

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Edition: International | Table of Contents

Page 03 Syllabus : GS 3 : Environment	Special initiative to drive away wild elephants from human habitations in Idukki village
Page 04 Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity	Bilkis Bano verdict SC dismisses review petition by Gujarat
Page 10 Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations	Storms brewing in East, South China seas
Page 11 Syllabus : GS 1 – History	A life in revolution Bhagat Singh, a radical thinker and ideologue
Event In News	Jivitputrika Festival
Page 08 : Editorial Analysis: Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity & Governance	An opportunity to rethink India's pension system

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The Forest Department started a special initiative to drive away wild elephants that wreak havoc in Kanthallur village under the Marayur forest division in Idukki.

Special initiative to drive away wild elephants from human habitations in Idukki village

The Hindu Bureau

IDUKKI

The Forest Department started a special initiative to drive away wild elephants that wreak havoc in Kanthallur village under the Marayur forest division in Idukki. According to the department officials, an 84-member team began the initiative on Thursday morning to drive away the elephants from human habitations in Kanthallur panchayat to Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Marayur divisional forest officer P.J. Shuhaib said the drive will continue on Friday. "The department aims to drive away problematic elephants from farm-



A wild tusker roaming in Kanthallur panchayat in Idukki on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lands," said the official.

Kanthallur panchayat president P.T. Thankachen expressed satisfaction with the department's special drive addressing man-animal conflict in the panchayat. "As many as 18 wild elephants were camping in

various parts of the panchayat, which made it hard for the people to engage in farming activities," he said.

M.R. Kumaravel, a farmer in Kanthallur, said that for the past three months, wild elephants have been camping on the farmlands.

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The Supreme Court rejected the Gujarat government's plea to review its January 8 verdict, which had canceled the remission granted to 11 men convicted of raping Bilkis Bano and killing seven of her family members during the 2002 Gujarat riots.

- The Gujarat government contested certain "adverse" observations made by the court in the January verdict, arguing that such remarks should not have been made against the state. However, the court found no merit in the review plea and dismissed it.

About the news

- The Supreme Court dismissed the Gujarat government's review plea challenging its January 8 judgment that canceled the remission granted to 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case.
- The January judgment accused Gujarat of being complicit with one of the convicts, Radheshyam Shah, and held that the May 2022, order granting remission was obtained through fraud and suppression of facts.
- The Supreme Court also criticized Gujarat for not filing a review against the 2022 order sooner, which could have avoided further litigation.

Stand of Gujarat govt

- In its review plea, Gujarat argued that it was only complying with the 2022 Supreme Court directive to decide the remission application under its 1992 Remission Policy, though it consistently maintained that Maharashtra was the appropriate authority to decide.
- The state rejected the court's accusation of "usurpation of power" and emphasized that it had no need to file a review petition as Bilkis Bano herself had done so, but her review was dismissed in December 2022.
- The state further contended that it was not complicit in any fraud.

What is Remission?

- **About**
 - Remission is the complete ending of a sentence at a reduced point.
 - Remission is distinct from both furlough and parole in that it is a reduction in sentence as opposed to a break from prison life.

Bilkis Bano verdict: SC dismisses review petition by Gujarat

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday found no "error apparent on the face of the record" or merit in a petition filed by the Gujarat government to review adverse remarks made against it by the top court in a January 8 judgment, which quashed the premature release of 11 men sentenced to life imprisonment for the gang rape of Bilkis Bano and the murder of her family during the 2002 riots in the State.

The review was decided by a Bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan.

The State of Gujarat had remitted the life sentence of the 11 convicts and released them from jail in August 2022.

The Supreme Court's January 8 verdict had passed scathing remarks about the alacrity shown by the Gujarat government to "usurp"

Maharashtra's authority in deciding on the remission. The trial in the case was held in Maharashtra, which was the competent authority to decide the remission applications of the 11 convicts.

The Gujarat government had found some of the observations in the January 8 judgment "extreme", including that the State had "acted in tandem and was complicit with [one of the] accused". It had argued in the review plea that such remarks in the judgment was not only highly unwarranted but had caused serious prejudice to the State.

"Having carefully gone through the review petitions, the order under challenge and the papers annexed therewith, we are satisfied that there is no error apparent on the face of the record or any merit in the review petitions, warranting reconsideration of the order impugned," the Supreme Court said.

➤ Constitutional Provisions

- Both the President and the Governor have been vested with sovereign power of pardon by the Constitution.
- Under Article 72, the President can grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person.
- Under Article 161, a Governor can grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment, or suspend, remit or commute the sentence.

➤ Statutory power of remission

- The Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) also provided for remission of prison sentences. This is because prisons is a State Subject.
- Under Section 432 of CrPC, the 'appropriate government' may suspend or remit a sentence, in whole or in part, with or without conditions.
- Under Section 433 of CrPC, any sentence may be commuted to a lesser one by the appropriate government.
- This power is available to State governments so that they may order the release of prisoners before they complete their prison terms.

