

Editorial of the Day – 01.11.2025

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1. Consent is all – On sexual violence, support for survivors (TH)

General Studies 2 – Social Justice/Governance

Topic – Issues relating to women; Legal and institutional frameworks for social justice; Governance and accountability in protecting vulnerable sections.

Consent, Autonomy, and the Fight Against Sexual Violence

Introduction

The fight against sexual violence serves as a profound test of a nation's conscience, compassion, and commitment to justice. While France's new law redefining rape as any non-consensual sexual act marks a significant legal milestone in protecting sexual autonomy, it also highlights a universal truth – true justice demands more than just laws. It requires a deep-seated cultural transformation that replaces societal silence and stigma with unwavering support, empathy, and accountability for survivors.

1. The Core Principle – Zero Tolerance and Unwavering Support

Societies must adopt an uncompromising, zero-tolerance stance against all forms of sexual violence. This must be coupled with an unwavering commitment to stand with and support survivors. The pursuit of justice is a dual-pronged effort, requiring both legal reform and a comprehensive cultural and institutional transformation that is rooted in empathy and accountability.

2. France's Landmark Legal Reform – Anchoring Consent in Law

Historic Law – France has enacted a new law that fundamentally redefines rape as any non-consensual sexual act.

Shift in Focus – This reform explicitly reaffirms the principle that "force is the crime," shifting the legal burden away from proving physical violence and onto the absence of consent.

Catalyst for Change – This reform was the result of years of activism and was significantly propelled by the extraordinary courage of Gisèle Pelicot.

Watershed Moment – Her case, which led to the conviction of 51 men, exposed the critical need to anchor sexual autonomy firmly within the law, symbolizing its recognition as a fundamental legal right.

3. Persistent Barriers to Justice for Survivors

Despite legal progress, survivors continue to face immense challenges in seeking justice.

Social and Cultural Barriers – Stigma, victim-blaming, and the fear of social ostracism continue to silence many survivors, preventing them from reporting crimes.

Vulnerability of Marginalized Groups – Women from marginalized backgrounds face even greater struggles in accessing legal remedies due to social, economic, and institutional disadvantages.

The "Justice Gap" (India Example) – India's conviction rate for rape remains alarmingly low, at approximately **27–28%** (for the period 2018–2022). This low rate persists despite legal provisions, such as Section 129 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which recognizes the use of criminal force. This highlights the gap between law on the books and justice in practice.

4. Building Sexual Autonomy in Both Law and Society

A Vital First Step – Establishing sexual autonomy as a judicial cornerstone is a vital first step, but it is not the final goal.

A Holistic Prevention Strategy – To truly prevent sexual violence and support survivors, a multi-faceted societal approach is required –

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1. **Community Sensitisation** - Widespread education on the nuances of consent and the deconstruction of harmful gender roles.
2. **Dismantling Patriarchy** - Using education and public awareness campaigns to challenge and dismantle deep-rooted patriarchal norms.
3. **Institutional Training** - Implementing mandatory, survivor-centered training for police, legal, and judicial institutions to ensure empathy and procedural fairness.
4. **Comprehensive Support** - Providing accessible and fully-funded psychological and legal aid to help survivors heal, rebuild their lives, and navigate the justice system.

5. The Road Ahead - From Legal Code to Lived Reality

Governmental Mandate - Governments must adopt a policy of complete intolerance for sexual violence, ensuring this is reflected not only in legal statutes but in everyday practice.

Restoring Faith in Justice - This requires creating empathy-driven investigation and trial processes, where the survivor's dignity is protected, not degraded.

The Stakes - Failing to maintain and build upon this momentum would be a betrayal of the courage shown by survivors like Gisèle Pelicot. It would stall the larger global movement for women's dignity, equality, and autonomy.

Conclusion

Ultimately, a society's moral strength is measured by its zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence and its capacity for unwavering, empathetic support for survivors. True justice demands more than legal reforms; it requires a collective commitment to empathy, awareness, and accountability at every level of society. Upholding sexual autonomy as a non-negotiable right is the only way to ensure that survivors are not silenced, but are empowered to reclaim their dignity and equality.

