

20th February 2026: DSC

🏛️ The Need for Diversity in the Judiciary

Polity • Judicial Reforms • Access to Justice

Source: The Hindu

A. Context

Rajya Sabha MP **P. Wilson** introduced the *Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2026*, proposing:

- Mandatory social diversity in the higher judiciary
- Establishment of regional benches of the Supreme Court

The objective is to democratize judicial representation and enhance equitable access to justice across India.

📌 Relevance

GS Paper 2 – Polity & Governance

Judicial appointments, separation of powers, constitutional reform, access to justice.

B. What is Judicial Diversity?

Judicial diversity refers to meaningful representation of varied **social, gender, caste, regional, and minority backgrounds** within the judiciary.

A representative bench:

- Reflects India's social plurality
 - Enhances institutional legitimacy
 - Strengthens inclusive constitutional interpretation
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C. Key Data & Structural Concerns

📊 Representation Gaps

- 78% of High Court judges (2018–24) belonged to upper castes
- SC/ST representation ~5% each
- Women constitute only 14% of High Court judges
- Only one sitting woman judge in the Supreme Court (Justice B.V. Nagarathna)
- Religious minorities account for <5% appointments in recent years

🏛️ Judicial Backlog

- 90,000+ pending cases in the Supreme Court (Jan 2026)
- Significant appellate concentration near Delhi
- High Courts face ~33% vacancy rate

D. Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 124** – Appointment of Supreme Court judges
- **Article 217** – Appointment of High Court judges
- **Article 130** – Permits the CJI (with Presidential approval) to establish Supreme Court benches elsewhere

Article 130 forms the legal basis for regional benches.

E. Why Judicial Diversity Matters

● **Enhanced Public Trust**

Representation improves citizens' faith in fairness.

Example: Positive public response to Justice B.R. Gavai's elevation.

● **Inclusive Interpretation of Rights**

Judges' lived experiences shape contextual understanding of social disputes.

Example: Gender-sensitive judgments in domestic violence cases.

● **Correcting Historical Exclusion**

India has not had a woman Chief Justice in 70+ years — indicative of systemic barriers.

● **Democratizing the Bar**

Visible representation inspires first-generation lawyers to aspire to the bench.

● **Advancing Social Justice**

A diverse judiciary aligns institutional functioning with constitutional equality.

F. Key Challenges

⚠ **Opaque Collegium System**

Lack of transparency perpetuates elite networks.

⚠ **“Old Boys’ Club” Culture**

Informal patriarchal networks restrict entry.

⚠ **No Formal Reservation**

Higher judiciary lacks structured diversity mandate.

⚠ **Geographical Centralisation**

Delhi-centric litigation limits regional access.

⚠ Structural Barriers for Women

Basic infrastructure gaps discourage long-term retention.

G. Way Forward

- Revisit NJAC-like transparent mechanism
 - Establish regional SC benches (Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata)
 - Institutionalize diversity metrics in Memorandum of Procedure
 - Mandate 90-day clearance window for appointments
 - Create mentorship pipelines for marginalized lawyers
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Conclusion

Judicial diversity enriches merit rather than diluting it. A bench reflecting India's social fabric strengthens constitutional guardianship and enhances democratic legitimacy.

🎯 Mains Practice Question (15 Marks)

Assess how performance evaluation of judges can improve judicial efficiency. Discuss limitations of disposal-rate metrics and propose holistic benchmarks aligned with constitutional justice.

📰 Digital Media and Code of Ethics

Governance • Media Ethics • Freedom vs Responsibility

Source: Times of India

A. Context

The Uttarakhand High Court cautioned digital media actors to strictly adhere to ethical norms, warning of criminal consequences for defamation or extortion.

📌 Relevance

GS Paper 4 – Ethics & Governance

Code of conduct, responsible communication, accountability.

