

Currently: 2&3rd August 2026

1. Doxxing: The growing threat to online privacy

**Source: Indian Express Explained | GS II – Governance
(Privacy, Digital Rights, Data Protection)**

2. Strong health systems for all with better public spending

**Source: The Hindu | P6 | GS II – Governance
(Public Health, Healthcare Infrastructure, Resource Allocation)**

3. Analysing the Supreme Court's judgment on sex work

**Source: The Hindu | P7 | GS II/IV – Polity & Ethics
(Article 21, Human Dignity, Fundamental Rights)**

4. A Lepidoptera hotspot, India is home to 8.25% of the world's butterflies, moths

**Source: The Hindu | P12 | GS III – Environment
(Biodiversity, Conservation, Ecosystem Services)**

5. Drugs-free youth crucial for developed India: Modi

**Source: The Hindu | P10 | GS II – Social Justice
(Substance Abuse, Youth Development, Public Health)**

6. 3.9 lakh cases pending, Centre tells states to set up special courts for drug crimes

**Source: Indian Express | P5 | GS II – Governance
(NDPS Act, Judicial Pendency, Drug Trafficking)**

7. Distress and dispute: Karnataka and Tamil Nadu should evolve a distress-sharing formula

**Source: The Hindu | P6 | GS II/III – Polity & Water
(Federalism, River Water Disputes, Cooperative Federalism)**

For doxxing victims in India, a patchwork of laws to navigate

Vineet Bhalla

New Delhi, August 2

WOMEN WHO participated in the protests at Delhi's Jantar Mantar are finding themselves at the centre of an online backlash.

Social media accounts have shared videos and photographs of a number of such women at the protests, and made public their personal details such as phone numbers and home addresses. This has resulted in instances of harassment, including rape and death threats.

The act of publicly revealing private personal information to intimidate or shame someone is known as doxxing. Despite its severe real-world consequences, doxxing is not explicitly defined or penalised as a criminal offence under Indian law. Legal experts say that victims have to navigate a patchwork of existing statutes under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Information Technology (IT) Act to find recourse.

Laws in India

The issue must be viewed in two parts, Supreme Court lawyer Shruti Narayan told *The Indian Express*: dissemination of personal information, and subsequent threats or harassment based on that information. The latter is easier to prosecute under criminal law.

If doxxing leads to someone monitoring a woman's internet use or trying to contact her repeatedly, it attracts Section 78 of the BNS, which deals with stalking. Rape and death threats fall under Section 351 of the BNS, which deals with criminal intimidation. If the victim is a minor, Section 12 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act is invoked.

Supreme Court lawyer Prasanna S said that if the

doxxing involves the publication of pictures that humiliate a woman, it can trigger Section 79 of the BNS — which punishes acts "intended to insult the modesty of a woman" and those that "intrude upon the privacy of... a woman". If the published content relates to the violation of one's reputation, provisions for criminal defamation can be invoked, he added.

However, when it comes to the mere publication of personal data, the law is uncertain. Prasanna explained that the act of doxxing itself is largely treated as a civil offence under the IT Act, rather than a criminal one, "unless intimate images are shared".

Section 66E of the IT Act criminalises the capturing or publishing of images of private body parts without consent. For general personal data, victims have to rely on Section 72A of the IT Act, which penalises the unauthorised disclosure of information. But this section primarily provides for a financial penalty of up to Rs 5 lakh, making it a civil wrong rather than a criminal offence.

Platform accountability

Victims can also hold social media platforms accountable. Under the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, platforms are legally obligated to make reasonable efforts to prevent users from hosting information "invasive of another's privacy including bodily privacy, insulting or harassing on the basis of gender".

The Rules mandate strict timelines for platforms to act. Intermediaries are required to acknowledge complaints within 24 hours and resolve them within seven days. For complaints regarding content that falls under specific severe categories — such as privacy invasions or harassment — platforms must resolve the issue within 36 hours.

If a platform fails to comply with these rules or ignores court orders, it risks losing its "safe harbour" protection — a legal immunity that shields tech companies from being prosecuted for what users post on their sites. In practice, however, "different platforms of course have varying levels of responsiveness and safety tools," Namrata Maheshwari, Asia Pacific Policy Manager and Global Encryption Policy Lead at Access Now, an international digital rights organisation, told *The Indian Express*.

For immediate relief, lawyers advise victims to preserve all evidence, including screenshots and URLs of the abusive posts.

• WHAT IS DOXXING?

• The act of publicly revealing private personal information to intimidate or shame someone is known as doxxing.

• Despite its severe real-world consequences, doxxing is not explicitly defined or penalised as a criminal offence under Indian law.

