



# Daily Current Affairs



## To The Point

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## Presidential Reference to Supreme Court: Clarifying Time Limits on Assent to State Bills

**Context:** In a landmark constitutional development, **President Droupadi Murmu** has invoked **Article 143** of the Indian Constitution, seeking the **Supreme Court's advisory opinion** on whether the **President and State Governors** must adhere to specific **timelines** while acting on **State Legislature Bills**.



### Background: Delay in Assent and the 'Pocket Veto' Dilemma

Traditionally, **Governors** and the **President of India** are **not constitutionally bound** by a strict timeframe to assent to or return a Bill passed by a **State Legislature**. This has often led to **indefinite delays**, a practice informally known as a "**Pocket Veto**"—a term not mentioned in the Constitution but used widely in political and legal discourse.

### Recent Supreme Court Verdict:

In a recent judgment, the **Supreme Court** addressed this ambiguity and ruled that **Governors cannot withhold or delay assent indefinitely**, especially after a Bill has been **re-passed** by the State Assembly.

### Timelines Set by the Court:

- **One month** to act on **re-passed Bills**.
- **Three months** to act when **withholding assent** contrary to the **State Cabinet's advice**.

This ruling has triggered a deeper debate about the **judicial enforceability** of timelines on constitutional authorities and whether the **Supreme Court**, under **Article 142**, can compel the executive to act within set periods.

### Article 142: Ensuring Complete Justice

**Article 142** grants the Supreme Court the authority to **pass any decree or order** necessary to ensure **complete justice** in any case before it.

### Significance of Article 142:

- Allows the Court to **fill legislative or executive gaps** in the interest of justice.
- Empowers the Court to protect **public interest, human rights, and constitutional values**.
- Enhances the Supreme Court's position as the **guardian of the Constitution**.

### Criticism:

Some experts argue that **Article 142** can potentially **blur the separation of powers**, inviting concerns of **judicial overreach**.

### Article 143: Presidential Consultation with the Supreme Court

**Article 143** empowers the **President** to seek the **Supreme Court's advisory opinion** on questions of law or fact that are of **public importance**.

### Key Features of Article 143:

- **Article 143(1):** President may refer legal questions for the SC's opinion.
- The **Court's response is advisory**—not binding but carries **significant moral and legal weight**.
- Hearings must be conducted by a **Constitution Bench** of at least **five judges** (as per **Article 145(3)**).

### Historical Context:

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This provision has its roots in the **Government of India Act, 1935**, and has been used by the President at **least 15 times** since **1950**, including in high-stakes cases like:

- **The Ayodhya Land Dispute (1993)**
- **Punjab Termination of Agreements Act (2004)**

#### Why This Reference Matters: A Federal Turning Point:

This move is **not merely legal**—it is a **constitutional inflection point** for Indian federalism. It raises critical questions:

- Can the **judiciary impose accountability** on **constitutional functionaries**?
- Should there be **defined timeframes** for **executive decisions** on legislative actions?
- How can **democratic mandates** of state legislatures be safeguarded from **executive inaction**?

#### Conclusion: Shaping the Balance of Power

This Presidential reference to the Supreme Court under **Article 143** could **redefine the contours of executive discretion**, bolster **legislative sanctity**, and reinforce the **judiciary's role in upholding democratic processes**.

The **Supreme Court's opinion**, while not binding, could shape future legislation, encourage **governance reforms**, and set a precedent for **time-bound accountability** in state-centre relations.

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## India Raises Concern Over Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal

**Context:** In a recent development, **India's Defence Minister** has raised serious concerns over the **security and accountability** of **Pakistan's nuclear arsenal**, urging that it be placed under the watch of the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**. This move reflects growing regional and global anxieties about **nuclear safety** and the risk of **proliferation**.