➤ The CrPC is now replaced by the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita.

➤ CHAPTER XXXIV of the BNS 2023 deals with the powers of remission or commutation in certain cases under the following sections:

- Section 473 - Power to suspend or remit sentences.
- The Central Government has the power to do so in cases where the sentence is for an offense against a law that comes under the executive power of the Union.
- In other cases, the Government of the State where the offender is sentenced has the power to do so.
- Section 474 - Power to commute sentences. The appropriate Government can commute any punishment to any other punishment without the consent of the offender.
- Section 475 - Restriction on powers of remission or commutation in certain cases.
- Section 477 - State Government acting after concurrence with the Central Government in certain cases.

➤ Guidelines to be followed while granting Remission

- In 'Laxman Naskar v. Union of India' (2000) case, the Supreme Court laid down five grounds on which remission is considered:
 - Whether the offence is an individual act of crime that does not affect the society;
 - Whether there is a chance of the crime being repeated in future;
 - Whether the convict has lost the potentiality to commit crime;
 - Whether any purpose is being served in keeping the convict in prison; and
 - Socio-economic conditions of the convict's family.
- Also, convicts serving life sentences are entitled to seek remission after serving a minimum of 14 years in prison.

What is Bilkis Bano Case?

➤ About

- In the aftermath of the Godhra riots in Gujarat in 2002, Bilkis Bano and her family were attacked by a group of people.
- Bilkis was brutally gangraped and seven of her family members were murdered.

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Daily News Analysis

- Her case was taken up by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Supreme Court, which ordered an investigation by the CBI.
- Due to persistent death threats, the trial was moved out of Gujarat to Mumbai where charges were filed against these people.
- In January 2008, a special CBI court in Mumbai had sentenced the 11 accused to life imprisonment.
- Release of these convicts
- In 2022, one of the convicts named Radheshyam Shah, after completing 15 years and four months of his life term, moved to the SC for early release.
- In May 2022, the SC passed this case to the Gujarat government.
- It asked the Gujarat government to consider Shah's application for premature release, as per the state's 1992 remission policy.
- On August 15, 2022, the Gujarat government released all 11 convicts in the gangrape case under its remission policy.
- However, this decision sparked a major public backlash, and prompted petitions from opposition MPs.
- ➔ **Review petition by Bilkis Bano**
 - Bilkis Bano in 2022 filed an appeal in the Supreme Court to review the decision of the Gujarat government ordering release of the 11 gangrape convicts.
 - January 8 judgement of Supreme Court
 - In response to the review petition filed by Bilkis Bano, the apex court, on January 8, overturned the Gujarat government's decision to release the 11 convicts.
- ➔ **Key highlights of the January 8 judgement by SC**
 - The Gujarat government was not the appropriate government to pass the remission order as the trial was held in Maharashtra.
 - The exemption order lacks competence. Criminals can be released only by the state where they are tried.
 - The bench also held that the SC order of May 13, 2022 was obtained by fraud and suppression of facts.
 - Gujarat government should have filed a plea seeking review of the 2022 order stating they are not the competent government.
 - The Supreme Court came down heavily against its own judgment in May 2022.
 - In May 2022, the SC ruled that there cannot be a concurrent jurisdiction of two State governments on the issue of remission.
 - Premature release of a convict has to be considered in terms of the policy applicable in the State where the crime was committed
 - Hence, Gujarat government's remission policy was applied for the release of these convicts.
 - The rule of law must be preserved unmindful of the ripples of the consequences.

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In recent years, maritime East Asia has witnessed escalating power struggles, with China claiming Japan-controlled Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea, sparking repeated tensions.

Storms brewing in East, South China seas

What has led to a flare-up in tensions in recent times? Why does China see its claims over the seas as defensive actions? Why do the regional countries consider it provocative? Why is the U.S. drawn into the conflict? What lies ahead?

EXPLAINER

Sankalp Gurjar

The story so far:

In the last few years, maritime East Asia has become an arena for intensified power politics. The East China Sea borders China, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. China asserts that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, located in the East China Sea and under Japanese control, belong to Beijing. There have been multiple crises over these islands in the past. The South China Sea lies between China, Taiwan and five Southeast Asian countries – Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Indonesia – and has emerged as one of the most important flashpoints in the Indo-Pacific. China has been aggressively pushing its claims in the South China Sea.

Why are the seas important to China? China views the East and South China Seas through the prism of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national security. China's Defence White paper, issued in 2019, declares, "South China Sea Islands and Diaoyu Islands are inalienable parts of the Chinese territory." In responding to the criticism regarding China's activities, it asserts that "China exercises its national sovereignty to build infrastructure and deploy necessary defensive capabilities on the islands and reefs in the South China Sea, and to conduct patrols in the waters of Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea." What China perceives as its defensive actions are considered offensive and provocative by the regional countries surrounding the East and South China Seas.

