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# Daily Current Affairs

## To The Point

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GS Paper 2 – Polity and Governance

## 1 Supreme Court Reinstates 3-Year Practice Requirement for Judicial Services Exams

**Context:** In a significant move, the **Supreme Court of India** has reinstated the **mandatory three-year practice as an advocate** for candidates aspiring to join the **judicial services** at the entry level. This ruling reaffirms the value of **courtroom experience** in shaping competent and mature judicial officers, especially in the **lower judiciary**, where day-to-day interaction with litigants is most intensive.

### Historical Background: Evolving Standards for Judicial Recruitment

The debate around requiring prior legal practice isn't new. The **14th Law Commission Report (1958)** first proposed a **3 to 5-year practice** condition for those entering the **subordinate judiciary**. At the same time, it recommended the establishment of an **All India Judicial Services (AIJS)**—a national-level recruitment process for the higher judiciary—which did not demand courtroom experience.

In **1992**, the Supreme Court, in the landmark **All India Judges' Association vs Union of India** case, initially allowed **fresh law graduates** to apply. However, this stance was **reversed in 1993** upon review. The **Shetty Commission (1996)** later criticized the practice requirement, citing it as a **barrier for talented law graduates**. Consequently, in **2002**, the SC scrapped the rule, acknowledging that the **judiciary was struggling to attract the best legal talent**.

### Why the Rule is Back: Arguments in Favour

1. **Bridging the Theory-Practice Divide** : Legal education in India, particularly in many traditional law colleges, often lacks **practical training**. Courtroom experience imparts vital skills such as **procedural fluency, evidence handling, and courtroom decorum**.
2. **Enhancing Judicial Decision-Making**: Practical exposure leads to **better reasoning, empathy, and procedural efficiency**. Seasoned advocates are more likely to deliver judgments that are grounded in **real-world legal challenges**.
3. **Building Ethical Resilience**: Lower courts often face **external pressures and local influences**. Candidates with prior legal practice are better equipped with the **ethical grounding and maturity** to resist such interference.
4. **Global Best Practices**: Countries like **Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia** mandate **prior experience** before judicial appointment, reinforcing its value in ensuring **judicial competence and credibility**.

### Concerns and Criticism: Arguments Against

1. **Barrier to Top Talent**: Graduates from **prestigious NLUs** often opt for high-paying corporate roles. Imposing a **3-year delay** further deters them from considering a **career in judiciary**.
2. **Infrequent Exams and Age Limit Challenges**: Judicial service exams are **irregular** in many states. Combined with **existing age limits**, the rule may **disqualify or discourage many aspirants**.
3. **Gender Disparity**: According to the **India Justice Report**, **women make up only 38%** of the district judiciary. **Career breaks** due to maternity and societal expectations may disproportionately affect their ability to fulfill the experience requirement.

4. **Impact on Marginalized Aspirants**: For students from **economically weaker sections**, the need to **start earning early** is critical. An added delay could make a judicial career **financially unviable**.

**What Lies Ahead: Pathways for Reform**

1. **Structured Training Instead of Practice** : A potential solution is to allow fresh graduates but subject them to a **comprehensive two-year judicial training program**, blending **classroom instruction** with **live court exposure**.
2. **Revamping the Examination Process**: Shift from memory-based questions to **scenario-based assessments**, focusing on **practical legal reasoning, evidence analysis**, and **judgment writing**—as envisioned in the original **14th Law Commission Report**.
3. **Attracting Talent Through Incentives**: Introduce **competitive stipends, mentorship, and career growth plans** to make the judiciary more attractive for **young legal professionals**.

**Additional Insight: A Global View**

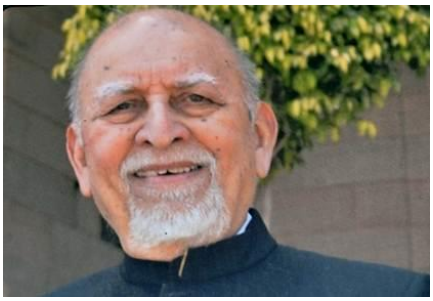
- In the **UK**, aspiring judges often spend **7 to 10 years in practice** before applying for judicial roles.
- In **Germany**, law graduates undergo a **two-year legal clerkship (Referendariat)** before qualifying for judicial exams.
- The **United States** emphasizes **trial experience**, and many judges are appointed only after **significant private or public legal practice**.