The terms 'WannaCry, Petya and EternalBlue' sometimes mentioned in the news recently are related to

- (a) Exoplanets
- (b) Cryptocurrency
- (c) Cyber attacks
- (d) Mini satellites



I. Context (GS-II: Governance & Fundamental Rights | GS-III: Cyber Security)

The issue highlights the growing challenge of online privacy violations and the need for a robust legal framework to protect individuals from cyber harassment and misuse of personal data.

II. What is Doxxing?

Definition: Public disclosure of a person's personal information without consent to harass, threaten or intimidate.

A. **Information disclosed:** Phone number | Address | Email | Workplace | Photographs

B. **Consequences:** Stalking | Online harassment | Identity theft | Reputational damage | Physical threats

C. **Legal Status:** Not a standalone criminal offence in India.

III. Important Types of Cyber Attacks

A. **Phishing:** Fraudulent emails/messages to steal confidential information.

B. **Ransomware:** Encrypts data and demands ransom (e.g., WannaCry, Petya).

C. **Malware:** Malicious software that damages systems or steals data.

D. **Spyware:** Secretly collects user information.

E. **Zero-day Attack:** Exploits software vulnerabilities before a security patch is released.

F. **Man-in-the-Middle (MITM):** Intercepts communication to steal or manipulate data.



IV. Legal Framework

A. No Separate Law for Doxxing

* India has no dedicated law to criminalise or prevent doxxing; victims rely on multiple legal provisions.

B. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023

* **Section 78**: Stalking | **Section 79**: Invasion of privacy/modesty of a woman | **Section 351**: Criminal intimidation

C. Information Technology Act, 2000

* **Section 66E**: Publication of private images without consent | **Section 72A**: Unauthorised disclosure of personal information

D. Other Safeguards

* **POCSO Act, 2012 (Section 12)**: Protection for minors | **IT Rules, 2021**: Grievance redressal, intermediary due diligence & timely content removal

V. Way Forward

Dedicated anti-doxxing law | Stronger data protection regime | Greater platform accountability | Enhanced cyber awareness

A lepidoptera hotspot, India is home to 8.25% of the world's butterflies, moths

Shiv Sahay Singh

KOLKATA

India is home to 13,703 species of lepidoptera – butterflies and moths – which is about 8.25% of the total lepidoptera found across the globe.

Scientists of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have come out with a detailed “Catalogue of Lepidoptera (Butterflies & Moths) of India”, which has been published in the peer-reviewed journal *Zootaxa*.

ZSI scientists Navneet Singh and Rahul Joshi took almost 12 years to complete the monumental work of cataloguing, field exploration, museum curation, and rigorous literature verification.

“There have been attempts to classify and catalogue lepidoptera for over 100 years. There are 13,703 species of butterflies and moths across 3,705 genera,



Of the 13,703 species of lepidoptera found in India, 12,286 are moths and 1,417 are butterflies. M. PERIASAMY

240 subfamilies, 102 families, and 31 superfamilies,” Mr. Singh said.

Of the 13,703 species of lepidoptera, 1,417 are butterflies, and the remaining 12,286 are moths, Mr. Singh said.

The scientific work bridges critical taxonomic gaps that have persisted for more than 100 years, since the first historical attempts to document the region's insect fauna, a Press Infor-

mation Bureau release stated. “It firmly positions India among a select group of megadiverse nations possessing a fully updated, centralised, and authoritative baseline inventory of its butterfly and moth diversity,” the release said.

Crucial role

Butterflies and moths play crucial roles in maintaining ecological equilibrium, serving as essential herbi-

vores, detritivores, and pollinators, while acting as vital food resources for birds, bats, and other insectivores, the ZSI scientists said.

“These catalogue volumes will serve as a vital national asset for biodiversity research, ecological monitoring, and global conservation strategies. Such comprehensive catalogues ensure these species are given an authoritative voice, a clear legal identity, and a permanent place in scientific history,” Dhriti Banerjee, Director, ZSI, said.

Among the 13,703 species of lepidoptera, the scientists have identified and catalogued 2,205 species of Geometroidea, nocturnal pollinators taking over the “night shift” when daytime butterflies rest. These 2,205 species account for 8.8% of the world's known species in this superfamily.

Recently, for the first time in our country, which of the following States has declared a particular butterfly as 'State Butterfly'?

(a) Arunachal Pradesh

(b) Himachal Pradesh

(c) Karnataka

(d) Maharashtra

I. Context (GS-III: Environment & Biodiversity | Prelims: Species Diversity & Taxonomy)

The article highlights India's rich Lepidoptera diversity and the publication of the first comprehensive national catalogue by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), strengthening biodiversity documentation and conservation.

