

● POLITY

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Sc Stays Hc Order Striking Down Law Regulating Madrasas

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court of India stays a Allahabad High Court ruling that struck down a law regulating religious schools (Madrasas) in Uttar Pradesh while considering arguments on whether the law violates secularism.

**BACKGROUND:****Law Regulating Madrasas in Uttar Pradesh**

- A law existed in Uttar Pradesh since 2004 - the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act, 2004.
- This law aimed to regulate madrasas, which are religious schools, primarily focused on Islamic teachings.

Allahabad High Court's Decision

- In March 2024, the Allahabad High Court struck down this law.
- The High Court's reasoning was that the law violated the principle of secularism enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
- They argued the Act gives preferential treatment to religious education and questioned the quality of secular education provided in madrasas.
- The High Court also ordered the transfer of madrasa students to regular schools.

Uttar Pradesh Government's Response

- Initially, the Uttar Pradesh government defended the law in the High Court.
- However, after the High Court's decision, the government seemed to accept the verdict.

Arguments for Maintaining the Madrasa Board Act

- Supporters of the Act argue that it provides a way to regulate madrasas and ensure some minimum standards for education.
- They point out that without the Act, madrasa education could be unregulated and lack proper quality control.

Arguments Against the Madrasa Board Act

- Opponents of the Act argue that it violates secularism by promoting religious education with state involvement.
- They believe the Act hinders providing a well-rounded education including subjects like maths, science, and social studies.

Supreme Court's Intervention

- The Supreme Court has stayed the Allahabad High Court's decision, putting a hold on its implementation.
- The Supreme Court will hear arguments from both sides in July 2024.
- The Supreme Court seems to be questioning the High Court's reasoning of completely striking down the Act, suggesting there might be ways to regulate madrasas while upholding secularism.

Additional Points

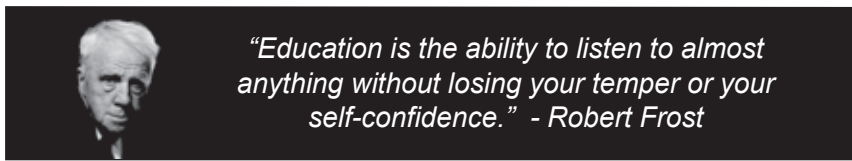
- The issue revolves around balancing the right to religious education with the right to quality secular education for all students.
- The case highlights the ongoing debate in India about the role of religion in education.

The Indian Constitution directly pertains to this case through several articles, particularly:

- **Article 28(1):** This article prohibits religious instruction in educational institutions wholly maintained by the state. This was a point raised by the Uttar Pradesh government while arguing against the Madrasa Board Act.
- **Article 25-26:** These articles guarantee the freedom of religion, including the right to establish and maintain educational institutions. This right is likely to be used by those arguing for the right to religious education in madrasas.
- **Article 30(1):** This article protects the rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. This right is also relevant for madrasas as a form of minority educational institution.
- **Part III (Fundamental Rights):** This entire part of the Constitution is relevant because the arguments revolve around balancing the rights mentioned above (religious freedom, minority rights) with the right to quality education (potentially implied under Article 21 - Right to Life and Liberty).
- These articles, particularly **Articles 14 (Right to Equality), 15 (Prohibition of Discrimination)** are also relevant to this case.
- **Secularism:** Though not an explicitly mentioned right, the concept of secularism is a basic structure of the Indian Constitution. This principle is at the heart of the debate, with arguments on both sides needing to demonstrate how their position aligns with a secular state.

CONCLUSION: The Supreme Court's intervention has put the issue of regulating madrasas in Uttar Pradesh on hold. The upcoming arguments in July 2024 will likely revolve around interpreting the Constitution's principles of secularism, minority rights, and the right

to education. The Court's decision will be crucial in setting a precedent for balancing these rights within the Indian education system.



POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Parliaments Past, A Mirror To Changing Dynamics

CONTEXT: Indian Parliamentary proceedings, including legislative activities, ministerial priorities, interventions by lawmakers, the evolving dynamics of parliamentary engagement, with a focus on highlighting shifts in ministerial priorities, the utilization of interventions by lawmakers, and the need for revitalizing legislative engagement to ensure accountability and constructive debate are the legacies of the 17th Lok Sabha.

