

Govt. withdraws order to install Sanchar Saathi app

Why is this in News?

- The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has now **rescinded** its earlier directive that required smartphone companies to compulsorily pre-install the Sanchar Saathi app on all new handsets from 2025.
- The rollback comes in the backdrop of:
 - Widespread criticism from the public and civil society groups,
 - Strong concerns over **privacy, surveillance, and abuse of regulatory powers,**
 - Objections raised by Opposition MPs in Parliament,
 - Revelations that the order itself had never been made publicly available.
- The government is now taking the line that, since **voluntary downloads of the app are rising**, enforcing a compulsory pre-load is no longer necessary.

Relevance

GS-II: Governance

- Limits of **executive authority** and risks of regulatory excess.
- Need for **openness and transparency** in norm-making for digital regulation.
- Frameworks of **e-governance and digital policy**, and their checks and balances.
- Centre's regulatory power over private entities under the **TIUE (Telecommunication Identifier User Entities) Rules**.

GS-II: Polity

- Application of the **Fundamental Right to Privacy** post-Puttaswamy.
- Tests of **proportionality** in imposing restrictions on citizens' digital autonomy.
- Concerns about the steady expansion of **state surveillance tools**.

GS-III: Internal Security

- Role of platforms like **CEIR** and **TAF COP** in detecting cyber fraud.
- Telecom infrastructure as a backbone for **security and identity verification**.
- Misuse of digital identity and mobile identifiers in cybercrime.

What is the Sanchar Saathi App?

- A platform built by the DoT to bolster **consumer safety in telecom services**.

It consists of multiple modules:



- **CEIR (Central Equipment Identity Register)** – used to block and track stolen or lost phones using IMEI.
- **TAF COP** – enables users to see how many SIMs are issued against their identity.
- Tools to:
 - Report telecom-related fraud,
 - Flag SIM misuse,
 - Help prevent identity theft.

Main objective: reduce cyber fraud, curb misuse of mobile numbers, and assist in recovery/blocking of stolen devices.

What Triggered the Controversy?

A. Confidential Mandatory Preinstallation Order

- DoT sent a **non-public direction** to handset manufacturers stating that:
 - The **Sanchar Saathi app must be preloaded** on all devices sold from 2025 onwards.

B. Why Did This Alarm Citizens?

- It appeared to mandate that:
 - A **government app** would be forcibly installed on **every smartphone** in the country,
 - Without explicit **user consent**.
- This raised multiple red flags:
 - Possible clash with **privacy rights under K.S. Puttaswamy**,
 - Fears that such an app, with deep integration, could extend **surveillance capacity**,
 - No explicit **Parliamentary mandate or statutory framework** backing such an intrusive requirement.

Legal Backdrop: TIUE Rules (Telecommunication Identifier User Entities)

- Under the newly framed **TIUE rules**, DoT gave itself sweeping authority to regulate any entity that uses telecom identifiers like mobile numbers.

This potentially covers:

- Banks and financial institutions,
- E-commerce and digital platforms,
- Payment apps and fintech players,

- Device manufacturers and other non-telecom firms.
- The same legal basis allowed DoT to issue **direct, binding orders** even to non-telecom companies.
- The Sanchar Saathi pre-load directive was among the **first major uses of these widened TIUE powers**.

Opposition & Civil Society Concerns

1. Surveillance & Privacy

- A compulsory government app on all phones could:
 - Enable large-scale **data extraction**,
 - Support behaviour tracking and profiling using telecom identifiers.
- Critics argued it did not pass the **necessity and proportionality tests** laid down by the Supreme Court.

2. Regulatory Overreach

- TIUE rules let DoT extend its footprint well beyond traditional telecom operators.
- Civil society groups argued this becomes a **side-door expansion of executive control** into multiple private sectors.

3. Opacity & Non-Transparency

- The order itself was not placed in the public domain and became known mainly through **leaks**.
- There was **no structured consultation** with:
 - Technology industry,
 - Citizen groups,
 - Cybersecurity experts.

