDIA'S EXISTING PRESENCE**

- **Svalbard Treaty (1920):** India was among the original signatories, giving Indians treaty-based rights to access Svalbard and undertake certain commercial activities.
- **Himadri:** India established its permanent Arctic research station at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard, Norway, in 2008. India is one of only two developing countries with a permanent scientific presence in the Arctic.
- **Arctic Council:** India has been an Observer since 2013, enabling participation in working groups but not decision-making.
- **Arctic Policy, 2022:** Provides the broad framework for India's engagement, centred on science, climate, environmental protection, economic cooperation and governance.



4. THE CORE GAP — INTEREST VS CAPABILITY

- **Low funding:** India spent only ₹17.53 crore on Arctic activities in 2024–25, according to the parliamentary committee—less than one-tenth of its Antarctica expenditure.
- **Institutional fragmentation:** Arctic-related responsibilities are spread across multiple divisions, making a coherent national strategy difficult.
- **No dedicated senior leadership:** The committee recommended a Polar Ambassador to coordinate India's polar diplomacy.
- **Research-vessel deficit:** India's dedicated Polar Research Vessel, sanctioned in 2014, remains pending; this limits independent access to Arctic waters and research.
- **Capability gap vis-à-vis China:** China has developed stronger polar infrastructure and operates several polar-capable vessels, demonstrating the importance of maritime and technological capability.

5. WAY FORWARD — FROM POLICY TO CAPABILITY

- **Strengthen institutions:** Appoint a Polar Ambassador and establish better inter-ministerial coordination.
- **Build research capacity:** Expedite an indigenous Polar Research Vessel; consider interim charter/acquisition of an ice-capable vessel.
- **Increase investment:** Align Arctic funding with India's climate, economic and strategic interests.
- **Deepen partnerships:** Expand cooperation with Arctic and Nordic countries in science, climate research, maritime technology and critical minerals.
- **Maintain a rules-based approach:** Pursue Arctic engagement through international law, environmental sustainability and Arctic Council mechanisms.

Why is the Supreme Court examining polygamy again?

What are the petitioners seeking? What has the court ruled on polygamy before?

Ziya Us Salam

The story so far:

The Muslim men's supposed right to have multiple wives is once again before the Supreme Court. Following a petition challenging the constitutional status of polygamy, the court sought the Centre's response last week. It also asked the Centre to consider taking suitable legislative steps to abolish the practice for all citizens, irrespective of religion. The petition was filed by five activists, who sought to have polygamy treated as a criminal offence under Section 82 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Incidentally, Section 82 applies to non-Muslims and provides for a punishment of up to seven years for marrying another person during the subsistence of an existing marriage. The petitioners also sought annulment of the exemptions granted under Muslim Personal Law.

What are the petitioners seeking?

The five petitioners challenged the constitutional validity of Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, which permits polygamy. They claimed that the said Act is against the Constitution's Articles 14, 15, and 16, which provide equality to all citizens irrespective of their religion or gender. They also requested the court to direct the Union government to take steps towards the codification of Muslim Personal Law to ensure that its provisions run parallel to Constitutional provisions of gender equality.

They sought compulsory registration of Muslim marriages and divorces with State authorities to prevent any second or subsequent marriage of a man with a subsisting marriage. In case this was flouted, the first wife and children should have the first and lasting right to the matrimonial home.

The petitioners also sought the court to direct the Law Commission of India or the

Union government to prepare a draft for the codification of Muslim Personal Law that aligns marriage, divorce, and succession with constitutional principles of gender equality. Incidentally, two of the activists had reached out to the Supreme Court to prohibit instant triple talaq in the famous Shayara Bano and others case. Then too, they argued that the practice of triple talaq violates fundamental rights of women. Following their petition, the apex court had invalidated instant triple talaq in August 2017. The court had then refrained from giving its verdict on polygamy and nikah halala, which too had been sought. Following the verdict, the Centre framed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act in 2019. The Act made instant triple talaq a punishable offence.

What has the court ruled before?

