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 January 6th, 2026



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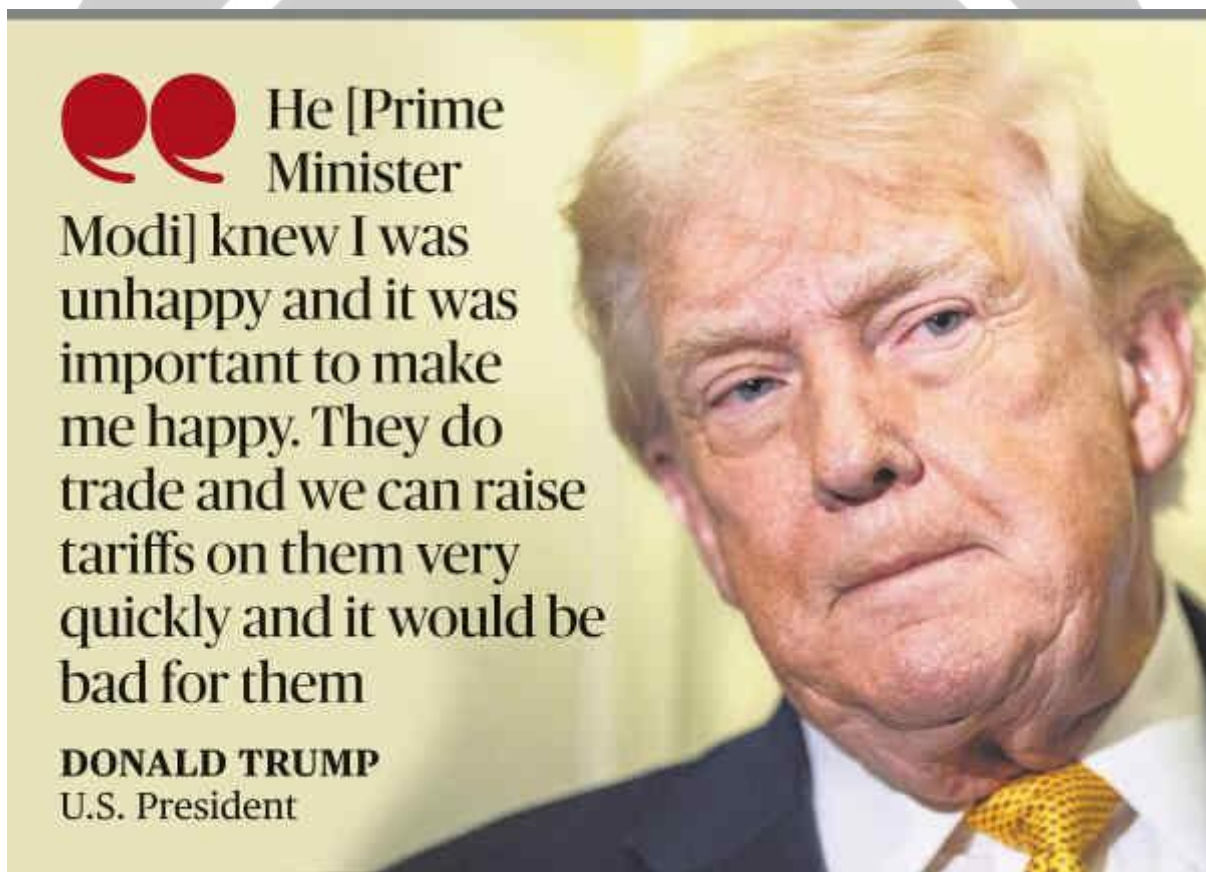
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1. Trump asserts India cut import of Russian crude to please him

Why in the News?

Former U.S. President Donald Trump has claimed that India reduced its imports of Russian crude oil to “make him happy” and to facilitate progress on an India–U.S. trade deal. Supporting this assertion, U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham alleged that India’s Ambassador to the U.S., Vinay Kwatra, highlighted India’s declining Russian oil purchases while seeking relief from additional 25% U.S. penalty tariffs. These remarks come at a time when the U.S. Senate is considering a Russia Sanctions Bill mandating tariffs up to 500% on countries continuing energy imports from Russia.

India has not officially responded to the claims, but has previously criticised unilateral U.S. sanctions as “double standards”, citing continued Western purchases of Russian commodities.