4. Precedent of Mandatory Digital Tools

- The controversy revived earlier debates around:
 - **Aarogya Setu** being made de facto mandatory,
 - Frequent mandatory KYC updates,
 - Aadhaar-based integrations with devices and apps.

5. Government's Defence

- The Communications Minister highlighted achievements:
 - **1.5 crore fake/illegal mobile connections disconnected**,
 - Around **26 lakh lost devices recovered** through the system.



- The stated intent was “only to make the app easily available” to citizens.
- The Minister also said the app’s success depends on **public trust**, and that the government is open to revisiting features based on feedback.
- The subsequent **withdrawal of the preload order** signals a more conciliatory approach.

Why the Withdrawal Happened

- DoT now points to a **sharp increase in voluntary downloads**, arguing that a compulsory pre-install is no longer essential.
- Politically, pulling back helps:
 - Cool down the **public and parliamentary backlash**,
 - Avoid a more intense debate on:
 - Extent of **TIUE powers**,
 - Digital surveillance fears,
 - Unchecked executive discretion.

Broader Implications

A. Digital Governance

- Illustrates the friction between **security-first digital policy** and **privacy rights**.

B. Rule-Making Process

- Reinforces demands for:
 - Transparent notification of rules and orders,
 - Prior **public consultation**,
 - Clear **statutory grounding** for intrusive measures.

C. Template for Future Mandates

- Even though this particular order has been rescinded, similar proposals could re-emerge for:
 - Security-related apps,
 - Mandatory KYC tools,
 - Device-level integrations linked to identity and safety.

D. Scope of TIUE Rules

- TIUE rules grant DoT significant leverage over **non-telecom sectors** through mobile identifiers.

- Their constitutional validity and scope may eventually be tested before **courts or data protection authorities**.

Why is volcanic ash a safety concern for flights?

Why is this in News?

- The **Hayli Gubbi volcano** in northern Ethiopia erupted on **23 November 2025**, its first known eruption in nearly 12,000 years.
- The volcano spewed huge **ash plumes up to around 14 km height**, which were carried by winds over:
 - The Red Sea,
 - Parts of West Asia,
 - Into India's western skies on **24–25 November**.
- India's aviation regulator **DGCA** issued advisories to airlines and airports, warning about the danger volcanic ash poses to aircraft.
- Several Indian airlines, including **Air India** and **Akasa**, cancelled flights to destinations in West Asia.

Relevance

GS-I: Geography

- Processes of **volcanism**.
- Atmospheric circulation and **jet streams**.
- Long-distance transport of ash and aerosols across borders.

GS-III: Science & Technology

- Working of **jet engines**.
- Effect of foreign particles like ash on aviation systems.
- Aviation safety protocols for natural hazards.

What Is Volcanic Ash? Why Is It Dangerous?

- Volcanic ash is **not** like the soft ash from wood or paper. It is a harsh mixture of:
 - Tiny shards of **silicate glass**,
 - Pulverised rock and mineral particles,
 - Gases such as **sulphur dioxide (SO₂)**.
- These particles are:



- Extremely **hard and abrasive**,
 - Often **microscopic and sharp-edged**,
 - Capable of withstanding very high temperatures.
 - Ash plumes spread because:
 - Strong updrafts carry them to **tens of thousands of feet**,
 - High-altitude winds (jet streams) transport them over huge distances,
 - Once aloft, they can circle regions or even the globe.
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Ash Movement from Ethiopia to India — What Happened?

- The eruption propelled ash to around **14 km** altitude.
 - Prevailing winds pushed the plume:
 - From Ethiopia across the **Red Sea**,
 - Over **Yemen, Oman, Iran**,
 - Into **western India**.
 - Approximate characteristics:
 - Altitude band: **15,000–25,000 ft**,
 - Speed: about **100–120 km/hour**.
 - Timeline:
 - Entered Indian airspace near **Rajasthan** around 5:50 pm on 24 November.
 - Passed over **Gujarat, Delhi-NCR, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh**.
 - Exited towards **China** on 25 November around 10:30 pm.
 - This fast-moving ash cloud intersected key flight paths, leading to serious aviation safety concerns.
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How Volcanic Ash Damages Aircraft Engines (The Science)

A typical **jet engine**:

1. Draws in ambient air,
2. Compresses it,
3. Mixes it with fuel,
4. Burns the mixture at temperatures around **1,600°C**,
5. Uses the expanding gases to generate thrust.