In the much-talked-about Sarla Mudgal case of 1995, the Supreme Court prohibited a Hindu man with a subsisting

marriage from converting to Islam purely for the purpose of marrying for the second time. The court noted, "the second marriage of a Hindu husband after converting to Islam without having dissolved the first marriage is void."

The court ruled on similar lines in the *Lily Thomas v. Union of India* case in 2000. Here the Supreme Court reiterated its stand of the Sarla Mudgal case, holding that a second marriage contracted after a feigned conversion to Islam was illegal and punishable under Section 494 of the Indian Penal Code.

Does Islam sanction polygamy?

Contrary to the contention that the Quran encourages polygamy, the book encourages monogamy. It permits a man to have up to four wives in special circumstances, such as marrying a widow or an orphan. It, however, makes it incumbent upon him to grant them complete equality. This being a practical impossibility, it asks men to desist from multiple marriages.

Says verse 3 of Surah Nisa, "If you fear you might fail to give orphan women their due rights if you were to marry them, then marry other women of your choice – two, three, or four. But if you are afraid you will fail to maintain justice, then content yourselves with one." Pertinently, this verse was revealed at a time when many men used to have multiple spouses, their numbers often running into three figures.

THE GIST

▼ The Supreme Court has sought the Centre's response to a petition challenging polygamy under Muslim Personal Law and asked it to consider legislative steps to abolish the practice for all citizens, irrespective of religion.

▼ The petitioners have challenged the constitutional validity of the law permitting polygamy, seeking its criminalisation, compulsory registration of Muslim marriages and divorces, and codification of Muslim Personal Law in line with gender equality.



1. **CONTEXT [GS-II – Fundamental Rights | Personal Laws]**

The Supreme Court is examining a fresh challenge to polygamy under Muslim Personal Law, raising the constitutional question of how religious freedom can be balanced with equality, dignity and gender justice.

2. **WHAT IS THE ISSUE?**

- The petitioners have challenged Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, to the extent that it requires Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) to be applied as the “rule of decision” in matters including marriage and dissolution of marriage, thereby giving legal recognition to personal-law practices such as polygamy, which they contend violate the constitutional guarantees of equality, non-discrimination and dignity under Articles 14, 15 and 21.
- They contend that polygamy violates Articles 14, 15 and 21 and seek its abolition.
- The petitions also seek stronger safeguards such as compulsory registration of marriages and divorces and protection of women and children from the consequences of subsequent marriages.

3. **THE CORE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION**

The issue lies at the intersection of: Article 25 — Freedom of religion versus Articles 14, 15 & 21 — Equality, non-discrimination and dignity

- Article 25 is not absolute and is subject to public order, morality, health and other Fundamental Rights.
- The key question is whether polygamy enjoys protection as an essential religious practice, or whether it can be regulated in the interest of gender equality and dignity.
- Article 44 adds the wider dimension of reforming personal laws through the idea of a Uniform Civil Code.

4. **PREVIOUS JUDICIAL DEVELOPMENTS**

- Sarla Mudgal (1995): Conversion to Islam cannot be used by a Hindu husband to circumvent the existing marriage and contract another marriage.
- Lily Thomas (2000): Reaffirmed that conversion does not automatically dissolve the existing Hindu marriage.
- Shayara Bano (2017): The Supreme Court invalidated instant triple talaq, strengthening the debate over constitutional scrutiny of discriminatory personal-law practices.

Important: The earlier cases do not directly decide the constitutional validity of polygamy itself.

● INDIA, THE WORLD'S BIGGEST CRUDE STEEL PRODUCER AFTER CHINA, MEETS 95% OF ITS COKING COAL NEEDS THROUGH IMPORTS

Steel mills face margin squeeze as global coking coal prices rise

Reuters

New Delhi, August 19

INDIAN STEEL mills are facing mounting pressure on margins as higher coking coal prices, driven by supply disruptions in Australia and China and the Iran war, raise steelmaking costs, executives and analysts said.

India, the world's biggest crude steel producer after China, meets 95% of its coking coal needs through imports, with at least half shipped from Australia. Coking coal accounts for nearly 40% of steel production costs.