Background

- Russia has become a major crude supplier to India since 2022, especially following Western sanctions on Moscow.
- India has justified these imports on the grounds of:
 - energy security
 - price stability
 - national interest

- Meanwhile, the U.S. has:
 - imposed tariff and sanctions regimes targeting Russian exports
 - pressured partners to scale down energy ties with Moscow
- India already faces reciprocal 25% tariffs with the U.S., and concerns exist over further punitive measures under proposed U.S. legislation.
- Donald Trump, known for an aggressive trade stance, has claimed that India promised to fully cut Russian oil imports.

Features

Political Signalling by the U.S.

- Trump's remarks link trade concessions with strategic alignment on Russia.
- Senator Graham's statements indicate direct diplomatic lobbying by India.

Threat of Escalating Tariffs

- Trump warned tariffs could increase "very quickly."
- The pending U.S.-Russia Sanctions Bill proposes tariffs up to 500% on countries buying Russian oil or uranium.

India's Diplomatic Position

- India maintains a strategic autonomy doctrine.
- It rejects unilateral sanctions as:
 - extra-territorial
 - inconsistent
 - discriminatory

Energy Security Imperative

- Russian crude has offered discounted rates, reducing import costs.
- India imports ~85% of its crude needs.

Challenges

Balancing Strategic Partnerships

- India-U.S. ties are vital in:
 - defence
 - technology
 - Indo-Pacific security
- Simultaneously, Russia remains:
 - a key defence partner
 - an energy supplier

Exposure to U.S. Policy Volatility

- Tariff threats create uncertainty over:

- trade flows
- investment confidence
- market stability

Perception of Diplomatic Pressure

- Claims that India sought to “please” the U.S. leadership may:
 - undermine India’s image of policy independence
 - trigger domestic political debate

Economic Impact Risks

- **Higher U.S. tariffs could affect:**
 - Indian exports (e.g., steel, aluminium, textiles, pharma)
 - FDI confidence

Geopolitical Complexity

- **Any visible shift away from Russian oil could:**
 - Strain Russia ties
 - affect defence procurement and logistics
 - reshape energy sourcing strategies

Way Forward

Reinforce Strategic Autonomy

India should articulate that:

- Energy decisions are sovereign and interest-based
- Sanctions not UN-mandated lack legitimacy

Diversify Energy Sources

- gradual reduction of dependency on any single supplier
- strengthen:
 - Middle East energy ties
 - renewable & strategic petroleum reserves

Institutionalise Trade Diplomacy

- negotiate tariff relief through:
 - Structured bilateral talks
 - WTO-consistent frameworks

Enhance Domestic Refining & Transition

- boost refining margins and exports
- accelerate renewable & EV transitions

Maintain Balanced Great-Power Engagement

- avoid zero-sum alignments
- Keep Russia and U.S. ties compartmentalised

Conclusion

The recent statements by Donald Trump and Senator Lindsey Graham highlight the interlinkage between trade policy, geopolitics, and energy security. For India, the challenge lies in safeguarding economic interests while preserving strategic autonomy amid intensifying U.S. pressure on Russian energy trade. As global alignments evolve, a measured, interest-driven and diversified approach to energy and trade diplomacy will remain essential for India's long-term strategic stability.

2. Police in the States step up social media monitoring.

Why in the News?

Police forces across Indian States and Union Territories have significantly increased the number of dedicated social media monitoring cells over the past five years. According to the Bureau of Police Research and Development's Data on Police Organisations (DoPO) 2024 report, these cells rose from 262 in 2020 to 365 in 2024. The largest numbers are found in Bihar (52), Maharashtra (50), Punjab (48), West Bengal (38), and Assam (37). Police officials cite evolving crime trends on digital platforms as the key reason for expanding surveillance capacity.

Expanding surveillance

There were 262 social media monitoring cells across 28 States and eight Union Territories as on January 1, 2020. The number rose to 365 as on January 1, 2024

■ Most such cells are operational in Bihar (52), Maharashtra (50), Punjab (48), West Bengal (38) and Assam (37)

■ In ethnic violence-hit Manipur, the number of cells increased from 3 on January 1, 2020, to 16 on January 1, 2024, this despite a 140-day Internet shutdown in 2023

■ Assam increased the number of its social media cells from 1 in 2022 to 37 in 2024, West Bengal from 2 to 38 and Punjab from 24 to 48

■ The number of cybercrime police stations increased from 376 as on January 1, 2020, to 624 as on January 1, 2024.

