



**NAMAN SHARMA**  
IAS ACADEMY

# Daily **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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 **Offline Centre Location:**  
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# 1. India 'stands firmly' with Israel, Modi says in address to Knesset

## Why in the news?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, during his official visit to Israel, expressing that India "stands firmly" with Israel following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks. He condemned the attack as a "barbaric terrorist attack," reiterated India's policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism, and supported the Gaza Peace Initiative endorsed by the UN Security Council, while also emphasising a just and durable peace, including the resolution of the Palestine issue. The visit comes amid continuing conflict in Gaza and evolving geopolitics in West Asia, making India's diplomatic positioning significant.



## Background

### India–Israel Relations: A Strategic Evolution

- India recognised Israel in 1950 but established full diplomatic relations only in 1992.
- Relations have expanded significantly in defence, agriculture, water technology, cyber security, and innovation.
- In 2017, PM Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel.
- Defence cooperation is a key pillar, with Israel among India's top defence suppliers.

### Growing cooperation in:

- Water management (drip irrigation)
- Agriculture technology
- Digital Public Infrastructure
- Innovation and start-ups
- Proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

## The October 7, 2023, Attack

- The conflict escalated after the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, leading to large-scale casualties and military retaliation in Gaza.
- India immediately condemned the terrorist attack while also calling for restraint and protection of civilians.

## **Gaza Peace Initiative**

The Prime Minister referred to the Gaza Peace Initiative, endorsed by the UN Security Council, aimed at:

- Ceasefire
- Humanitarian access
- Release of hostages
- Renewed diplomatic engagement

India reiterated support for a two-state solution and peaceful resolution of the Palestine question.

## **Abraham Accords and Regional Realignment**

The Abraham Accords normalised relations between Israel and several Arab nations.

India welcomed these agreements as they:

- Reduce the regional isolation of Israel
- Create new economic corridors
- Enhance regional stability
- Open pathways for India's connectivity initiatives (e.g., IMEC corridor concept)

## **Features of Modi's Address**

- Clear Condemnation of Terrorism
- Called the October 7 attack "barbaric".
- Emphasised India's "uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism."
- Recalled the 26/11 Mumbai attacks to underline the shared experience of terror.

## **Support for Israel with Diplomatic Balance**

- Expressed solidarity with Israel.
- Simultaneously supported the Gaza Peace Initiative.
- Reiterated the need to address the Palestine issue for a durable peace.

## **Civilizational and Historical Links**

- Highlighted ancient trade ties.
- Mentioned Jewish communities in Kerala, Kolkata, and Mumbai.
- Emphasised the absence of anti-Semitism in India.

## **Expanding Economic Cooperation**

- **Focus on:**
- Cross-border digital financial linkages
- Digital Public Infrastructure
- Innovation partnerships
- Free Trade Agreement negotiations

## **West Asia Strategic Vision**

- Supported Israel's outreach to Arab nations.
- Called the Abraham Accords a sign of "courage and vision".

- Advocated sustaining hope amid changing regional dynamics.

## **Challenges**

- Balancing Act in West Asia
- India must carefully balance:
  - Strategic ties with Israel
  - Long-standing support for Palestinian statehood
  - Relations with Arab Gulf nations (energy security, diaspora, remittances)

A perceived tilt could impact India's image in the Global South.

## **Domestic Political Sensitivities**

- India has a large Muslim population.
- Public opinion is divided over the conflict in Gaza.
- Political opposition may frame the visit as one-sided.

## **Geopolitical Volatility**

- Escalating Israel–Gaza conflict
- Iran–Israel tensions
- Red Sea security disruptions
- Impact on global oil prices and trade routes

## **Humanitarian Concerns**

- Civilian casualties in Gaza
- International pressure for a ceasefire
- Need to align anti-terror stance with humanitarian law

## **India's Strategic Autonomy**

- India traditionally follows:
  - Non-alignment
  - Strategic autonomy
  - Issue-based diplomacy

Open solidarity with one side may test this approach.

## **Way Forward**

- Maintain Dual Track Diplomacy
- Strong anti-terror stance.
- Simultaneous support for a two-state solution.
- Continued humanitarian assistance to Palestine.

## **Deepen Economic Partnership with Israel**

- Finalize India–Israel FTA.
- Expand cooperation in:
  - AI and cyber security
  - Water management
  - Agri-tech

- Defence manufacturing under Make in India

### **Engage Arab Nations Proactively**

- Strengthen ties with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.
- Promote India–Middle East–Europe connectivity projects.
- Protect diaspora interests.