What is the significance of the seas? The key maritime trade routes in East Asia pass through these two seas. Taiwan Strait is a critical maritime choke point. The region is home to undersea cables that are important for the global digital economy. As per the U.S. Energy Information Administration, in 2023, 10 billion barrels of petroleum and petroleum products and 6.7 trillion cubic feet of liquefied natural gas passed through the South China Sea. It is also home to vast reserves of untapped oil and natural gas.

What is China doing in the region? China has been aggressively pushing its territorial claims in both seas in two ways: by building defence-related infrastructure such as ports, military installations, airstrips, and artificial islands and by pushing back against the claims of regional countries. In the East China Sea, China vehemently contested Japanese claims and, both countries found themselves embroiled in multiple crises, the most notable being the arrest of a Chinese captain of a fishing boat in 2010 and Japan's nationalisation of the Senkaku islands in 2012. These crises saw both countries taking maximalist positions. China had imposed a ban on the export of rare earth minerals to Japan. In the last few years, there has been a slight easing of tensions over the issue regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. As per the Japan Coast Guard data, 2023 saw the highest level of activity by the Chinese Coast Guard in the contiguous zone of the Senkakus. Owing to China's assertive foreign policy, its relationship with South Korea, Taiwan and Japan has deteriorated rapidly.

Meanwhile, the South China Sea has



Tensions rise: Members of the Philippine Coast Guard on alert as a Chinese Coast Guard vessel blocks their way to a resupply mission at Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea, on March 5, 2024. REUTERS



growing continuously. China's navy is also the largest naval force in the world by numbers. Therefore, the South China Sea is seeing the ever-growing projection of Chinese power. For asserting its claims, China has deployed a Coast Guard and maritime militia. The tactics include dangerous and aggressive manoeuvres at sea, harassing resupply missions, ramming vessels, collisions, and using water cannons and military-grade lasers, etc. These tactics are known as 'grey zone' operations, which fall short of war but are designed to alter the status quo.

China has been actively pushing its claims in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Philippines. Since 2022, tensions between China and the Philippines have been rising due to a significant increase in the frequency of such incidents. In June/July 2024, multiple incidents of clashes occurred. The Second Thomas Shoal and Sabina Shoal have been the focus of China's recent

contention. China aims to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its treaty partners in East Asia. Chinese Coast Guard ships are considerably heavier and larger in terms of tonnage compared with Coast Guard vessels of other countries. For example, the Chinese vessel CGC 5901 (541 feet long and displaces 12,000 tons) is three times larger than the main ships of the U.S. Coast Guard. Hence, China's frequent ramming of the Philippines' vessels is dangerous and risky. There is a chance of miscalculation.

In July, China conducted naval exercises with Russia in the South China Sea to demonstrate the support that it enjoys over it while projecting its claims. China's claims in the South China Sea lack a legal basis, according to a permanent court of arbitration ruling in 2016. However, China has rejected that ruling.

What has been the response from regional countries?

regional countries trying to catch up with China. For example, by 2027, Japan wants to double its defence expenditure. The Philippines too is ramping up its defence capabilities and, among others, has acquired the anti-ship, BrahMos missiles from India.

Second, regional countries are responding to China's activities at sea. From 2016 to 2022, Under President Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines sought to minimise the friction between Manila and Beijing. Since 2022, the Philippines has been pushing back and publicising these incidents. The change in policy was crafted by the new President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. As a result, the frequency of incidents has gone up. Regional countries are engaged in a battle of narratives as well. They are deploying tools such as public diplomacy. The Philippines has been filming the behaviour of Chinese vessels and is releasing it through social media. The Philippines has also taken international journalists along with its resupply missions in the West Philippine Sea. The shaping of perceptions has become a key battleground.

Third, the Philippines, Japan and South Korea are treaty allies of the U.S. and are strengthening their defence relationship with it. The U.S. and the Philippines have enhanced their cooperation in the South China Sea to "historic levels" and expanded cooperation in domains such as base access, training and joint exercises. They are working with Australia and Japan in "a complex, multilateral maritime cooperative activity." It is dubbed as the "Squad". According to U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin, the U.S.' commitment to the security of Japan is "ironclad" and includes the Senkaku islands as well. The U.S., Japan, and South Korea are deepening their trilateral cooperation. For the first time in history, the Defence Ministers of the three countries met in Japan in July 2024. In view of aggressive Chinese maritime activities, the press statement noted that these three countries "strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the waters of the Indo-Pacific." They also "stressed the importance of fully respecting international law including the freedom of navigation and overflight."

Despite the efforts at bolstering the U.S.' alliances in the Indo-Pacific, concerns remain about American credibility and the impact of the U.S.' domestic politics on its external security commitments. There is also a debate about whether the U.S. engagement will

THE GIST

China asserts sovereignty over the East China Sea, particularly the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, which are controlled by Japan, and pushes its claims in the South China Sea, leading to heightened tensions with several Southeast Asian nations.

The East and South China Seas are vital maritime trade routes, housing essential undersea cables and significant reserves of oil and natural gas, making them critical for regional and global economies.