Why ash is so dangerous:



- Silicate ash can **melt** inside the engine due to high temperatures and then **re-solidify** as glass-like coatings on:
 - Turbine blades,
 - Nozzles,
 - Other hot components.
- This can:
 - Block vital **cooling air passages**,
 - Disrupt airflow and **sensor readings**,
 - Trigger **compressor stalls**, power loss, and even **total engine failure**.

Even limited exposure can lead to:

- Multi-million-dollar damage to engines,
- Sudden in-flight emergencies.

Ash also:

- **Sandblasts aircraft windscreens**, turning them opaque.
- Damages sensors such as **pitot tubes**, which are crucial for airspeed measurement.
- Contaminates cabin air and can scratch the fuselage and fan blades.

Historical Incidents That Prove the Risk

1. British Airways Flight 9 (1982) – Mount Galunggung, Indonesia

- A Boeing 747 flew into an ash cloud at about **37,000 ft**.
- All **four engines failed**.
- The plane lost cabin pressure; oxygen masks dropped.
- It descended about **25,000 ft** before pilots could restart engines.
- Windshields were severely abraded, impairing visibility.

2. KLM Flight 867 (1989) – Mount Redoubt, Alaska

- Another Boeing 747 encountered ash around **24,000 ft**.
- All four engines shut down and had to be restarted.
- The aircraft landed safely but the engines suffered such heavy damage that they had to be scrapped, costing an estimated **\$80 million**.

These episodes are foundational examples in aviation training on ash hazards.

What Did DGCA Order in India?

DGCA issued instructions to:

1. Airlines

- Avoid **airspace segments** and altitudes contaminated by ash.
- Modify **routes and flight levels** accordingly.
- Report any:
 - Engine abnormalities,
 - Smoke or unusual odours in cabin,
 - Suspected ash encounters.

2. Airports

- Inspect **runways and aprons** for ash deposits.
- Temporarily curtail operations if contamination is detected.
- Activate emergency protocols if needed.

3. Flight Operations & ATC

- Fine-tune air traffic flow to ensure planes **do not enter ash zones**.
- Maintain up-to-date information from **Volcanic Ash Advisory Centres (VAACs)**.

4. Airline Response

- Air India cancelled multiple flights to destinations like **Dubai, Doha, Dammam**, etc.
- Akasa Air suspended services to/from **Jeddah, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi**, among others.

How Has the Eruption Affected Global Flights?

- Airlines in **West Asia and East Africa** rerouted or delayed flights to avoid ash-laden corridors.
- VAACs issued ongoing **ash cloud bulletins** to aviation authorities.
- Many carriers, including Indian airlines, chose **proactive cancellations** rather than risk engine damage.

Broader Implications

Aviation Safety

- Reinforces the global safety rule: “**Do not fly through visible ash.**”
- Highlights how vulnerable **long-haul and regional flights** are to far-away volcanic events.

Climate & Atmosphere

- Volcanic ash and associated aerosols can:

- Temporarily **cool** parts of the atmosphere,
- Lead to **acid rain** via sulphur dioxide conversion.

Regional Cooperation

- Underlines the importance of:
 - Integrated **meteorological services**,
 - Rapid information sharing via VAACs,
 - Coordinated airspace management among neighbouring countries.

SC flags issues in payouts, free care for acid attack survivors

Why is this in News?

- The **Supreme Court of India** has decided to review why many **acid attack survivors**, mostly women:
 - Are still **not receiving the minimum compensation of ₹3 lakh**, and
 - Continue to be refused **free emergency care** by private hospitals,

despite the Court having given explicit directions over a decade ago.

- The matter is being heard by a Bench headed by **Justice B.V. Nagarathna**.
- The Court has asked **NALSA (National Legal Services Authority)** to provide State-wise data on compensation disbursement.