### **Promote Multilateral Peace Frameworks**

- Support UN-backed initiatives.
- Encourage regional dialogue platforms.
- Advocate for a ceasefire and reconstruction.

### **Leverage Digital Public Infrastructure Diplomacy**

- Expand fintech linkages.
- Promote the India Stack model globally.
- Build resilient cross-border financial systems.

### **Conclusion**

Prime Minister Modi's address to the Knesset signals a mature and assertive phase in India–Israel relations. By combining firm condemnation of terrorism with support for a negotiated peace process, India attempts to project a balanced yet principled position. The challenge lies in sustaining strategic partnerships while preserving diplomatic equilibrium in a volatile West Asian region.

## **2. SC takes suo motu case over NCERT corruption remark**

### **Why in the News?**

The Supreme Court of India has taken suo motu cognisance of a reference to “corruption” in the judiciary contained in a Class 8 Social Science textbook published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant termed the reference a “calculated attempt” to denigrate the judiciary. The case has been registered as: In Re: Social Science Textbook for Grade-8 (Part 2) published by NCERT and ancillary issues.

### **The move has triggered a debate on:**

- Judicial accountability vs institutional dignity
- Academic freedom vs constitutional integrity
- Separation of powers under the Basic Structure doctrine

### **Background**

#### **Role of NCERT**

The NCERT is a statutory body under the Ministry of Education tasked with:

- Developing National Curriculum Frameworks (NCF)
- Publishing school textbooks

- Conducting educational research and teacher training

## The Controversial Content

The chapter titled “The Role of the Judiciary in Our Society” reportedly listed:

- Corruption
- Massive backlog of cases
- Inadequate number of judges

## Suo Motu Jurisdiction

“Suo motu” means “on its own motion.”

- Under Articles 32 and 142 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court has the power to:
- Take cognisance of matters affecting public interest
- Protect constitutional values
- Ensure institutional integrity

The Court has previously exercised suo motu powers in matters of:

- Environmental protection
- Prison reforms
- Pandemic management
- Judicial appointments



## Constitutional

- The issue touches upon key constitutional principles:
- Separation of Powers
- Judicial Independence
- Basic Structure Doctrine (as laid down in the landmark case of Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala)

Justice Joymalya Bagchi reportedly observed that the content may affect constitutional

## Features

- Institutional Protection

## CJI Surya Kant emphasised:

- The judiciary cannot be defamed.
- It is the duty of the head of the institution to protect its integrity.

## Strong Observations

- The reference was termed:
- “Tentatively calculated”
- A “deep-rooted attempt” to denigrate the judiciary.

## Registration Despite Withdrawal

- Even though the textbook portion was reportedly withdrawn:
- The Court proceeded with formal registration.
- Indicates the seriousness of perceived institutional impact.

## Concerns Raised by Senior Advocates

- Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Manu Singhvi:
- Questioned the selective targeting of the judiciary.
- Argued corruption exists across governance organs.
- Suggested the reference seemed deliberate.

## Issues Involved

- Academic Freedom vs Institutional Dignity
- Should textbooks discuss systemic challenges like corruption?
- Can critical analysis be considered defamation?
- Where is the line between reform-oriented critique and institutional undermining?

## Judicial Accountability

- The judiciary has historically acknowledged:
- Case backlogs (over 4 crore pending cases across courts)
- Judge vacancies
- Occasional corruption allegations

Discussion of systemic issues is often part of democratic discourse.

## Separation of Powers

- If one organ (judiciary) intervenes in educational content:
- Does it risk appearing overreaching?
- Or is it legitimately defending constitutional sanctity?

## Basic Structure Doctrine

- Judicial independence is part of the Basic Structure.
- If institutional credibility is weakened:
- Public trust in justice delivery may decline.
- Constitutional governance may be affected.

## Challenges

- Maintaining Public Confidence
- The judiciary depends heavily on:
- Moral authority
- Public trust
- Perception of impartiality
- Excessive criticism may erode trust, but suppression of debate may also raise concerns.

## Educational Neutrality

- Textbooks must:
- Provide balanced civic education
- Avoid political bias
- Encourage critical thinking
- Over-sanitising institutional discussions may dilute democratic education.

## Risk of Chilling Effect

- Strong judicial intervention could:
- Discourage open discussion on systemic reforms
- Create fear among academic authors and curriculum developers

## Political Overtones

### The controversy could become:

- Politicised
- Interpreted as executive–judiciary tension
- Used in broader debates on institutional accountability

## Way Forward

- Balanced Civic Education

### Textbooks should:

- Present institutional challenges factually
- Highlight reform mechanisms
- Emphasise checks and balances

### For example:

- Instead of a standalone reference to corruption, context should include:
- Judicial oversight mechanisms
- In-house inquiry procedures
- Transparency reforms

## Institutional Dialogue

- The Supreme Court and the NCERT could engage constructively.
- Establish advisory mechanisms for constitutional content review.
- Encourage expert academic consultation.