China is expanding its military presence by building artificial islands, military infrastructure, and aggressive maritime tactics, which include harassing vessels from neighbouring countries.

In reaction to China's assertiveness, countries like Japan and the Philippines are increasing their defence capabilities while shifting policies to confront Chinese actions.

What are the current geopolitical tensions in the East and South China Seas?

- **East China Sea:** The main issue revolves around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, claimed by both China and Japan.
 - Tensions have escalated through incidents like the arrest of a Chinese fishing boat captain and Japan's nationalization of the islands in 2012. The area also witnesses Chinese Coast Guard incursions.

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- **South China Sea:** China's claims over most of the region, backed by aggressive actions such as the creation of artificial islands and naval exercises, have escalated tensions with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan.
 - China's "Nine-Dash Line" claims have been rejected by international tribunals, but Beijing continues to push these claims.
- **USA Context:** The U.S. maintains security alliances with Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, providing military backing. Joint exercises and increased cooperation between these allies.
 - The formation of the "Squad" (US, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines) highlights the coordination to counterbalance China's influence.

How do climate change and environmental factors impact storm patterns in these regions?

- **Storm Patterns and Rising Seas:** The region is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, including typhoons, which are becoming more intense and frequent due to climate change.
 - Rising sea levels and changing storm patterns threaten coastal communities, military installations, and infrastructure.
- **Erosion of Islands:** The creation of artificial islands by China is accelerating coastal erosion and destroying coral reefs, which are critical to local marine ecosystems.

What are the implications of military activities by regional powers in the East and South China Seas?

- **Growing Militarization:** China has rapidly expanded its military presence, including the construction of airstrips, ports, and other defense infrastructure.
 - The Chinese Coast Guard and maritime militias have been active in harassing the vessels of other claimant states, particularly in the South China Sea.
- **Challenge the US Navy:** China's military activities are seen as part of its broader strategy to challenge U.S. naval supremacy in the Indo-Pacific. This strategy also includes controlling vital sea lanes, undersea cables, and energy reserves.

How are local communities and economies affected?

- **Economic Disruption:** China's actions in the South China Sea, particularly around disputed fishing areas, have impacted local economies dependent on fishing.
- **Maritime Trade:** The region is home to critical sea lanes through which a significant portion of global trade, including energy supplies, passes. Any conflict or blockade in these waters would have severe global economic ramifications.
- **Impact on Tourism:** The increasing militarization and tension also negatively impact tourism in coastal areas.

Way forward:

- **Strengthening Maritime Partnerships:** India should enhance its strategic maritime partnerships in the Indo-Pacific through forums like the Quad (India, U.S., Japan, and Australia) and ASEAN to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- **Economic and Infrastructure Diplomacy:** India can leverage initiatives like SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and enhance its economic presence by investing in infrastructure, connectivity, and capacity-building projects in Southeast Asian countries.

September 28th marks 117th birth anniversary of the legendary freedom fighter "Bhagat Singh".



Rich Legacy: His writings must be read widely, this perhaps would be a better tribute to Bhagat Singh's life as a revolutionary than propagandism or empty political posturing. FILE PHOTO

A life in revolution: Bhagat Singh, a radical thinker and ideologue

A look back at the works of a revolutionary who was martyred in the fight for freedom; erudite, and a polyglot, he filled his short and tumultuous life writing on many subjects, from communalism and inequality to religion and faith, words which have a chilling contemporary relevance

Prathmesh Kher

In our age and clime, a radical worldview is often simplified. As if an entire ideology could be reduced to a haiku, and the worth of a man reduced to mere sloganeering. Whether it is Gandhi, Ambedkar, Bose, Savarkar, or Nehru, all are victims of this malaise; as if those who existed in the past serve merely the political interests of the present. One such figure in history is Bhagat Singh. On his birth anniversary, we take a look back at some of the works of the thinker and ideologue.

Literary references

Bhagat Singh was able to communicate in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, and English, and was familiar with the fundamentals of Sanskrit.

In one of his earliest pieces in 1923, *The Problem of Punjab's Language and Script*, a 16-year-old Singh lucidly explains the distinction between the Gurmukhi script and the Punjabi language, and how a language is suffused with influences far beyond man-made borders.

Singh's jail notebook and letters also reflect the eclecticism of his literary diet.

In *Vishva Prem* (Universal Love), published in November 1924, Singh declares "Visvabandhuta (Universal Brotherhood)! For me the greatest meaning of this word is equality and nothing else. None will need to cry for bread when hungry... There would be peace without penal codes."

Singh extols Rana Pratap, Mazzini, Gandhi, Lenin, Washington, Savarkar, Tilak, and MacSwiney as models for the youth, and harkens to Brutus in Roman history, and Krishna in the Mahabharata in the article.

By 1928, the stark realities of the Indian situation were more apparent to

the young Singh.

In the article *Communal Riots and their Solution*, Singh comes down hard on the journalists of his day, writing, "These people arouse public sentiment by writing bold headlines in the newspapers against one or the other and compel people to start fighting with one another... riots started in many locations just because of the fact that local newspapers had written articles that stoked passions."