■ The number of drones available with police forces in States and Union Territories increased from 1,010 as on January 1, 2023 to 1,147 as on January 1, 2024

The annual data on police organisations (DOPO) reports are prepared by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), a police think tank under the Union Home Ministry



Background

- Social media platforms—Facebook, X, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat—are increasingly used for:
 - misinformation & fake news
 - hate speech and communal mobilisation
 - online fraud and cybercrime
 - radicalisation and illegal coordination
- Initially, social media monitoring was conducted within cybercrime police stations.
- From 2021 onwards, DoPO reports began counting dedicated social media cells separately, indicating institutional recognition of their importance.
- Parallely, cybercrime police stations increased from 376 (2020) to 624 (2024).
- The expansion coincides with:
 - rising internet penetration
 - digital governance
 - Social media's role in public discourse

Features

Rapid Expansion Across States

- Total cells increased from 262 → 365 (2020–2024)

Highest numbers:

- Bihar – 52
- Maharashtra – 50
- Punjab – 48
- West Bengal – 38
- Assam – 37

State-Specific Surges

- Manipur: 3 → 16 cells (amid ethnic violence & long internet shutdown)
- Assam: 1 (2022) → 37 (2024)
- West Bengal: 2 → 38
- Punjab: 24 → 48

Institutional Backing

- Data sourced from BPR&D, under the Ministry of Home Affairs
- Reflects formal policy trend—not ad hoc policing

Use of Technology

- Police drone inventory increased to 1,147 (2024) from 1,010 (2023)

Persistent Staff Shortages

- 5.92 lakh vacancies out of the sanctioned 27.55 lakh posts
- Significant representation from SC, ST, and OBC categories

Challenges

Privacy & Civil Liberties

- Potential risks of:
 - mass surveillance
 - political profiling
 - chilling effect on free speech
- Raises constitutional debates under Article 19 & Article 21

Legal Ambiguities

- **Lack of uniform national standards on:**
 - data retention
 - consent
 - oversight mechanisms

Capacity Constraints

- Large police vacancies strain operations
- Skill gaps in:
 - data analytics
 - cyber forensics
 - multilingual monitoring

Risk of Misuse

- Selective targeting
- Overzealous content policing
- Weak grievance mechanisms

Digital Misinformation Ecosystem

- Encrypted platforms complicate detection
- Volume of content remains overwhelming

Way Forward

Establish Clear Legal Frameworks

- Transparent SOPs for:
 - scope of monitoring
 - data storage limits
 - citizen safeguards
- Parliamentary or judicial oversight mechanisms

Balance Security with Rights

- Ensure compliance with:
 - Supreme Court privacy jurisprudence (Puttaswamy)

- Due process norms

Build Professional Cyber Units

- Train personnel in:
 - OSINT tools
 - AI-assisted analytics
 - Behavioural threat detection

Promote Public–Platform Collaboration

- Engage social media companies
- Strengthen reporting mechanisms

Invest in Preventive Communication

- Fact-check networks
- Rapid misinformation response teams
- Public digital literacy campaigns

Conclusion

The rapid expansion of social media monitoring cells across Indian States highlights the growing centrality of the digital sphere in law enforcement and public safety. While such surveillance infrastructure may help counter misinformation, organised crime, and online radicalisation, it also raises critical questions about privacy, accountability, and democratic freedoms. A robust regulatory framework, skilled policing, and rights-based oversight will be essential to ensure that security imperatives do not override constitutional liberties.

3. SC banks on ‘hierarchy of participation’ to grant bail to other accused in case

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court of India has ruled that bail decisions in the Delhi riots “larger conspiracy” case must be based on a “hierarchy of participation” among accused persons. While the Court denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, described as “alleged masterminds,” it granted bail to several other accused, noting their comparatively limited roles. The ruling emphasises that uniform treatment of all accused violates Article 21 if it converts pre-trial detention into punishment.

Background

- The case pertains to the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy charges.
- Multiple accused stand charged under serious offences, including unlawful activities.
- Bail applications had been pending for long periods, raising questions of liberty vs. security.
- The Supreme Court adjudicated on whether all accused should be viewed similarly or individually.