## Promote Constitutional Literacy

- Students should learn:
- Judiciary's strengths
- Its structural challenges

- Mechanisms of reform and accountability
- A mature democracy encourages informed critique.

### **Strengthen Judicial Reforms**

- Addressing genuine systemic issues such as:
- Filling judicial vacancies
- Digitisation of courts
- Case management reforms
- Transparent appointment systems

### **Preserve Separation of Powers**

- While safeguarding institutional dignity:
- Judicial restraint must be exercised.
- Academic freedom must be respected.
- The executive must ensure balanced curriculum drafting.

### **Conclusion**

The Supreme Court's suo motu action over the NCERT textbook highlights the delicate balance between protecting institutional integrity and preserving academic freedom. While judicial independence is a cornerstone of India's constitutional democracy, civic education must also foster informed awareness of institutional challenges. The ultimate goal should not be shielding institutions from discussion, but strengthening them through transparency, reform, and trust.

## **3. Loose connection made satellite miss orbit: panel**

### **Why in the News?**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has released the report of an apex committee investigating why the NVS-02 satellite failed to reach its intended orbit after launch aboard GSLV-F15 from Sriharikota. The committee found that a loose electrical connection prevented a signal from reaching a critical valve in the oxidiser line, stopping the engine from firing to raise the satellite into its final orbit.

#### **The incident is significant because:**

- It occurred during ISRO's 100th launch from Sriharikota.
- NVS-02 is part of India's strategic navigation system NavIC.
- It triggered broader review mechanisms into systemic reliability issues.

### **Background**

#### **The NVS Series and NavIC**

- NVS-02 is the second satellite in the NVS series.
- It is part of India's regional navigation system NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation).

#### **NavIC provides:**

- Positioning services over India and the surrounding region (~1,500 km)
- Strategic navigation capability independent of GPS

- Support for defence, disaster management, and civilian use

### **The NVS series aims to:**

- Replace older IRNSS satellites
- Improve atomic clock reliability
- Enhance signal accuracy and resilience



### **Launch Profile**

- Launched on January 29, 2025
- Vehicle: GSLV-F15
- Successfully placed into elliptical transfer orbit
- Failure occurred during the orbit-raising manoeuvre

### **After separation:**

- Solar panels deployed
- Attitude stabilised
- Autonomous systems functioned normally
- However, the satellite could not fire its engine to circularise the orbit.

### **The Technical Fault**

- The committee concluded:
- The signal to activate a critical oxidiser-line valve did not reach it.
- At least one electrical connector in both primary and backup lines likely came loose.
- As a result, the engine required to raise orbit never ignited.

### **This indicates:**

- A failure in redundancy
- A reliability gap in pyro system operations

## **Feature Analysis**

- Importance of Pyro Systems

### **Pyro systems:**

- Control valve activations
- Trigger separation events
- Enable stage ignition

### **A malfunction here can:**

- Render propulsion systems inoperative
- Compromise mission objectives

## **Strategic Significance of NavIC**

### **NavIC ensures:**

- Sovereign navigation capability
- Reduced dependence on foreign systems like GPS
- Military-grade positioning accuracy

### **Failures in navigation satellites:**

- Affect constellation redundancy
- Impact maritime and aviation precision systems

## **Corrective Measures**

### **The committee recommended:**

- Enhanced redundancy
- Improved connector reliability
- Stronger quality assurance protocols

### **These measures were reportedly implemented in:**

- CMS-03
- Launched aboard LVM3-M5
- Successfully placed in the intended orbit
- Critical for the Indian Navy's secure communications

## **Broader Institutional Review**

- A separate high-level panel including:
  - K. Vijayraghavan (former Principal Scientific Adviser)
  - S. Somanath (former ISRO Chairman) is probing systemic issues behind successive launch anomalies, including those involving the PSLV.

