



# Daily Current Affairs



## To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

**Table Of Content 22 April 2025**

1. Criminalisation of Civil Disputes
2. K2-18b: Tracing the Possibility of Life Beyond Earth
3. Ride-Hailing in India
4. Earth Day 2025
5. Cloudburst, Landslide, and Flash Floods
6. Syria's First Wheat Shipment Marks a Step Toward Recovery



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1

## Criminalisation of Civil Disputes: Supreme Court's Concern, Causes, and Solutions

**Context:** Chief Justice of India **Sanjiv Khanna** recently raised serious concerns about the increasing tendency to **convert civil disputes into criminal cases**, particularly in **Uttar Pradesh**. His observations came during a case where two individuals facing a cheque bounce charge were also booked under severe criminal provisions, including **breach of trust, intimidation, and criminal conspiracy**.



The Chief Justice emphasized that such misuse of criminal law **undermines the legal process and threatens the rule of law**.

### CJI's Remarks on Criminalising Civil Disputes:

CJI Khanna condemned the **growing practice of giving civil disputes a criminal flavor** to harass or intimidate the other party. He stressed that this misuse risks **eroding public trust** in the legal system and could cause **breakdowns in the rule of law**.

### Modus Operandi: How Civil Cases Are Converted to Criminal Cases:

The common method involves **alleging dishonest intent from the beginning** of a civil transaction. For example:

- If **Person A lends money to Person B** and the money isn't returned, it should ideally be a civil dispute.
- However, **Person A** might allege that **Person B** never intended to repay and filed a **criminal complaint** under **Section 420 IPC** (now Section 318 of the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**), accusing **cheating or fraud**.

This **misrepresentation of intent** turns a civil issue into a criminal case, adding pressure on the accused to settle quickly.

### Why Are People Choosing Criminal Law Over Civil Law?

#### 1. Perceived Inefficiency of Civil Law:

- Civil litigation is often **slow, expensive, and tedious**.
- Especially in **family disputes**, prolonged legal battles cause emotional and financial stress.

**2. Criminal Law as a Pressure Tactic:** Criminal charges bring **quicker hearings, fear of arrest, and reputational damage**, making them a tool to coerce or force a settlement.

**3. Influence and Incentivization:** In some cases, **influential individuals** or **corrupt practices** result in **FIRs being filed** even when the matter is clearly civil in nature.

### Backlog of Cases in Indian Courts:

According to the **National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG)**:

- Over **1.08 crore civil cases** are pending in **district courts**.
- **68%** of these have been pending for **over a year**.
- Out of **4.52 crore total pending cases**, **76% (3.44 crore)** are **criminal cases**.

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Page No

2

This backlog **fuels the shift** from civil to criminal cases, as criminal proceedings are seen as a faster route to resolution.

### Courts' Consistent Stand Against Misuse:

The **Supreme Court of India** has consistently warned against using criminal law to settle civil scores.

#### Key Judgments:

- **G. Sagar Suri vs. State of U.P. (2000)**: The Court warned against using criminal proceedings as **shortcuts** for civil remedies.
- **C. Subbiah @ Kadambur Jayaraj vs. Superintendent of Police (2024)**: The Court noted that a purely civil dispute had been given a **criminal color** alleging fraud and breach of trust.

These judgments reinforce that **criminal charges should not be used to settle private disputes** rooted in civil law.

### Way Forward: Court's Recommendations to Prevent Abuse

#### Hold Frivolous Complainants Accountable:

In **Indian Oil Corporation vs. NEPC India Ltd. (2006)**, the Court stated that:

- People using criminal law despite **knowing the matter is civil** must face consequences.
- **Baseless criminal proceedings** should be **dismissed**, and civil remedies pursued instead.

#### Use of Section 250 CrPC and BNSS Section 395

The Court recommended the **frequent use of Section 250 CrPC**, which allows compensation to be awarded to falsely accused individuals. In the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023**, this is covered under **Section 395**.

- This **acts as a deterrent** for filing malicious or frivolous criminal complaints.
- Encourages the **judiciary to penalize misuse** of criminal law more often.