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/consent-is-all-on-sexual-violence-support-for-survivors/article70226300.ece#~:text=The%20law%20was%20passed%20in,particularly%20with%20reference%20to%20women.>

2. The Legal Battle Over MGNREGS in West Bengal (TH)

General Studies 2 - Social Justice

Topic - Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), a cornerstone of India's social security framework, has become the focal point of a significant legal and political confrontation between the Union Government and the State of West Bengal. The dispute, centered on the suspension of funds, has escalated to the Supreme Court, highlighting deep-seated tensions in federal relations, governance, and the legal right to livelihood.

1. Background of the MGNREGS

Legal Foundation - Enacted in 2005, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provides a legal guarantee for 100 days of wage employment per year to any rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work.

Economic Objective - It is a demand-driven programme designed for poverty alleviation, rural asset creation (e.g., water conservation, rural roads), and promoting inclusive growth.

Rights-Based Framework - It operationalizes the Right to Work as a legal entitlement, making it one of the world's largest rights-based welfare schemes.

Funding Model - It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with a specific funding split -

Centre - Bears 100% of the cost of unskilled labour wages.

Centre - Bears 75% of the material cost for assets created.

States - Bear 25% of the material cost and are responsible for implementation.

2. The Core of the Dispute

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Union Government's Action – In December 2021, the Union Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) suspended the release of MGNREGS funds to West Bengal.

Union's Justification (Accountability) – The Centre cited large-scale irregularities, including the presence of fake job cards, ghost beneficiaries, and diversion of funds. These claims were reportedly based on findings from multiple social audits and field verification teams. The Ministry invoked Section 27 of the MGNREGA Act, which empowers the central government to stop fund releases to a state that fails to comply with operational guidelines or correct reported irregularities.

West Bengal's Counter-Argument (Federalism & Rights) – The state government challenged the move, labeling it as "political vendetta" and a violation of federal principles. It argued that the suspension of funds unilaterally punishes the state's entire rural population. The state claimed this action deprived lakhs of rural workers of their rightful wages, with pending payments (for work already completed) estimated at ₹7,500 crore.

3. Supreme Court's Intervention (2025)

Judicial Cognizance – The Supreme Court (SC) acknowledged the gravity of the situation and sought detailed affidavits from both the Centre and the state.

Balancing Rights and Accountability – The Court observed that the dispute involves two critical, and at times conflicting, issues –

1. The need for financial accountability and transparency in public funds.
2. The protection of the fundamental livelihood of millions of rural workers.

Constitutional Link (Article 21) – The SC bench emphasized a crucial constitutional point – non-payment of wages under a statutory scheme like MGNREGS is a violation of Article 21 (Right to Life), as the right to livelihood is an integral part of this fundamental right.

Directive for Resolution – The Court has directed the Centre to respond to the allegations and, importantly, to consider a structured resolution mechanism. The aim is to ensure that genuine beneficiaries are not denied their legal entitlements due to protracted administrative or political disputes.

4. Key Legal and Policy Issues Involved

Federalism and Financial Relations – The case exemplifies the friction in Centre-State relations regarding **Centrally Sponsored Schemes**. It raises the question of whether the Centre can use its financial control (the "power of the purse") to penalize a state, potentially bypassing federal principles, even if implementation lies with the state.

Accountability vs. Beneficiary Rights – The Centre's insistence on audit compliance and transparency is vital for preventing corruption. However, using the blunt instrument of indefinite fund suspension punishes the workers (the beneficiaries) for alleged administrative or state-level failures, violating the spirit of the Act.

Right to Livelihood (Constitutional Law) –

Article 21 – As noted by the SC, denying wages for work already performed directly impacts the right to livelihood.

Article 23 – The situation can also be linked to the prohibition of forced labour ('begar'). When a state (as an employer) makes a person work and then refuses to pay them, it amounts to a form of forced labour, which is unconstitutional.

