

12<sup>th</sup> July 2025: DSC

## **Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024**

### **Overview**

The Maharashtra Legislative Assembly has approved the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024. Its objective is to tackle unlawful activities carried out by Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) outfits and comparable entities. The legislation is slated for presentation in the Legislative Council for its final ratification.

**Relevance:** *GS 2 (Governance and Polity), GS 3 (Internal Security)*

### **Principal Provisions**

The legislation applies to individuals linked to prohibited organisations declared unlawful. Prescribed penalties range from 2 to 7 years' imprisonment. All offences under the Bill are classified as cognisable and non-bailable. Authorities are empowered to freeze and confiscate financial assets belonging to such groups. Prosecution is contingent on demonstrable evidence proving an individual's affiliation with the banned organisation.

### **Legislative Journey**

The Bill was introduced during the Winter Session in December 2024. A Joint Select Committee was tasked with in-depth scrutiny. Following a two-hour deliberation, the Assembly passed it via a voice vote.

### **Current Backdrop**

Maharashtra is reported to have 64 front organisations affiliated with extremist movements—among the largest numbers nationwide. Four other states—Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh—already have similar security laws in place.

### **Points of Debate and Concern**

**Clarity of Definitions:** Critics have highlighted that the language used may be overly broad or vague.

**Risk of Overreach:** There are apprehensions that peaceful associations such as student bodies, farmer collectives, or protest groups might inadvertently fall under its scope.

**Need for Safeguards:** It has been emphasised that prosecution must rest solely on credible proof of actual involvement in proscribed organisations.

### **Balancing Security and Individual Rights**

#### **Strengths:**

- Targets the operational and financial frameworks supporting extremist groups.
- Bolsters state-specific legal capacity to counter such networks, complementing central laws.

#### **Cautions:**

- Ambiguous definitions could lead to potential abuse or misapplication.

- Strong statutory powers necessitate stringent oversight and transparent processes.
- Safeguarding legitimate democratic dissent remains crucial to protect civil liberties.

### Comparative Perspective

The Bill is consistent with the framework adopted by other states combating insurgency. It also shares similarities with central legislations like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), though it operates within state jurisdiction.

### Closing Reflection

The Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024 signifies an assertive approach to dismantling organised extremist structures. Nonetheless, effective enforcement requires that the legislation be implemented in a manner that is transparent, evidence-based, and respectful of democratic freedoms. The key is to ensure the law targets genuine security threats without encroaching on ideological expression or peaceful association.

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### Are Existing Mechanisms Effective in Preventing Custodial Violence?

#### Overview

The custodial death of Ajith Kumar, a 27-year-old security guard from Sivaganga, Tamil Nadu, has sparked renewed national outrage over the issue of police torture and deaths in custody. In response, the Madras High Court has instructed a report to be filed by August 20, 2025, while the CBI has been assigned to investigate.

**Relevance:** GS 2 (Governance), GS 3 (Internal Security: Human Rights), GS 4 (Ethics: Abuse of Authority and Justice)

#### Underlying Problems in India

**Absence of a Specific Anti-Torture Statute:** India has signed but not ratified the UN Convention Against Torture.

**Deep-Seated Police Practices:** Use of violence is often rationalised as an expedient form of justice due to systemic delays in the legal process.

**Public Attitudes:** Reactions are inconsistent—public sometimes celebrates extrajudicial action, perpetuating acceptance.

**Data Gaps:** No comprehensive, publicly accessible database reliably tracks instances of custodial torture or deaths.

#### Structural Weaknesses and Legal Gaps

**CCTV Compliance:** Despite Supreme Court directions in 2020 mandating cameras in lock-ups, implementation has been erratic, with devices often malfunctioning or interrogations conducted out of camera range.

**Judicial Oversight Deficits:** Magistrates frequently neglect to conduct thorough physical inspections or inquire into detainee treatment.

**Evidence Loopholes:** Section 27 of the Indian Evidence Act permits evidence obtained through custodial confessions, indirectly legitimising torture.

#### Proposed Reforms

- **Training & Sensitisation:** Include human rights principles, modern interrogation techniques, and bias-awareness modules in police training curricula.
- **Decriminalisation of Minor Offences:** Curtail unnecessary arrests and reduce the opportunity for abuse.
- **Strengthen Magistrates' Role:** Empower them to act as the first line of defence against custodial excesses.
- **Reverse Burden of Proof:** Following the Law Commission's advice, consider shifting the onus to the police when custodial deaths occur.
- **Effective Police Complaints Authorities:** Though mandated by the Supreme Court in the Prakash Singh judgment (2006), many states still lack functioning bodies.