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

1. **What is criminalisation of civil disputes**: It refers to the **misuse of criminal law** to address issues that are fundamentally **civil in nature**, such as contractual breaches, money recovery, or property disputes.
2. **Why is it a problem**: It **clogs criminal courts**, harasses individuals, and **undermines the legal process** by bypassing civil procedures and protections.
3. **Can civil cases be legally converted into criminal cases**: Only if **criminal intent is present from the start**. Otherwise, such conversions are **misuse of law** and courts may penalize them.
4. **What is Section 250 CrPC**: This section allows **courts to order compensation** to be paid to **wrongfully accused individuals**, discouraging frivolous criminal proceedings.

**Conclusion**: The **criminalisation of civil disputes** is a growing concern in India's justice system. While the **pressure and speed** of criminal cases may tempt parties to misuse them, such actions **erode trust, clog courts, and violate legal rights**. The **Supreme Court's repeated warnings**, combined with **systemic reforms and strict enforcement of penalties**, are vital to restoring the sanctity of both **civil and criminal legal processes**.



## 2 K2-18b: Tracing the Possibility of Life Beyond Earth

**Context:** On **April 17**, an international team of scientists published a groundbreaking paper suggesting that the distant exoplanet **K2-18b** may exhibit conditions suitable for life.

### Introduction:

In a remarkable development in the field of space science, researchers analyzing data from the **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)** have reported signs of potential **habitability** on the exoplanet **K2-18b**, located about **124 light-years** from Earth in the **Leo constellation**. The presence of **biomarkers** in its atmosphere has sparked optimism among scientists, though with warranted caution.



### Understanding K2-18b and Its Discovery:

Discovered in **2015** by NASA's **Kepler Space Telescope**, **K2-18b** is a **super-Earth**—about **5.2 times wider** and **nine times more massive** than our planet. It orbits a **red dwarf star** (K2-18) within the **habitable zone**, receiving a level of stellar radiation similar to Earth.

### Key Milestones:

- **2019 (Hubble):** Water vapor detected in its atmosphere.
- **2023–2024 (JWST):** Stronger evidence for **methane**, **carbon dioxide**, and other organic molecules essential to life.

### Hycean World Hypothesis and Atmospheric Composition:

Scientists speculate that K2-18b could be a **Hycean world**—a planet with a **hydrogen-rich atmosphere** and possibly a **liquid water ocean** beneath it. These planets may support life despite extreme environments, thanks to potentially **moderate temperatures** and **protective atmospheric layers** like a stratosphere.

### Key atmospheric findings include:

- **Carbon-based molecules:** Carbon dioxide and methane.
- **Possible detection of Dimethyl Sulphide (DMS) or Dimethyl Disulphide (DMDS).**

### The Significance of Dimethyl Sulphide (DMS):

The potential detection of **DMS** is a highlight of the K2-18b analysis.

- On **Earth**, DMS is **almost entirely biological** in origin, produced by **marine phytoplankton** and **bacteria**.
- On K2-18b, **DMS-like signals** were reportedly **up to 1,000 times stronger** than on Earth, suggesting an **active production source**.

### However:

- **Spectral overlap** between DMS and DMDS complicates analysis.
- **Abiotic sources** such as **volcanic activity** or **cometary chemistry** cannot be ruled out.

### Caution Against Premature Conclusions:

Despite the excitement, researchers stress the need for **scientific caution**:



- **JWST limitations:** Data interpretation depends on computer models that may not fully capture unknown atmospheric conditions.
- **Past false positives:** In 2024, DMS was discovered on **comet 67P**, generated through **non-biological processes**.
- **Alternative hypotheses:**
  - A U.S. study suggests K2-18b might be a **mini-Neptune** with a thick gas envelope, not requiring life to explain its chemical makeup.
  - A **2025 reanalysis** challenges earlier findings, claiming **no statistically significant evidence** of DMS or carbon dioxide.

### Challenges in Confirming Life on Exoplanets:

Detecting extraterrestrial life is one of science's most complex endeavors due to:

- **Indirect methods:** Reliance on molecular signatures, temperature estimates, and radiation modeling.
- **Technological limitations:** Even advanced tools like JWST cannot **directly observe life**—only indicators or conditions that might support it.

Thus, while promising, any claims of life on K2-18b must be **treated as preliminary**.

### Conclusion:

K2-18b remains one of the most intriguing exoplanets studied so far. Its **hydrogen-rich atmosphere**, potential **water vapor**, and traces of **organic molecules** present a compelling case for further exploration. The possible detection of **DMS** adds a tantalizing layer of mystery, but **conflicting data** and **technical challenges** mean that conclusions must await more rigorous confirmation.