II. Prelims Value Addition

- A. **Lepidoptera**: Order of insects comprising butterflies & moths; characterised by scale-covered wings and important as pollinators & bio-indicators.
- B. **Zoological Survey** of India (ZSI): 1916 | HQ–Kolkata | MoEFCC | Nodal agency for faunal survey, taxonomy & biodiversity documentation.
- C. **Geometroidea**: A superfamily of moths (“inchworm moths”); 2,205 species recorded in India.
- D. **Blue Mormon**: State Butterfly of Maharashtra | India's second-largest butterfly | Protected under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

III. Key Highlights

- A. **India's Lepidoptera Diversity**: 13,703 species (8.25% of global diversity) | 1,417 butterflies | 12,286 moths
- B. **National Catalogue**: Published by ZSI in Zootaxa after 12 years of field surveys, museum studies and taxonomic verification.
- C. **Taxonomic Coverage**: 3,705 genera | 240 subfamilies | 102 families | 31 superfamilies
- D. **Scientific Significance**: Bridges century-old taxonomic gaps | Provides an authoritative national database | Supports biodiversity research & conservation planning.

Drugs-free youth crucial for developed India: Modi

The PM launches nationwide campaign against drugs, says physically and mentally fit young Indians are key for 'Viksit Bharat'; over one crore participants join pledge against substance abuse

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

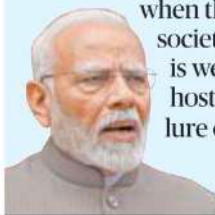
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday laid out a national vision for building a drugs-free youth population as the foundation of "Viksit Bharat" (developed India). Stressing the need for sustained action and community participation to combat drug abuse, he said today's youth would eventually enjoy the fruits of a developed India.

After launching the *Nasha Mukta Yuva* for Viksit Bharat *Sankalp Abhiyan* (Drug-Free Youth for Developed India Pledge Campaign), Mr. Modi said that as India has set the goal of becoming a developed country, it was essential for the youth to remain physically and mentally fit, and therefore stay away from drug abuse.

Supported by more than 125 spiritual and public organisations, educational institutions, and industrial associations, the programme was conducted at over 28,000 locations across the country and saw participation from over one crore youth, besides several Chief Ministers and



When a young person falls into drug addiction, it is not only that individual who loses. A dream dies before it can be fulfilled. An entire family suffers and often falls apart... when this happens in families and society, the strength of the country is weakened as well. That is why hostile countries also conspire to lure our youth into drug addiction



NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

Governors.

Before the Prime Minister's address, the participating youth pledged to make India drugs-free.

'Youth to lead India'

Mr. Modi said the initiative required collective action. "The pledge taken today will continue over the next 100 weeks. Every Sunday, activities related to art, culture, sports, meditation, spirituality, and service will be organised. The message of a drug-free life will reach more and more people," he said.

"Over the next 20 to 25 years, you will shape your own lives, and by 2047, it is you who will lead India to the goal of becoming a developed country. You will be the ones enjoying the

fruits of that achievement," he said, addressing the youth.

Noting that young people were today excelling in start-ups, leading the field of Artificial Intelligence, setting new milestones in sports, science and space, he said the country needed their energy, imagination, and talent.

"That is why it is essential that you remain free from drugs, for both your own future and for the country... When a young person falls into drug addiction, it is not only that individual who loses. A dream dies before it can be fulfilled. An entire family suffers and often falls apart," said Mr. Modi.

"When this happens in families and society, the

strength of the country is weakened as well. That is why hostile countries also conspire to lure our youth into drug addiction. Profiting from drug trafficking while weakening our country is part of their malicious agenda. Therefore, we must protect every young person from falling into the trap," he said.

Mr. Modi urged people not to hide cases of addiction and to seek professional help for young people struggling with substance abuse, pointing out that rehabilitation centres have been established to aid their recovery. "Someone who defeats addiction is a true warrior. Society should respect them and give them a second chance," he said.

The Prime Minister said the government had been taking stringent action against drug traffickers and dealers. "Compared with previous years, arrests have increased significantly. This shows how seriously our government is tackling this issue," he said, expressing confidence that the government would continue the mission with full commitment.