### Systemic and Social Factors

**Rigid Hierarchies:** Top-down police structures often shield offending personnel.

**Social Inequality:** Marginalised groups are disproportionately subjected to abuse.

**Perverse Incentives:** In certain cases, officers implicated in misconduct have been rewarded with promotions instead of facing accountability.

### Role of Civil Society and Communities

**Community Policing:** Can foster trust but requires training, safeguards, and independent monitoring.

**Media and NGOs:** Play a pivotal role in educating the public, exposing violations, and sustaining pressure for reform.

### Landmark Court Rulings

- **Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006):** Required states to set up Police Complaints Authorities.
- **Paramvir Singh Saini v. Baljit Singh (2020):** Mandated installation of CCTVs in all police stations and granted detainees the right to access footage.

### Conclusion

Custodial violence reflects deep-seated cultural, institutional, and social failures rather than mere procedural gaps. Tackling it demands more than cameras or sporadic investigations—it requires comprehensive reform, robust monitoring, and a transformation of police culture to prioritise service and accountability over control and coercion.

### The Need to Safeguard the Right to Vote

#### Overview

On July 10, 2025, the Supreme Court instructed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to allow the use of Aadhaar, Voter ID cards, and Ration Cards as valid identification during Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. This directive rekindled a critical national discussion around the tension between ensuring inclusion and enforcing vigilance in India's electoral processes.

**Relevance:** GS 2 (*Electoral Reforms & ECI Mandate*), GS 4 (*Ethical Dimensions of Inclusion and Accountability*)

## Legal Character of Voting Rights in India

**Not a Fundamental Right:** In the landmark *Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India* (2006), the Supreme Court held that voting is a statutory right under Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951.

**Not a Constitutional Right:** Although debated extensively, no larger bench has recognised it as a constitutional entitlement.

**A Democratic Imperative:** Despite its legal status, courts and civil society treat the right to vote as indispensable to democracy.

**Justice Ajay Rastogi's Dissent (2023):** He argued that voting is intertwined with Articles 19(1)(a) (freedom of expression) and 21 (right to life and dignity), but this interpretation remains a minority opinion.

## Supreme Court Intervention in Bihar

To mitigate risks of wrongful voter exclusions, the Supreme Court ordered that multiple forms of identification—Aadhaar, voter ID, and ration card—must be accepted by election authorities.

The case remains under consideration, with the next hearing scheduled for July 28. Petitioners contend that errors in the SIR process have disenfranchised large numbers of eligible voters.

## Electoral Roll Management – Legal Foundations

### Relevant Laws:

- RPA, 1950 governs the preparation, revision, and maintenance of electoral rolls.
- RPA, 1951 outlines procedures for elections, offences, and disqualifications.

### Key Sections:

- *Section 21 (RPA, 1950):* Grants EC authority to revise rolls.
- *Section 19:* Stipulates that only those ordinarily resident in a constituency and 18 years or older are eligible to register.
- *Article 324:* Confers broad constitutional powers to the ECI over election management.

## What Constitutes “Ordinary Residence”?

“Ordinary residence” means a genuine, regular presence in a constituency.

In the *Manmohan Singh* case (1991), the Supreme Court clarified that casual visits or nominal addresses do not fulfil this criterion.

This concept is critical to avoid fraudulent enrolment and to maintain authentic voter-constituency links.

## Why Electoral Roll Accuracy is Critical

Massive exclusions undermine the principle of “one person, one vote.”

Conversely, fraudulent inclusions allow impersonation and distort electoral outcomes.

The Supreme Court has ruled that only substantial and material inaccuracies that impact election results justify annulment (*Lakshmi Charan Sen v. A.K.M. Hassan Uzzaman*, 1985).

## Citizenship Verification and Procedural Safeguards



### Key Judgments:

- *Lal Babu Hussein v. ERO* (1995): Election authorities cannot strike names based on vague suspicions.
- Due process requires a comprehensive inquiry, notice to the individual, and adherence to quasi-judicial protocols.
- In *Md. Rahim Ali* (2024), the court reaffirmed that prior voting and proper inquiry are prerequisites for deletion.

### Measures to Enhance Inclusivity

- *Postal Ballots*: Rule 18 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 allows postal ballots for armed forces, certain government staff posted abroad, and election officials.
- *NRI Voting*: Under Section 20A of the RPA, 1950, overseas Indians can vote in person but cannot yet vote by proxy or postal ballot.

### Historical Context – Global Comparisons

The United Kingdom extended universal suffrage to women only in 1928. In the United States, multiple constitutional amendments and civil rights legislation were required before voting became genuinely inclusive. India, by contrast, embraced universal adult suffrage from its inception in 1950—an unprecedented move for a newly independent nation.