B. What is the Digital Media Code of Ethics?

Governed by:

- IT (Intermediary Guidelines & Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021
- IT Amendment Rules 2026

Mandates digital publishers to follow:

- Norms of Journalistic Conduct
- Grievance Redress Mechanism
- AI-content labeling requirements

C. Key Data

- 1.03 billion internet users (2026)
- 800 million active social media users
- 3-hour takedown window (reduced from 36 hours)
- Only 36% trust level in news (Reuters 2025)

D. Why Ethics is Essential

- **Prevent Character Assassination**

Unverified allegations can destroy reputations instantly.

- **Combat Viral Misinformation**

False celebrity death rumors & conflict videos show digital amplification.

- **Maintain Public Order**

Mislabelled violence videos can incite communal tension.

- **Protect Vulnerable Groups**

Publishing minor victims' identities causes secondary victimization.

- **Safeguard Democratic Integrity**

Exit poll violations distort electoral fairness.

E. Implementation Challenges

- Click-driven sensationalism
- Anonymous “ghost portals”
- Speed-over-verification culture
- AI/deepfake detection difficulties
- Weak enforcement penalties

F. Way Forward

- Mandatory MIB registration
- “Verify-first” newsroom protocols
- Strict AI watermark enforcement
- Journalist legal literacy training
- Tiered penalties for repeat offenders

Conclusion

Digital freedom must coexist with ethical restraint. Responsible media is central to sustaining democratic credibility.

Mains Practice Question (10 Marks)

Explain the role of a code of ethics in governance and public institutions.

India–UK Offshore Wind Taskforce

Energy Diplomacy • Renewable Transition • Strategic Climate Cooperation

A. Context

India and the United Kingdom launched the **India–UK Offshore Wind Taskforce** under *Vision 2035* during the Fourth India–UK Energy Dialogue.

The initiative seeks to accelerate India’s offshore wind deployment by combining UK’s technical experience with India’s market scale and energy transition ambitions.

Relevance

GS Paper II – International Relations

Bilateral cooperation in climate technology, energy diplomacy, strategic partnerships.

GS Paper III – Environment & Energy

Renewable energy expansion, offshore wind, energy security, green hydrogen ecosystem.

B. What is the India–UK Offshore Wind Taskforce?

A structured bilateral platform bringing together:

- Policymakers
- Industry stakeholders
- Technical experts

It is designed to guide India’s emerging offshore wind ecosystem through coordinated strategy, infrastructure readiness, and financing architecture.

C. Objectives

- Accelerate commercial-scale offshore wind deployment
- Develop enabling regulatory and leasing frameworks
- Build port and marine logistics capacity
- Mobilize blended finance for capital-intensive projects
- Strengthen long-term energy security

D. Core Design – Three Priority Pillars

1 Ecosystem Planning & Market Design

- Seabed leasing framework
- Revenue certainty mechanisms
- Long-term Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)

2 Infrastructure & Supply Chains

- Port modernization
- Turbine manufacturing clusters
- Marine engineering and logistics capacity

3 Financing & Risk Mitigation

- Blended finance models
- Institutional capital mobilization
- Viability Gap Funding (₹7,453 crore approved)

E. Identified Offshore Zones

- Gujarat coast
- Tamil Nadu coast

These regions offer high wind potential and proximity to industrial hubs.

F. Strategic Significance

- Supports India's 500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity target by 2030
- Strengthens National Green Hydrogen Mission via renewable coastal power
- Reduces import dependence on fossil fuels
- Enhances India–UK climate diplomacy

G. Structural Challenges

- High capital intensity of offshore projects
 - Grid evacuation constraints
 - Long gestation periods
 - Regulatory coordination between Centre & States
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Conclusion

The Taskforce represents a strategic pivot from onshore to high-capacity offshore renewables. If implemented effectively, it can transform India into a major offshore wind economy while deepening Indo-UK strategic energy cooperation.

🔊 VoicERA on BHASHINI National Infrastructure

Digital Public Infrastructure • Multilingual AI • Inclusive Governance

A. Context

VoicERA, an open-source end-to-end Voice AI execution stack, was launched at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 on India's BHASHINI platform.