3.9 lakh cases pending, Centre tells states to set up special courts for drug crimes

Punjab, with 60,000 cases pending, has no special NDPS court; Kerala, with a backlog of 50,000 cases, has just two

Mahender Singh Manral
New Delhi, August 2

WITH ABOUT 3.96 lakh cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act pending across the country, the Ministry of Home Affairs has asked all states and Union Territories to set up ex-

INSIDE

PAGE 5

**PM ASKS YOUTH TO
TAKE PLEDGE AGAINST
SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

clusive courts for narcotics-related cases. The direction came after the MHA was informed in

• States with most pending NDPS cases

States	Pending cases	Special courts	Proposed courts
Punjab	60,000	0	5
Kerala	50,000	2	9
Odisha	17,000	8	0
Tamil Nadu	15,000	5	6
Karnataka	15,000	3	8

SOURCE: MHA MEETING HELD IN JULY

a meeting that 22 states are yet to set up special NDPS courts.

In the last six months, the Union Home Ministry has held

multiple meetings with chief secretaries and home secretaries of states and UTs on the

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Drugs-free youth crucial for developed India: Modi



The PM launches nationwide campaign against drugs; over one crore participants join pledge against substance abuse.

The Hindu, 3 Aug 2026, Page 10

The Indian EXPRESS

3.9 lakh NDPS cases pending, Centre tells states to set up special courts for drug crimes



With about 3.96 lakh NDPS cases pending across the country, the Centre has asked all States/UTs to set up exclusive Special NDPS Courts to ensure speedy disposal.

Indian Express, 3 Aug 2026, Page 1

CURRENTLY - MAINS ONE PAGER

CONTEXT

The Union Government has launched 'Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan', a nationwide campaign to combat substance abuse through awareness, prevention, rehabilitation and community participation with the objective of building a drug-free youth population for Viksit Bharat@2047.

SYLLABUS LINKAGE

GS-II : Health, Social Justice
GS-III : Internal Security,
Organised Crime, Drug Trafficking

UPSC MAINS QUESTION (10 MARKS | 150 WORDS)

A drug-free youth population is essential for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047. Discuss the Government's initiatives to combat drug abuse. Highlight the key challenges and suggest measures to improve their effectiveness.

I. GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- **Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan** : Nationwide movement promoting awareness, behavioural change and youth participation against substance abuse.
- **Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan** : Focuses on demand reduction through education, counselling, prevention and rehabilitation.
- **Legal Framework** : Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 provides legal tools to curb production, trafficking and consumption of narcotics.
- **Institutional Measures** : Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), State anti-narcotics agencies, de-addiction centres and public awareness campaigns.
- **Community Participation** : Involvement of schools, colleges, NGOs, spiritual organisations, parents and local communities. Over 1 crore youth participated in the anti-drug pledge across 28,000+ locations.

II. KEY CHALLENGES

- **Judicial Delays** : Nearly 3.9 lakh NDPS cases are pending across the country, leading to slow justice and reduced deterrence.
- **Institutional Gaps** : Many States still lack adequate Special NDPS Courts and rehabilitation infrastructure.
- **Evolving Drug Networks** : Rise in synthetic drugs, darknet platforms and cross-border trafficking makes enforcement complex.
- **Rehabilitation Deficit** : Limited number of de-addiction centres, shortage of trained professionals and poor post-recovery support often lead to relapse.
- **Social Barriers** : Peer pressure, stigma, lack of awareness and family support discourage individuals from seeking treatment.

III. MEASURES TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS

- **Strengthen Prevention** : Integrate drug education in school and college curricula; regular awareness and life-skills programmes.
- **Enhance Enforcement** : Increase number of Special NDPS Courts, improve forensic capacity, leverage technology and financial intelligence to dismantle drug networks.
- **Expand Rehabilitation** : Scale up de-addiction centres, counselling services, mental health support and livelihood/skill development for recovered individuals.
- **Improve Coordination** : Strengthen Centre-State coordination, intelligence sharing and border surveillance with neighbouring countries.
- **Community Ownership** : Encourage families, civil society, educational institutions and youth groups to sustain behavioural change and reduce stigma.

CONSTITUTIONAL & LEGAL LINKAGES

- ➔ **Article 21** : Right to life and personal liberty includes the right to health.
- ➔ **Article 47** : Duty of the State to improve public health and prohibit the consumption of intoxicating drugs injurious to health.
- ➔ **NDPS Act, 1985** : Principal legislation to regulate and control narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- ➔ **Special NDPS Courts** : To ensure speedy trial and disposal of narcotics-related cases.