### Conclusion

Safeguarding the credibility of elections requires a dual focus: preventing fraud and ensuring every eligible voter can exercise their franchise. The Supreme Court's directive in the Bihar case embodies this balance—combining vigilance with a commitment to inclusion. As India heads into future electoral cycles, the Election Commission must blend technological innovations, procedural safeguards, and legal clarity to preserve both integrity and access. Citizens, too, have a role to play by proactively verifying and updating their records—because the strength of Indian democracy rests on the authenticity of each ballot cast.

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## Trump Threatens 500% Tariff on Countries Importing Oil from Russia

### Immediate Context – The U.S. Sanctioning Russia Act, 2025

**Introduced By:** Bipartisan senators Lindsey Graham and Richard Blumenthal in April 2025.

**Core Provision:** Imposes a punitive 500% tariff on any nation purchasing crude oil from Russia.

**Rationale:** Designed to compel Russia to engage in genuine peace talks over Ukraine.

**Current Status:** Former President Donald Trump has expressed support in principle, describing the measure as “optional” and still “under review.”

**Relevance:** GS 2 (*International Relations*), GS 3 (*Indian Economy*)

### India's Growing Reliance on Russian Crude

- In 2022, Russia accounted for less than 2% of India's oil imports.
- By FY25, that share ballooned to approximately 35–40% of India's total crude intake.

- The appeal lay in discounted rates below the G7/EU price ceiling of \$60 per barrel.

### Potential Economic Repercussions for India

**Energy Security Challenges:** Disruption of Russian supplies—about 10% of global production—would force India to switch to more expensive Middle Eastern and African crude.

**Price Instability:** Oil prices could surge to \$120–130 per barrel, according to Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

**Widening Trade Deficit:** The increased import bill would exacerbate India's current account deficit.

**Fiscal Pressure:** Escalating prices might compel the government to expand fuel subsidies, straining the budget.

### India's Diplomatic and Policy Response

- *Diplomatic Outreach:* Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar has conveyed India's energy security concerns to U.S. lawmakers.
- *Official Clarification:* Minister Puri has stressed that India's purchases comply with international norms and benefit the stability of global markets.
- *Diversification Strategy:* Plans are underway to broaden sourcing to other regions such as Latin America, the U.S., and West Asia.

### Global Oil Market Implications

Russia produces nearly 9 million barrels daily, roughly 10% of worldwide supply (97 million bpd).

A sudden cut-off could:

- Constrict global supplies.
- Challenge OPEC+ spare production capacity.
- Trigger inflationary shocks worldwide.

### Geopolitical Stakes for India

New tariffs would force India to navigate:

- Its strategic partnership with the U.S. and other G7 nations.
  - Continued economic cooperation with Russia, a top energy supplier.
- Any unilateral U.S. action risks testing India's long-held non-alignment doctrine and energy pragmatism.

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### 'TB Death Audits, Like Maternal Mortality Model, Can Aid Elimination'

#### Urgent Objectives

**Short-Term Focus:** Reduce India's TB mortality rate, currently 22 per 100,000, to more acceptable benchmarks.

**Long-Term Vision:** Fulfil the End TB Strategy and Sustainable Development Goals by 2025–2030.

- India's TB death rate is vastly higher than China's (3 per 100,000).
- Daily TB fatalities in India hover around 800–900, many unreported.

**Relevance:** GS 2 (*Health Policy*)

### **Recommended Policy Measures**

#### **District-Level TB Death Audits:**

- Led by District Collectors.
- Independent assessments by institutions like medical colleges.
- Mandate screening of all TB patients for co-morbidities: diabetes, anaemia, HIV, and alcohol dependence.

#### **Diagnostic Gaps and Innovations**

**Subclinical TB:** Constitutes 40–50% of total cases, evading symptom-based detection.

#### **Proposed Solutions:**

- Deploy WHO-approved, AI-driven portable X-ray equipment.
- Expand molecular testing beyond the 30% baseline established under the 100-day TB campaign.
- Enable household-level screening using handheld diagnostic tools.

#### **Nutritional Support – A Preventive Strategy**

- The RATIONS Trial in Jharkhand showed nutritional aid halved secondary TB incidence.
- Under Nikshay Poshan Yojana, monthly direct benefit transfers were raised from ₹500 to ₹1,000.
- However, delivery remains inconsistent in remote regions, often reliant on voluntary efforts.

#### **Model Practices – Tamil Nadu's TN-KET Program**

- *Kasanoi Erappila Thittam* launched in 2022 to cut TB mortality by 30% among public-notified cases.
- Out of 14,961 patients:
  - 13% (1,509) identified as severely ill.
  - 75% received assessments at nodal centres.
  - 4% mortality among those admitted with severe illness.
- BMI monitoring is now routinely implemented.