### **This reflects:**

- Institutional accountability
- Willingness to introspect
- Focus on mission assurance

## **Challenges**

- Reliability vs Expansion

### **ISRO is expanding:**

- Human spaceflight (Gaganyaan)
- Deep space missions
- Commercial launches

### **Increased launch frequency increases:**

- System complexity
- Quality control burden

### **Redundancy Failures**

#### **The failure occurred in:**

- Both primary and backup lines

#### **This suggests:**

- Common-cause vulnerability
- Need for stronger fault isolation

### **Reputational Risks**

#### **ISRO enjoys:**

- High global credibility
- Cost-effective launch reputation

#### **Repeated anomalies could:**

- Impact commercial contracts
- Affect strategic confidence

### **Growing Strategic Dependence**

- NavIC and GSAT systems support:
- Defence communications
- Maritime domain awareness
- Secure navigation

Failure impacts strategic resilience.

### **Way Forward**

- Strengthen Quality Assurance
- Independent electrical integrity audits
- Randomised connector stress testing
- Enhanced assembly-line oversight

### **Institutional Redundancy Reform**

- Avoid common-cause failures
- Introduce physically independent signal routing
- Triple redundancy in critical ignition circuits

### **Third-Party Mission Review**

- External technical audits before launch
- Failure simulation stress-tests
- Strengthened Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)

## **Enhance Supply Chain Reliability**

- Vendor certification upgrades
- Zero-defect electrical component policy
- Digital traceability systems

## **Mission Transparency**

- Timely public release of investigation reports
- Confidence-building through openness
- Clear communication of corrective steps

## **Conclusion**

The NVS-02 anomaly highlights how even minor electrical lapses can derail high-stakes space missions. While the failure was not due to propulsion design or launch vehicle malfunction, it exposed vulnerabilities in signal transmission and redundancy systems.

Encouragingly, ISRO's swift investigation and corrective implementation in subsequent missions like CMS-03 demonstrate institutional resilience.

## **4. Balancing faith, dignity and constitutional rights**

### **Why in the News?**

The Supreme Court is set to hear final arguments in the Sabarimala review petitions, nearly a decade after its landmark 2018 verdict in *Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala*.

#### **The review will re-examine:**

- The validity of allowing women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala temple.
- The constitutional interpretation of religious freedom.
- The continued relevance of the "essential religious practices" (ERP) test.
- The possible adoption of Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's proposed "anti-exclusion test."

## **Background**

### **The 2018 Sabarimala Verdict**

In 2018, a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India delivered a 4:1 majority judgment:

- Held that devotees of Lord Ayyappa do not constitute a separate religious denomination.
- Declared the exclusion of women aged 10–50 unconstitutional.
- Struck down Rule 3(b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship Rules, 1965.

### **Majority Opinions**

- CJI Dipak Misra (for himself and Justice A.M. Khanwilkar)
- Justice Rohinton Nariman
- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud

### **Dissent**

- Justice Indu Malhotra

### **Justice Malhotra held that:**

- Courts must harmonise equality with religious autonomy.
- The practice of exclusion constituted an "essential religious practice."

## **Essential Religious Practices (ERP) Test**

The ERP doctrine evolved through earlier rulings, such as:

- Sastri Yagnapurushadji v. Muldas Bhudardas Vaishya

### **Under this doctrine:**

- Courts determine whether a practice is “essential” to a religion.
- Only essential practices receive constitutional protection.
- Courts effectively sit in theological judgment.
- Judges examine scriptures and doctrines.
- It blurs the line between secular adjudication and religious interpretation.

### **Feature: The Anti-Exclusion Test**

- Justice Chandrachud proposed an alternative — the Anti-Exclusion Test.

### **Instead of asking:**

- “Is this practice essential to religion?”

### **It asks:**

- “Does this practice exclude individuals in a way that impairs dignity or denies access to basic goods?”



### **Key Elements**

#### **Autonomy of Religious Groups**

- Religious communities can define their own tenets.

### **Constitutional Override**

- If a practice:
  - Excludes individuals,
  - Violates dignity,
  - Denies equal moral membership,

### **Constitutional Framework**

- Article 25 – Freedom of religion (individual right)
- Article 26 – Rights of religious denominations

- Subject to:
  - Public order
  - Morality
  - Health
  - Other Fundamental Rights

## **Basic Tension**

### **India's Constitution protects both:**

- Individual conscience
- Communitarian religious autonomy

The Sabarimala case sits at this intersection.

## **Broader Implications**

### **The review verdict will affect:**

- Rights of the Dawoodi Bohra community regarding excommunication.
- Rights of Parsi women marrying outside the faith.
- Temple entry and denominational autonomy cases.
- Future challenges to exclusionary practices in religious institutions.

Thus, the case is not just about Sabarimala - it concerns the architecture of religious freedom jurisprudence.

## **Challenges**

### **ERP forces courts to:**

- Interpret scripture.
- Decide what is doctrinally central.