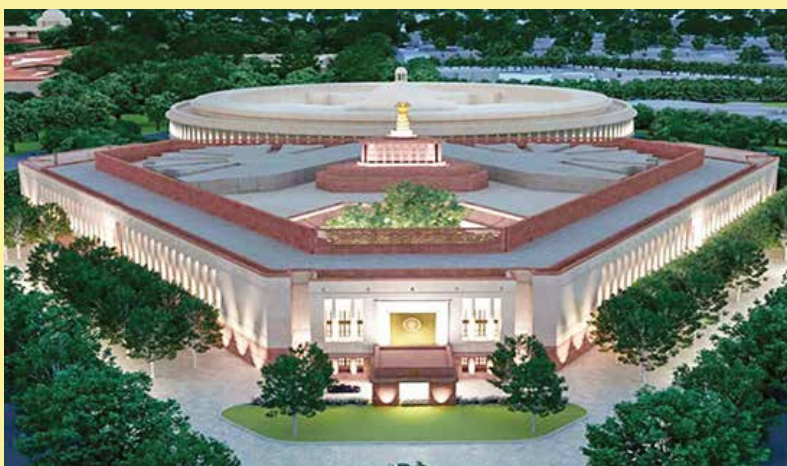
BACK GROUND: The Evolving Landscape of Indian Parliamentary Proceedings

India's Parliament grapples with a potential decline in active engagement. Ministries like Health and Agriculture reflect growing public concerns, while waning interest in National Security is troubling. The rise of Zero Hour interventions highlights immediate issues, but deeper discussions are needed. Missed opportunities to hold the government accountable raise concerns about a robust Opposition. Revitalising parliamentary engagement is crucial for a healthy Indian democracy.

The Evolving Landscape of Indian Parliamentary Proceedings

The Indian Parliament, a bicameral legislature consisting of the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States), serves as the cornerstone of Indian democracy. Traditionally, Parliament has played a vital role in shaping national policy, holding the government accountable, and fostering a healthy exchange of ideas.

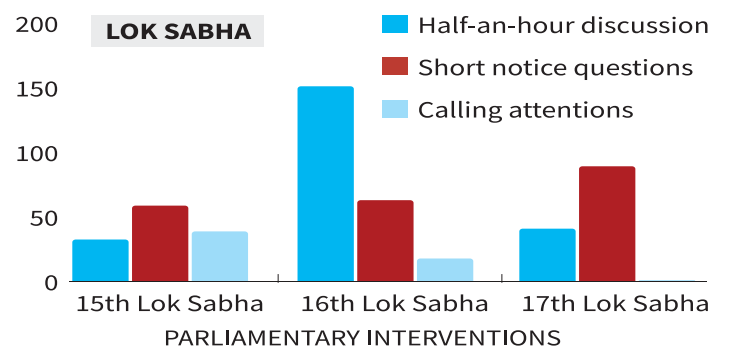
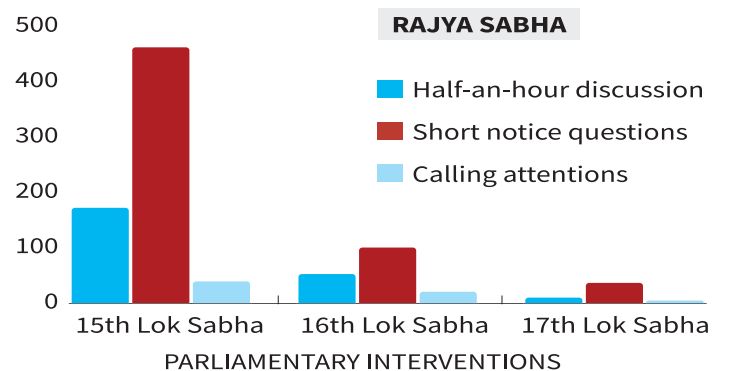
However, the critics highlight a concerning trend: a potential decline in robust parliamentary engagement.