**Conclusion: Striking a Balance Between Experience and Access**

While **experience enhances judicial quality**, it is crucial to ensure that it does not become an **unjust hurdle** for talented, young, and marginalized aspirants. A **balanced approach**, combining **early-career training, inclusive policies, and reformative assessment models**, can help build a judiciary that is not only **competent but also representative and accessible**.

GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

## 2 Dr. M.R. Srinivasan: The Visionary Behind India's Peaceful Nuclear Power Revolution



**Context:** India mourns the loss of **Dr. M.R. Srinivasan**, a pioneering nuclear scientist and a key figure in shaping the nation's nuclear energy programme. A titan in the field, Dr. Srinivasan passed away recently, leaving behind a legacy rooted in **scientific excellence, national service, and energy self-reliance**.

**A Career Defined by Nation-Building:**

Born on **January 5, 1930**, Dr. Srinivasan dedicated his life to advancing India's nuclear capabilities. His illustrious career spans the formative decades of India's atomic energy mission.

**Key Milestones in His Journey**:

- **1955**: Joined the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)**, collaborating closely with **Dr. Homi Bhabha** on **Apsara**, India's first nuclear research reactor.
- **1959**: Became **Principal Project Engineer** for India's first nuclear power station.
- **1967**: Appointed **Chief Project Engineer** of the **Madras Atomic Power Station**.
- **1974**: Led the **Power Projects Engineering Division**, driving key infrastructural advancements.
- **1984**: Took charge as **Chairman of the Nuclear Power Board**.
- **1987**: Became **Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission** and **Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy**.
    - He was also the **founding Chairman of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL)**, under which **18 nuclear reactors** were commissioned.

**Honours and Recognition:**

Dr. Srinivasan's contributions earned him **national and international acclaim**:

- **Padma Shri** (1984)
- **Padma Bhushan** (1990)
- **Padma Vibhushan** (2015) – one of India's highest civilian honours
- Served on the **Planning Commission (1996–1998)** and **National Security Advisory Board (2002–2004, 2006–2008)**.

His scientific vision helped shape India's nuclear policy in both **civilian and strategic sectors**, balancing technological independence with responsible governance.

**India's Nuclear Programme: A Pillar of Energy Security**

India's nuclear journey, championed by visionaries like **Dr. Srinivasan**, is rooted in the aim of achieving **energy security, clean power, and strategic autonomy**.

**The Three-Stage Nuclear Power Strategy**:

1. **Stage I – Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)**: Utilizing **natural uranium** as fuel. This stage is the current backbone of India's civilian nuclear energy generation.
2. **Stage II – Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)**: Convert plutonium and depleted uranium into more fissile material, enabling sustainable fuel cycles.

- India has **successfully entered Stage II** with the **core loading of the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR)** at Kalpakkam.

3. **Stage III – Advanced Thorium Reactors**: Designed to leverage **India's vast thorium reserves**—the country holds **21% of global thorium resources**.
    - Projects like **'Bhavini'** aim to unlock this clean and abundant energy source.

**Current Capacity and Future Outlook:**

- **Installed Capacity (2024)**: India operates **23 nuclear reactors** across **seven power stations**, generating **8,180 MW** (up from 4,780 MW in 2014).
- **Future Projection**: The nuclear capacity is expected to rise to **22,480 MW by 2031–32**, indicating rapid growth.
- **Energy Distribution Model**: Under a new power-sharing framework:
    - **50%** of electricity goes to host states
    - **35%** to nearby regions
    - **15%** to the **national grid**

**Recent Developments and Global Cooperation:**

India is increasingly positioning nuclear power as a **clean energy alternative**, alongside solar and wind. Recent advancements include:

- **Ten new reactors approved** for construction
- Exploration of **private sector participation**, including the launch of **Bharat Small Modular Reactors (BSMRs)**
- **Strategic partnerships** with **Russia, France, and the United States** for nuclear technology transfer and collaboration

India is also actively engaging in the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** to strengthen global nuclear safety and research cooperation.