This conflicts with secular constitutionalism.

## **Balancing Dignity vs Faith**

If a practice is essential but discriminatory:

- Should faith override equality?
- Or should dignity be paramount?

The ERP test offers no clear solution.

## **Practical Limitations**

### **Courts:**

- Do not allow extensive theological evidence.
- Cannot conduct full factual inquiries like trial courts.
- Risk of making sweeping doctrinal declarations.

## **Risk of Majoritarian or Judicial Subjectivity**

### **Judges may:**

- Impose personal interpretations.
- Determine "true" religion.
- Undermine minority autonomy.

## **Way Forward**

### **Move Beyond ERP**

Adopt a framework grounded in:

- Constitutional morality
- Dignity
- Equal moral membership

The anti-exclusion test offers a promising alternative.

### **Protect Religious Autonomy with Limits**

- Allow communities internal self-governance.
- Intervene only when:
  - Exclusion affects civic participation,
  - Denies access to public spaces,
  - Undermines dignity.

### **Clarify Constitutional Standards**

The nine-judge Bench should:

- Define “morality” in Articles 25 and 26.
- Clarify the relationship between dignity and denominational rights.
- Establish a coherent standard for future disputes.

### **Conclusion**

The Sabarimala review is not merely about temple entry - it is a constitutional moment.

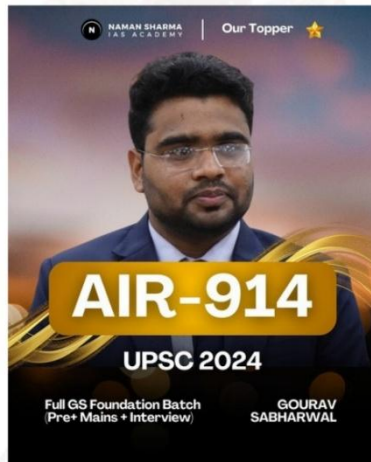
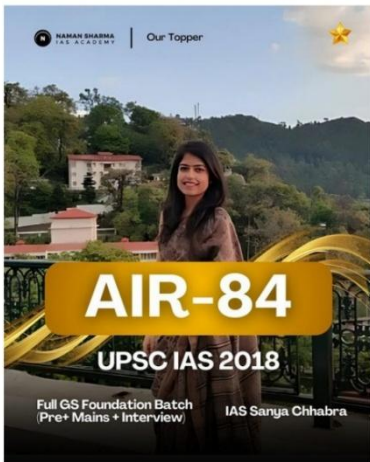
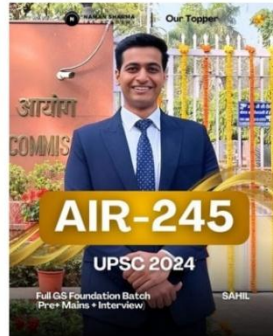
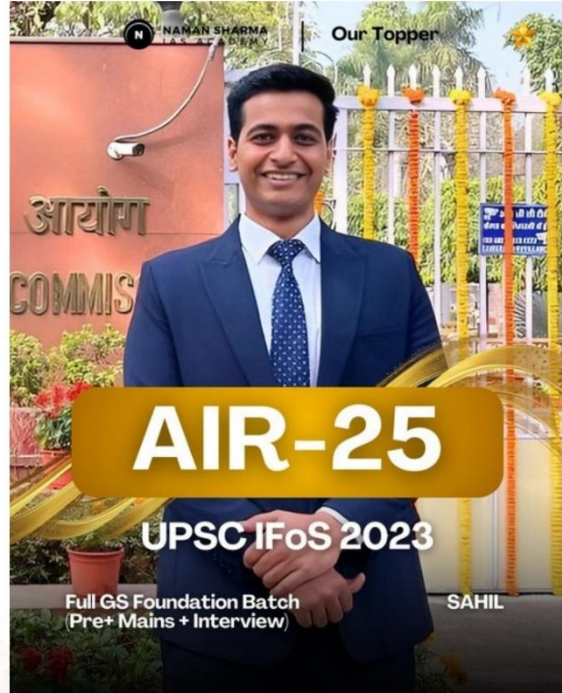
The Supreme Court now has the opportunity to:

- Reconsider the essential religious practices doctrine.
- Shift from theological adjudication to constitutional evaluation.
- Reaffirm that dignity and equal moral membership lie at the heart of India’s constitutional promise.

By adopting a principled framework such as the anti-exclusion test, the Court can balance faith and freedom - protecting belief without permitting discrimination in its name. The verdict will shape the future of religious liberty jurisprudence in India for decades to come.



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