CONCLUSION

A drug-free youth population is vital for India's public health, social harmony, internal security and economic growth. The Nasha Mukta Yuva for Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan is a step in the right direction through awareness, prevention and rehabilitation. However, addressing judicial delays, institutional gaps and evolving drug threats with a technology-enabled, coordinated and community-driven approach is essential to achieve a drug-free India and realise the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

Strong health systems for all with better public spending

The discourse on building strong public health systems tends to start with financing. Indeed, according to the World Bank, the per capita public spending on universal health coverage in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) – including government expenditure and off-budget development assistance – is about half of the minimum benchmarks. As a share of gross domestic product (GDP), the health expenditure gap between LMICs and high-income countries narrowed from 2.05 percentage points in 2000 to 1.68 percentage points in 2023. While it may seem that LMICs are “catching up”, recent World Health Organization data show that in per capita terms the gap has in fact expanded more than three-fold during this period.

Health aid under pressure

Over the years, “development assistance for health” (DAH) has played a critical role in supplementing national budgets in LMICs with the amount of such aid peaking in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the trend of increasing DAH reversed sharply post the pandemic. Further, in early 2025, the United States, a country that has historically contributed over a third of all DAH globally per year, announced cuts to the tune of 67% to its foreign assistance programme. The United Kingdom, France, and Germany followed suit, with cuts of 39%, 35%, and 12%, respectively. As per the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), health funding could drop by up to 60% from its 2022 peak.

At the same time, national budgets are strained due to rising public debt and its costs. Global public debt reached a record figure of \$102 trillion in 2024, with developing countries accounting for \$31 trillion of this total. Since 2010, the public debt of developing countries has grown twice as fast as that of advanced countries. In 2024, according to UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), developing countries paid a record \$921 billion in net interest payments in public



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With foreign aid cuts and strained domestic budgets, the way forward may be to spend available money better

debt leaving less for other needs including health.

With public sources drying up, it is unlikely that more money will flow into health systems anytime soon and the way forward may be to spend available money better. There are three broad ways to make public health spending go further.

The first is to spend what is allocated. The World Bank reports that health budgets in LMICs are executed at around 85%-90%, rates that are lower than that for the general budget and for education. This effectively means that there is a deprioritisation of health at the implementation stage of budgets. In India, a parliamentary panel found that only about two-thirds of the allocation for the flagship health infrastructure mission was spent in 2024-25. Within the National Health Mission (NHM), the picture is worse: just 26% of the money earmarked for communicable and non-communicable disease programmes was actually used that year.

The right health investments

The second is to spend on the right things. Budget execution varies across expenditure categories. While wages and salary budgets tend to be implemented in full, there is underspending on goods and services. As a result, workers are not well-equipped to deliver quality health care. More broadly, there is a choice to be made in terms of the tiers of health care that are prioritised in public spending. A lot of the money goes to curative care at the secondary and tertiary levels – at the cost of preventive, primary health care. According to estimates from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, India spends less than one-fourth of public health money on preventive care.

Purely from a health impact viewpoint, public health money is best spent on classic public goods such as infectious disease control or sanitation, where there is a ‘market failure’ – rather than on the expansion of relatively cheap curative health services (for instance, treating common illnesses) that the private sector is

already supplying competitively. Recent evidence bears this out: public health spending markedly improves infectious disease outcomes, through greater access, vaccination, and sanitation, but does far less for maternal and child health or non-communicable diseases, making a strong case for strategic allocation. As populations age, more will need to be done for chronic conditions in terms of addressing risk factors, early detection, and management.

Better governance, better health

The third is to improve governance and operational efficiency. Good governance is key: if corruption is reduced or the quality of bureaucracy improves, countries see greater positive effects of public health spending on desired health outcomes, such as child mortality. The converse also holds: simply increasing spending where governance is weak is unlikely to improve outcomes. Moreover, with the increasing decentralisation of public service delivery, it is becoming imperative to focus on improving governance at the subnational level.

Within governance, there is a crucial role for public finance management. While a well-formulated budget is a good starting point, impact will only be achieved if the budget is implemented efficiently. There is a need to improve budget credibility and cash disbursement. Involvement of public health providers in budget processes can enhance both their accountability and motivation. Improving procurement processes can help achieve greater value for money in health sector resources. As the pandemic has taught us, budgets should be flexible to respond to unforeseen circumstances.

That said, the case for enhanced spending remains: its returns are greatest precisely where health outcomes are poorest; hence, money that is well-directed can help narrow gaps across countries.

- Health
- Governance
- Social Justice

Strong health systems for all with better public spending



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The Hindu | Editorial | Page 10

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CONTEXT

India's aspiration of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) requires not only higher public health expenditure but also efficient allocation, stronger primary healthcare, better governance and improved budget execution, especially at a time when foreign health assistance is declining.