Treating all the accused identically will risk transforming pre-trial detention into a punitive mechanism divorced from individual circumstances. Prolonged custody disproportionately burdens those whose roles are limited

SC JUDGMENT



Features

Principle of 'Hierarchy of Participation'

- The Court recognised different levels of involvement:
 - Central/managerial role (alleged masterminds)
 - Peripheral/associative participants
- Hence, detention must correlate with the degree of alleged culpability.

Article 21 Emphasis

- Treating all accused the same risks turning pre-trial detention into punishment.
- Individual liberty requires case-by-case assessment.

Evidentiary Distinction

- **Against Khalid & Imam:**
 - alleged direct & corroborative evidence
 - digital communications
 - indications of planning & managerial role
- Against others:
 - Largely associative or peripheral evidence

Individual Assessment Required

- Bail must depend on:
 - role
 - evidence strength
 - risk profile
- This is not ranking culpability, but ensuring fair process.

Risk-Based Detention Logic

- Continued detention may be justified for the principal accused
- But not necessary when involvement is minimal or unclear.

Challenges

Balancing Liberty & Security

- Courts must guard against punitive pre-trial detention
- Yet prevent interference with the investigation/trial

Precedent for Future Cases

- Strengthens individualised bail jurisprudence
- May reduce blanket denial of bail in conspiracy-related cases

Evidentiary Complexity

- Assessing hierarchy requires deep evaluation, even at the bail stage.

Way Forward

- Ensure timely trials to prevent prolonged custody
- Develop clear guidelines for role-based bail assessment
- Strengthen digital forensics & evidentiary transparency
- Maintain judicial independence while respecting constitutional liberty

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's reliance on a "hierarchy of participation" marks a significant reaffirmation of Article 21-based liberty protections. By insisting on individualised scrutiny of evidence and role, the Court underlines that bail cannot be denied uniformly in complex conspiracy cases. This approach seeks to balance state security concerns with the constitutional mandate against punitive pre-trial detention.

4. Delay cannot be used as a 'trump card' to secure bail: SC verdict.

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court of India has denied bail to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the Delhi riots "larger conspiracy" case, ruling that delay in trial or prolonged incarceration cannot be used as a "trump card" to secure bail under special anti-terror laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).

The Court upheld the stringent Section 43D(5) UAPA bail restriction, observing that constitutional guarantees of liberty under Article 21 are not absolute and must operate within the framework of law enacted by Parliament.

Background

- UAPA imposes strict bail conditions, requiring courts to deny bail if a prima facie case exists.
- Many UAPA cases involve long pre-trial custody periods because trials progress slowly.
- Courts previously debated whether delay alone can justify bail.
- The present judgment clarifies the legal position.

The Bench acknowledged the right to a speedy trial under Article 21, but stressed that liberty must be balanced with national security concerns.



Features

Delay

- Prolonged incarceration or trial delay does not automatically entitle an accused to bail under UAPA.
- Delay is merely a trigger for closer judicial scrutiny, not a decisive factor.

Priority to Statutory Threshold

- Courts must respect Parliament's intent in creating special bail restrictions.
- Article 21 rights exist within the framework of law, not outside it.

Prima Facie Evidence Matters

- Bail may be denied if:
 - Deliberate and central involvement is indicated
 - Prosecution evidence supports a prima facie case

Section 43D(5) Upheld

- This section allows courts to assume prima facie guilt at the bail stage
- The accused carries a higher burden to rebut allegations before trial.

Balanced Judicial Role

- Courts must avoid:
 - ideological bias
 - presumption of innocence overriding statutory limits
- But also must not allow detention to become punitive.

Article 21 & Speedy Trial - Court's View

- Article 21 guarantees:
 - personal liberty
 - life
 - speedy trial
- But liberty is not absolute.
- UAPA aims to protect:
 - national security
 - sovereignty
 - public order

Hence, liberty must be weighed against collective security.

Legal & Policy Implications

Positive Dimensions

- Clarifies legal standards for UAPA bail
- Reduces inconsistent judicial interpretations
- Reinforces parliamentary sovereignty

Concerns

- Raises fears of prolonged detention without trial
- Burden shifts heavily onto the accused, reversing normal criminal law standards.
- Speedy trial remains largely unresolved in practice.