Here's a deeper look at some key points mentioned in the context and further elaborated upon:

Trends of parliamentary interventions filed in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

The Lok Sabha has seen a decrease in the filing of Calling Attention motions, while the Rajya Sabha has seen a decreased filing of all parliamentary interventions



SOURCE: LOK SABHA AND RAJYA SABHA STATISTICAL STATEMENTS

- **Shifting Ministerial Focus:** The rise in prominence of Ministries like Health and Family Welfare, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare reflects growing public concern over healthcare and rural well-being. This aligns with various government initiatives like Ayushman Bharat (health insurance) addressing these areas.
- **Waning Interest in National Security?:** The dwindling focus on the Ministry of Home Affairs, traditionally a high-priority area, is a cause for concern. This could be due to various factors, such as a shift in perceived security threats or a lack of transparency in government actions.
- **Economic Ambitions and Scrutiny:** The narrative around the Ministry of Finance is intriguing. While there's a decline in overall parliamentary interest, a rise in admitted questions suggests a growing focus on transparency in financial matters. This might be due to India's ambitious goal of becoming a top-five global economy.
- **The Rise of Zero Hour:** The surge in Zero Hour interventions, where members raise pressing issues without prior notice, indicates a growing need to address immediate concerns. However, its limitations necessitate utilising other options like 'Calling Attention' for more in-depth discussions.
- **Missed Opportunities and Apathy:** The overlooked instances of holding the government accountable, like failing to raise privilege motions or missing crucial discussions, paint a

concerning picture. A strong Opposition, as exemplified by the withdrawal of the Communal Violence Bill in 2014, is essential for a healthy democracy.

CONCLUSION: The Indian Parliament stands at a crossroads. While there are positive signs like increased focus on healthcare and financial transparency, a decline in scrutiny of critical areas and missed opportunities for constructive debate raise concerns. To ensure a vibrant democracy, revitalising parliamentary engagement and fostering a culture of accountability are paramount.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

EC Seeks To Increase Voter Turnout In 266 Constituencies

CONTEXT: The Election Commission is focusing on increasing voter turnout in 266 constituencies across nine States and Union Territories with low turnouts, particularly in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, by implementing targeted interventions and developing booth-wise action plans for enhanced participation and behavioural change.

BACKGROUND: The Election Commission aims to boost voter turnout in 266 constituencies across India, focusing on rural areas. Challenges like logistical hurdles, voter apathy, and limited awareness drive targeted interventions including voter education campaigns and technology-driven initiatives. Their nuanced approach aims at active citizenship and fair representation.



Voter Turnout Challenges in India:

- India's democratic process faces challenges in ensuring widespread voter participation, especially in rural areas.
- Logistical hurdles such as limited access to polling stations in remote regions contribute to low voter turnout.
- Voter apathy and lack of awareness about voting rights and processes among marginalized communities are significant issues.
- Disillusionment with political representatives or issues also contributes to voter disengagement.

Election Commission's Targeted Interventions:

- The Election Commission is focusing on boosting voter turnout in 266 constituencies across India.
- Targeted interventions include voter education campaigns and

technology-driven initiatives.

- Strategies aim to address logistical challenges, increase awareness, and combat voter apathy.

Booth-Wise Action Plans for Enhanced Participation:

- The Commission's approach involves developing booth-wise action plans tailored to specific areas.
- Differentiated strategies are planned for urban and rural regions to address unique challenges.
- Emphasis is placed on behavioural change and active citizenship to ensure fair representation.

CONCLUSION: The Election Commission's proactive efforts to increase voter turnout in 266 constituencies reflect a deep commitment to strengthening India's democratic fabric. By addressing challenges such as logistical hurdles, voter apathy, and limited awareness, the Commission's targeted interventions and booth-wise action plans aim to promote active citizenship and ensure fair representation in the electoral process. These initiatives underscore the importance of inclusive and participatory democracy, paving the way for a more engaged and empowered electorate.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Escalation Ladder

CONTEXT: Israel had attacked the Iranian embassy in Syria and this has escalated the conflict.

