

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INDIA-FRANCE DEFENCE TIES
TAKE A LEAP

CONTEXT: Mr. Macron was in Delhi as part of a 30-hour visit to India, and was accompanied by 40 officials, including his new Minister for Foreign Affairs Stéphane Séjourné, and Ministers of Defence and Culture. This was Mr. Macron's third visit to India, the seventh time he has met Mr. Modi since January 2023, and the sixth time a French President has been invited to Republic Day, the maximum number for any country.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with French President Emmanuel Macron during the 75th Republic Day parade in New Delhi. PTI

India and France announced a “defence industrial road map” for cooperation on defence production, future collaboration on “co-design and co-development” of military hardware, as well as key agreements on space cooperation. The roadmap was part of a number of agreements between the two countries that were sealed during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron in Jaipur. The roadmap will also bring some parity with the India-U.S. defence production plan finalised last year.

India and France also signed a new agreement for a defence-space partnership that will see them collaborate on “space situational awareness”, and an MoU on coordinating on satellite launches, along with other agreements on partnerships in energy, digital health, agriculture, and education. At least one joint venture for the local manufacture of civilian helicopters was agreed between Airbus and Tata.

Two mega multi-billion dollar defence deals in the pipeline between the two countries — the 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, and three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines — are currently in the cost negotiation

phase. The focus and priority of the [industrial defence] roadmap is to actually identify opportunities for partnership in the defence industrial sector that prioritises co-designing, co-development, co-production and also build the defence supply chains between the two countries so that they can fulfil the defence needs of not only India and France but also be a useful contributor in the security partnership with other countries who might be need similar products.

Press visa restrictions

The French government had also raised the issue of a French journalist who could be deported after she was handed a notice by the government, but insisted that this was a matter of “compliance of the rules”. At least 30 foreign correspondents based in India issued a letter of protest over the case, saying that they were all “grappling with increased visa restrictions in recent years”, and appealing to the government help “facilitate the vital work of a free press in line with India's democratic traditions”.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

GOVT. MULLS STUDY TO
INTEGRATE E-NAM WITH ONDC

CONTEXT: The Union government is doing a feasibility study to integrate all its related platforms with Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) to ensure larger benefits go to both buyers and sellers and a robust e-commerce ecosystem is built to withstand any disruption in physical market.

The government finds it legally and technically feasible to link e-NAM (electronic National Agricultural Market) with ONDC. The electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) has connected 1,389 mandis (agriculture market yards) across the country, an integration may help farmer-producer organisations (FPOs) to navigate both e-NAM and ONDC simultaneously to buy and sell produce. After acquiring skills, many FPOs have forayed into trading of farm produce to increase their turnover for viability.

One FPO from Maharashtra while sourcing spices from its own district has also ventured into buying chillis from Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, to meet its customers' demand and opportunities for selling the produce have widened manifold after the Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) enabled such FPOs to join the ONDC platform.

CRACKING
CIVIL SERVICES
NO MORE A
DIFFICULT TASK
COME JOIN WITH US

VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra



ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

AIRBUS, TATA TO SET UP INDIA'S FIRST PRIVATE COPTER ASSEMBLY LINE

CONTEXT: Airbus Helicopters has announced that it is partnering with the Tata Group to establish a Final Assembly Line (FAL) for civil helicopters in the country, making it India's first helicopter assembly facility in the private sector. The announcement was made during the two-day visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to India as Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations.

Under this partnership, the FAL will produce Airbus' best-selling H125 single-engine civil helicopter for India and export to some of the neighbouring countries. Under this partnership, Tata Advanced Systems Limited, a subsidiary of Tata Group, will set up the facility along with Airbus Helicopters. Airbus and Tata are already setting up a FAL in Vadodara for the C-295 military transport aircraft as part of a contract to supply 56 aircraft to the Indian Air Force.

The FAL in India will undertake the integration of the major component assemblies, avionics and mission systems, installation of electrical harnesses, hydraulic circuits, flight controls, dynamic components, fuel system and the engine. It will also do testing, qualification, and delivery of the H125 to customers in India and the region.

Two years

The H125 is the world's best-selling single-engine helicopter that outclasses other helicopters in its category, according to Airbus and is a member of Airbus' Ecureuil family, which has accumulated more than 38 million flight hours. It can operate in high-and-hot and extreme environments and can be easily reconfigured for various missions, including aerial work, firefighting, law enforcement, rescue, air ambulance, passenger transport, and many others. The H125 is the only helicopter to have landed on Mount Everest, demonstrating its agility in operating in high altitude, extreme environments. Airbus currently does \$750 million worth of sourcing from India every year to its global supply chain and this is expected to go up to \$1.5 billion per year by 2026.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

OMCs TO GET HALF OF BUDGET PROVISION FOR GREEN ENERGY

CONTEXT: The Centre has halved the capital support given to State-owned oil marketing companies, which was ostensibly aimed at beefing up investments in energy transition projects, but government officials had indicated that the provision had been made to compensate the fuel retailers who had suffered huge losses in 2022 when they held retail petrol and diesel prices despite a spike in crude oil prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Union Budget for FY24 made a provision of ₹ 30,000 Cr. of capital support to Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. The Finance Minister had proposed ₹ 5,000 Cr. for buying crude oil to fill strategic underground storages at Mangalore in Karnataka and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. The equity support has been halved to ₹ 15,000 Cr. and the plan for filling strategic reserves has been deferred.