**Legacy of Dr. Srinivasan: A Torchbearer of Scientific Excellence**

Dr. M.R. Srinivasan's life epitomized **visionary leadership, scientific innovation, and patriotic commitment**. His guidance helped lay the foundation for one of the world's most **self-reliant nuclear energy programmes**, driving both **clean energy growth** and **strategic independence**.

As India aims to meet its climate goals and energy needs, his legacy continues to **inspire the next generation of scientists and policymakers**.

GS Paper 3 – Environment and Ecology

## 3 Operation Olivia: Safeguarding India's Marine Biodiversity

**Context: Operation Olivia** is a **flagship conservation initiative** of the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)**, launched annually between **November and May**. The mission is focused on **protecting Olive Ridley sea turtles** during their **critical nesting season**, especially along the **Odisha coastline**, including the **Gahirmatha Beach** and **Rushikulya river mouth**.

In its latest success, the operation ensured the safe nesting of over **6.98 lakh Olive Ridley turtles** at the Rushikulya river mouth — setting a **new conservation milestone**.

**How Operation Olivia Works:**

Operation Olivia employs a **multi-layered protection strategy** that includes:

- **24/7 coastal patrolling** by ships and personnel
- **Aerial surveillance** using aircraft and drones
- **Monitoring of fishing activity** to curb illegal practices
- **Community engagement** and collaboration with NGOs
- **Promotion of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs)** to reduce bycatch
- **Environmental awareness campaigns** for sustainable fishing

**Since its inception, the Indian Coast Guard has executed:**

- **5,387+ surface patrol sorties**
- **1,768+ aerial surveillance missions**

These concerted efforts have led to a **sharp decline in threats** such as **illegal trawling**, **marine pollution**, and **habitat degradation**.

**Why Olive Ridley Turtles Matter:**

The **Olive Ridley turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea)** is one of the **smallest and most abundant** sea turtles in the world. They are recognized by their **olive-colored, heart-shaped shell** and are famous for their **Arribada** — a rare mass nesting event where **thousands of females** come ashore **simultaneously to lay eggs**.

**Key Features**:

- **Length**: Up to **2 feet**
- **Weight**: Around **50 kg**
- **Diet**: **Omnivorous** – feeding on jellyfish, shrimp, algae, and seaweed
- **Behavior**: **Solitary** and **highly migratory**, traveling **thousands of kilometers** between feeding and nesting grounds

**Where Are They Found?**

These turtles inhabit the **warm tropical waters** of the **Pacific, Indian**, and **Atlantic Oceans**. In India, **Odisha's Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary** is recognized as the **world's largest rookery** of Olive Ridley turtles.

**Other important nesting sites include:**

- **Rushikulya river mouth**, Odisha
- **Devi river mouth**, Odisha
- **Velas Beach**, Maharashtra
- **Chilika Lake area**, Odisha

**Conservation Status:**

Despite their abundance, Olive Ridley turtles face **multiple threats** from **coastal development**, **climate change**, and **fishing-related mortality**. They are protected under:

- **IUCN Red List**: **Vulnerable**
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (India)**: **Schedule I** (highest protection)
- **CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species)**: **Appendix I** (trade strictly prohibited)

**Extra Facts and Insights:**

- The **Arribada phenomenon** is **unique to Olive Ridley** and **Kemp's ridley turtles** only.
- The turtles use **geomagnetic cues** to return to the **same beach** where they were born.
- **Turtle hatchlings**, upon emerging, instinctively **crawl toward moonlight** reflecting on the sea — a process disrupted by **artificial coastal lighting**.
- The **incubation temperature** of eggs determines the **sex** of hatchlings — **higher temperatures** produce **more females**, raising climate-related concerns.
- **Plastic ingestion** and **oil spills** are growing threats to marine turtle populations.