Squeezed margins could impede investment and delay capacity expansion as Indian

steelmakers step up spending to meet buoyant domestic demand driven by infrastructure and strong economic growth.

Premium hard coking coal prices jumped 25% from last year to average \$236 per metric ton freight on board (FOB) Australia in the first seven months of 2026, said Banmeet Khurmi, lead, metallurgical coal and coke market service, at consultancy CRU in Sydney.

"Prices have been higher this year due to supply disruptions in Australia, slower-than-expected ramp-up at new mines, price support from the conflict in the Middle East and, more recently, a large accident in Shanxi, China," Khurmi said.



Every \$10 jump in coking coal price adds \$7-\$9 per metric ton to steelmaking costs. REUTERS

Costs are likely to remain high in the second half of the year, partly due to the loss of supply following the Shanxi coal mine

disaster, said Freddie Brooks, commodities analyst at BMI, a unit of Fitch Solutions. For blast furnace-based steelmakers,

every \$10 a ton increase in coking coal prices adds approximately \$7 to \$9 per metric ton to steelmaking costs, said an executive at a large steel mill, who was not authorised to speak to the media.

Higher coking coal prices have squeezed margins, three other executives at leading steelmakers said, with little headroom to raise steel prices, given competition from cheap Chinese steel.

Shipments from China have increased despite import tariffs on some grades. Coking coal imports are expected to rise by between 2 million and 3 million tons in 2026-27 from 64 million tons a year earlier, commodities

consultancy BigMint said. With the higher demand for imports, comes higher transport costs, partly due to disruptions from the U.S.-Iran war.

"Trade flows have tightened with high demand from India and higher diesel, freight and insurance costs," said Hui Ting Sim, vice president at Moody's Ratings. Australia is expected to continue meeting at least half of India's coking coal needs, although imports from Russia, Mozambique and the United States are also set to rise.

Discounts on Russian coal, which accounted for 24% of India's coking coal imports in recent years, have diminished over the past two years, Khurmi said.

1. **CONTEXT [Prelims – Economy | Steel & Coal]**

Rising global coking-coal prices are putting pressure on Indian steelmakers, as India is the world's second-largest crude steel producer but depends on imports for about 95% of its coking-coal requirement.

2. **INDIA'S POSITION**

- **Steel:** India is the 2nd-largest crude steel producer globally, after China, with domestic steel demand rising due to infrastructure and economic growth.
- **Coking coal:** It is essential for the blast-furnace route of steelmaking. It is converted into coke, which provides heat and acts as a reducing agent.
- **Import dependence:** Around 95% of India's coking-coal requirement is imported, with Australia supplying at least half.
- **Cost importance:** Coking coal accounts for nearly 40% of steel-production costs in blast-furnace-based production.
- **Policy response:** In January 2026, India classified coking coal as a Critical and Strategic Mineral under the MMDR framework to accelerate exploration and mining and reduce import dependence.

3. **IMPACT ON INDIA**

- **Margin squeeze:** Steelmakers have limited scope to raise steel prices because of competition from relatively cheaper Chinese steel.
- **Capacity expansion:** Persistently high input costs could reduce investment and delay new steel-capacity expansion.
- **Import vulnerability:** Higher prices and India's heavy import dependence expose the steel sector to global commodity shocks, geopolitical disruptions and freight volatility.
- **Growing import requirement:** India's coking-coal imports are expected to rise by 2–3 million tonnes in 2026–27, from about 64 million tonnes the previous year.
- **Supply-source pattern:** Australia remains the dominant supplier; Russia, Mozambique and the US are also important sources, while India is exploring additional supplies such as from Mongolia.

INDIA'S COCONUT SECTOR

GLOBAL NO.1 PRODUCER

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

**INDIA RANKS FIRST IN
GLOBAL COCONUT PRODUCTION**

**KERALA – HIGHEST
AREA UNDER CULTIVATION**

**TAMIL NADU – HIGHEST
PRODUCTION**

**ANDHRA PRADESH – HIGHEST
PRODUCTIVITY**