**Pakistan's Nuclear Posture: A Threat Without Restraint****Unchecked Expansion:**

Pakistan became a **declared nuclear power in 1998**, following India's own nuclear tests. Since then, it has **rapidly expanded** its nuclear capabilities, with an estimated **170 nuclear warheads** today.

Unlike India, which adheres to a **No-First-Use (NFU)** policy, **Pakistan has no such declared restraint**, making its nuclear doctrine **opaque and unpredictable**.

**Outside Global Norms:**

Pakistan remains **outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**, raising red flags globally, particularly because of:

- Past **nuclear proliferation links**, including the A.Q. Khan network.
- Lack of formal commitment to **disarmament principles** or **international verification mechanisms**.

**NPT: A Framework Pakistan Rejects**

The **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**, signed in **1968** and in force since **1970**, aims to:

- **Prevent nuclear weapon spread.**
- Promote **peaceful nuclear energy**.
- Facilitate **nuclear disarmament**.

Only five nations are recognized as **Nuclear Weapon States (NWS)** under this treaty. **India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea** have **not signed** the NPT, citing its **discriminatory nature**.

**IAEA: Global Nuclear Watchdog****About the IAEA:**

The **International Atomic Energy Agency**, established in **1957**, is the world's foremost body promoting **safe, secure, and peaceful use of nuclear energy**.

- **Headquarters:** Vienna, Austria
- **Members:** 180 countries (as of November 2024)
- **Motto:** "Atoms for Peace and Development"

**Core Functions:**

- **Safeguards & Verification:** Ensures that **nuclear materials are not diverted for weapons**.
- **Nuclear Safety & Security:** Supports nations in improving **nuclear standards** and countering **nuclear terrorism**.



- **Technical Cooperation:** Helps developing countries harness **nuclear technology** for health, agriculture, and energy.

The IAEA plays a vital role in **non-proliferation diplomacy**, especially in **inspections and monitoring** (e.g., in Iran's case).

### India's Commitment to Responsible Nuclear Conduct:

India, though not an NPT signatory, has taken several steps to demonstrate **nuclear responsibility and transparency**:

- **Ratified the Additional Protocol (2014):** Allows greater IAEA access to **India's civil nuclear program**.
- **Signed item-specific safeguards agreements** with the IAEA.
- **Joined key export control regimes:**
  - **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)** – Joined in 2016.
  - **Wassenaar Arrangement** – Joined in 2017.
  - **Australia Group** – Joined in 2018.

India has also aligned its export controls with the norms of the **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**, although it remains **outside the group**, alongside Pakistan and Israel.

### India-Pakistan Nuclear Installation Agreement:

In an effort to reduce nuclear risks, India and Pakistan signed the **Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement (NAA)** in **1988**, effective from **1991**.

#### Key Provisions:

- **Annual exchange** of nuclear facility locations.
- Prevents **attacks on each other's civilian nuclear installations**.

#### However, this agreement:

- **Does not mandate** transparency in terms of **activities or capabilities**.
- **Lacks depth** in preventing broader military confrontations.

India has repeatedly called for **expanding the agreement** to include **civilian and economic infrastructure**, but **Pakistan has consistently refused**.

#### Why India is Concerned:

- **Strategic Instability:** Pakistan's lack of a **No-First-Use policy** heightens the risk of a **nuclear first strike** in a crisis.
- **Nuclear Brinkmanship:** Islamabad often uses its nuclear capability as a **deterrent** to **offset India's conventional military edge**.
- **Terror Risks:** Concerns persist about **internal security** in Pakistan, raising fears that **non-state actors** could potentially access nuclear materials.

#### Conclusion: A Call for Oversight and Dialogue

India's demand for **IAEA supervision** over Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is not just about bilateral rivalry—it is a **global call for accountability**. In an age where **nuclear risks** are rising due to **geopolitical tensions** and **terror threats**, greater **transparency, dialogue, and regional arms control** are essential for **long-term peace** in South Asia.