#### **Systemic Barriers**

- Highest TB burden falls on people aged 25–55—India's most economically productive demographic.

- Main drivers of death: delayed diagnosis, treatment lags in the private sector, severe malnutrition, co-morbidities.
- TB must be treated as a public health emergency, akin to maternal mortality or COVID-19.

### Recommendations for the Way Ahead

- Make clinical evaluations universal for all TB patients.
- Institutionalise independent death audits to guide district-level interventions.
- Scale up portable diagnostics, nutritional programs, and community-based care.
- Back these measures with a well-resourced National Strategic Plan to sustain momentum.

### 12<sup>th</sup> July 2025: Daily MCQs

#### 1. Question

With reference to the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024, consider the following statements:

1. The legislation permits authorities to take legal action against individuals merely suspected of backing banned groups, even without established membership.
2. The Bill bears similarities to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) but applies solely within the boundaries of Maharashtra.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Correct Answer:** (b) 2 only

#### Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Incorrect:** The Bill explicitly provides for prosecution **only** of individuals **proven** to be members of proscribed organisations, not those suspected of mere support.
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** While echoing the provisions of UAPA to counter extremist activities, the Bill is designed as a state-specific legal instrument limited to Maharashtra.

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#### 2. Question

With reference to custodial violence in India, consider the following statements:

1. India has enacted a dedicated anti-torture legislation in alignment with the UN Convention Against Torture.
2. Confessional statements made in custody are categorically inadmissible as evidence under Indian law.



3. The Supreme Court, in the Prakash Singh vs. Union of India verdict, directed the creation of Police Complaints Authorities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

**Correct Answer:** (a) Only one

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 – Incorrect:** Although India signed the UN Convention Against Torture, it has neither ratified the treaty nor enacted standalone anti-torture legislation.
- **Statement 2 – Incorrect:** Under Section 27 of the Indian Evidence Act, custodial confessions are admissible in certain circumstances, which indirectly legitimises coerced confessions.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** In its 2006 judgment, the Supreme Court mandated the establishment of Police Complaints Authorities at both state and district levels to address complaints against police misconduct.

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### 3. Question

Consider the following statements about India's legal framework governing voting rights:

1. The right to vote is recognised as a constitutional right under Article 19 of the Constitution.
2. According to the Representation of the People Act, 1950, only an ordinary resident aged 18 or older qualifies for voter registration.
3. The Election Commission's power to update electoral rolls is derived from Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Only 2 and 3
- (d) All three

**Correct Answer:** (b) Only 2

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 – Incorrect:** Voting is a statutory right conferred by Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and **not** a constitutional or fundamental right. The Supreme Court confirmed this position in *Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India* (2006).
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** Section 19 of the RPA, 1950 stipulates that only those who are ordinary residents and at least 18 years old may be enrolled as voters.

- **Statement 3 – Incorrect:** The authority to revise electoral rolls is actually found in Section 21 of the RPA, 1950. Section 62 pertains to voting procedure during elections.

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#### 4. Question

Consider the following statements regarding recent developments on U.S. sanctions and India's oil imports:

1. The U.S. Sanctioning Russia Act, 2025 imposes a compulsory 500% tariff on nations purchasing Russian oil.
2. In FY25, more than one-third of India's crude oil came from Russia.
3. India formally conveyed its energy security concerns to American lawmakers via diplomatic channels.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

**Correct Answer:** (b) Only two

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 – Incorrect:** The proposed 500% tariff is discretionary, not mandatory. The U.S. administration described it as an option available at the president's discretion.
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** In the fiscal year 2024–25, India sourced approximately 35–40% of its crude oil imports from Russia.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar officially raised these concerns with U.S. legislators on July 2, 2025, demonstrating proactive diplomatic engagement.

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#### 5. Question

Consider the following statements regarding India's efforts to reduce TB mortality:

1. The RATIONS trial in Jharkhand revealed that nutritional support could avert nearly 50% of secondary TB infections.
2. Subclinical TB accounts for the majority of cases in India, making symptom-based detection largely adequate.
3. Tamil Nadu's TB programme, TN-KET, includes routine BMI checks and prioritisation of high-risk patients for hospital care.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two

- (c) All three
- (d) None

**Correct Answer:** (b) Only two

**Explanation:**

- **Statement 1 – Correct:** The RATIONS study demonstrated that nutrition interventions helped reduce nearly half of secondary TB cases.
- **Statement 2 – Incorrect:** Subclinical TB represents about 40–50% of cases, and symptom-based screening alone fails to identify many of these infections.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** Tamil Nadu's TN-KET initiative employs BMI monitoring, risk assessment, and inpatient triaging for vulnerable TB patients.