Relevance

GS-II: Polity & Governance

- Gaps between **judicial directions** and administrative compliance.
- Functions of **NALSA, SLSAs and DLSAs** in victim compensation.
- Criminal justice reforms and victim-centric justice.
- Protection of **vulnerable groups**, especially survivors of gender-based violence.

GS-II: Social Justice

- Acid attacks as a form of **gender-based violence**.
- Intersection of **poverty, disability and social stigma**.
- Long-term rehabilitation and access to healthcare.

Background: How Did SC Start Intervening?

A. Early Intervention – Laxmi Case (from 2006)



- In 2006, the Supreme Court took **suo motu interest** after hearing the petition of **Laxmi**, an acid attack survivor.
- The Court recognised:
 - The catastrophic, lifelong **physical and psychological impact** of acid attacks.
 - The State's obligation to provide **rehabilitation and financial support**.

B. Key Supreme Court Directions (2013 & 2015)

The Court issued binding norms that:

- Every acid attack survivor must get **at least ₹3 lakh** compensation:
 - **₹1 lakh** within 15 days of the attack,
 - Remaining **₹2 lakh** within two months.
- **Sale of acid:**
 - Over-the-counter sale to be tightly regulated and largely banned.
 - Acid to be sold only after **ID proof** and a written justification, with records maintained.
- **Free treatment:**
 - All hospitals, including **private hospitals**, must provide **free emergency care** to acid attack survivors.
 - Refusal to treat should attract **criminal liability**.
- **DLSAs as Criminal Injuries Compensation Boards:**
 - District Legal Services Authorities were designated to process claims swiftly and ensure payment.

C. Order Dated 20 March 2024

- The Court clarified that survivors can approach:
 - **State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs)** or
 - **District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs)** if compensation is delayed or denied.

What Is the Issue Now? What Did Petitioners Say?

- The **Acid Survivors Saahas Foundation** informed the Court that:
 - Many States, including prominent ones like **Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh**, pay only the **initial ₹1 lakh**.
 - The remaining **₹2 lakh** often never reaches survivors.
 - Private hospitals still demand **advance payment** or refuse treatment outright.

- As a result:
 - Survivors bear crippling **medical expenses**,
 - Need repeated surgeries and long-term treatment,
 - Suffer loss of income, disability, and prolonged rehabilitation.
 - The NGO argued this is a **humanitarian breakdown** and a direct breach of repeated Supreme Court directions.
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Why Compensation & Free Treatment Matter

- Acid attacks cause:
 - Severe burns, **disfigurement**, possibly **blindness**,
 - Loss of normal facial and bodily function,
 - Need for **20–30 corrective surgeries** and continuous therapy,
 - Deep psychological trauma and social stigma,
 - Long spells of inability to work.
 - Without immediate financial support and free emergency care, many survivors **cannot even begin adequate treatment**, worsening outcomes.
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What Did the Supreme Court Observe Now?

A. Court Will Reassess Enforcement Failures

- The Bench noted:
 - Compensation often remains **partially or fully unpaid**,
 - Private hospitals are still **turning survivors away**,
 - State authorities are not effectively monitoring compliance.

B. Notice to NALSA

- The Court asked NALSA to compile:
 - State-wise data on **how many survivors received full ₹3 lakh**,
 - Where and how often **payments are pending or incomplete**.

C. NALSA's Statement

- NALSA informed the Court that between **March 2024 and April 2025**, about **₹484 crore** has been disbursed under various schemes.
- The Court, however, seeks a more detailed breakup specific to **acid attack survivors**.

D. Directions to Chief Secretaries

- Chief Secretaries of States have been told to:
 - Take note of all Supreme Court directions,
 - Ensure that funds are promptly routed to **SLSAs and DLSAs**,
 - Strengthen supervision and timely disbursement.

E. Next Hearing

- The matter is posted for **3 February 2026** for further review.