While we may not yet know if **K2-18b hosts life**, its study is **expanding the frontier of planetary science**, guiding future missions in the search for life beyond Earth.

3

## Ride-Hailing in India: BluSmart Exit, Subscription Models, and Legal Challenges Reshape Market

**Context:** India's \$1-billion ride-hailing market is undergoing major disruption.

- **BluSmart**, a leading **electric vehicle (EV)** cab operator, has **paused services** amid financial distress and regulatory probes.
- In parallel, **subscription-based pricing models** by startups like **Rapido** and **Namma Yatri** are challenging traditional commission-heavy models from Uber and Ola.
- Adding to the volatility, the **Karnataka High Court** has ordered a **ban on bike taxis**, impacting gig workers and raising broader questions about regulation.



### BluSmart's Uncertain Future: Key Developments

#### Service Suspension:

BluSmart has halted operations in **Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, and Mumbai**. Refunds for users' in-app wallet balances may take **up to 90 days**, worrying customers and regulators alike.

#### Liquidity Crisis Deepens:

- **ICRA** has flagged **delays in debt servicing** and highlighted BluSmart's **loss-making status**.
- The service suspension further worsens its **cash crunch**.

#### Vehicle Financing in Trouble:

- **Gensol Engineering**, BluSmart's associate, is **in default** on loans from **IREDA** and **PFC** used to finance EVs.
- These vehicles were pledged as collateral and may now be **repossessed and auctioned**.

#### Ownership Tangles:

- While some EVs are under BluSmart's "**Assured**" **leasing program**, most are leased from **Gensol**, complicating potential takeovers or partnerships (e.g., with Uber).

#### Failed Exit Deal;

- A proposed deal to sell **3,000 EVs to Refex Green Mobility** has collapsed.
- Meanwhile, **SEBI is probing Gensol** for financial misconduct, further clouding future asset deals.

**Bottom Line:** BluSmart's exit appears more permanent than temporary, with **deep financial, legal, and operational hurdles** blocking a revival.

#### Who Gains from BluSmart's Fall?

- **Uber and Ola May Regain Share:** BluSmart's absence could drive users back to **Uber** and **Ola**, but the landscape is no longer theirs alone.
- **Rise of New Players:** Startups like **Shofrr** in Delhi are gaining traction—especially for **airport transfers**—with better reliability and service.

#### Subscription Models on the Rise:

- **Rapido** and **Namma Yatri** now offer **driver-friendly daily/weekly subscription fees**, instead of steep commissions.

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Page No

6



- These models are increasingly popular among **auto** and **cab drivers**.

### Pressure on Incumbents:

Uber and Ola have **adopted subscriptions for autos** and may soon extend them to cabs. However, moving away from commission models challenges their existing revenue structures.

Legal Hurdles Facing India's Ride-Hailing Sector

### GST Confusion Over Subscription Models:

Subscription platforms avoid collecting **5% GST from passengers**, since payments go directly to drivers. But legality is unclear:

- **Nov 2024 (Karnataka AAR):** Held that **Uber must collect GST** under the subscription model.
- **Sep 2023 Ruling:** Exempted **Namma Yatri**, saying it only connects drivers and passengers.

The industry is now seeking **clear policy guidance** from the **GST Council** and tax authorities.

### Crackdown on Bike Taxis:

- **Karnataka High Court** ordered a **shutdown of bike taxi services** by **mid-May**, citing lack of regulation.
- This affects **thousands of drivers**, including **many women riders**.

### Drivers have petitioned for:

- **Temporary permits**
- **A regulatory framework**
- **Stakeholder consultations**

### Call for Reform:

The **Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)** has urged the formation of a **joint government-industry committee** to frame comprehensive **bike taxi regulations**.

### Growth Potential Amid Legal Uncertainty:

Despite ongoing disruption, India's ride-hailing market is **poised for rapid expansion**:

- Valued at **\$951 million in FY 2023-24**
- Expected to reach **\$3.9-4 billion by FY 2031-32**
- Implies a **CAGR of over 18%**

However, **policy clarity**—on **subscription pricing, GST, and bike taxis**—will be critical to sustaining this momentum.