BACKGROUND: The background to the Israel-Iran escalation involves a longstanding shadow war, heightened by the October 7th, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel. This event triggered a larger conflict, leading to substantial casualties and escalating tensions. Key points of escalation include Israel's attack on an Iranian embassy annex in Syria on April 1st, violating international law and prompting concerns about a wider war and potential US involvement.



WAY POINTS TO EMERGING CONFLICT

Background to Israel-Iran Escalation:

- **Shadow War:** Long-standing conflict between Israel and Iran, primarily over Iran's nuclear program and support for groups like Hezbollah.
- **October 7th, 2023:** Hamas attack on Israel triggers broader conflict, leading to Israeli invasion of Gaza and airstrikes in Syria and Lebanon targeting Iranian-backed forces.

- **Mounting Casualties:** Gaza conflict results in over 33,000 deaths, mostly civilians.
- **Israeli Pressure:** Prime Minister Netanyahu faces domestic and international pressure to end the Gaza conflict.

Key Points of Escalation:

- **April 1st 2024 Attack:** Israel targets an Iranian embassy annex in Syria, killing a senior Iranian commander.
- **Violation of International Law:** Targeting a diplomatic site escalates tensions and raises concerns about violating international norms.
- **Iranian Response:** Iran views the attack as an act of war.

Potential Consequences:

- **Wider Regional Conflict:** Escalation could lead to a broader war with severe regional and global repercussions.
- **US Involvement:** The US, a key ally of Israel, may be drawn into the conflict.
- **Urgency for Restraint:** Calls for restraint from both Israel and Iran to avoid further escalation and potential catastrophe.

2. The Gaza War and its Potential Consequences

- The Battle for Rafah:
 - Israeli objective: Eradicate remaining Hamas forces.
 - Public opinion: Divided between prioritizing hostage release and Hamas eradication.
 - International pressure: US urging ceasefire, UN resolution for a pause during Ramadan.

3. The Threat of Regional Escalation

- Hamas' disregard for civilian casualties: Aims to continue fighting.
- Hezbollah's potential involvement: May see an opportunity to attack Israel.
- Potential domino effect: Syria, Iran, and Egypt drawn into the conflict.
 - Syria and Iran: Likely retaliation for Israeli attacks.
 - Egypt: Pressure to join the fighting due to public opinion and Arab influence.

4. The US Role and the Risk of Superpower Involvement

- US support for Israel: Intervention if a wider conflict erupts.
- The possibility of Russian involvement: A frightening global scenario.

5. Conclusion: The Urgent Need for De-escalation

- The high probability of a wider conflict.
- The importance of international efforts to prevent a devastating war.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

There Will Be No Independent, Sovereign Palestine

CONTEXT: Complexities of the Israel-Palestine conflict post-October 7, 2023, highlights the challenges to the two-state solution, with the rise of Hamas's popularity, the internal dynamics within Israel regarding Palestinian statehood, the ongoing Gaza war, and the potential for wider regional conflict involving Hezbollah, Syria, Iran, and Egypt mandates a need for U.S increased efforts to prevent a further escalation of Conflict.



1. The Two-State Solution is Dead

- Pre-October 2023: Negotiations and the possibility of a Palestinian state.
- Hamas' rise in popularity: Support for Hamas grows in the West Bank.
- Discrediting the Palestinian Authority: Seen as corrupt and ineffective by both Israelis and Palestinians.
- Israeli unwillingness: No support for a Palestinian state with a Hamas majority.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Stop Selling Or Shipping Arms To Israel, Unhrc Tells Nations

CONTEXT: The UNHRC has passed a resolution urging nations to stop selling or shipping arms to Israel and calling for UN-backed investigators to report on shipments of weapons that could be used against Palestinians. The resolution was supported by a majority vote in the Human Rights Council, with the U.S. and Germany opposing it, France and Japan abstaining, and India abstaining on a related resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.



BACK GROUND: The UN Human Rights Council's resolution calling on countries to halt arms sales to Israel amid its military campaign in Gaza. The resolution received support from a majority of HRC members, reflecting global concerns about rights violations.

The US and Germany opposed it, signalling divisions among Western nations. India's abstention aligns with past votes on similar resolutions but supports other measures critical of Israel's actions and advocating Palestinian rights.