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**Account Aggregators: Laying the Foundation for India's Consent-Based Data Economy**

**Context:** With the advent of the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023**, and the draft **DPDP Rules, 2025**, India is taking a transformative step toward **empowering individuals with control over their personal data**. A key pillar of this initiative is the **Account Aggregator (AA)** framework, which now serves as a **blueprint for developing Consent Managers (CMs)** under the new data protection regime.

**What is an Account Aggregator (AA)?**

An **Account Aggregator** is a **Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC-AA)** regulated by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**. It acts as a **digital bridge** between institutions that hold your financial data and those that need access to it — all based on your **explicit consent**.

**Key Features:**

- Operates on a **real-time, consent-based, and encrypted data-sharing system**.
- Acts as a conduit between:
  - **Financial Information Providers (FIPs)**: e.g., banks, mutual funds, insurance firms.
  - **Financial Information Users (FIUs)**: e.g., lenders, wealth advisors, insurers.
- **Does not store, modify, or analyze data** — it merely facilitates secure transfer.

**How it Works:**

1. A user links their bank accounts to an AA.
2. Provides **consent** to share specific data (e.g., bank statements) with a **FIU**.
3. The AA fetches the data from the relevant **FIP** and delivers it securely to the FIU.

**Examples of Licensed AAs:**

- **CAMS FinServ** – Backed by Computer Age Management Services.
- **PhonePe AA** – A subsidiary of PhonePe, utilizing its vast digital ecosystem.

**Transitioning to the Consent Manager (CM) Framework under DPDP**

The **DPDP Act, 2023** introduces the concept of **Consent Managers (CMs)** — entities entrusted with managing an individual's **consent lifecycle** in the data-sharing ecosystem.

**Role of Consent Managers:**

- Facilitate **consent collection, modification, and withdrawal**.
- Ensure secure data transfers between **Data Principals** (individuals) and **Data Fiduciaries** (organizations using data).
- Act as **trusted intermediaries**, much like AAs, but across all sectors, not just financial services.

**Draft DPDP Rules, 2025: Key Proposals for Consent Managers**

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To build an effective and scalable CM ecosystem, the draft rules propose several foundational elements:

1. **Mandatory Registration:** Consent Managers must register with the **Data Protection Board (DPB)** to ensure oversight and regulatory compliance.
2. **Sector-Specific Consent Managers:** Encourages development of **domain-specific CMs** (e.g., for health, finance, education), provided they adhere to **common APIs and technical protocols**.
3. **Commercial Flexibility:** Allows CMs to **enter into business arrangements with Data Fiduciaries**, enabling sustainable business models while preserving user trust.

#### Why a Unified Consent Infrastructure Matters:

1. **Avoids Redundancy:** Aligning the **AA and CM frameworks** avoids duplication and unnecessary complexity across sectors.
2. **Boosts Efficiency:** Leverages the **proven efficiency** of the AA model, accelerating the nationwide rollout of **Consent Managers**.
3. **Fosters Innovation :** Empowers startups, fintechs, and public platforms to **develop secure, user-centric data-sharing services**.
4. **Supports Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) :** Strengthens India's vision for a **secure, interoperable, and citizen-first digital ecosystem**, building on success stories like **UPI and DigiLocker**.

#### India's Moment to Lead in Data Empowerment:

India stands at the cusp of redefining global standards in **data protection and empowerment**. By **harmonizing the Account Aggregator model with the Consent Manager regime** under the DPDP framework, the country can establish a **scalable, transparent, and inclusive data governance system**.

This unified approach not only safeguards personal data but also unlocks massive potential for **digital innovation, financial inclusion, and user autonomy** in the digital age.

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## 4 Back From the Brink: Blyde Rondavel Flat Gecko Rediscovered After 34 Years

**Context:** In a thrilling breakthrough for conservation biology, the **Blyde Rondavel Flat Gecko**, a species that had gone unrecorded for over **three decades**, was **rediscovered in April 2025** in the rugged **Blyde River Canyon** of **Mpumalanga Province, South Africa**. This marks the first confirmed sighting of the elusive lizard since its initial discovery in **1991**.