Governance and Social Justice – MGNREGS is a legal guarantee, not a discretionary role. Its disruption has a disproportionate impact on the most marginalized communities, including women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and landless labourers, thereby undermining rural social security.

5. Steps Needed for Effective Functioning

1. **Independent Mechanisms** – Establish an independent grievance redressal and audit mechanism under the Act, free from executive interference at both levels.
2. **Time-Bound & Compensated Payments** – Strictly implement the system for time-bound wage payments and ensure automatic compensation for delays, as already mandated by the law.

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3. **Depoliticize Fund Flows** – Utilize the scheme's Management Information System (MIS) for objective, data-driven monitoring and fund release, delinking it from political discretion.
4. **Strengthen Social Audits** – Empower local-level accountability by strengthening Gram Sabhas and independent social audit units, as envisaged in the Act, to catch corruption at its source.
5. **Cooperative Federalism** – Shift the paradigm from adversarial confrontation to cooperative federalism, using dialogue and joint monitoring to resolve issues in welfare delivery.

Way Forward

The MGNREGS dispute in West Bengal transcends state politics; it is a test case for the resilience of India's federal structure and its commitment to social justice. While financial propriety and accountability are non-negotiable, they cannot be used to undermine the constitutional right to livelihood. The Supreme Court's final decision is poised to set a critical precedent on how to balance these two essential pillars of democratic governance.

<https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-express/20251101/282411290563701?srsid=AfmBOoraeGffp0glyxCp-gPSGKxt5WPWqTKiU2ZoxRPPIvbwhIFfycR8>

3. Piyush Goyal says India will be a \$30 trillion economy in 25 years – Decoding the projections (IE)

General Studies 3 – Economy

Topic – issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

Decoding India's \$30 Trillion Economic Vision

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stated a vision for India to become a \$30 trillion economy within the next 20 to 25 years (approx. 2045–2050). This ambitious target symbolizes India's growing economic aspirations. However, achieving this goal necessitates unprecedented and sustained high growth, supported by robust policy reforms and resilience against complex domestic and global challenges.

Understanding GDP and the Scale of the Target

GDP – Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a country's borders during a specific period.

Significance – It is the primary indicator of a nation's economic performance. It directly influences crucial factors like employment rates, investment levels, and overall living standards.

India's Current Position (as of 2025)

Aggregate GDP – Approximately \$3.7 trillion.

Global Rank – Fifth-largest economy in the world.

The Caveat (Per Capita Income) – Despite a high aggregate GDP, India's per capita income remains relatively low. This highlights a significant challenge – high national wealth does not automatically guarantee equitable prosperity for all citizens.

The Growth Requirement

Historical Performance – India has maintained a commendable average real GDP growth rate of 6–7% over the past decade.

Required Target – To reach the \$30 trillion mark by 2050, this pace is insufficient. India would need to sustain a nominal GDP growth rate of 10–11% annually.

Breakdown – This nominal rate consists of approximately 7–8% real GDP growth combined with an assumed 3% average inflation.

Challenge – Sustaining such high growth for over two decades demands exceptional policy consistency and stable global economic conditions.

Divergence in Growth Projections

Economic models show varied outcomes based on different sustained growth rates –

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At 6% annual growth – India could reach a \$10 trillion economy by 2047.

At 8% annual growth – The economy could achieve \$20 trillion by 2047.

At 9–10% annual growth – Sustaining this rate, the \$30 trillion target becomes achievable within two decades.

Historical Precedent – Maintaining 9–10% growth for 20–25 years is extremely rare globally. Even China, during its peak industrial expansion, managed this (averaging 9–10%) for three decades, but it was driven by massive state-led investment and unique global integration opportunities.

Implication – To replicate this, India must fundamentally overhaul its productivity, employment structures, and governance mechanisms.

Key Drivers of India's Future GDP Growth

1. Demographic Dividend

The Asset – Over 65% of India's population is below the age of 35. This youthful workforce is a massive potential economic asset.