B. What is VoicERA?

VoicERA is a national execution layer for multilingual Voice AI systems that enables scalable speech-based governance solutions.

It operates on the **BHASHINI National Language Infrastructure**, India's digital public good for language AI.

C. Launched By

- Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD)
 - Under Digital India Corporation (DIC), MeitY
 - In collaboration with EkStep Foundation, COSS, IIIT Bengaluru, AI4Bharat
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D. Objectives

- Enable speech-based access to public services
 - Reduce digital language barriers
 - Promote interoperable and open AI frameworks
 - Avoid vendor lock-in
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E. Key Features

◆ **Open-Source Architecture**

Digital public good with modular design.

◆ **Cloud & On-Premise Compatibility**

Flexible deployment based on security needs.

◆ **Multilingual Real-Time Speech Recognition**

Supports multiple Indian languages.

◆ **Pluggable APIs**

Integrates with existing government platforms.

◆ **Population-Scale Deployment**

Designed for nationwide service delivery.

F. Strategic Significance

- Strengthens inclusive digital governance
- Democratizes AI access beyond English-speaking users
- Enables AI-driven service delivery in rural India

Conclusion

VoicERA operationalizes India's vision of language-inclusive digital governance by embedding AI within public infrastructure.

 **Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited (Bharat Taxi)**

Cooperative Economy • Gig Worker Reform • Platform Governance

Source: The Hindu

A. Context

The Union Home and Cooperation Minister formally launched '**Bharat Taxi**', India's first cooperative-based taxi service.

The platform is operated by **Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited**, a multi-state cooperative society registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.

The initiative seeks to transform India's commission-driven taxi aggregation ecosystem into an ownership-based, driver-centric economic model.

◆ **Relevance**

GS Paper 2 – Governance

Cooperative federalism, platform regulation, gig worker welfare.

GS Paper 3 – Economy

Gig economy reforms, cooperative institutions, digital platforms.

B. What is Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited?

A multi-state cooperative enterprise where:

- Drivers are shareholders
- Drivers are decision-makers
- Drivers retain majority economic benefits

Unlike private aggregators, this model shifts control from corporate intermediaries to service providers (Sarathis).

C. Institutional Promoters

The cooperative has been promoted by major national cooperative institutions:

- NCDC
- IFFCO
- GCMMF (Amul)
- KRIBHCO
- NAFED
- NABARD
- NDDB
- NCEL

This institutional backing ensures credibility, capital support, and governance oversight.

D. Operational Model

1 Ownership via Shareholding

Drivers purchase shares (minimum ₹500), giving:

- Voting rights
- Profit-sharing entitlement
- Governance participation

2 Zero-Commission Model

Instead of percentage-based deductions (20–30%), the platform charges:

- ₹30 per day for cabs
- ₹18 per day for autos

This ensures predictable and transparent cost structure.

3 Direct Payment Mechanism

Fares are transferred directly into the Sarathi's bank account without delay.

4 Democratic Governance

Two elected Sarathi representatives sit on the Board of Directors.

E. Key Features

- **Sarathi Didi Initiative** – Female drivers for women passengers
- **No Surge Pricing** – Fixed pricing model
- **Integrated Platform** – Two-, three-, four-wheelers
- **Social Security Integration** – Linked with e-Shram and PMJAY

F. Economic & Social Significance

- Reduces exploitation by intermediary platforms
- Enhances gig worker dignity and bargaining power
- Introduces cooperative principles into digital capitalism
- Forces private competitors to rationalize commissions

G. Structural Challenges

- Scaling digital infrastructure nationwide
- Competing with venture-capital backed firms
- Ensuring governance transparency within cooperative
- Maintaining service efficiency and customer satisfaction

Conclusion

Sahakar Taxi represents a paradigm shift from platform capitalism to platform cooperativism. If successfully scaled, it may redefine gig worker empowerment and cooperative-led digital governance in India.