"The actual duty of newspapers is to educate, to liberate people from narrow-mindedness, eradicate fundamentalism, to help in creating a sense of fraternity among people, and build a common nationalism in India, but these papers behaved in a manner entirely antithetical to their duties," he says.

Students and politics

"We are hearing a wide clamouring that students should not take part in political work," Singh writes in a July 1928 article, *Students and Politics*, explaining how the then Punjab government required aspiring collegiates to "sign off on an undertaking that they will not take part in political activities." Singh says that an education which will "only equip them for clerical jobs" would be "worthless." "They should study, but at the same time they should acquire the knowledge of politics too, and when the need arises they should jump into the fray and sacrifice their lives for the nation," Singh states.

In his June 1928 article, *The Problem of Untouchability*, Singh exhorts the "so-called untouchables, the real sustainers of life" to remember that they "were the backbone of Guru Gobind Singh's army. Shivaji was able to achieve all he did with your participation and it made him forever shine in history." Singh

urges them to "unite to stand on your own feet and challenge the existing order of society."

Declaring the idea that "since someone is born in a poor sweeper's family, he shall continue cleaning toilets all his life" as "utter nonsense", Singh stokes the depressed classes to "start a revolution from a social agitation." Singh reminds the untouchables that they "are the pillars of the nation and its core strength. Awake, O sleeping lions! Rebel, raise the banner of revolt."

In a December 1929 article, *What is Revolution?*, Singh explains, "The spirit of revolution should always permeate the soul of humanity so that reactionary forces may not accumulate to check its eternal onward march. Old order should change, always and ever, yielding place to new, so that one 'good' order may not corrupt the world. It is in this sense that we raise the shout 'Long Live Revolution.'"

In a three-part piece titled, *What is Anarchism?*, published in 1928, Singh reflects, "Anarchists are against God and religion to begin with because they feel this is the root of mental slavery. And then they are against the State because it is the root of physical slavery. They say that motivating people with the temptation of heaven, fear of hell, or with the iron hand of law is the wrong approach and it is also an insult to a superior being like a human."

In his 1931 *Letter to Young Political Workers*, Singh writes, "According to our definition of the term, revolution means the complete overthrow of the existing social order and its replacement with the socialist order... the state, the government machinery is just a weapon in the hands of the ruling class to further and safeguard its interest. We want to snatch it, and handle it, to utilise it for the consummation of our ideal, i.e., social

reconstruction on a new, i.e., Marxist, basis."

Challenging faith

As an atheist and a materialist, Singh had thought organised religion to be an impediment to the freedom struggle in particular and to social progress in general. "We can see the mountain of religion standing in our path," Singh writes in an April 1928 article, *Religion and our Freedom Struggle*. "... a clash between people could be instigated with the loud recitation of Koranic verses and Vedic mantras. The question is then, why should we not do away with all this once and for all?" he asks.

In *Why I am an Atheist*, Singh declares, "Any man who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith. Item by item, he has to reason out every nook and corner of the prevailing faith... An individual who claims to be a realist has to challenge all of ancient faith."

In an April 1929 letter to his compatriot Sukhdev, Singh writes about how the emotion of "love" can elevate a human life. Writing of Mazzini in the aftermath of the failed rebellion, Singh says, "He could have either gone mad or committed suicide, but with a letter from his beloved, he became not only as strong as the others, but stronger than everybody else... The character of a person is always elevated by love; it never shows one in a bad light provided that the love is true love. True love can never be created. It wells up by itself when no one can predict."

Bhagat Singh wrote and worked extensively in his short and tumultuous life. His writings must be read widely – this perhaps would be a better tribute to Singh's life as a revolutionary than propagandism or empty political posturing.

Who was Bhagat Singh?

Birth	September 28, 1907; Banga, Punjab (now in Pakistan)
Family	Came from a family involved in anticolonial activities; his