UPSC MAINS QUESTION (10 MARKS | 150 WORDS)

"Universal Health Coverage cannot be achieved merely by increasing public health expenditure. Better governance, efficient utilisation of resources and greater investment in primary healthcare are equally important." Discuss. (150 Words)

FLOW OF ANSWER



I. WHY DOES INDIA NEED STRONGER PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS?



- **Low public health expenditure:** India's public health spending is low both in total and as a share of GDP, creating a wide gap with high-income countries.
- **Rising disease burden:** Increasing NCDs, age-related illnesses and emerging infectious diseases demand sustained public investment.
- **Declining Development Assistance for Health (DAH):** Global health aid has declined post COVID-19 and major donors have cut health assistance.
- **High out-of-pocket expenditure:** Low public spending pushes households into high out-of-pocket expenses, limiting access and causing financial distress.

II. HOW CAN BETTER PUBLIC SPENDING IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES?



- A Better budget utilisation:** It is not enough to allocate more funds; timely release and full utilisation of budgets are essential to deliver services.
- B Prioritising primary healthcare:** Invest more in primary care infrastructure, manpower and medicines to ensure first-contact, accessible and affordable care.
- C Preventive healthcare:** Focus on vaccination, sanitation, disease surveillance, health promotion and early detection for better and cost-effective outcomes.
- D Strategic resource allocation:** Allocate funds based on disease burden, regional needs and performance to maximise impact and reduce inequalities.

III. WHY IS GOVERNANCE THE REAL MULTIPLIER?



- A Better financial management:** Improve budget credibility, ensure timely cash flow and rationalise expenditures to avoid underspending.
- B Transparent procurement:** Streamline procurement processes to reduce costs, eliminate leakages and ensure quality of medicines and equipment.
- C Decentralised governance:** Empower states and local bodies with adequate funds, functions and flexibility for context-specific solutions.
- D Accountability & monitoring:** Outcome-based monitoring, data systems and public disclosure ensure accountability and improve results.

IV. KEY CHALLENGES



- **Declining foreign aid:** Reduction in global health assistance limits available resources.
- **Under-utilisation of funds:** A significant portion of allocated health budgets remains unspent or delayed.
- **Curative bias:** Overemphasis on hospital-based curative care over primary and preventive care.
- **Weak governance:** Bureaucratic delays, poor procurement and limited accountability reduce efficiency.
- **Regional inequalities:** Uneven distribution of health infrastructure and manpower across states and districts.

V. WAY FORWARD



- **Increase public health spending:** Gradually raise public expenditure on health to global benchmarks.
- **Improve budget execution:** Simplify procedures, ensure timely fund flow and strengthen financial management systems.
- **Strengthen primary healthcare:** Expand Health & Wellness Centres, train health workforce and ensure availability of essential medicines.
- **Outcome-based financing:** Link allocations to measurable health outcomes and performance.
- **Better Centre-State coordination:** Foster cooperative federalism for equitable resource sharing and best practice exchange.

CONCLUSION



A resilient health system is built not merely by spending more, but by spending smarter. Efficient governance, stronger primary healthcare and accountable public finance are indispensable for achieving Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goal-3.



KEYWORDS:

Universal Health Coverage | Public Health Spending | Primary Healthcare | Governance
Preventive Care | Budget Utilisation | Health Outcomes

Analysing the SC's judgment on sex work

For more than three decades, sex workers have told governments and courts how anti-trafficking interventions cause profound harm including forced rescues, indefinite detention in "corrective homes", separation from children and even threat to life. And for decades, these accounts were only acknowledged in fragments, and never in a comprehensive rights-based framework. That is what makes the Supreme Court's judgment of May 29, 2026, so significant.

Across nearly 300 pages, the court departs from many assumptions that have long shaped anti-trafficking discourse globally. It recognises that agency and vulnerability can coexist; rejects the conflation of migration with trafficking; affirms that constitutional rights do not disappear because society disapproves of sex work; holds that consenting adult sex workers cannot forcibly be rescued; and that any intervention must begin with an inquiry into consent. Invoking Article 142, the court gives these directions legal force.

But the judgment also exposes a paradox: it adopts arguments that have been painstakingly developed by sex workers but does not acknowledge the workers or their collectives (such as the National Network of Sex Workers among others). This is not only a question of credit; it reveals how even progressive jurisprudence can reproduce a hierarchy of knowledge in which those most affected by law remain its least recognised authors.

What the judgment assumes
The judgment places faith in institutions that have repeatedly failed the very people it seeks to protect. The court assumes that clearer legal standards will produce different institutional behaviour – that police officers will assess consent without prejudice, magistrates will suspend moral judgment, shelter homes will become rights-based



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Press)

Sex workers and their unions must move from the margins to the centre of implementation. They should draft guidelines, monitor compliance, shape police training, and establish standards for shelters

support services, and sex workers will have access to legal aid.