**The Bigger Picture:**

Operation Olivia is more than a conservation effort — it is a **symbol of hope** and **collaborative commitment** to preserving **India's marine ecosystem**. The initiative reflects a **harmonious balance between enforcement and education**, making it a model for **wildlife protection globally**.

By ensuring a **safe nesting environment**, India contributes significantly to the **global survival** of this ancient species, helping maintain the **delicate balance** of marine biodiversity.

## 4 Irula Tribe: Guardians of Ancient Wisdom and Nature

**Context:** In the village of **Kunnapattu**, Tamil Nadu, the **Irula tribe**, who have lived on ancestral land for generations, now face **eviction threats** and **lack legal ownership**. Despite their deep-rooted presence, nearly **half of the Irula families** remain without **official recognition or land rights**, sparking concern over **tribal displacement** and the erosion of **indigenous heritage**.

**Who Are the Irula?**

The **Irula** (also spelled Iruliga or Erular) are one of **India's most ancient tribal communities**, belonging to the **Dravidian ethnolinguistic group**. Predominantly found in the **Nilgiri Hills** of **Tamil Nadu**, and parts of **Kerala and Karnataka**, they are the **second-largest Adivasi group in Tamil Nadu**.

They are officially listed under the **"Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)"**, reflecting their **low socio-economic development**, **geographical isolation**, and **unique cultural practices**.

**Names and Identity:**

The Irulas refer to themselves as **Erlar** or **Poosari**, and are also locally known as **Eralollu**, **Shikari**, or **Pujari**, names that often reflect their **reputation as hunters**, **healers**, or **spiritual practitioners**.

**Language and Religion:**

- **Language**: The Irulas speak **Irula**, a distinct dialect related to **Tamil** and **Kannada**, and part of the **Dravidian language family**.
- **Belief System**: They follow a **pantheistic tradition**, believing in **spirits inhabiting nature, humans, and objects**.
- Their chief deity is **Kanniamma**, a **virgin goddess** closely associated with the **cobra**, symbolizing **protection, fertility, and healing**.

**Traditional Lifestyle:**

Irula communities live in compact settlements called **"mottas"**, often built on **hill slopes** and surrounded by **dry fields, forest patches, or plantations**.

**Traditional Occupations**:

- **Snake Catching**: The Irulas are globally renowned for their **legendary skill in tracking and catching venomous snakes**. They can identify snakes from **tracks, smell, and droppings** — a rare, inherited expertise.
- **Venom Extraction**: Their work is essential for **anti-venom production**. The **Irula Snake Catchers' Industrial Cooperative Society**, established in 1978, supplies over **80% of India's snake venom**, crucial for producing **anti-snake venom (ASV)**.
- **Healing and Traditional Medicine**: Their **ethnobotanical knowledge** makes them vital contributors to **natural healing and forest medicine**.
- **Forest Livelihoods**: They sustainably gather **wild honey**, **firewood**, **resins**, and **medicinal plants**.

- **Cattle Rearing and Farming**: Many Irulas also engage in **animal husbandry** and small-scale **subsistence agriculture**.

**Cultural and Environmental Significance:**

- Irulas are known as **eco-warriors**, preserving the **delicate balance between humans and wildlife**.
- Their practices support **biodiversity conservation**, especially in **forest ecosystems**.
- The cobra, revered in their culture, plays a **spiritual and ecological role**, helping control rodent populations and maintaining crop health.

**Challenges Faced:**

**Despite their invaluable contributions, the Irula community faces:**

- **Landlessness** and **eviction threats**
- **Social marginalization** and **discrimination**
- **Limited access to education**, healthcare, and basic infrastructure
- **Cultural erosion** due to modern development and loss of traditional practices

**Did You Know?**

- The Irula tribe's work is recognized globally; they've been featured in **National Geographic** and **BBC documentaries** for their snake-catching expertise.
- Venom collected by Irulas is used not only in anti-venom but also in **medical research** for **neurological and cardiovascular drugs**.
- Their **snake-catching methods** are **non-lethal**, ensuring that snakes are **safely released back into the wild**, making them models of **sustainable wildlife interaction**.