Way Forward

Ensure Faster Trials

- dedicated UAPA courts
- witness protection
- digital hearings

Build Safeguards Against Misuse

- periodic judicial review of detention
- stricter prosecution accountability
- case-timelines monitoring

Maintain Constitutional Balance

- Liberty and security must co-exist
- Courts should guard against:

- politically motivated charges
- indefinite incarceration

Conclusion

The Supreme Court has reaffirmed that delay alone cannot secure bail under the UAPA, as constitutional liberty is not absolute when Parliament has enacted special restrictions in the interest of national security. While the Court recognised that prolonged detention raises serious constitutional concerns, it emphasised that bail decisions must be proportional, contextual, and based on prima facie evidence and offence gravity- striking a delicate balance between individual liberty and collective security.

5. A 'terrorist act' is not just a finale, but a culmination of conspiratorial activities: SC

Why in the News?

The Supreme Court of India has clarified that a "terrorist act" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) is not confined to the final violent act alone, but includes the entire chain of conspiratorial and preparatory activities leading up to it.

This interpretation came in the judgment concerning bail pleas in the Delhi riots "larger conspiracy" case.



Background

- Petitioners argued they did not directly participate in the violence of February 2020.
- The Delhi Police alleged a wider conspiracy, including disruption of essential supplies and destabilisation of civic life, amounting to acts of terror.
- Section 15(1)(a) UAPA defines terrorist acts, including violent acts using weapons or hazardous substances, and contains the phrase "by any other means".

Features

Terrorism ≠ Only Physical Violence

- The Court said the statute does not limit terror to conventional weapons or visible violence.
- The phrase “by any other means” broadens the scope.
- Restricting “terrorist act” only to bombings or shootings would unduly narrow the law’s ambit.

Conspiracy & Build-up Are Part of the Act

- Terrorism may include:
 - organised planning
 - mobilisation
 - coordinated disruption of essential services
- Even without actual violence, conduct aimed at destabilising civic order may fall within Section 15.

Impact-Based Understanding

A terrorist act is one that:

- threatens the security or integrity of the nation
- causes economic or civic destabilisation

Culmination” Doctrine

- A terrorist act is often the culmination of organised, sustained conspiratorial activities over time, not a single event.

Implications for Bail

- Because terrorism offences are distinct in nature, Section 43D(5) imposes stringent bail thresholds.
- Courts may refuse bail if prima facie involvement in the wider conspiracy is shown.

Challenges

Broad Interpretation Risk

- Could widen the scope of terrorism beyond violent acts
- Potential civil liberties and free-speech implications

Evidentiary Burden on Accused

- Bail denial may rely on prima facie police material, not full trial proof.

Boundary with Ordinary Offences

- Distinguishing between protest-related disruption and “terrorism” becomes complex.

Way Forward

- Strengthen judicial safeguards against over-broad application
- Ensure speedy trials to avoid prolonged incarceration
- Clearer guidelines distinguishing legitimate dissent from terror conspiracy

Conclusion

The Supreme Court’s ruling underscores that terrorism under UAPA is defined not only by violent outcomes but also by the broader conspiratorial process leading to societal destabilisation. This interpretation reinforces the stringent bail regime under Section 43D(5), while raising important constitutional questions about liberty, dissent, and national security.

6. Coast Guard adds pollution control vessel to its fleet

Why in the News?

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has commissioned ICGS Samudra Pratap, the first of two indigenously designed Pollution Control Vessels (PCVs), in Goa. Commissioned by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the vessel marks a major milestone in India’s maritime environmental protection and defence industrial self-reliance, with over 60% indigenous content.

Background

- India has over 7,500 km of coastline and busy sea lanes.
- Growing offshore activity and ship traffic increase the risks of:
 - oil spills
 - marine pollution
 - maritime accidents
- The Coast Guard plays a key role in:
 - pollution response & containment
 - search and rescue
 - coastal security

The vessel is built by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) and is the largest ship in the ICG fleet.

Features

Pollution Control Capability

Equipped with:

- advanced pollution detection systems
- specialised response boats
- modern firefighting systems
- Enables rapid detection, containment, and recovery in oil spills or hazardous discharge incidents.

Multi-role Maritime Platform

- Integrates:
 - coastal patrol
 - maritime surveillance
 - environmental protection
- Built for extended operations in rough sea conditions.



Aviation Facilities

- Includes:
 - helicopter hangar
 - aviation deck
- Enhances reach and response time.