The Condition – To convert this potential into productivity, massive parallel investments are required in education, skill development, and large-scale job creation, especially in the manufacturing and services sectors.

2. Infrastructure and Industrialization

Key Initiatives – Flagship programs like the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), PM Gati Shakti Master Plan, and the Gati Shakti Mission are aimed at modernizing logistics and connectivity.

Impact – Infrastructure expansion acts as a powerful economic multiplier, boosting short-term employment and enhancing long-term economic output through higher productivity and investment efficiency.

3. Manufacturing and Export Competitiveness

Policy Support – Schemes like 'Make in India' and the Production Linked Incentives (PLI) are critical for boosting domestic manufacturing capabilities and export potential.

Decisive Factors – Success will depend on India's ability to integrate deeply into global value chains (GVCs), diversify its export markets (beyond traditional partners), and rapidly adopt new technologies.

4. Digital and Financial Inclusion

The Foundation – India's digital public infrastructure—including UPI, the JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile), and fintech innovations—has already fueled a significant transformation.

Benefits – This digital revolution enhances transparency, boosts efficiency, and expands financial access, thereby driving both consumption (from the bottom up) and entrepreneurship.

5. Investment and Policy Reforms

The Prerequisite – High growth cannot be sustained without a stable and attractive investment climate.

Essential Reforms – This requires continuous structural reforms in complex areas like land acquisition, labor laws, and taxation (e.g., GST simplification).

Supporting Factors – Success also hinges on improving the 'ease of doing business', ensuring policy predictability, and increasing institutional efficiency.

Formidable Challenges to Sustained Growth

1. **Unequal Development** – Significant regional, gender, and income disparities persist. This inequality hinders inclusive growth and limits the full utilization of the nation's human potential.

2. **Climate and Resource Constraints** – The transition to a green economy (renewable energy, sustainable practices) is non-negotiable but requires enormous investment and a balanced policy design to avoid disrupting growth.

3. **Global Volatility** – India's economy is exposed to external shocks, including geopolitical tensions (e.g., supply chain disruptions), rising protectionist trade policies in partner countries, and global inflationary pressures.

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4. **Fiscal and Institutional Limitations** – High public debt and fiscal deficits can restrict government spending on critical capital formation. Limited revenue mobilization (low tax-to-GDP ratio) and bureaucratic inefficiencies further constrain long-term investment.
5. **The Employment Challenge** – A persistent issue of "jobless growth" in the formal sector, coupled with high dependence on low-productivity agriculture, limits income diversification and prosperity.

Steps Needed to Enable Reforms

To achieve the \$30 trillion goal, the focus must be on inclusive, technology-driven, and investment-led growth.

Increase Investment Rate – India must attract and sustain a high investment rate, aiming for 34–36% of GDP (from both public and private sectors) to support real growth of 8% or more.

Boost Productivity – A relentless focus on encouraging innovation, widespread digitalization across all sectors, and the adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies (like AI, IoT, and robotics) is essential.

Enhance Human Capital – The workforce must be made globally competitive. This requires a radical improvement in public education, healthcare, and targeted skill development to match modern industry demands.

Ensure Fiscal Prudence – The government must improve tax compliance (widening the tax base) and rationalize non-essential subsidies. This will create the fiscal space needed for critical capital expenditure on infrastructure.

Green Growth Transition – Economic growth must be aligned with climate commitments. This involves strategically leveraging renewable energy, building sustainable infrastructure, and promoting a circular economy.

Way Forward

India's aspiration to become a \$30 trillion economy is a reflection of its deep confidence in its demographic strength, entrepreneurial spirit, and policy ambitions. However, this vision is not a guaranteed outcome. The path ahead is challenging and requires a clear-eyed strategy built on sustained structural reforms, deeper global integration, and an unwavering commitment to inclusive growth that benefits all citizens.

Source – <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/explainspeaking-decoding-india-projected-gdp-piyush-goyal-10335946/>