Why the Problem Persists (Structural Issues)

- 1. Funding Delays and Shortfalls**
 - Victim compensation funds are often under-provisioned or disbursed late.
- 2. Weak DLSA Capacity**
 - Delayed verification and poor coordination with police and hospitals.
- 3. Lack of Action Against Private Hospitals**
 - Rarely any **criminal proceedings** for refusal to treat.
 - Survivors end up paying large sums out-of-pocket.
- 4. Illegal Acid Sales Continue**
 - Acid remains available through unregulated channels and informal markets.
- 5. No Comprehensive Rehabilitation Ecosystem**
 - Limited access to:
 - Shelters,
 - Counselling and mental health care,
 - Skill development and livelihood support.

Broader Social Implications

- Acid attacks disproportionately target **women** and girls, often as punishment for rejecting advances or asserting autonomy.
- Survivors face:
 - Lifelong **stigma and discrimination**,
 - Social exclusion and difficulties finding employment or marriage.
- Delayed compensation and lack of proper care deepen **inequality, dependence and vulnerability**.

Haircuts, asset valuation

Why is this in News?

- A **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance** has raised serious alarm over:
 - Very high **haircuts** in several Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) cases,
 - Lack of transparency in **asset valuation**,
 - Low average **recovery rates**,
 - Prolonged delays in closing resolution processes.
- These observations were made while reviewing the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025**.
- The panel has cautioned that these trends could undermine both **creditor confidence** and the **long-term trustworthiness of the IBC framework**.

Relevance

GS-III: Indian Economy

- Evolution of the **IBC** as the main bankruptcy law.
- Management of bad loans and **NPAs**.
- Impact of haircuts and recoveries on the banking system.
- Stability of the financial sector and the functioning of **NCLT/NCLAT**.

GS-II: Governance

- Parliamentary oversight over economic legislation.
- Accountability of **IBBI**, insolvency professionals, and valuers.

What is the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)?

- Enacted in **2016** to:
 - Consolidate scattered insolvency laws,
 - Shift control to creditors via the **Committee of Creditors (CoC)**,
 - Achieve **time-bound resolution** of stressed companies,
 - Improve **credit discipline** and business environment.
- Formal timeline:
 - 180 days + 90-day extension; outer cap is **330 days**.
- In practice, many cases significantly **overshoot** these time limits.

What is a “Haircut”?

Meaning

- A **haircut** is the proportional loss borne by creditors when the final resolution amount is lower than the total admitted claims.

Illustration

- If a company owes **₹1,000 crore** and creditors recover **₹200 crore**,
 - Haircut = $(1,000 - 200) / 1,000 = 80\%$.

Why Do Haircuts Happen?

- Corporate distress so deep that **enterprise value collapses**.
- Assets deteriorate further during **prolonged insolvency**.
- Past **mismanagement or fund diversion** by promoters.
- Insufficient interest from bidders due to risk, sectoral weakness or information gaps.
- Poor quality of the **information memorandum** circulated to buyers.
- Lengthy litigation and stays erode asset value and discourage resolution.
- Many cases come to IBC at a **very late stage**, when liquidation value is already low.

Why Are Haircuts Controversial?

- Banks and financial institutions have to **write off large amounts**.
- This indirectly hits **taxpayers**, given public sector ownership.
- Doubts arise about:
 - Fairness and correctness of **valuation exercises**,
 - Possible **conflicts of interest** involving valuers and bidders,
 - Potential collusion between **defaulting promoters and new buyers**.
- Extremely high haircuts damage **confidence in the IBC ecosystem** and can dilute its deterrent effect on wilful defaulters.

What the Parliamentary Committee Flagged

1. Very High Haircuts

- Some cases show **haircuts as high as 95–99%**.
- The average recovery is only **about 32.8% of admitted claims**, lower than initial expectations for IBC.

2. Valuation Concerns

- Persistent complaints of:
 - Inconsistent valuation methods,
 - Confusion around what constitutes “**fair value**” vs “**forced sale value**”,
 - Limited transparency in how valuers arrive at numbers.
- Instances where resolution value has fallen **below liquidation value**, indicating inefficiency or misjudgement.

3. Delays in Resolution

- Excessive delays reduce going-concern value, pushing recovery down and haircuts up.

4. Insolvency Professional (IP) Performance

- Questions raised about:
 - Competence and training of IPs,
 - Adequacy of oversight and disciplinary mechanisms.