## 4 Earth Day 2025: "Our Power, Our Planet"

**Context:** Earth Day is celebrated every year on April 22, marking one of the **largest environmental protest movements** in the world. It's a global reminder of our **shared responsibility** to protect and preserve our planet for future generations.

### Theme of Earth Day 2025:

This year's official theme is:

"OUR POWER, OUR PLANET"



The message is clear: we must act now. Earth Day 2025 emphasizes the urgent need to **transition to renewable energy** sources. It calls on **individuals, corporations, and governments** to take bold action by **tripling clean energy production by 2030**. The campaign is a powerful rallying cry for a **just and sustainable energy future**.

### A Brief History of Earth Day:

- **First observed on April 22, 1970**, Earth Day began as a **national teach-in on environmental issues** in the United States.
- It was initiated by **U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson**, bringing together **over 20 million Americans**—about **10% of the U.S. population**—to demand cleaner air, water, and land.
- By **1990**, Earth Day had gone **global**, with more than **200 million people in 141 countries** participating.
- Since then, it has evolved into a **worldwide movement**, inspiring action on **climate change, biodiversity loss, plastic pollution**, and more.

### Why Earth Day Still Matters:

- **Climate change** continues to threaten ecosystems and communities worldwide.
- Environmental issues such as **deforestation, ocean acidification**, and **species extinction** are intensifying.
- Earth Day is a moment to **reflect, educate, and act**—pushing for **policies, innovations, and behaviors** that lead to a greener world.

### Did You Know?

- **Over 1 billion people** now participate in Earth Day activities annually.
- Earth Day inspired the creation of the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** and landmark laws such as the **Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act**, and **Endangered Species Act**.
- The **Paris Agreement**, a global treaty to fight climate change, is often promoted through Earth Day advocacy.

### What You Can Do:

- **Reduce your carbon footprint** by using public transport or cycling.
- **Switch to renewable energy** or support clean energy policies.
- **Plant trees**, reduce plastic use, and conserve water.
- Educate others and participate in **local clean-up events**.

### Our Future is in Our Hands:

As we honor **Earth Day 2025**, let's remember: **we are not powerless**. Together, **our power can protect our planet**. Join the movement. Be part of the change.

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5

## Cloudburst, Landslide, and Flash Floods: Nature's Sudden Fury

**Context:** Torrential rains in Ramban tehsil, Jammu and Kashmir, have led to casualties, massive infrastructure damage, and emergency evacuations. Authorities report that cloudbursts, landslides, and flash floods are the primary causes of the widespread destruction.

### What is a Cloudburst?

#### Definition:

A cloudburst is a sudden, extremely intense rainstorm, delivering more than 10 cm of rain in under an hour over a small area (around 10 km<sup>2</sup>).

It is often accompanied by thunder, lightning, and sometimes hail.

#### Common in:

- Mountainous regions, especially the Himalayas
- Hard to predict due to their localized nature

#### Causes:

- **Orographic Lifting:** Moist air ascends mountain slopes, cools, and condenses, causing rainfall.
- **Upward Air Currents:** These can hold raindrops longer, causing them to grow. Once the currents weaken, a sudden downpour occurs.
- **Monsoon Dynamics:** Monsoon clouds moving from the Bay of Bengal or Arabian Sea collide with the Himalayas, triggering intense rain.

#### Examples:

- Himachal Pradesh (2024) – Cloudburst led to deadly floods
- Uttarakhand (2021) – Massive rainfall, landslides, and infrastructure collapse

### What is a Landslide?

#### Definition:

A landslide is the downward movement of rock, soil, or debris on a slope under the influence of gravity. It is a form of mass wasting.

#### Causes:

- **Natural Triggers:** Heavy rainfall, earthquakes, and water seepage
- **Human Activities:** Deforestation, unregulated construction, and mining
- **Geological Factors:** Weak soil layers, steep terrain, and poor vegetation cover

#### Landslide-Prone Areas in India:

- North East & North West Himalayas
- Western Ghats, Konkan Hills, Eastern Ghats

**Total Area Prone:** 0.42 million sq. km (12.6% of India's land)

#### Examples:

- Wayanad, Kerala (2024) – Significant landslide events





- **Kedarnath, Uttarakhand (2013)** – Over **5,700 deaths** due to massive landslide and floods
- **Chamoli (2021)** – Triggered by glacier burst and heavy rainfall

### What is a Flash Flood?

#### Definition:

A **flash flood** is a **sudden and intense flooding** event, occurring within **6 hours of heavy rainfall**. These floods are **short-lived**, but **extremely destructive**.