Indigenous Defence Manufacturing

- Over 60% indigenous content
- Symbolises India's maturing defence industrial ecosystem
- Supports 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' goals.

Environmental & Strategic Significance

- Strengthens oil spill & marine pollution response
- Protects:
 - coral reefs
 - mangroves
 - fisheries
 - marine biodiversity
- Supports the blue economy
- Reinforces India's maritime governance & safety net

Social Dimension

- First-time inclusion of two women officers onboard
- Reflects progress toward gender-neutral maritime services

Government Outlook

- Aim to increase indigenous content in warships to 90%
- Push for an intelligence-driven, technology-enabled Coast Guard

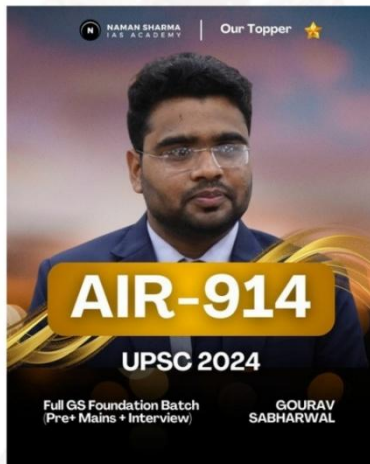
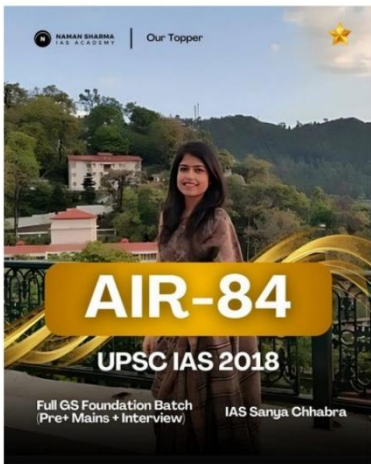
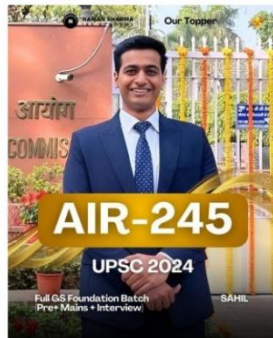
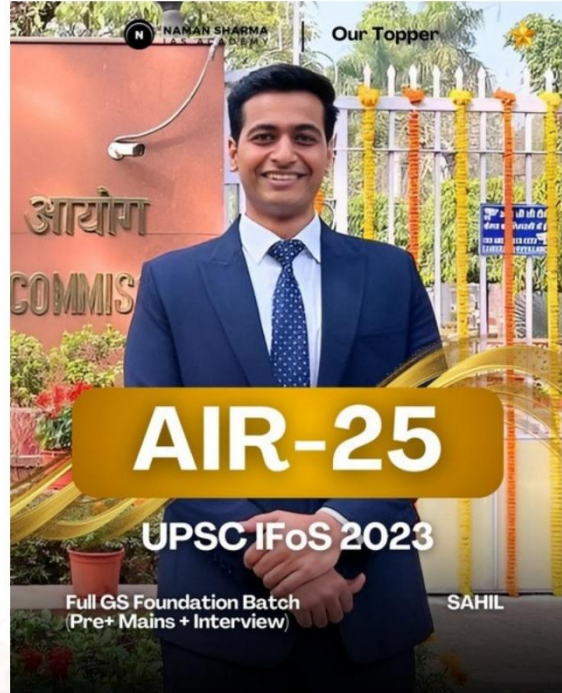
Focus on:

- environmental protection as a strategic responsibility
- modernisation of maritime security forces

Conclusion

ICGS Samudra Pratap significantly enhances India's capacity to respond to maritime pollution and strengthens coastal security while advancing self-reliance in defence manufacturing. With multi-role capability, environmental focus, and inclusive crew policies, the vessel marks an important step in integrated maritime safety and environmental protection in Indian waters.

Our Recent Toppers



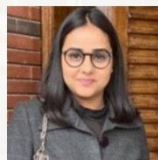
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AIR-4, HPAS 2022



Anshul Shandil
AIR-7, HPPCS 2019



Arshiya Sharma
AIR-3, HPPCS 2019



Kirti Sharma
AIR-35, PCS 2021



IPS Vineet Ahlawat
AIR-231, CSE 2020



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