5. Low Bidder Participation

- Potential bidders deterred by:
 - Litigation risks,
 - Unclear asset valuations,
 - Uncertain timelines.

Why Are Haircuts Rising?

Economic Factors

- Many firms reach IBC only after **years in distress**, with heavily eroded assets.
- Sluggish macroeconomic conditions in certain sectors.

Institutional Weaknesses

- Insolvency professionals managing multiple large cases simultaneously.
- CoCs sometimes lack expertise to **assess business viability and restructuring proposals**.

Legal Bottlenecks

- Frequent court challenges at **NCLT/NCLAT/Supreme Court**, delaying resolution.
- Promoters resisting loss of control.
- Litigation about eligibility of resolution applicants (e.g., under Section 29A).

Valuation Issues

- Significant divergence between the two mandatory independent valuations.
 - Overvaluation prior to IBC, followed by steep undervaluation under distress scenarios.
 - Information asymmetries make bidders cautious or opportunistic.
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What the Committee Recommended

1. Curb Haircuts Through Tighter Monitoring

- Strengthen supervision over **resolution professionals and valuers**.
- Scrutinise cases with exceptionally high haircuts.

2. Enhance Transparency in Valuation

- Standardise valuation methodologies.
- Mandate **independent audits** of valuations in large or sensitive cases.
- Explore use of **technology and AI** for better forensic valuation and data analysis.

3. Ensure Time-Bound Resolution

- Enforce the 330-day cap more strictly.
- Fast-track and streamline litigation to reduce delays.

4. Improve Information Sharing

- Use digitised **data rooms** to give bidders comprehensive access to information.
- Standardise **information memorandum** formats.

5. Strengthen Cross-Border Insolvency Framework

- To boost confidence of **foreign creditors** and investors.
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IBC Performance Snapshot (as per recent data)

- Around **1,940 cases** resolved under IBC.
 - Average recovery is roughly **32.8% of admitted claims**, although recoveries represent about **68% of enterprise value** at the time of resolution.
 - Banks have realised around **₹3.89 lakh crore**, but individual cases often involve massive haircuts.
 - Big-ticket successes like **Essar Steel and Bhushan Steel** are balanced by many less successful cases.
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Why This Matters for the Indian Economy

A. Bank Balance Sheets

- Large haircuts hit bank profits, delay recapitalisation, and limit future **credit growth**.

B. Investor Confidence

- Foreign and domestic investors may be wary if **recovery expectations** are unclear and inconsistent.

C. Credit Culture

- If high haircuts and delays become the norm, borrowers may feel **less pressure to repay on time**, weakening credit discipline.

D. Industrial Revival

- Timely and effective resolution allows **productive assets to be revived** instead of wasting away, supporting growth and jobs.

Why a landmark US lawsuit is accusing big brands of engineering addictive, unhealthy foods

Why is this in News?

- The **city of San Francisco** has filed a **path-breaking lawsuit** against 10 major multinational food corporations such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé, Mondelez and Kellogg.
- The lawsuit accuses these firms of:
 - **Intentionally formulating ultra-processed foods (UPFs)** to make them addictive,
 - Concealing or downplaying scientific evidence about their health harms,
 - Using **misleading and predatory advertising**, particularly aimed at children,
 - Fueling a public health crisis on the scale of **tobacco and opioid epidemics**.
- This action is globally significant because obesity and diabetes linked to UPFs are also rising rapidly in **India**.

Relevance

GS-II: Governance

- Consumer protection and **regulation of harmful products**.
- Corporate responsibility and accountability.
- Comparisons with **tobacco and opioid litigation**.
- Role of courts in public health-related market failures.

GS-III: Public Health & Economy

- Growing burden of **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**.
- Role of ultra-processed foods in obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- Food safety and labelling norms under regulators like **FSSAI**.
- Behavioural addiction science and its policy implications.

What Are Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)?

- Under the **NOVA classification**, UPFs are industrial products made from **food extracts, isolates and additives**, rather than whole or minimally processed foods.