During the Expenditure Finance Committee meeting held on November 30, 2023, it was decided that a maximum of ₹15,000 Cr. could be provided for equity infusion into OMCs in FY2023-24.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

REFLECTING ON BILKIS BANO'S RESILIENT PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

CONTEXT: Two weeks ago, on January 8, the Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark ruling in the harrowing case of Bilkis Bano. The ruling quashed the remission granted by the Gujarat government to the 11 people convicted in the case, on the basis that the State government had "no jurisdiction" to have done so. In keeping with the deadline imposed by the Court, all 11 convicts surrendered on the night of January 21 at Godhra sub-jail.

The convicts in question were part of a Hindu mob implicated in the gangrape of Ms. Bano, who was pregnant at that time, coupled with the brutal killing of several of her relatives, including her infant daughter, during the 2002 Gujarat riots. What made the experience worse for Ms. Bano was that she knew the convicts — they had been her neighbours.

For years, her case has been a symbol of resilience and an emblem of the larger struggle for justice for survivors of sexual violence and communal violence. The Supreme Court's decision to quash the remission not only upholds the integrity of the legal process but also underscores the need for a consistent, impartial application of the law, regardless of the socio-political context. The applause the verdict has received is a testament to the collective yearning for a justice system that stands unwavering against impunity.

Though the ruling has stirred optimism in the justice system, it has simultaneously ignited a profound reflection on the ineffectiveness of the justice system for people with multiple



VEDHIK IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

MASTER THE NEW LEARNING MANTRA

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

subordinating identities, especially when such crimes are backed by the state. The case prompts a critical examination of the intersectionality that defines Ms. Bano's identity — a Muslim woman navigating a society marked by entrenched biases against religious minorities and women, and how that has determined her relationship with justice. As we celebrate this verdict and the return of the convicts to prison, we must also acknowledge the work that lies ahead. Ms. Bano's journey must serve as an introspective lens for us to think through the broader struggle towards justice, and how best we can serve survivors of sexual violence.

Inadequacy of prisons

Justice B.V. Nagarathna, who authored the judgment, drew upon the wisdom of Greek philosopher Plato to justify directing the convicts back to prison: "... punishment is to be inflicted not for the sake of vengeance but for the sake of prevention and reformation. In his treatise, Plato reasons that the lawgiver, as far as he can, ought to imitate the doctor who does not apply his drug with a view to pain only, but to do the patient good. This curative theory of punishment likens penalty to medicine administered for the sake of the one being chastised."

However, the convicts in Ms. Bano's case paint a disconcerting picture of our legal and penal systems, highlighting their inadequacies. Despite being behind bars for about 15 years, they showed no signs of remorse upon their release, underscoring a critical flaw in the prison system's ability to deliver what is expected from it — a "curative theory of punishment" as Plato puts it. The convicts were jubilant as they were garlanded and fed sweets by their supporters and relatives upon their release, almost as if they were battlefield heroes returning home. They even participated in a meeting with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a right-wing Hindu nationalist organisation, where they were garlanded once again and their release celebrated.

The Supreme Court's recent decision offering temporary respite to Ms. Bano reveals a disconcerting gap between legal theory and the prison system's stark reality. Despite relying on Plato's notion of punishment as a transformative tool, the judgment overlooked the function of prisons as mere holding cells, failing to instigate genuine rehabilitation. The professed objective of reformation and reintegration into society as responsible citizens rings hollow when one takes into account the glaring lack of essential resources and programmes within most Indian prisons. Without exposure to a better way of life or an alternative thought process that prompts individuals to recognise the errors of their actions, the prospect of genuine personal evolution while in prison becomes elusive. Ms. Bano's experience exemplifies this flaw— once the convicted individuals in her case are released after the completion of their sentence, it is unlikely that they will be reformed, if they have not thus far. Their freedom upon release will again leave Ms. Bano with a lingering sense of trauma. The judgment's fleeting impact exposes a systemic failure to deliver permanent justice or sustainable relief for survivors like Ms. Bano.