**About the Blyde Rondavel Flat Gecko:**

- This **flat-bodied gecko** reaches a length of **8–9 cm** when fully grown.
- It is likely **rock-dwelling**, specially adapted to **cliff habitats and isolated rocky outcrops**, which contributes to its **elusiveness** and difficulty in detection.
- After its original discovery, the gecko vanished from all records, sparking fears of **extinction** and even **doubts about its taxonomic validity**.
- Due to the absence of sufficient data, it had been listed as **"Data Deficient"** by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**.

**Rediscovery Confirmed by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT):**

The rediscovery was made during a targeted **research expedition** by the **Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT)** to an **inaccessible rocky escarpment** of the canyon—precisely the site where the species was first found.

This marks the **fifth successful rediscovery** of a species by EWT in recent years, joining an impressive list of once-thought-lost creatures, including:

- A **dune mole**, rediscovered after **80 years**,
- A **rare butterfly**,
- An **unrecorded lizard**, and
- A **frog species**, all of which had similarly disappeared from scientific sight.

**A Victory for Conservation and Biodiversity:**

The reappearance of the Blyde Rondavel Flat Gecko is a **testament to the importance of sustained fieldwork** in even the most inaccessible habitats. It also reaffirms the critical value of **protected ecosystems like the Blyde River Canyon**, which serve as refuges for unique and often overlooked species.

This rediscovery contributes to a growing list of so-called **"Lazarus species"**—organisms presumed extinct that reemerge, surprising scientists and conservationists alike.

**Looking Ahead:****The find is expected to lead to:**

- **New ecological studies** on the gecko's behavior and habitat,
- **Updated conservation assessments** by the IUCN, and
- **Heightened interest** in protecting other potentially hidden species in remote ecosystems.

It also serves as a **beacon of hope** for biodiversity conservation, proving that even in a rapidly changing world, **nature still holds secrets waiting to be uncovered**.



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## India's Largest Conservation Reserve Declared in Himachal: Tsarap Chu Joins the Biodiversity Map

**Context:** In a significant step towards ecological preservation, the **Himachal Pradesh government** has officially **notified the Tsarap Chu Conservation Reserve** in the **Lahaul-Spiti region**, making it **India's largest conservation reserve** with an area of **1,585 sq. km**.



### Strategic Location in the Cold Desert Biodiversity Hotspot:

Nestled in the remote trans-Himalayan terrain, **Tsarap Chu Conservation Reserve** shares its boundaries with:

- The **Union Territory of Ladakh** to the **north**,
- **Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary** and the **Malang Nala-Lungar Lungpa stretch** to the **east**,
- **Kabjima Nala** to the **south**, and
- The famed **Chandratal Wildlife Sanctuary** to the **west**.

This ecologically vital zone lies at the **confluence of the Unam River and Charap Nala**, acting as a **critical catchment area** for Charap Nallah.

### Wildlife Corridor with Rich Biodiversity:

The reserve plays a **pivotal role as a wildlife corridor**, linking **Kibber** and **Chandratal** wildlife sanctuaries—ensuring **genetic flow** and **safe movement** of species across habitats.

It is recognized as one of **Himachal Pradesh's high-density snow leopard zones**. Alongside the elusive **snow leopard**, the region is home to:

- **Tibetan wolf**
- **Bharal** (*blue sheep*)
- **Himalayan ibex**
- **Kiang** (*Tibetan wild ass*)
- **Tibetan argali** (*Great Tibetan sheep*)

The skies of Tsarap Chu are no less impressive, featuring rare high-altitude avian species such as the:

- **Rose Finch**
- **Tibetan Raven**
- **Yellow-billed Chough**

### Community-Driven Conservation Governance:

The reserve will be overseen by a **Conservation Reserve Management Committee**, which includes:

- **Forest department officials**
- **Wildlife experts**
- **Local Panchayat representatives**

This participatory model aims to **balance conservation goals with the livelihood needs** of the local communities, many of whom follow traditional **nomadic pastoralism**.