🌐 America–India Connect Subsea Cable Initiative

Digital Infrastructure • AI Connectivity • Strategic Tech Partnership

Source: News on Air

A. Context

Google announced the billion-dollar **America–India Connect** initiative during the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

The project anchors Google’s five-year strategic investment in India.

◆ Relevance

GS Paper 3 – Science & Technology

Digital infrastructure, subsea cables, AI ecosystem.

GS Paper 2 – International Relations

India–US strategic technology partnership.

B. What is the Initiative?

A global digital connectivity project involving:

- Construction of multiple subsea fiber-optic cables
- Creation of a new subsea gateway on India’s east coast
- Expansion of AI-ready cloud infrastructure

It aims to reduce digital latency and strengthen AI computing capacity.

C. Core Components

◆ **New Subsea Gateway – Visakhapatnam**

Provides geographic redundancy to Mumbai and Chennai landings.

◆ **Three Direct Subsea Paths**

India–Singapore
India–South Africa
India–Australia

◆ **Four US Strategic Fiber Routes**

Linking US coasts to India via Africa and South Pacific.

◆ **Mumbai–Western Australia Direct Link**

Enhances Indo-Pacific connectivity.

D. Complementary Announcements



- AIIMS collaboration for AI-powered health tools
 - AI skilling via Karmayogi Bharat for 20 million public servants
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E. Strategic Significance

- Reduces AI latency bottlenecks
 - Enhances cloud computing resilience
 - Positions India as global AI hub
 - Prevents digital divide from becoming AI divide
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F. Risks & Concerns

- Geopolitical tensions in undersea cable zones
 - Cybersecurity vulnerabilities
 - Infrastructure sabotage risks
 - High capital expenditure
-

Conclusion

The initiative transforms maritime routes into digital arteries, reinforcing India's role in global AI infrastructure networks.

📄 Graphics Processing Unit (GPU)

AI Backbone • Parallel Processing • High-Performance Computing

Source: The Hindu

A. Context

GPUs have emerged as the backbone of modern AI systems, powering cloud computing, data centers, and frontier AI models.

B. What is a GPU?

A Graphics Processing Unit is a specialized processor optimized for:

- Massive parallel computation
- Data-intensive matrix operations
- High-throughput workloads

Unlike CPUs, GPUs execute thousands of simultaneous operations.

C. Historical Evolution

The term gained prominence in 1999 when Nvidia launched the GeForce 256.

Originally designed for graphics rendering, GPUs now dominate AI workloads.

D. Working Mechanism

For graphics:

- Vertex processing
- Rasterization
- Shading
- Frame output

For AI:

- Large-scale matrix multiplications
 - Neural network training
 - Parallel tensor computations
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E. Key Features

- Thousands of CUDA / Tensor cores
 - High Bandwidth Memory (HBM3, GDDR6X)
 - Energy-intensive (1000W+ per unit in advanced models)
 - Advanced liquid cooling requirements
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F. Applications

- Training LLMs
 - Weather modelling
 - Drug discovery simulations
 - Blockchain hashing
 - Industrial digital twins
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Conclusion

Control over GPU supply chains increasingly determines technological sovereignty in the AI era.

The Privileges Committee

Source: NIE

A. Constitutional Basis



- Article 105 – Parliament privileges
- Article 194 – State Legislature privileges

Rooted in British parliamentary conventions.

B. What is the Privileges Committee?

A quasi-judicial standing committee responsible for:

- Investigating breach of privilege
 - Protecting institutional dignity
 - Recommending corrective action
-

C. Composition

- Lok Sabha – 15 members
- Rajya Sabha – 10 members

Members nominated by presiding officers.

D. Powers

- Summon individuals
 - Record evidence
 - Demand documents
 - Recommend admonition, suspension, or imprisonment
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E. Significance

- Protects legislative free speech
 - Ensures institutional autonomy
 - Acts as deterrent against obstruction
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⚡ AI-for-Energy Mission

Source: Down to Earth

A. Context

Launched by the International Solar Alliance at India AI Impact Summit 2026.