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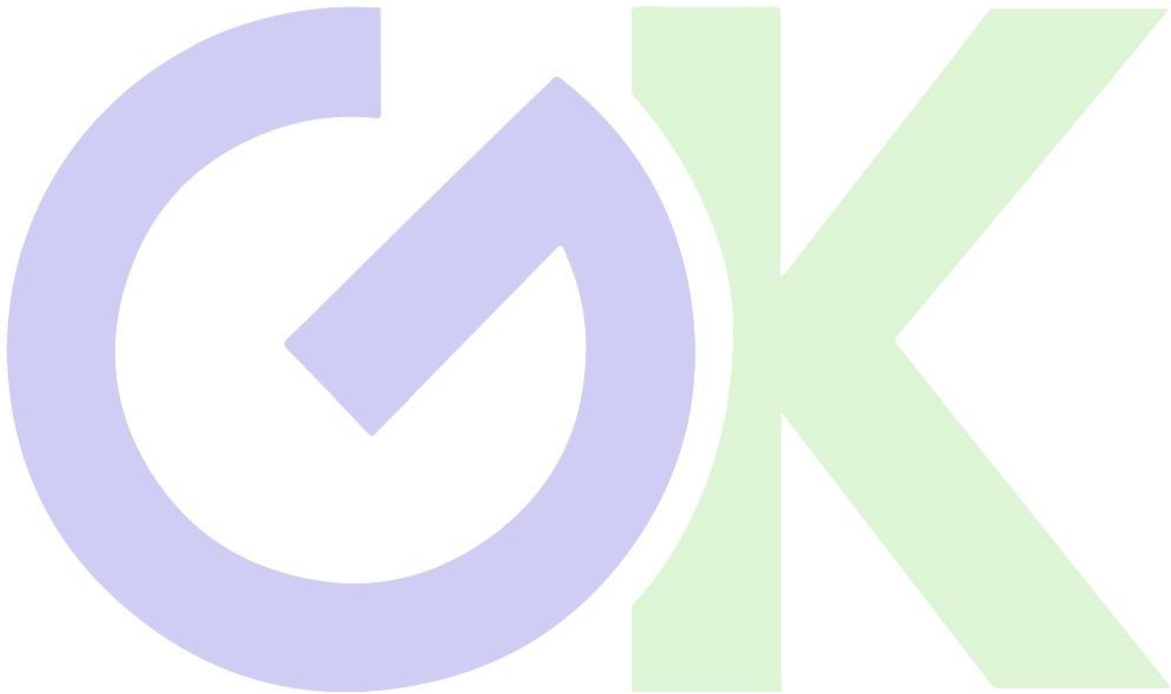
	father Kishan Singh and uncle Ajit Singh were active freedom fighters.
Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hindustan Republican Association (1924) • Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (1928) • Naujawan Bharat Sabha (1926)
Revolutionary Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Played a key role in the Lahore Conspiracy Case (1928) by avenging Lala Lajpat Rai's death and mistakenly killing J.P. Saunders • Threw a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly on April 8, 1929, with B.K. Dutt, to protest oppressive British laws.
Ideologies and Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocated Marxist and socialist ideologies • Rejected religion in his essay Why I Am an Atheist • Emphasized rationalism, equality, and justice.
Arrest and Trial	Arrested in 1929 for throwing a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly; later rearrested for the Lahore Conspiracy Case (murder of J.P. Saunders). Jinnah opposed a 1929 Bill allowing trials in absentia, delivering a strong speech in the Central Assembly.
Execution	Hanged on March 23, 1931 , along with Sukhdev and Rajguru , in Lahore for his revolutionary activities. Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose visited Bhagat Singh in prison.
Literary Works	<p>Bhagat Singh was fluent in Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, and English, and familiar with Sanskrit. His jail notebook referenced thinkers like Karl Marx, Thomas Jefferson, Mark Twain, and others, reflecting his intellectual diversity.</p> <p>At 17, he wrote Vishwa Prem (Universal Love), advocating for universal brotherhood and equality. He urged the oppressed classes to rebel against the social order and spoke about the philosophy of revolution in his writings, such as What is Revolution? (1929).</p> <p>In his series What is Anarchism? he described organized religion and the state as forms of mental and physical slavery.</p>

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He wrote about the **power of love** in a 1929 letter to **Sukhdev**, emphasizing its role in personal and political strength.



GURUKULAM IAS

Event In News : Jivitputrika Festival

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Daily News Analysis

- ▶ At least 46 people, including 37 children, drowned while taking holy dip in rivers and ponds in several Bihar districts during the 'Jivitputrika' festival, recently.



About Jivitputrika Festival:

- ▶ Jivitputrika, or Jitiya Vrat, is a Hindu festival observed primarily in the northern and eastern parts of India, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Nepal.
- ▶ It is celebrated by mothers who fast for the well-being, long life, and prosperity of their children.
- ▶ The festival spans three days, with the main ritual involving a strict 'nirjala' fast, meaning no water is consumed during the fast.
- ▶ The fast is considered an expression of a mother's devotion and love, with the belief that it will bring divine blessings upon her children.
- ▶ The festival is rooted in Hindu mythology, particularly the story of King Jimutavahana, whose sacrifice for the welfare of others is commemorated during this time.
- ▶ The celebration begins with Nahai-Khai, where mothers take a purifying bath and eat a nourishing meal.

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- ▶ The second day is marked by the rigorous fasting ritual, and the festival concludes on the third day with Paaran, where the fast is broken with a meal.



GURUKULAM IAS

An opportunity to rethink India's pension system

The pension system in India has undergone a significant transformation over the years with three major schemes, the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), New Pension Scheme (NPS), and the proposed Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), marking the different phases of government policy. Each scheme impacts retirees in different ways, with the OPS often being viewed as a more secure system compared to the NPS, which ties retirement funds to volatile market conditions. As the world witnesses a retreat from neoliberal policies, the debate around welfarism is being reignited. In this context, the UPS requires considerable rectification to ensure that it serves the interests of retirees effectively.