**Preserving the Irula Legacy:**

The Irulas represent a **living link to India's ancient traditions**, offering a model of **coexistence with nature**, **indigenous medicine**, and **wildlife conservation**. Protecting their **land rights**, **cultural heritage**, and **livelihoods** is not just a matter of justice — it is essential for the **sustainable future** of India's environment and diversity.

GS Paper 2 – Education

## 5 Mizoram Becomes India's First State to Achieve Full Functional Literacy


**Context:** In a historic achievement, **Mizoram has become the first Indian state to attain Full Functional Literacy**, with a remarkable **literacy rate of 98.20%**, as per the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24**. This milestone places Mizoram above the **95% literacy threshold** defined by the **Ministry of Education** to qualify for *functional literacy*.

**What is Functional Literacy?**

**Functional literacy** goes beyond basic reading and writing. It refers to individuals' ability to **read, write, perform basic arithmetic**, and apply these skills effectively in daily life. In today's context, it also includes **digital and financial literacy**, enabling individuals to participate more fully in society and the economy.

**ULLAS: A Lifelong Learning Movement**

Mizoram's success story is closely linked to the **ULLAS initiative** – *Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society*, officially known as the **Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram** or **New India Literacy Programme (NILP)**.

**Here are key highlights of the programme:**

- **Type**: **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**
- **Duration**: **2022-2027**
- **Ministry**: **Ministry of Education**
- **Target Group**: Adults aged **15 years and above**, especially those who missed out on formal education
- **Core Components**:
  - **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)**
  - **Critical Life Skills** (including health, hygiene, and disaster management)
  - **Basic Education** (up to Class 8)
  - **Vocational Skills Development**
  - **Continuing Education** (libraries, book clubs, digital learning)

**Volunteer-Driven Implementation:**

The programme thrives on **volunteerism**, encouraging citizens to contribute through a sense of **Kartavya Bodh** (duty consciousness). **Samajik Chetna Kendras** have been set up using available infrastructure like schools, community halls, and local cultural centers, with schools serving as the operational base.

Educational resources are made accessible in **regional languages** through platforms like the **DIKSHA Portal** and the **ULLAS Mobile App**.

**Certification Through FLNAT:**

To assess learning outcomes, the **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test (FLNAT)** is conducted **twice a year**, or **on-demand**, at local schools. Successful learners are awarded certificates recognizing their achievement.

**Mizoram's Feat in National Context:**

While **Ladakh** was the first administrative unit (Union Territory) to declare full functional literacy, **Mizoram's achievement as the first full-fledged state** marks a significant stride in India's education reform. It serves as a model for other states aiming to empower citizens through **inclusive, lifelong learning**.

**Did You Know?**

- According to UNESCO, each year of schooling can increase a person's income by up to **10%**.
- Literacy among adults leads to **lower child mortality**, **higher civic participation**, and **better health outcomes**.
- India aims to make **100% functional literacy a reality** under the National Education Policy (**NEP 2020**), in alignment with **SDG Goal 4**: *Quality Education for All*.

**Mizoram's literacy success reflects the power of community participation, inclusive policy, and the transformative vision of NEP 2020.** The journey from basic literacy to functional literacy marks not just an educational milestone—but a social revolution.

GS Paper 2 – Health Governance

## 6 World Health Assembly 2024 Adopts Historic Pandemic Agreement

**Context:** In a landmark move, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** has formally adopted the **first-ever international Pandemic Agreement** during the **78th World Health Assembly (WHA)** held in **Geneva, Switzerland**. The legally binding pact is designed to enhance **global readiness, response, and equity** in tackling future pandemics—drawing lessons from the unprecedented challenges of the **COVID-19 pandemic**.

**What is the WHO Pandemic Agreement?**

After **three years of intense negotiations**, WHO Member States have unanimously agreed to the **Pandemic Accord**, a global legal framework intended to ensure the world never faces a pandemic unprepared again. This **historic accord**, once ratified by **at least 60 countries by 2026**, will come into full effect—marking a turning point in **international health cooperation**.