Ms. Bano's case serves as a poignant reminder that the pursuit of justice goes beyond punitive measures. It necessitates a comprehensive re-evaluation of our penal

institutions and societal norms. Only through such systemic changes can we hope to break the cycle of crime and ensure a more just and compassionate society. The quest for justice must extend beyond courtrooms to encompass a commitment to building an ecosystem that genuinely addresses the root causes of criminal behaviour and facilitates lasting change.

Perils of carceral feminism

In the realm of feminist discourse, a term has emerged that demands our scrutiny and contemplation: "carceral feminism". Coined by Barnard College's professor, Elizabeth Bernstein, this term delves into the complexities of advocating for feminist goals in an increasingly carceral state. It sheds light on the paradoxical relationship between feminism and the state, recognising the state as both a potential ally of patriarchy and a depriver of liberties.

India is grappling with the perils of carceral feminism. Feminists have been demanding stricter penalties under the law, without questioning why many women opt not to report cases of rape in the first place. The deeply rooted mistrust in the criminal justice system stems from the entrenched patriarchy which grips each institution of the criminal legal system, starting from their encounters with the police to interactions with medical officers and the judiciary, which cannot adequately be addressed through exclusive reliance on legal reforms and punitive measures. The police force, notorious for dismissing complaints of sexual violence, often compounds the trauma of survivors by subjecting them to uncomfortable and insensitive questioning. This hostile environment extends to the medical examination process, which further distresses survivors and leaves them feeling additionally violated.

Need for a more nuanced approach

By understanding the limitations and pitfalls of carceral feminism and the prison's ability to reform perpetrators, we can strive for a more nuanced, victim-centered approach that does not overly rely on legal avenues and remedies to uphold the principles of justice, while simultaneously safeguarding and prioritising the dignity and the safety of survivors.

As we applaud the Supreme Court for its resolute decision, we must collectively commit to fostering a society where survivors' voices are heard, their pain is acknowledged, and their quest for justice is validated. In celebrating Ms. Bano's triumph in the face of every adversity, we must also recognise that it is unfair to expect of every survivor the strength and courage that Ms. Bano had to have to persistently fight for justice despite facing innumerable obstacles from the criminal legal system.



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra
www.vedhikiasacademy.org

**Comprehensive Coaching For
568 Government Jobs**
www.vedhikiasacademy.org

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ENDLESS WAR

CONTEXT: The crash of a Russian plane with Ukrainian prisoners of war on board has once again shown how delicate the situation between the two countries that have been at war since February 2022.

Ukraine shot down the plane, which had 65 Ukrainian soldiers, in Belgorod, a Russian border town, that has seen repeated Ukrainian shelling in recent months. Kyiv has slammed Russia for spreading propaganda, but has not ruled out its possible role in the downing. The incident comes at a time when Ukraine's troops are struggling to keep up the fight on the front line amid Russia's incremental advances. Russia, which suffered humiliating setbacks in 2022, has since retaken the battlefield momentum. Last year, Ukraine's top general said the counteroffensive, which began in June 2023, aimed at recapturing Russia-held territories in the south and east, had failed. Russia has made territorial gains in the east, capturing Mariinka and making advances towards Avdiivka and Kupiansk. With its huge losses on the battlefield, Ukraine's generals are calling for the mobilisation of up to 5,00,000 soldiers — which would be hugely unpopular. Worse, the

changing mood in Washington has sent an alarming message to Kyiv.

While Russia's annexation of Ukraine regions and its war are a violation of international laws, Ukraine does not seem to have a practical path towards victory. Israel's war on Gaza, which has the Biden administration's full support, has also distracted global attention from Ukraine. If Donald Trump, the U.S. Republican leader, is re-elected in November — he has vowed to end the war in days — Ukraine could come under heavy pressure. The war cannot be sustained without uninterrupted support from the U.S. and its NATO partners. When pressure increases on the battlefield, what Ukraine is doing is to carry out missile and drone attacks inside Russia. Ukraine's possession of advanced weapons, supplied by the West, has enhanced its fire power. Last week, a fuel export terminal on Russia's Baltic coast came under attack. There is suspicion, deep mistrust and misinformation on both sides, which could lead to more violence and accidents. Russia, Ukraine and NATO— should take a more practical assessment of the progress of the war and be ready for talks, instead of continuing an endless war which is hurting all sides.



**START YOUR
JOURNEY WITH THE
BEST**

COME JOIN WITH US



+91-9383 432 123 | +91-7777 875 588 | 0484-452 77 77

www.vedhikiasacademy.org



**START YOUR
JOURNEY WITH THE
BEST**

INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING



VEDHIK

IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S
TOP MOST
CIVIL SERVANTS
FOR COACHING**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

Head Office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Mercy Estate,
MG Road, Ravipuram,
Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office

Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:

Bobscoedu,
Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain
www.bobscoedu.com