B. What is the AI-for-Energy Mission?

An international initiative integrating AI into renewable energy systems across 120+ ISA member countries.

C. Objectives

- Enable digital leapfrogging
 - Transform grids into smart, bidirectional systems
 - Improve renewable integration
 - Enhance affordable electricity access
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D. Core Components

- India Energy Stack model
 - Digital twin technology for DISCOMs
 - GIS asset-level mapping
 - Citizen-facing solar apps
 - Technical capacity building
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E. Significance

- Reduces technical losses
 - Improves grid reliability
 - Supports Net Zero commitments
 - Strengthens Global South climate leadership
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Strait of Hormuz

Source: Foreign Policy

A. Context

Iran temporarily restricted sections of the Strait during live-fire drills amid heightened geopolitical tensions.

B. Geographic Location

Separates Iran (north) and Oman (south).
Connects Persian Gulf to Gulf of Oman → Indian Ocean.

C. Physical Features

- 167 km long
 - 33 km narrowest width
 - Two 3-km-wide shipping lanes
 - Deep waters (60–100 m) suitable for VLCCs
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D. Strategic Importance

- ~20% global petroleum liquids transit
 - ~20% global LNG trade
 - Energy chokepoint of global economy
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E. Geopolitical Significance

- Military flashpoint
- Oil price volatility trigger
- Central to US–Iran strategic tensions

20th February 2026: Daily MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Privileges Committee of Parliament, consider the following statements:

1. It derives its constitutional basis from Article 105 of the Constitution.
2. It has the power to impose imprisonment beyond the duration of the House session.
3. Its recommendations become binding only after adoption by the House.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Correct:** Article 105 defines parliamentary privileges; the committee functions under this framework.
 - **Statement 2 – Incorrect:** Imprisonment, if recommended, is limited to the duration of the session.
 - **Statement 3 – Correct:** The Committee only recommends action; final authority lies with the House.
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Q2. Regarding the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 and subsequent amendments, consider the following:

1. Digital news publishers must adhere to the Norms of Journalistic Conduct.
2. The 2026 amendments reduced the content takedown window to 3 hours for certain violations.
3. The Rules completely prohibit synthetic AI-generated content.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Correct:** Digital publishers must follow established journalistic norms.
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** The amended rules shortened compliance timelines in specified cases.
- **Statement 3 – Incorrect:** Synthetic content is not banned outright; it must be properly labelled.

Q3. With reference to the Strait of Hormuz, consider the following statements:

1. It connects the Persian Gulf directly to the Red Sea.
2. Nearly one-fifth of global petroleum liquids transit through it.
3. It is bordered by Iran and Oman.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Incorrect:** It connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and then the Arabian Sea, not the Red Sea.
- **Statement 2 – Correct:** Around 20% of global petroleum liquids pass through it daily.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** Iran (north) and Oman (south via Musandam Peninsula) border the strait.

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Graphics Processing Units (GPUs):

1. GPUs are optimized for parallel processing of repetitive computations.
2. GPUs are primarily designed to execute complex sequential instructions like CPUs.
3. Modern AI systems rely heavily on GPUs for large-scale matrix multiplications.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Correct:** GPUs excel at executing thousands of simultaneous operations.
- **Statement 2 – Incorrect:** CPUs handle complex sequential tasks; GPUs specialize in parallel workloads.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** AI neural networks depend on massive matrix multiplications efficiently handled by GPUs.

Q5. With reference to Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited (Bharat Taxi), consider the following statements:

1. It operates under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.
2. It follows a percentage-based commission model similar to private aggregators.
3. Drivers become members by purchasing shares and participate in governance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 – Correct:** It is registered as a multi-state cooperative society.
- **Statement 2 – Incorrect:** It operates on a flat daily access fee, not a percentage commission.
- **Statement 3 – Correct:** Drivers purchase shares and have representation in governance.



TAKSHASHILA
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Mains: “Discuss the constitutional and governance implications of establishing regional benches of the Supreme Court and reforming the judicial appointments process in India.”