For many women, especially those from the Dalit and Adivasi communities, bureaucracy has never been a neutral system. Caste discrimination and economic marginalisation continue to shape everyday encounters with the state. One woman, wrongly labelled a trafficker after a raid, has spent seven years reporting every month to a police station while attending court hearings where, despite all this time, her statement has never even been recorded. "I go to court and sit outside. Then they call my name, and I go inside. But they don't ask me anything. They have not even recorded my statement yet!"

The top court rightly recognises caste as one of the structural conditions that can push women into sex work. But it stops there. Caste does not simply explain entry into the profession. It also structures every institution responsible for implementing this judgment. As one worker put it: "The state says that *acche din* (good days) will come. When will our *acche din* come? Everything is about money these days. Take any actor. They can kill but do not get arrested. Those who do not have money have to keep going to the court like me." Her question exposes the judgment's central assumption: that the law is applied equally once rights are recognised. For many workers, the challenge is not only overcoming moral prejudice. It is navigating a legal and bureaucratic system that continues to be shaped by caste.

The judgment is also noticeably quieter about another source of violence: the anti-trafficking industry itself. The court recommends reforming shelter homes but does not examine the organisations that run them, the funding structures that sustain them, or the incentives that make carceral and forced rescue practices persist. The rescue industry is not solely a humanitarian project. It is sustained by a dense network of

civil society organisations that participate in forced raids, manage shelter homes, and exercise significant authority over the women confined within them.

One woman who experienced both prison and a government shelter offered a striking comparison. "Even after rescue, we are bound by the shelter. It is another form of bondage. It seems better to serve six months in jail and come out free than to stay in a shelter for an unknown time." This account is not an exception. It exposes an uncomfortable reality that anti-trafficking discourse obscures: rescue can become another mechanism of control.

The road ahead

The top Court's recommendations are important. But for the judgment to fulfil its promise, three priorities stand out.

First, sex workers and their unions must move from the margins to the centre of implementation. They should draft guidelines, monitor compliance, shape police training, and establish standards for shelters. Second, the anti-trafficking NGO sector deserves scrutiny. Longstanding evidence suggests that some have become active participants in coercive rescue practices while operating with limited accountability to the communities they claim to serve. Their funding and legal immunity should no longer be taken for granted. Finally, the structural conditions identified by the court do not require new institutions to fix. India already possesses an extensive welfare architecture. The challenge is ensuring that sex workers can access it as rights-bearing citizens.

The Supreme Court has opened an important constitutional door. Whether it leads to meaningful change will depend on whether India's institutions can abandon decades of paternalism and begin treating sex workers as citizens whose choices deserve the same legal respect as anyone else's.

With reference to the Constitution of India, prohibitions or limitations or provisions contained in ordinary laws cannot act as prohibitions or limitations on the constitutional powers under Article 142. It could mean which one of the following?

- (a) The decisions taken by the Election Commission of India while discharging its duties cannot be challenged in any court of law.

(b) The Supreme Court of India is not constrained in the exercise of its powers by laws made by the Parliament.

(c) In the event of grave financial crisis in the country, the President of India can declare Financial Emergency without the counsel from the Cabinet.

(d) State Legislatures cannot make laws on certain matters without the concurrence of Union Legislature.

I. Context (GS-II: Judiciary | Fundamental Rights | Vulnerable Sections)

The Supreme Court's 2026 judgment in **Budhadev Karmaskar v. State of West Bengal** strengthens the rights-based approach towards sex workers by recognising dignity, consent and constitutional protections.

II. Key Takeaways

- A. **Rights recognised** – Adult consensual sex work is not illegal; trafficking and exploitation remain punishable.
- B. **Consent matters** – Rescue or rehabilitation cannot be forced without informed consent.
- C. **Structural causes** – Poverty, caste discrimination and lack of livelihood must be addressed through welfare measures.
- D. **Institutional reform** – Police, shelter homes and welfare agencies must adopt a rights-based, non-discriminatory approach.

III. Article 142

- A. **Complete Justice** – Empowers the Supreme Court to issue binding directions where legal gaps exist.
- B. **In this case** – Used to frame nationwide operational guidelines for protecting sex workers' rights.

IV. Challenges

- A. Coercive rescue practices.
- B. Social stigma and discrimination.
- C. Weak rehabilitation and livelihood support.
- D. Limited participation of sex worker collectives in policymaking.