UNHRC Resolution Against Arms Sales to Israel:

- The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution urging countries to halt arms sales to Israel amid its Gaza military campaign.
- The resolution aims to prevent rights violations against Palestinians and received significant support with 28 in favor, 6 opposed, and 13 abstentions.
- It calls for halting shipments of weapons, munitions, and 'dual use' items to Israel that could be used against Palestinians.

International Response and Divisions:

- Western countries showed divisions, with the US and Germany opposing, France and Japan abstaining, and Belgium, Finland, and Luxembourg supporting the resolution.
- This reflects international concern over Israel's actions in Gaza, including limitations on humanitarian aid and impeding access to water.

US Warning and Israel's Response:

- US President Joe Biden warned Israel of future dependence on protecting civilians and aid workers during the Gaza war.
- Israel announced temporary aid deliveries to northern Gaza amidst escalating tensions and international scrutiny.

India's Position and Abstention:

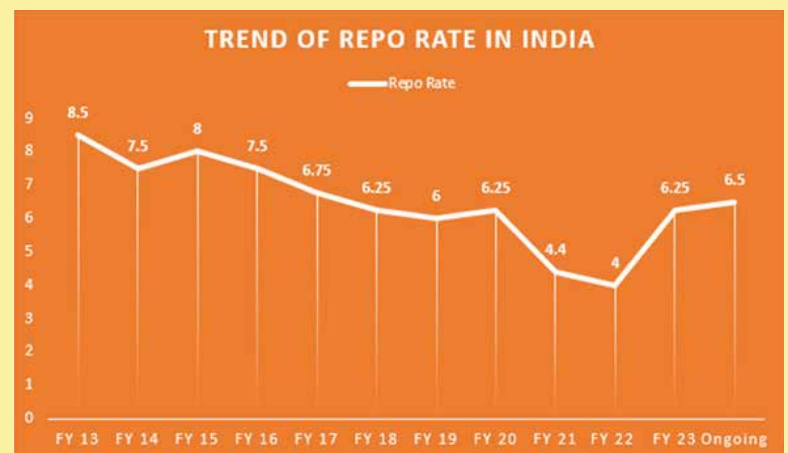
- India abstained from the HRC vote on a ceasefire resolution, aligning with previous votes and focusing on accountability resolutions criticising Israel's actions.
- India supported resolutions on Palestinian rights to self-determination, human rights in occupied territories, and Israeli settlements.

ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT

RBI Keeps Repo Rate On Hold As Food Prices Remain High

CONTEXT: Despite a slight decrease in overall inflation, the Reserve Bank of India remains concerned about rising food prices, maintaining the policy repo rate at 6.50%.

HIGHLIGHTS: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das emphasized the ongoing commitment to stabilizing inflation within the target range despite maintaining interest rates for the seventh consecutive time. Highlighting progress in disinflation, he stressed the importance of continued vigilance, particularly amidst uncertainties in food prices. With expectations of improved wheat production and a promising monsoon forecast, efforts to balance inflation and support growth persist.



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ECONOMICS AND DEVELOPMENT**RBI To Enable Upi For Cash Deposit**

CONTEXT: The RBI Governor announced upcoming instructions for enabling UPI cash deposit, allowing foreign investors in IFSC to buy green bonds, and launching a mobile app for Retail Direct.

BACKGROUND: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das announced plans to expand the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) to include cash deposits, citing the widespread popularity and convenience of the platform. This move aims to leverage the success of UPI for card-less cash withdrawals and enhance customer convenience, ultimately reducing the burden on bank branches for cash handling.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Cash Deposit Machines (CDMs) will soon accept UPI payments, reducing reliance on debit cards for cash deposits, enhancing customer convenience.
- Eligible foreign investors in the International Financial Services Centre can now invest in Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs), widening participation.
- A scheme for foreign investors in IFSC for SGrB investment and trading is under consultation with the Government and IFSC Authority.
- Retail Direct scheme, launched in 2021, will have a mobile app for individual investors to manage gilt accounts and invest in government securities.
- Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) registered with SEBI can invest in SGrBs through different routes available for government securities investment.



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