Features:

- Typically high in:
 - Added sugars (e.g., fructose syrup, HFCS, maltodextrin),
 - Processed fats and oils,
 - Refined starches,
 - Salt,
 - Synthetic flavours, colours, stabilisers and emulsifiers.
- Low in:
 - **Dietary fibre**,
 - High-quality protein,
 - Essential vitamins and minerals.

Design Objective:

- Maximise **taste, shelf life, convenience and brand loyalty**, often at the cost of nutrition.
- Gradually replace **home-cooked or whole foods** in everyday diets.

Common Examples:

- Chips, crisps, packaged namkeen, biscuits.
- Carbonated soft drinks, energy drinks.
- Many breakfast cereals.
- Sweetened yoghurts, processed meat products.
- Ice creams, ready-to-eat snack packs, instant noodles.

Why Are UPFs Considered “Engineered Addictive”?

- UPFs are carefully crafted using **precise combinations** of salt, sugar, fat and flavour enhancers to activate the brain’s **reward pathways**.

Mechanisms:

- Trigger **dopamine release** similar to other addictive substances.
- Enhance cravings and reduce feelings of fullness, encouraging **overconsumption**.
- Artificial flavours and textures **trick the brain** into expecting real nourishment that never arrives, creating a “nutritional mismatch”.
- Soft, easy-to-chew textures increase **speed of calorie intake**, making it easy to consume large amounts quickly.
- Aggressive marketing and branding reinforce **habit loops** and emotional attachment.

Evidence:

- Global studies estimate “**food addiction**” or UPF addiction in roughly **14–20%** of adults, comparable to some substance-use disorder rates.
- High UPF consumption has been linked with:
 - Obesity and type-2 diabetes,
 - Heart disease and stroke,
 - Certain cancers,
 - Depression and cognitive decline,
 - Overall higher mortality.

What Does the Lawsuit Claim?

- The case has been brought under **California’s Unfair Competition Law and Public Nuisance Law**.

Main Allegations:

1. **Deliberate Design for Addictiveness**
 - Companies knowingly shape UPF recipes to stimulate **compulsive eating behaviours**.
2. **Deceptive and Predatory Marketing**
 - Heavy targeting of **children, low-income communities and minorities**, associating products with fun, sports, happiness, and social success.
3. **Concealing Evidence**
 - Alleged parallels with:
 - **Tobacco companies**, which hid evidence about cancer,
 - **Opioid manufacturers**, who obscured addiction risks.
4. **Public Health Damage**
 - UPFs are alleged to be central drivers of:

- Rising obesity and metabolic syndrome,
- Type-2 diabetes,
- Mental health issues.

5. Economic Burden on Government

- The city seeks:
 - Compensation for **public healthcare costs**,
 - Civil penalties,
 - Court orders limiting certain marketing and labelling practices.

Why Is This Considered a Landmark Case?

- It is among the **first major legal challenges** directly framing **UPF consumption as an addiction issue**, not merely personal choice.
- It may pave the way for regulatory steps similar to those used for:
 - Cigarettes (warning labels, ad restrictions),
 - Trans-fats (bans and reformulation),
 - Sugar-sweetened beverages (taxes).
- Litigation could compel companies to reveal:
 - **Internal research** on formulation and health impacts,
 - Documents related to **addiction and marketing strategies**.

Global Context & Public Health Crisis

A. Obesity Epidemic

- US adult obesity rates are approaching **42%**.
- India is also witnessing sharp increases in **overweight, obesity and type-2 diabetes**, including in rural areas.

B. UPFs' Growing Share in Diets

- UPFs account for:
 - Around **58% of total calorie intake** in the US,
 - Roughly **25–30%** of urban calorie consumption in India, and rising rapidly.

C. Disproportionate Impact on Low-Income Groups

- UPFs are often:
 - Cheaper,

- More heavily advertised,
- Ready-to-eat, requiring no time or fuel for cooking, making them more accessible to economically vulnerable households.

Why the India Link Matters

- India is facing a **double burden of malnutrition**—undernutrition co-existing with obesity and NCDs.
- Consumption of **soft drinks, packaged snacks, biscuits and instant foods** is soaring among children and youth.
- Challenges:
 - Weak or delayed **front-of-pack labelling**,
 - No strong rules yet targeting additives linked to overeating,
 - Aggressive marketing influencing school canteens and neighbourhood shops.
- UPFs are now a major **public health and regulatory challenge** for India as well.