**Understanding the World Health Assembly (WHA):**

The **World Health Assembly** is the **governing body** of the WHO, comprising delegates from all 194 Member States. It meets annually to:

- Set **global health priorities**
- Approve **WHO budgets and strategic work plans**
- Elect the **Director-General of WHO**
- Adopt **international agreements** under **Article 19** of the WHO Constitution

**The WHA has previously been instrumental in key health victories, including:**

- **Eradication of Smallpox (1980)**
- **International Health Regulations (IHR)** – global health security framework
- **Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2003)** – first global health treaty
- **Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework (2011)**

**Key Objectives of the Pandemic Agreement:**

The newly adopted agreement centers around the principles of **equity, transparency, solidarity**, and **scientific cooperation**, while firmly upholding the **sovereignty of nations**. Its primary aims include:

- **Enhancing early detection and rapid response** to emerging health threats
- Strengthening **national pandemic prevention plans**
- Ensuring **equitable access to vaccines, treatments, diagnostics**, and health products
- **Promoting transparency** in information and pathogen sharing

**Major Features and Provisions:**

1. **Legal Framework with Global Significance:** This is only the **second legally binding agreement** adopted under **Article 19** of the WHO Constitution—the first being the **Tobacco Control Convention** in 2003.
2. **Prevention, Surveillance & Preparedness:**

**Member States will be guided to:**

- Establish robust **surveillance systems**
- Invest in **routine immunization**, lab safety, and **zoonotic disease monitoring**
- Address **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** and strengthen **early-warning systems**

**3. Equitable Production & Distribution:**

The agreement encourages **sustainable local manufacturing** of health tools to avoid overreliance on a few countries. It aims for:

- **Timely scale-up** of medical production during pandemics
- **Fair distribution** guided by public health needs

**4. Technology Transfer and Innovation Access:**

A major emphasis is placed on **voluntary technology sharing**, especially with **low- and middle-income countries**. Mechanisms include:

- Licensing and financial incentives
- Creation of **regional tech hubs** supported by WHO
- Building local manufacturing capacity

**5. Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS) System:**

The **PABS system** will enable rapid sharing of **pathogen data** with researchers and manufacturers. In return:

- Manufacturers must reserve **20% of their output for WHO** (10% donated, 10% at affordable prices)
- **Open to global manufacturers**, promoting transparency and cooperation

**6. Global Supply Chain and Logistics Network:**

To avoid supply shortages seen during COVID-19, a **WHO-coordinated logistics network** will be created to:

- Distribute medical supplies based on urgency and equity
- Enhance transparency in **supply and demand forecasts**

**Protecting National Sovereignty:**

The agreement **does not empower WHO to override national laws** or enforce measures like lockdowns, vaccine mandates, or border closures. Each country retains **full autonomy** in how it implements the agreement within its jurisdiction.

**U.S. Absence: A Notable Omission**

A significant concern is the **absence of the United States** from the final agreement. U.S. negotiators withdrew from the process, partly influenced by earlier decisions under the Trump administration to disengage from the WHO. Experts warn this could **limit the agreement's global impact**, though efforts continue to bring the U.S. back into the fold.

**Additional Insights and Global Implications:**

- According to the **Global Preparedness Monitoring Board**, the world faces a **27% chance of a pandemic** as deadly as COVID-19 in the next 25 years.

- The pandemic caused a **global economic loss of over $12.5 trillion**—highlighting the urgent need for preventive frameworks.
- The agreement aligns with the **UN's Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being)**, reinforcing health as a universal right.

**A Step Toward a Safer Future:**

The **WHO Pandemic Agreement** represents a **monumental shift in how the world addresses global health threats**. With its emphasis on **solidarity, scientific cooperation, and equity**, it sets the foundation for a **more resilient and inclusive global health system**.

As countries move toward ratification and implementation, this agreement could very well become the **bedrock of future pandemic resilience**—preventing history from repeating itself.