A shift with greater individual risk

The OPS, prevalent before 2004, guaranteed a defined benefit pension to government employees. In this scheme, the pension amount was fixed and determined by the last drawn salary, and the government was solely responsible for disbursing the pensions. The OPS provided stability and ensured that retirees were insulated from any financial market risks. The reliance on a fixed percentage of the last drawn salary for pensions meant that employees could plan their retirements with a sense of financial security, knowing that they would have a guaranteed income stream throughout their post-retirement years. The OPS reflected the government's commitment to social security by excluding the market from the equation and offering guaranteed pensions.

In 2004, the Government of India replaced the OPS with the New Pension Scheme (NPS). Here, the shift was from a defined-benefit model to a defined-contribution model, wherein employee and the government contributed towards a pension fund, which was then invested in financial markets. The pension payout under the NPS is linked to the performance of these investments, meaning retirees' incomes are now subject to the fluctuations of market prices.

The shift from OPS to NPS represents the neoliberal tendency to reduce state involvement



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With the return to welfarism worldwide, India's proposed Unified Pension Scheme should ensure that retirees are supported by a robust welfare system

in welfare provisions and transfer risk to individuals. The NPS left retirees vulnerable to market volatility, effectively placing their futures at the mercy of speculative market conditions. The NPS has drawn criticism because the security once provided by the state under OPS has been eroded. During periods of economic downturn, retirees may face reduced returns, undermining their financial stability.

This market-driven pension model has also fuelled wider concerns about the commercialisation of public welfare programmes and the weakening of the state's social responsibility.

A return to welfarism

Globally, the era of neoliberalism that dominated economic policy for the past few decades is showing signs of a retreat. The 2008 financial crisis exposed the risks associated with excessive market reliance, leading to calls for stronger social safety nets and a return to welfarism. The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified these demands, as governments worldwide were compelled to intervene in unprecedented ways to protect the health and livelihoods of their citizens. India, too, is experiencing a similar shift, with demands for the return of state-backed welfare provisions.

The UPS, as proposed by the Narendra Modi government, emerges in this context as an attempt to provide universal pensions while balancing state involvement and market participation.

While the U-turn of the Modi government, as pointed out by the Opposition, aims to address the issues raised by the NPS, the UPS is still in its nascent stages and requires significant rectification before it can be seen as a viable alternative to the NPS. Critics have already pointed out that the UPS promises retirement payouts but offers reduced returns compared to the OPS and exposes retirees to the risks of uncertain market-based assets. The requirement of 25 years of service for a full pension is a disadvantage for those who join late, while potential underfunding raises concerns about

future pension delays or corpus depletion.

Moreover, the scheme only covers Union government employees, excluding many public sector workers such as teachers, and may disincentivise further pay commissions. One of the critical aspects of the UPS that needs attention is the need for greater state intervention to ensure that retirees are not left vulnerable to market forces. While the UPS offers a universal framework, its structure should incorporate safeguards against market fluctuations, possibly by providing a minimum guaranteed pension similar to the OPS.

Issue of government contribution

Another area that needs reform is the level of government contribution. The UPS hybrid model would not completely mitigate risks associated with market reliance and may fail to offer a balanced pension system. Further, ensuring the inclusivity of the UPS across all sectors, including informal labour, is critical. India's vast informal workforce currently lacks adequate pension coverage. The UPS must broaden its scope to provide pension security to all citizens, and not just to government employees, aligning with the broader return of welfarism that is gaining momentum globally.

The comparison of the OPS, the NPS and the UPS illustrates the tension between state-backed welfare and market-driven policies in India's pension system. While the OPS provided a stable and predictable pension income, the NPS shifted retirees' financial futures into the volatile realm of market investments, creating uncertainties and vulnerabilities. The retreat of neoliberalism and the return to welfarism worldwide, although on a limited scale or even notionally, provide an opportunity to rethink India's pension system and strike a better balance between state responsibility and market participation. The UPS, if properly restructured, could become an important tool in protecting the financial security of retirees and addressing the shortcomings of the NPS, ensuring that India's retirees are not left to the mercy of market forces but are supported by a robust welfare system.

GS Paper 02 : Indian Polity & Governance

UPSC Mains Practice Question Critically analyze the implications of transitioning from the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) to the New Pension Scheme (NPS) in India, and evaluate the potential of the proposed Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) in addressing the challenges faced by retirees in the context of global shifts towards welfarism. (250 w /15 m)

Context :

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Daily News Analysis

- ➔ The pension system in India is under scrutiny as discussions around the proposed Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) gain momentum. This comes amid a broader global retreat from neoliberal policies and a resurgence of calls for welfarism, highlighting the need for effective pension security for retirees.

Introduction

- ➔ The pension system in India has undergone a significant transformation over the years with three major schemes, the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), New Pension Scheme (NPS), and the proposed Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), marking the different phases of government policy.
- ➔ Each scheme impacts retirees in different ways, with the OPS often being viewed as a more secure system compared to the NPS, which ties retirement funds to volatile market conditions. As the world witnesses a retreat from neoliberal policies, the debate around welfarism is being reignited.
- ➔ In this context, the UPS requires considerable rectification to ensure that it serves the interests of retirees effectively.