### A Boost to Eco-Tourism and Scientific Research:

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Given its unique landscape and rich fauna, the reserve is poised to:

- **Promote responsible eco-tourism**
- **Support high-altitude biodiversity studies**
- Encourage **youth-led conservation efforts** through community involvement and awareness campaigns.

### **Conclusion: A Landmark for India's Cold Desert Conservation**

The creation of the **Tsarap Chu Conservation Reserve** marks a **new era in Himalayan ecosystem preservation**, showcasing how **biodiversity conservation, indigenous involvement, and ecological connectivity** can go hand in hand. It not only protects fragile mountain ecosystems but also strengthens **India's commitment to global biodiversity targets** under frameworks like the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**.



## 6 India to Dive into the Depths: 'Samudrayaan Mission' Set for Launch by End of 2026

**Context:** In a landmark announcement, the **National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)** has confirmed that **India's Samudrayaan Mission** will be launched by the **end of 2026**. This ambitious venture is part of the broader **Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)** and marks **India's entry into elite global club** of countries capable of **manned deep-sea expeditions**.

So far, only **five nations**—the **U.S., Russia, China, France, and Japan**—have achieved such underwater milestones.



### Unveiling Matsya-6000: India's Deep-Sea Chariot

At the heart of Samudrayaan is '**Matsya 6000**', a **4th-generation human-rated submersible vehicle** capable of diving to a **depth of 6,000 metres (6 km)**.

### Key Features of Matsya 6000:

- Developed by **NIOT-Chennai**, under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.
- Successfully completed **wet testing**.
- **Endurance:** 12 hours of standard operation and **up to 96 hours** in emergency mode.
- Designed to carry **three humans**, supported by life systems and scientific equipment.
- Constructed with **titanium alloy pressure hull**, suitable for extreme deep-sea pressure conditions (over 600 times atmospheric pressure).

### Mission Objectives: More Than Just Exploration

The **Samudrayaan Mission** will open up vast possibilities in:

- **Deep-sea scientific research**
- **Mapping of marine biodiversity**
- **Exploration of polymetallic nodules**, rare-earth metals, and hydrothermal vents
- **Survey of deep-living biological resources** with potential pharmaceutical value
- **Development of ocean observation technologies**
- **Laying the foundation for deep-sea tourism and robotics**

This initiative will greatly enhance India's efforts to sustainably harness its **blue economy potential**, which already contributes nearly **4% to the national GDP**.

### Deep Ocean Mission (DOM): Driving India's Blue Economy

#### About DOM:

- **Launched:** 2021
- **Tenure:** 5 years
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- **Goal:** Develop **deep-sea technologies**, promote **resource assessment**, and ensure the **sustainable use** of the ocean's unexplored depths.

#### Objectives of DOM Include:

- Deep-sea mining and exploration of energy resources

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- Mapping the ocean floor and biodiversity
- Creation of advanced marine infrastructure and underwater robotics
- Development of climate change forecasting tools
- Coastal and island community development

**Why Samudrayaan Matters for India:**

- Enhances **India's strategic capabilities** in the Indian Ocean region
- Supports **self-reliance** in ocean exploration technology
- Boosts **scientific innovation and marine education**
- Helps mitigate climate and ecological challenges through better ocean data

**Conclusion: A Giant Leap into the Blue Frontier**

With **Samudrayaan**, India is not just diving into the ocean—it's **diving into the future**. By integrating cutting-edge technology, environmental sustainability, and strategic marine development, the mission will place **India on the global map of deep-sea exploration**. This milestone aligns with the broader vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and propels the nation toward **scientific sovereignty in marine exploration**.