V. Way Forward

- A. Shift from rescue-centric to rights-based rehabilitation.
- B. Sensitise police and welfare institutions.
- C. Ensure healthcare, legal aid, education and social security.

Distress and dispute

Karnataka and Tamil Nadu should evolve a distress-sharing formula

With the southwest monsoon playing truant in its first half, a familiar distress situation has developed in the Cauvery basin. The principal riparian States – Karnataka upstream and Tamil Nadu downstream – have made little progress in evolving a distress-sharing formula in the vexed dispute. Once again, heavy rain in the Cauvery catchment has come to the aid of both States. Whether this will douse the embers or fan parochial flames remains to be seen. Political tensions are rising, with pro-Kannada groups calling for a Karnataka bandh on August 13 and the DMK planning a stir in Thanjavur on August 3, coinciding with the Aadi Perukku festival on the Cauvery's banks. Despite a surge in inflows into four major Karnataka reservoirs in the Cauvery basin, it is too early to conclude that the water shortage affecting farmers in both States is over. The decision of the Congress government in Karnataka not to release irrigation water adds to the crisis, though such refusals over scheduled water deliveries are not new. Consequently, Billigundulu, the inter-State border measuring point, realised barely one thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) against the stipulated 31 tmc ft in July, the wettest month.

Perhaps guided by forecasts of a deficient monsoon, Karnataka's Chief Minister chose to err on the side of caution, anticipating an acute drinking water shortage ahead. However, this has proved costly for Tamil Nadu, which realised only about 3.6 tmc ft from June 1 to July-end, barely 10% of the 40-odd tmc ft prescribed by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal and the Supreme Court. The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), at its July 30 meeting, ratified the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC)'s directive that Karnataka release 3,500 cusecs to Billigundulu daily for 15 days from July 29. Although this quantum would not have met irrigation needs in Tamil Nadu's Cauvery delta, it would have provided some support to the ecosystem. The CWMA's decision has upset farmers in Karnataka and the political class but nature has intervened in a limited way. If Karnataka finds the existing mechanisms – the CWMA and CWRC – inadequate, it can suggest alternatives, but must first abide by the decisions of these institutions, which safeguard riparian States' interests in line with Tribunal and Supreme Court verdicts. Unlike his predecessors, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay reached out to his Karnataka counterpart, D.K. Shivakumar – but Mr. Shivakumar has asked Mr. Vijay to defer his August 3 Bengaluru visit. However, this episode should not deter the two States from making a renewed bid to work out a distress-sharing formula, the last of which was attempted nearly 25 years ago. Mr. Vijay should also take a cue from his counterpart in handling the Cauvery issue, by bringing together other political players in the State.



I. **Context (GS-II: Inter-State Relations | Federalism | Water Resources)**

The Cauvery water dispute highlights the challenges of equitable inter-State river water sharing and the need for a scientific distress-sharing mechanism during low-rainfall years.

II. **Cauvery River**

A. **Origin & Course:** Originates at Talakaveri, Brahmagiri Hills (Western Ghats), Karnataka; flows through Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, forms part of the boundary with Kerala, and drains into the Bay of Bengal. Basin States/UT: Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry (Karaikal).

B. **Tributaries:**

- **Right-bank:** Lakshmana Tirtha, Kabini, Shimsha, Arkavathi.
- **Left-bank:** Harangi, Hemavathi, Bhavani, Amaravathi, Noyyal.

C. **Importance:** Supports irrigation, drinking water, hydropower generation and the fertile Cauvery delta.

III. **Cauvery Dispute**

A. **Cause:** Competing water demands between upstream and downstream riparian States, especially during deficient monsoons.

B. **Core Issue:** Absence of a mutually accepted distress-sharing formula for drought years.

C. **Challenge:** Rising water demand, climate variability and political mobilisation.

IV. **Institutional Framework**

A. **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT):** Constituted in 1990 under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956; final award in 2007.

B. **Supreme Court (2018):** Modified water allocation and upheld the Tribunal's award with changes.

C. **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA):** Implements the Tribunal award and Supreme Court directions.

D. **Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC):** Monitors reservoir levels and recommends periodic water releases.

V. **Way Forward**

A. Adopt a scientific distress-sharing formula.

B. Strengthen cooperative federalism and basin-level planning.

C. Improve irrigation efficiency and demand-side water management.

D. Ensure timely compliance with CWDT, CWMA and Supreme Court directions.



Bengaluru
(Bangalore)

Chennai

Kaveri

Kaveri

Kaveri

PUDUCHERRY
(Pondicherry)

Mahe
(Puducherry)

Kavaratti

KERALA

TAMIL NADU

Karaikal
(Puducherry)

Thiruvananthapuram