A shift with greater individual risk About Old Pension Scheme (OPS)

- The OPS, prevalent before 2004, guaranteed a defined benefit pension to government employees.
- In this scheme, the pension amount was fixed and determined by the last drawn salary.
- The government was solely responsible for disbursing the pensions.
- ➔ **Financial stability and security:** The OPS provided stability and ensured that retirees were insulated from any financial market risks.
 - The reliance on a fixed percentage of the last drawn salary for pensions meant employees could plan their retirements with a sense of financial security.
 - Retirees were assured of a guaranteed income stream throughout their post-retirement years.
- ➔ **The commitment to social security:** The OPS reflected the government's commitment to social security.
 - By excluding the market from the equation, the scheme offered guaranteed pensions to retirees.
- ➔ **A shift from OPS to NPS:** In 2004, the Government of India replaced the OPS with the New Pension Scheme (NPS).
 - The shift was from a defined-benefit model to a defined-contribution model, wherein both the employee and the government contributed towards a pension fund.

This fund was then invested in financial markets.

- ➔ **The Market-linked pension payout:** The pension payout under the NPS is linked to the performance of these investments.
 - Retirees' incomes are now subject to the fluctuations of market forces.
- ➔ **Neoliberal Shift and Risk Transfer:** The shift from OPS to NPS represents the neoliberal tendency to reduce state involvement in welfare provisions.

The transfer of risk to individuals has left retirees vulnerable to market volatility

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Retirees' futures are now at the mercy of speculative market conditions.

- **Criticism of NPS:** The NPS has drawn criticism for eroding the security once provided by the state under OPS. During periods of economic downturn, retirees may face reduced returns, undermining their financial stability.
- **Concerns over commercialisation and social responsibility:** The market-driven pension model has fuelled concerns about the commercialisation of public welfare programmes. It also raises concerns about the weakening of the state's social responsibility.

A return to welfarism

- Globally, the era of neoliberalism that dominated economic policy for the past few decades is showing signs of a retreat.
- The 2008 financial crisis exposed the risks associated with excessive market reliance, leading to calls for stronger social safety nets and a return to welfarism.
- The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified these demands, as governments worldwide were compelled to intervene in unprecedented ways to protect the health and livelihoods of their citizens.
- India, too, is experiencing a similar shift, with demands for the return of state-backed welfare provisions.

Introduction of the Universal Pension Scheme (UPS)

- The UPS, as proposed by the Narendra Modi government, emerges in this context as an attempt to provide universal pensions while balancing state involvement and market participation.

Criticism and Challenges of the UPS

- While the U-turn of the Modi government, as pointed out by the Opposition, aims to address the issues raised by the NPS, the UPS is still in its nascent stages and requires significant rectification before it can be seen as a viable alternative to the NPS.
- Critics have already pointed out that the UPS promises retirement payouts but offers reduced returns compared to the OPS and exposes retirees to the risks of uncertain market-based assets.
- The requirement of 25 years of service for a full pension is a disadvantage for those who join late, while potential underfunding raises concerns about future pension delays or corpus depletion.
- Moreover, the scheme only covers Union government employees, excluding many public sector workers such as teachers, and may disincentivise further pay commissions.
- **Need for Greater State Intervention:** One of the critical aspects of the UPS that needs attention is the need for greater state intervention to ensure that retirees are not left vulnerable to market forces.
- While the UPS offers a universal framework, its structure should incorporate safeguards against market fluctuations, possibly by providing a minimum guaranteed pension similar to the OPS.

Issue of government contribution

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Daily News Analysis

- **Need for reform in government contribution:** Another area that needs reform is the level of government contribution.
 - The UPS hybrid model would not completely mitigate risks associated with market reliance and may fail to offer a balanced pension system.
- **Inclusivity across all sectors:** Further, ensuring the inclusivity of the UPS across all sectors, including informal labour, is critical.
 - India's vast informal workforce currently lacks adequate pension coverage.
 - The UPS must broaden its scope to provide pension security to all citizens, and not just to government employees, aligning with the broader return of welfarism that is gaining momentum globally.

Conclusion

- The comparison of the OPS, the NPS and the UPS illustrates the tension between state-backed welfare and marketdriven policies in India's pension system. While the OPS provided a stable and predictable pension income, the NPS shifted retirees' financial futures into the volatile realm of market investments, creating uncertainties and vulnerabilities.
- The retreat of neoliberalism and the return to welfarism worldwide, although on a limited scale or even notionally, provide an opportunity to rethink India's pension system and strike a better balance between state responsibility and market participation.
- The UPS, if properly restructured, could become an important tool in protecting the financial security of retirees and addressing the shortcomings of the NPS, ensuring that India's retirees are not left to the mercy of market forces but are supported by a robust welfare system.