Possible Implications for India

Regulatory

- This case could inspire:
 - Stronger **warning labels** and nutritional grading systems,
 - Stricter advertisement norms, especially for **child-targeted marketing**,
 - Limits on UPFs within **school environments**.

Judicial

- Public interest litigations (PILs) in India may:
 - Challenge misleading health claims,
 - Seek regulation of marketing practices,
 - Demand restrictions in school and hospital premises.

Economic

- Food companies (domestic and multinational) may face:
 - Pressure to **reformulate** products,
 - Potential compliance costs and branding changes.

Health Systems

- Unless consumption patterns change, India's health system may shoulder escalating costs for **diabetes, heart disease and other NCDs**.

05th December 2025: Daily MCQs

Q1. With reference to the withdrawal of the DoT's Sanchar Saathi preload order, consider the following statements:

1. The Sanchar Saathi app integrates modules like CEIR and TAF COP to prevent mobile-related fraud.
2. The withdrawn preload directive was one of the first major uses of DoT's expanded powers under the TIUE Rules.
3. After withdrawal, the government stated that low voluntary adoption of the app made the preload unnecessary.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation:

- (1) Correct – CEIR (for blocking stolen phones) and TAF COP (for SIMs in one's name) are key parts of Sanchar Saathi.
- (2) Correct – The preload order was a notable early use of TIUE powers over non-telecom entities like device makers.
- (3) Incorrect – The government cited *high* voluntary downloads as a reason to say mandatory preload was "unnecessary".

Q2. Volcanic ash is considered a serious hazard to jet aircraft primarily because:

1. It can melt inside engines and form glass-like deposits on hot components.
2. It absorbs all radio communication signals, causing loss of contact with air traffic control.
3. It can sandblast cockpit windscreens and damage external sensors.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3
- D. 1 only

Answer: A

Explanation:

- (1) Correct – Silicate ash melts at high temperatures and re-solidifies, blocking cooling passages and damaging turbines.

- (2) Incorrect – It doesn't "absorb all radio signals" as a primary hazard; the main concerns are mechanical/thermal.
- (3) Correct – It abrades windscreens and damages instruments like pitot tubes.

Q3. With reference to the Supreme Court's interventions in acid attack cases, consider the following:

1. The Supreme Court mandated a minimum compensation of ₹3 lakh to every acid attack survivor, payable in two instalments.
2. Private hospitals refusing emergency treatment to acid attack victims can face criminal liability as per Supreme Court directions.
3. District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) have been assigned the role of Criminal Injuries Compensation Boards.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: D

Explanation:

All three are correct and come from the Court's binding orders: minimum compensation, compulsory free treatment, and DLSAs' role.

Q4. In the context of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which of the following best defines a "haircut"?

- A. The reduction in the statutory interest rate on loans as part of RBI's monetary policy.
- B. The percentage of total claims that creditors are unable to recover under a resolution plan.
- C. The difference between liquidation value and fair value of a company's assets.
- D. The reduction in share capital of a distressed firm post-resolution.

Answer: B

Explanation:

A haircut is the **proportion of admitted claims not recovered** by creditors after resolution (i.e., loss portion).

Q5. Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs), as discussed in recent litigation in the United States, are generally characterised by which of the following?

1. High levels of added sugars, refined fats, and salt.
2. Extensive use of additives such as emulsifiers, flavour enhancers, and colourants.

3. High content of natural fibre and minimally processed whole ingredients.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation:

- (1) and (2) describe UPFs correctly.
- (3) is incorrect – UPFs are typically low in fibre and whole foods; they're based on extracts and additives.

Mains: Despite clear Supreme Court directions on compensation and free emergency treatment, acid attack survivors continue to face systemic neglect. Critically examine the reasons for poor implementation of Supreme Court orders in such cases and suggest institutional reforms to ensure timely compensation, healthcare, and long-term rehabilitation.