#### Causes:

- **Heavy Rainfall** that exceeds soil absorption and overwhelms drainage
- **Rapid Snowmelt** or **glacial lake outbursts**
- **Dam or Levee Breaks**
- **Urbanization**: Impervious surfaces like concrete **increase runoff**

#### Examples:

- **Himachal Pradesh (2023)** – Intense rainfall caused sudden floods
- **Uttarakhand (2013)** – Cloudbursts triggered flash floods and landslides
- **Mumbai (2005)** – Over 944 mm of rain in a day caused major urban flooding

#### Did You Know?

- India sees an average of **30–40 cloudburst events** annually, especially during the **monsoon**.
- **Flash floods** account for **more than 40%** of flood-related deaths globally.
- Landslides cost India **millions in damages** each year and displace thousands of people.

#### Final Thoughts:

Understanding **natural disasters** like cloudbursts, landslides, and flash floods is crucial for **disaster preparedness and climate resilience**. As extreme weather events become more frequent due to **climate change**, both **governments and citizens** must work together to minimize the risks through **early warning systems, eco-sensitive planning, and community awareness**.

## 6 Syria's First Wheat Shipment Marks a Step Toward Recovery

**Context:** In a pivotal moment for Syria's food security, the port of Latakia has received its **first wheat shipment** since the **departure of former President Bashar al-Assad** in **December 2024**. This development reflects Syria's ongoing efforts toward **economic stabilization and agricultural recovery** amidst a challenging post-conflict environment.

### Understanding Syria: Land of Heritage and Resilience:

#### Geographic Location:

- Situated in **Southwest Asia**, Syria lies along the **eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea**.
- Capital City: Damascus**, one of the **oldest continuously inhabited cities** in the world.



#### Bordering Nations:

#### Syria shares its borders with:

- Turkey** to the north
- Iraq** to the east
- Jordan** to the south
- Israel and Lebanon** to the southwest

This strategic location has made Syria a **crossroads of civilizations**, but also a hotspot for **regional geopolitics**.

#### Geological and Natural Features:

##### Mountain Ranges:

- Al-Anṣariyyah Mountains:** Running parallel to the coast, these peaks reach heights of **~1,562 meters**, forming a natural barrier between the **coastal plain** and the **interior plateau**.
- Other notable ranges include:
  - Mount Al-Durūz** (in the south)
  - Abū Rujmayn and Bishrī Mountains** (in the east-central region)

#### Rivers and Water Bodies:

- Euphrates River:** Originating in **Turkey**, this is Syria's **primary water artery**, vital for agriculture and hydroelectric power. The **Euphrates Dam** forms **Lake Al-Asad**, a major **reservoir**.
- Orontes River:** Flows **northward**, defying typical river paths, through the **Ghāb Depression** before emptying into the Mediterranean.
- Yarmouk River:** A key tributary that **forms part of the Syria-Jordan border**.

#### Plains and Deserts:

- Syrian Desert (Al-Bādiyah):** A vast expanse of **rocky and gravelly terrain**, it covers much of **southeastern Syria**. Despite its arid nature, it has served as a corridor for ancient trade and pastoral nomadism.

**Lakes:**

- **Al-Jabbūl Lake:** Syria's largest seasonal salt lake, important for migratory birds and salt extraction.
- Other significant lakes:
  - **Lake Qattinah** (man-made)
  - **Lake Muzayrib**
  - **Lake Khātūniyyah** near the northeast

**Did You Know?**

- Syria is home to **ancient cities** like **Palmyra**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The **Orontes River** is one of the few rivers in the Middle East that **flows north** instead of south.
- **Agriculture** once accounted for **more than 25%** of Syria's GDP before the civil conflict.

**The Road Ahead:**

The arrival of wheat at **Latakia Port** is more than a shipment—it's a **symbol of hope and revival**. As Syria aims to **rebuild its economy**, ensuring **food sovereignty**, restoring **agricultural infrastructure**, and **revitalizing rural livelihoods** will be central to its recovery.

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